ACTS
of the Apostles

Opening considerations

A link to Luke

1 [1]The first account I prepared, Theophilus [God-lover],[1] concerned all that Jesus began to do and to teach[2] [2]until the day in which He was taken back,[3] after He had given commandment, by Holy Spirit,[4] to the apostles whom He had chosen; [3]to whom He also showed Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing evidences, appearing to them during forty days and speaking of things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.[5] [4]And being together He directed them not to go away from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father,[6] "which you heard from me; [5]John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with Holy Spirit not many days from now."[7]

Jesus returns to Heaven

[6]Well then, being together[8] they asked Him saying, "Lord, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel at this time?"[9] [7]So He said to them: "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has placed within His own authority. [8]But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be witnesses to me[10]—both in Jerusalem, and all Judea and Samaria, and even to the last *part* of the

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[1] Since in addressing Luke to Theophilus the author added the honorific 'honorable' or 'excellent', this was presumably a specific man, but I would like to think that the two books are also addressed to all lovers of God. Actually, Luke 1:4 makes clear that he was a specific man.

[2] Why "began"? Presumably because this book will relate what He continued to do and teach, through the Apostles. He is still at work in our world, through us.

[3] Jehovah the Son was given (John 3:16, Isaiah 9:6) to this earth for thirty some years, then He was taken back.

[4] There is no definite article with "Holy Spirit", and I hesitate to add it. Perhaps we should try thinking of 'Holy Spirit' as a proper name. To carry out the commands in Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 16:15-18, Luke 24:46-48 and John 20:21 would require the Holy Spirit's enabling.

[5] I get the impression that the Lord did a lot more appearing and teaching during those 40 days than has been recorded.

[6] Luke is repeating what he wrote in Luke 24:49, which in turn refers to John 14:16 and 26 (from John 14:31 it appears that what Jesus did started with the Father).

[7] The grammar requires that the material within quotation marks be handled as a direct quote, even though it is a bit awkward, in English.

[8] The reference is to verse 4, which refers to Luke 24:49-50, which informs us that Jesus led them out to Bethany; so they had assembled in the city. A certain Greek particle is used in both verse 1 and verse 6, making them grammatically parallel; verses 1-5 refer to the former account, verse 6 begins the present account.

[9] Messiah and kingdom are closely linked in their minds. Jesus is the Messiah, now victorious over death, so where is the Kingdom? Jesus does not question the fact implicit in their question, but tells them that the **time** is classified information.

[10] A very small minority of Greek manuscripts (perhaps 2%), of inferior quality, read 'my witnesses' instead of 'witnesses to me'. To my mind, at least, there is a significant

earth."[1]

9Upon saying these things, as they watched, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him out of their sight. **10**And as they were staring into the sky, while He was going, suddenly two men in white clothing[2] stood beside them; **11**and they said: "Men of Galilee,[3] why do you stand gazing up into the sky? This very Jesus who is being taken up from you into the sky, He will come *again* in the precise manner that you observed Him going into the sky."[4]

12They then returned to Jerusalem from the mount called 'of Olives', which is near Jerusalem (a Sabbath day's journey).[5]

A replacement for Judas Iscariot

13When they had entered [the city] they went up into the upper room[6] where they were staying: namely Peter and James, John and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas of James.[7] **14**All these were continuing with one purpose in prayer and petition, along with the women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.[8]

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difference in meaning—to be a witness **to** Jesus involves <u>being</u> like Him (Matthew 10:25) and <u>doing</u> like Him (John 14:12).

1 There is a strategy here: 'both…and…and' = simultaneously. If you stay in your 'Jerusalem' until you win everyone, you will never get to the world (there are many people who do not want God, period, so they will never be won). 'Judea' and 'Samaria' are treated as a unit, grammatically, so we have our town, our country and the world. "Last" is an adjective used as a noun, so we must supply 'part' or 'place', or else render 'end'; note that the word is singular. I take it that no part of the world is to be left unreached.

2 I wonder if these were the same two angels who officiated at the empty tomb.

3 Why do the angels emphasize that the men are from Galilee? The 'men' refers only to males, so presumably they were the Eleven. It does appear that none of the first apostles were from Judea, which I find to be curious. On the other hand, the Pharisee types had such a stranglehold on Jerusalem society that the Text refers to secret believers, 'for fear of the Jews'. That stranglehold was a factor throughout Judea, but much less in Galilee. So much so that the Judeans tended to look down their spiritual noses at Galileans.

4 The angels are emphatic; the return is going to be just like the departure. I take it that the Lord will return with the same glorified human body, visibly, come out of a cloud, and His feet will touch down at the same spot where they left (see Matthew 24:30, "coming on the clouds", and Zechariah 14:4, "His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives").

5 Generally understood to be about 1,000 yards or 3/5 of a mile; just under a kilometer.

6 Probably the same one that was used for the last Passover, since the Text has '<u>the</u> upper room'. Both Mark 14:15 and Luke 22:12 inform us that the room was 'large', as it would have to be to hold 120 people (see verse 15 below).

7 Since there was more than one James, Simon and Judas, the last three require an added description. The Text presents the names in pairs, and so have I.

8 The reference is to His half-brothers, presumably including at least James and Jude.

15Well in those days Peter stood up in the middle of the disciples[1]
(the number of people assembled there was about 120) and said:
16"Men,[2] brothers: It was necessary that this Scripture be fulfilled, which
the Holy Spirit spoke before by David's mouth[3] concerning Judas, who
was guide to those who arrested Jesus; 17in that he was numbered with
us and obtained his share in this ministry." 18(In fact this man acquired
a field with the wages of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst
open in the middle, and all his innards were spilled out.[4] 19And it became
known to all who lived in Jerusalem, so that in their own language that
field came to be called '*Akeldama*', that is, 'Field of Blood'.) 20"Because it
stands written in Book of Psalms: 'Let his residence become desolate,
and may no one live in it' and, 'Let another take his office.'[5] 21So then, of
the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went
in and out among us, 22beginning from the baptism of John until the day
when He was taken up from us, of these one must become a witness with
us of His resurrection."[6]

23So they nominated two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was sur-
named Justus, and Matthias. 24And praying they said: "You, Lord,
Knower of all hearts, show which one of these two You have chosen[7] 25to
receive the portion of this ministry and apostleship, out of which Judas
turned aside to go into his own place."[8] 26And they cast their lots, and
the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven Apostles.

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1 A very small minority of the Greek manuscripts [3%], of inferior quality, read 'brothers' for 'disciples' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). The original Eleven are now called 'apostles' (verse 2), and the 120 who were there are called 'disciples'.

2 The term used here refers exclusively to males—so also in 1:21, 2:5, 2:14, 2:22, 2:29, 2:37 and 3:12.

3 Notice that Peter evidently held to a 'dictation' view of Inspiration, the Holy Spirit used David's mouth.

4 Matthew 27:5 says that Judas hanged himself, and here it says he fell headlong—well, to fall headlong there has to be a cliff, and you would have to dive off. Putting the two accounts together we understand that there must have been a tree near the edge of the cliff, with a branch reaching out beyond the edge; Judas tied a cord around that branch and his neck and jumped—either the cord or the branch broke, and the impact was sufficient to split him open. Matthew also states that it was actually the chief priests who bought the field, using the money that Judas had thrown on the temple floor; so Judas made the purchase posthumously.

5 See Psalms 69:25 and 109:8.

6 Notice that the crucial thing is the resurrection. 'Let another take his office' would appear to be the basis for Peter's assertion.

7 Wait a minute! How do we, or Peter, know that holding that election was God's idea? If it was not God's idea, then Matthias was not really God's choice. (Perhaps Peter did like we so often do, bring our ideas to God and ask Him to bless them, although Peter's idea was evidently based on Psalm 109:8.) In any case, this is the first and last time Matthias is mentioned in the New Testament. The original twelve were personally chosen by Jesus; the only other one so chosen was Saul/Paul.

8 Judas turned aside "out of" Jesus' group, to go "into" his own place. Peter does not name the place, but the Lord Jesus had declared in their hearing that Judas was lost (John 17:12; see also Matthew 26:24).

Pentecost

2 [1]When the day of Pentecost had come,[1] they were all together with one purpose.[2] [2]And suddenly a roar came out of the sky, like the rushing of a violent wind,[3] and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.[4] [3]Fiery tongues appeared and were distributed to them, and it [a tongue] landed[5] on each one of them. [4]And they were all filled with Holy Spirit and began to speak different languages,[6] as the Spirit was granting to them to speak out.[7]

People from all over

[5]Now there were devout men, Jews, from every nation under heaven, dwelling in Jerusalem.[8] [6]So when that roar occurred, the crowd came together, and was bewildered, because each one was hearing them speaking to him in his own dialect.[9] [7]So they were amazed and marveled, saying to one another:[10] "Hey, aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? [8]So how can each of us be hearing our own dialect in which we were born? [9]Parthians and Medes and Elamites; those dwelling in

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[1] This was no more than eight days after the Ascension. In John 14:18 the Lord had said, "I will not leave you orphans"—they only had to wait one week for the Holy Spirit; albeit on resurrection night Jesus had breathed on them at least a portion of the Holy Spirit (John 20:22).

[2] See 1:14 above. What was that 'purpose'? I assume that they were obeying the Lord's command, they were waiting for 'the promise of the Father', the baptism with Holy Spirit.

[3] Why the noise? Presumably to attract attention—God wanted to impact the whole city. Since everyone moved on foot, people would be arriving for a number of minutes, depending on where they started (the city was small in those days).

[4] They were sitting, so presumably the 'house' wasn't the temple; I imagine it was the 'upper room'.

[5] I understand from the grammar that the tongue actually touched down on the person, there was contact.

[6] These are human languages, spoken somewhere on earth, as the following context makes clear.

[7] "Speak out" translates a different word than the "speak" in the middle of the verse; the idea is to proclaim or project the voice. Notice that the speaking was controlled by the Spirit. The Text is emphatic that they were all filled, but they did not all start spouting languages; the languages were directed to specific hearers, as the following context makes clear. As the crowd began to gather the Spirit presumably sent the disciples (probably the same 120, at least) out to mingle with the people, and the Spirit proclaimed 'the great works of God' to each one in his mother tongue, using the mouths of the disciples. But there would also need to be a miracle in the ear of each hearer, to filter his own language out from the welter of sound (many languages being proclaimed at the same time). I would imagine that this activity lasted at least 10 or 15 minutes.

[8] If these were people who had come for a short time, they would not be tied to business activities, and might even be bored, so any promise of something different would be welcome. So the 'foreigners' probably outnumbered the local citizens in that crowd.

[9] The word rendered 'dialect' is different from the word rendered 'language'. What each one heard was what was spoken in his home town, complete with peculiarities—the only explanation for what was happening was supernatural activity.

[10] I gather that the material within quotes represents a sampling from a variety of speakers.

Mesopotamia, in Judea and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, **10**in Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene; and visitors from Rome—both Jews and proselytes—**11**Cretans and Arabians; we hear them declaring the great works of God in our own languages." **12**Yes they were all amazed and perplexed, saying one to another, "Whatever is going on?" **13**But different ones were jeering, saying, "They are full of sweet wine!"[1]

Peter's proclamation

14So Peter, standing with the eleven,[2] raised his voice and proclaimed to them: "Men—Jews and all who are dwelling in Jerusalem—let this be known to you; indeed, listen to my speech! **15**Because these are not drunk, as you suppose (since it is only the third hour of the day),[3] **16**but this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

> **17**'It will be in the last days, says God: I will pour out from my Spirit upon all flesh;[4] your sons and your daughters will prophesy; your young men will see visions; your old men will dream a dream.[5] **18**In those days I will indeed pour out from my Spirit upon my male slaves and upon my female slaves, and they will prophesy.[6] **19**I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below: blood and fire and smoke vapor. **20**The sun will be turned into dark-

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[1] In 'sweet' wine the fermentation process was just beginning, so the alcohol content was still low; but if you drank enough of it you got 'happy'. So the mockers are saying that the disciples had tanked up and were feeling the effects. (On the other hand, 120 bellyfuls would represent a respectable quantity of liquid, much more than would normally be available, so the mockers' hypothesis is not very plausible—and being drunk does not give you the ability to speak a different language [in fact, you don't even speak your own correctly].) But as Peter points out in verse 15, it was 9:00 a.m., too early for anyone to be drunk.

[2] Many versions render 'standing up', as if Peter and the others had been sitting in the house all this time (did the crowd invade the house?). The basic meaning of the verb here is more like 'standing still' (stopping)—I take it that the Eleven had been mingling with the crowd too, but Peter now gathers them to form a nucleus upon which the crowd can focus its attention.

[3] "The third hour of the day" was 9:00 a.m. Peter was speaking Hebrew, and therefore was using Jewish time.

[4] The Text says "all flesh"; in the context this refers to human beings, not animals. Peter understood that a variety of ethnic nations would be represented.

[5] "Visions" is plural, but "dream" is singular, in the Text (albeit 15% of the Greek manuscripts do have 'dreams'). When I was young I had all sorts of 'visions' of what I thought I was going to achieve in my lifetime. Now that I am old I am pretty well reduced to one 'dream'. One's focus must accompany his energy level. (My personal experience is probably not the intended meaning of the Text, but I am not sure what it might be—do all old men have the same dream?)

[6] As is typical in Hebrew, verse 18 repeats part of verse 17. Similarly, verse 20 complements verse19. I take it that verses 19 and 20 will be fulfilled during the Great Tribulation, literally, so it was verses 17 and 18 that were immediately applicable to what was happening there. So why did Peter quote the material in 19 and 20? Perhaps he (and the others) thought that 'the day of the LORD' had already started—so much so that no one went home; the believers stayed on in Jerusalem until the persecution sent them running (Acts 8:1).

ness and the moon into 'blood' before the great and glorious day of the LORD will come. 21And it will be: whoever calls on the name of the LORD[1] will be saved!'[2]

22"Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Natsorean,[3] a man from God attested to you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in your midst, as you yourselves well know,[4] 23Him—being delivered up by the established purpose and foreknowledge of God—you murdered, having taken Him with lawless hands and crucified Him;[5] 24whom God raised up, ending the labor pains of death,[6] because it was not possible that He should be held by it. 25For David says concerning Him:

'I always saw the LORD before my face, because He is at my right side so that I not be shaken.[7] 26Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced. Furthermore, even my flesh will repose upon hope,[8] 27because You will not abandon my soul in Hades,[9] nor will You allow Your Holy One to see decay. 28You have made known to

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1 To call on the 'name' of the Lord is to call on Him. To 'call' on Him is to place yourself under His protection, which involves a recognition of His rulership.

2 See Joel 2:28-32.

3 'Natsorean', not 'Nazarene'. The Text has 'the' Natsorean, the Branch-man (see Matthew 2:23 and Isaiah 11:1). In Acts 22:8 the glorified Jesus identifies Himself to Saul as 'the Natsorean', which Saul would understand as being the Messiah. Please see "The Natsorean" on my website: www.prunch.org.

4 Peter here addresses specifically the Israelites, presumably residents of Jerusalem and Judea, since they had been eye-witnesses of what Jesus did.

5 "You took with lawless hands"—'take' and 'lawless' clearly give the idea that they were responsible for their actions. "Being delivered up by the established purpose and foreknowledge of God" is a clear statement of God's sovereignty in action. So here we have divine sovereignty and human responsibility side by side; they are both true, whether we understand it or not. (Less than 3% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit 'having taken'.)

6 In Revelation 1:5 Jesus is called "the firstborn from among the dead". Death is pictured as a huge womb, pregnant with all the dead, and Jesus Christ was the first one out, literally the 'firstborn'. Resurrection is the process by which one is 'born' out of physical death. The figure of death as a womb is strong, but effective. That 'womb' had been holding people for thousands of years, but now finally 'gives birth'. (People like Lazarus who were returned to this life for a while had to die all over again; they have to wait for the resurrection like the rest of us.)

7 Nothing like having God at your side, literally, to give you confidence, but nothing like the awareness that He is looking at you to keep you in line! The quote is from Psalm 16:8-11.

8 I take it that the emphasis here is upon the physical body; Jesus' body was preserved from decay by divine intervention—there was no bad smell in the empty tomb. The resurrection accounts refer to the wrappings, but not to the 100 pounds of spices—I wonder what happened to them (you know, that much spice would be hard to ignore).

9 This is the other side of the coin: for the body not to see decay, it would have to be resurrected; but for resurrection to happen the soul must be reunited with the body, and therefore could not remain in Hades. David had no way of knowing that, so evidently wrote under divine inspiration.

me roads of life;[1] with Your presence You make me full of gladness.'[2]

29"Men, brothers, be it permitted to speak to you plainly about the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.[3] 30So then, he being a prophet and knowing that God had sworn to him with an oath that of the fruit, according to flesh,[4] of his loins[5] He would raise up the Messiah[6] to sit on his throne, 31he foreseeing this[7] spoke about the resurrection of the Messiah, that His soul[8] was not abandoned in Hades,
nor did His flesh see decay.[9]

32"This Jesus God raised, to which we all are witnesses. 33Therefore, having been exalted to God's right hand, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this that you now see and hear. 34Further, David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says: 'The LORD said to my Lord:[10] Sit at my right hand 35until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.' 36Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom **you** crucified!"[11]

The reaction

37Now upon hearing this they were cut to the heart and said to Peter, and the rest of the Apostles, "Men, brothers, what shall we do?!" 38So Peter said to them: "Repent and be baptized, each one of you, upon

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1 Life, not death.

2 If you are a God-lover there is nothing like His presence to make you glad (on the other hand, for a God-hater that Presence is the worst thing in the universe [which is why a God-hater would rather be in hell than in heaven]).

3 David was buried in Jerusalem, and evidently his tomb could still be identified at that time.

4 Peter is being theologically precise here; David's genes contributed only to the Messiah's body, not to His soul and spirit.

5 The term rendered 'loins' when singular refers to the waist, where a belt is worn. When plural it was used to refer to the place of the reproductive organs—actually, the prostate gland is not all that far below the waist.

6 The Text, being Greek, has 'Christ', but king David spoke Hebrew and to him it was 'Messiah' (and Peter was presumably speaking in Hebrew). Peter makes the overt connection to Jesus in verse 32. Two percent of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit "according to flesh, He would raise up the Messiah" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). The omission is serious.

7 "He foreseeing this" is parallel to "he being a prophet" in verse 30.

8 Two percent of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit "His soul" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). The omission weakens the point of the argument.

9 Peter's reasoning is impressive, a prime instance of illumination. (By 'illumination' we mean divine assistance in interpreting divinely inspired writing. 'Inspiration' attaches to the writing, 'illumination' attaches to the interpretation of inspired writing.)

10 Peter was there when Jesus used this text to silence the Pharisees (Matthew 22:41-46).

11 Nothing like making sure your audience gets the point! But why "both Lord and Christ"? Perhaps there were a variety of ideas about the 'Messiah' out there and Peter nails down His identity as the Lord.

the name of Jesus Christ,[1] for forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.[2] 39For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all who are far away[3]—as many, *that is*, as the Lord our God may call." 40With many different words he both testified and kept exhorting, saying, "Escape from this perverse generation!"[4]

The beginning of the Church

41Then those who gladly[5] received his word were baptized, and that day about three thousand souls were added. 42And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' teaching and in the fellowship, both in the breaking of the bread and in the prayers.[6] 43Fear came upon every soul—many wonders and signs were taking place through the Apostles.[7]

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[1] This is the first use of the title, Jesus Christ, after the Gospels; the Lord had Himself inaugurated the title fifty days before (John 17:3)—it affirms that Jesus is the Messiah. Anyone being baptized upon that name would be publicly declaring allegiance to Jesus **as the Messiah**. Notice that Peter promises forgiveness of sin and the gift of the Holy Spirit to any who enter into that commitment.

[2] I stated that water baptism does not save; how then do I explain Acts 2:38? "Repent and be baptized, each one of you, upon the name of Jesus Christ, for forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit". To begin, this took place on the day of Pentecost itself, and may have been something of a transition. Then, the context is king of interpretation, and the context here is very specific, so what Peter said should not be taken as a generic standard. Verses 36 and 40 are crucial to understanding Peter. "Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom **you** crucified!"[2] (verse 36). So then they asked what they should do. Peter concluded with, "Escape from this perverse generation!" (verse 40). The 'generation' in question was the one that had crucified the Messiah. By being baptized upon the name of **Jesus Christ** they would be formally disassociating themselves from that generation, and the judgment that was coming upon it. This is the first use of the title, Jesus Christ, after the Gospels; the Lord had Himself inaugurated the title fifty days before (John 17:3)—it affirms that Jesus is the Messiah. Anyone being baptized upon that name would be publicly declaring allegiance to Jesus **as the Messiah**. Peter promised forgiveness of sin and the gift of the Holy Spirit to any who entered into that commitment. Anyone who did that would be believing into Jesus, and He would baptize them with Holy Spirit. It was not the water that saved them.

[3] I assume that "all who are far away" is a reference to Gentiles, and the promise applies only to the 'called'.

[4] The 'generation' in question was the one that had crucified the Messiah. By being baptized upon the name of **Jesus Christ** they would be formally disassociating themselves from that generation, and the judgment that was coming upon it. The worst curse in all human history is recorded in Matthew 27:25, "And all the people answered and said, 'His blood be on us and on our children'." Terrible, terrible, terrible—just terrible! (The persecutions later sent them scattering and probably very few were in Jerusalem when it was destroyed in AD 70.)

[5] Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit "gladly" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). The word is significant and should not be omitted on such flimsy evidence. It emphasizes sincerity and commitment.

[6] I take "the breaking of the bread" to refer to the Lord's Supper, which with the "prayers" gives the content of the "fellowship", but that fellowship cannot be disassociated from the Apostles' teaching.

[7] Evidently it was not just Peter; the others were also producing.

All things in common

44Now all who believed were together and had all things in common;
45they started selling both possessions and goods and were distributing
to all according as anyone had need.[1] 46So day by day they continued
steadfastly with one purpose in the temple[2] and broke bread from house
to house;[3] they received their share of food with gladness and singleness
of heart,[4] 47praising God and having favor with all the people. And day
by day the Lord added[5] to the Church[6] those who were being saved.

A man lame from birth

1Now Peter and John were going up together into the temple at the
3 hour (the ninth)[7] of prayer.[8] 2And a certain man, who had actually
been lame from his mother's womb, was being carried (they would lay
him daily at the temple gate, the one called Beautiful, to ask alms from
those who entered the temple), 3who, upon seeing Peter and John about
to go into the temple, began asking for alms.

Peter heals him

4So Peter, with John, fastening his gaze on him said, "Look at us."
5So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from
them. 6But Peter said: "I do not have silver and gold, but what I do have
I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ the Natsorean, get up and walk!"[9]
7And grasping him by his right hand he lifted him up;[10] immediately his
feet and ankles were strengthened. 8So jumping up he stood, and began

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1 No one wanted to go home to his own area; they did not want to miss anything (it appears that they were expecting the Lord's return at any moment). But what happens after all the goods and possessions have been sold? God sends persecution, and if there is nothing to leave behind it is easier to go somewhere else and start over.

2 Since Jesus had formally abandoned the temple, Matthew 23:38-24:1, why were they still using it? It was probably the largest structure in town, and the only one that could hold their increasing number. It would also be strategic for evangelizing unconverted Jews. But it later became a snare, as illustrated by the episode that resulted in Paul's imprisonment.

3 Here we have the regular meals.

4 This sort of thing can work for a while, but tends to go sour; see 6:1 below. [Many years ago, I observed a community in Ann Arbor, Michigan try this, but they had trouble with free loaders and moochers.]

5 Notice who does the adding, and He cannot be deceived.

6 Three percent of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit "to the Church" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

7 If Luke is using Hebrew time, it was 3 p.m., if Roman, it was 9 a.m., both being Jewish times for prayer. But from 4:3 below, that says it was already evening, it appears that Luke uses Hebrew time here.

8 But why did they go to the temple to pray? Since God had abandoned that temple, they might just as well have prayed at home.

9 Alack! Many churches now have silver and gold, but can no longer say, "Get up and walk!"

10 This was an act of faith on Peter's part; if nothing happened the man would fall back down.

to walk![1] And he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping[2] and praising God. **9**Well all the people saw him walking and praising God; **10**and they recognized him—that he was the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, with a view to alms—and they were filled with wonder and amazement because of what had happened to him.

Peter preaches

11Now as the lame man who had been healed held on[3] to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the portico, the one called 'Solomon's', really wondering. **12**So upon observing this Peter responded to the people: "Men of Israel, why are you marveling at this, or why are you staring at us as if we have made him walk by our own power or godliness?[4] **13**The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up; and you repudiated Him to Pilate's face, when he was intending to release Him.[5] **14**Yes you repudiated the holy and righteous One, and you asked that a **murderer** be granted to you,[6] **15**while you killed the Originator of the Life,[7] whom God raised from among the dead, to which we are witnesses. **16**Well His name, based on faith in His name,[8] made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith that is through Him[9] has given him this wholeness in the presence of you all.

17"So now, brothers, I know that you did it in ignorance, as also your rulers. **18**But the things that God foretold through the mouth of all His prophets, that the Messiah would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. **19**Repent therefore, and turn around, so that your sins may be erased, in order

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[1] He had never learned to walk (lame from birth), so how could he just start walking, not to mention leaping? The miracle included his head, not just his limbs.

[2] Don't you know he had a bouncing good time!

[3] I assume that he was literally hanging on to them, perhaps their clothes—for whatever reason he did not want to be separated from them. Some 11% of the Greek manuscripts omit 'the lame man who had been healed' (as in NIV [the beggar], NASB, LB, TEV [the man], etc.).

[4] Well, what had happened was extraordinary, to say the least, and probably deserved a little staring.

[5] Comparing Matthew 27:11-26, Mark 15:2-19, Luke 23:3-25 and John 18:33-19:15 it becomes clear that Pilate wanted no part of killing Jesus and tried hard to release Him. But they not only repudiated Jesus, they repudiated their claim to the Messiah, saying, "We have no king but Caesar". For a fuller discussion, please see "Poor Pilate—wrong place, wrong time" on my website: www.prunch.org.

[6] Peter does not mince words; he is emphatic about their guilt.

[7] A curious expression! How could anyone kill the Originator of the Life? Well, it was certainly their intention to kill Jesus, and Peter declares their guilt, but Jesus gave up His own life, as John 10:17-18 makes clear. For a fuller discussion, please see "Did the cross kill Jesus?" on my website: www.prunch.org.

[8] A name represents the person, so it was faith in Jesus that produced the healing; but Peter put his faith into action.

[9] If the Lord Jesus is not the actual source of the faith, it is mediated through Him.

that times of refreshing may come from the Lord's face[1] **20**and that He may send Jesus, who had been ordained to be your Messiah,[2] **21**whom Heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things,[3] of which *times*[4] God spoke long ago by the mouth of all His holy prophets.

22"For example, Moses said to the fathers:[5] 'The LORD our[6] God will raise up for you a Prophet, like me, from among your brothers. You must listen to **Him**, in all that He may say to you. **23**It will be that every person who will not listen to that Prophet will be extirpated from among the people.'[7]

24"Yes and all the prophets, from Samuel on down,[8] as many as have spoken, have also foretold[9] these days. **25**You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'Yes, in your seed[10] all the families[11] of the earth will be blessed.' **26**God, having raised up His Servant Jesus,[12] sent Him to **you** first,[13] to bless you by turning each of you away from your iniquities."[14]

Peter and John arrested

4 **1**Now as they were speaking to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came at them, **2**being upset because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection

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1 Although the Lord's return is still future, by His grace, and by walking in the Spirit, we have the privilege of experiencing our own little 'times of refreshing'.

2 That is what the Text says. There was God's side, ordaining, and there was their side, recognizing and receiving. If Jesus had been received as Messiah while He lived among them, presumably history would have been different. But now Jesus will only return when it is time to 'restore all things'. But comparing the first clause of verse 19 with that of verse 20 it almost seems that Peter is saying that they could bring Jesus back right away.

3 I take this to be a reference to the Messianic Kingdom, the Millennium.

4 The relative pronoun here is ambiguous as to the antecedent, it could refer to 'things' or 'times', but verse 24 below makes clear that it is 'times'.

5 Some 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit "to the fathers" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

6 Instead of 'our', perhaps 40% of the Greek manuscripts read 'your'.

7 See Deuteronomy 18:15-19. Peter is saying that those who did not listen to Jesus are under the sentence of an early death, and quite possibly with spiritual implications.

8 Samuel was a prophet.

9 I follow the best line of transmission in reading "foretold", rather than 'proclaimed', albeit representing only 25% of the Greek manuscripts, at this point.

10 "Seed" is singular. Paul runs with this in Galatians 3:16.

11 The reference is to patriarchal families, units much smaller than whole tribes or ethnic nations; God emphasizes the importance of the family, while Satan works to destroy it.

12 Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit "Jesus" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). As is often the case, the eclectic text weakens the statement.

13 Wait a minute! When did this 'sending' take place? It was after the resurrection, but Jesus never showed Himself to the people at large during the forty days. I take it that God is doing the 'sending' through the Apostles, who started their ministry in Jerusalem ('to you first').

14 To be turned away from one's iniquities is a major blessing, because of the consequences of those iniquities, both now and later.

from the dead.[1] [3]And they laid hands on them and put them in custody until the next day, because it was already evening. [4](However, many of those who heard the message believed; the number of the men[2] came to be about five thousand.) [5]So the next day an assembly of their rulers, both elders and scribes, occurred in Jerusalem,[3] [6]along with Annas the high priest,[4] and Caiaphas, John and Alexander, and as many as were of high-priestly descent. [7]And having placed them in the middle [of the assembly] they started questioning: "By what power, or by what name did you do this?"[5]

Peter's defense

[8]Then Peter, full of Holy Spirit,[6] said to them: "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel:[7] [9]If we are being examined today about a good deed *done* to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, [10]be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Natsorean, whom <u>you</u> crucified, whom God raised from the dead,[8] by **Him** this man stands here before you whole. [11]This is 'the stone which was despised by you, the builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' [12]Also, the salvation[9] does not exist in anyone else, because there is no other name under heaven, given among men, by which we must be saved."

Rulers impressed

[13]Now upon observing the boldness of Peter and John and perceiving that they were uneducated and unskilled men,[10] they marveled; and they recognized that they had been with Jesus. [14]Further, seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. [15]So ordering them to go out from the council they began to confer among themselves, [16]saying: "What can we do to these men? Because, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is

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[1] The high priest and family were Sadducees; they did not believe in resurrection (for anybody). So they were doubly disturbed, because the Apostles were affirming that Jesus had already done it, and in consequence others would too.

[2] The word used refers exclusively to males, so with women and children the total number of believers would have been several times larger. In 2:41 above it was 3,000 'souls', which presumably included everybody. The total number had probably grown 4-5 times since Pentecost.

[3] The impression one gets is that they were called in from surrounding areas.

[4] Annas was the real high priest—once installed, the office was for life.

[5] "This" suggests that the healed man was present, as verse 10 confirms.

[6] Again, no definite article.

[7] Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit "of Israel" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[8] Peter is being neither cautious nor conciliatory! In affirming the resurrection he goes right to the sore point.

[9] The Text has the definite article; there may be many 'salvations' in life, but this is a very specific one. Notice that Peter makes an absolute statement: Jesus is the <u>only</u> way.

[10] The disciples had not received a theological education nor been trained in verbal skills (of course Peter was a skilled fisherman, but that is not the point here).

evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.[1] **17**But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them to no longer speak to anyone in this name."

They are forbidden to use the name 'Jesus'

18So summoning them they commanded them absolutely not to speak or teach in the name of 'Jesus'. **19**But in answer Peter and John said to them: "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, judge for yourselves; **20**because we cannot help but speak the things we have seen and heard."[2] **21**So threatening them some more they released them, not finding any way to punish them, because of the people, since they were all glorifying God over what had happened; **22**because the man on whom this miracle of healing had been performed was over forty years old.[3]

The reaction of the believers

23So upon being released they went to their own *group* and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. **24**Well upon hearing it, with one mind they called out[4] to God and said: "O Sovereign![5] You are God,[6] the Maker of sky and earth and ocean, and all that is in them; **25***You* who said through the mouth of Your servant David:[7] 'Why did nations snort[8] and peoples plot vain things? **26**The kings of the earth took a stand, and the rulers were gathered together, against the LORD and against His Messiah.'[9]

27Well, in fact, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, together with Gentiles and peoples of Israel, were gathered together[10] against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, **28**to do whatever Your hand and

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[1] They knew that Jesus was the Messiah but had repudiated Him anyway. Here again the facts are clear, but they are determined to maintain their repudiation of Jesus, and to impose their view on the people. Having committed the unpardonable sin, they were under satanic control.

[2] There are times when we must not obey those in authority; mainly when they demand that we deny God's truth and His values.

[3] He had been lame for over forty years.

[4] The Text actually says 'they lifted voice to God' (since God is not deaf, there is no need to shout).

[5] Our 'despot' is a transliteration of the Greek word here. The term is stronger than 'master' or 'lord'. But 'despot' by itself has a negative connotation to us, so we sometimes say 'benevolent despot', but not as a form of direct address! Hence, 'sovereign'.

[6] Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit "God" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[7] Some 8% of the Greek manuscripts replace the opening clause with, "You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[8] One can 'snort' in anger or in disdain, or perhaps both. There is no definite article with either 'nations' or 'peoples' (and so in verse 27).

[9] See Psalm 2:1-2.

[10] Perhaps 10% of the Greek manuscripts add 'in this city' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

Your counsel foreordained to happen.[1] 29As for the present, Lord, consider their threats, and grant to Your slaves to speak Your word with all boldness, 30while You stretch out Your hand to heal and that signs and wonders may occur through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." 31Well when they had prayed, the place where they were gathered was shaken, and they were all filled with Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God with boldness.[2]

The young Church consolidates

32Now the multitude of those who believed was of one heart and soul; indeed not one was saying that any of his belongings was his own, but they had all things in common. 33(Also the Apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power.[3]) Yes, great grace was on them all, 34because there were not any needy among them—as many as were owners of lands or houses were selling them and bringing the proceeds of the sold items 35and placing them at the Apostles' feet, and they were distributed to each according as anyone had need.

36So Joses, who was named Barnabas by the Apostles (which is, being translated, 'Son of encouragement'), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, 37having a field, sold it, brought the money and placed it at the Apostles' feet.[4]

Ananias and Sapphira

5 1Now a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession 2and kept back part of the price for himself, his wife also being party to it; bringing a certain part he placed it at the Apostles' feet. 3So Peter said: "Ananias, on what basis[5] has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the price of the land? 4While it remained *unsold* was it not yours, and once sold was it not in your power? How is it that you have conceived this thing in your heart? You did not lie to men but to God."[6] 5Well upon hearing these

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1 They have a clear understanding that God's Plan prevailed, while not denying human responsibility.

2 Their request was granted. Notice that the Holy Spirit's filling is not once for all, and it is not automatic. Notice further that they did not ask for a free ride. (Again, there is no definite article with Holy Spirit.) But where did they do the speaking? Presumably out among the people.

3 So how did that work? It was power in action, presumably signs and wonders (see 5:12 below), performed in the name of the resurrected Jesus—if He were rotting in a grave, what could He do?

4 Since many were doing it, one wonders why Luke singled out Barnabas; perhaps because he would be an important player later on.

5 The familiar 'why' is not adequate here; Satan needs no reason for attacking us. But by asking 'because of what' Peter is saying that Ananias gave Satan an entrance into his life (which evidently is not a very good idea). So what sort of thing gives Satan an entrance? One way is to harbor an attitude contrary to God's will and character.

6 As the context makes clear, the problem was that Ananias lied. He wanted the credit for doing like the others, but he was hedging his bet. If he had honestly stated that it

words Ananias fell down and expired! (Great fear came on all who heard these things.) **6**So the young men got up and wrapped him, and carrying him out they buried him.[1]

7Now after an interval of some three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.[2] **8**So Peter addressed her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much." So she said, "Yes, for so much." **9**Peter said to her: "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out!" **10**So she immediately fell down at his feet and expired! So upon entering the young men found her dead, and carrying her out they buried her beside her husband.[3] **11**So great fear came on the whole assembly and on all who heard these things.[4]

The Apostles distinguish themselves

12Now many signs and wonders were being performed among the people by the hands of the Apostles; and they were all in Solomon's Porch with one purpose.[5] **13**None of the rest dared to join them,[6] but the people were magnifying them. **14**Believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,[7] **15**to the point that they kept carrying the sick into the streets, placing them on cots and pallets, so that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them.[8] **16**Further, the multitude from the surrounding cities also kept coming into Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.[9]

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was only a part, he would have lived on. He evidently figured it was only a little 'white' lie that would not do anybody any harm (no victim)—it did not occur to him that he was really challenging God.

1 Apparently they did not have a coroner. The two were buried without ceremony and without mourning. Was there no family?

2 She was probably looking for him, wondering why he had not come home.

3 There are times when 'togetherness' is not all that good an idea.

4 Really. Can you imagine if this sort of thing started happening in our churches today?

5 I take it that the primary reference is to the Apostles; they were holding court, as it were, in Solomon's Porch where there was plenty of room.

6 The Eleven had a stature that set them apart; no one else was pretending to be an Apostle.

7 After Pentecost we find the expression 'both men and women'—the participation of women in the Church is overtly stated.

8 Well now, the Lord Jesus recuperated Peter with a vengeance. This would appear to be one of the "greater things" of John 14:12, since we have no record of Jesus using His shadow. Evidently people kept getting healed in this way, and once healed their places would be taken by new arrivals. The local residents had the first chance, and if they were all healed it would be the ones from outlying areas that maintained the flow.

9 This is reminiscent of the Lord's ministry, when all who came were healed. Should we be able to do this today, or is this a 'special occasion' sort of thing? How about when we introduce the Gospel to a new area or culture? Would not overt demonstrations of God's power speed up the process?

Sadducees X Apostles

17Then the high priest rose up, and all those with him (being the sect of the Sadducees); they were filled with jealousy[1] **18**and laid their hands on the Apostles and put them in the common prison.**19**But, during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the prison, and leading them out he said, **20**"Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life."[2] **21**So upon hearing it they entered the temple about daybreak[3] and started to teach.

Then the high priest and those with him arrived and convened the Sanhedrin, even all the council of elders of the sons of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. **22**Well, upon arriving the operatives did not find them in the jail, so they returned and reported, **23**saying: "We certainly found the prison securely locked, and the guards standing in front of the doors, but upon opening them we found no one inside!" **24**Now when the high priest,[4] the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these words, they were really perplexed as to what the implications might be.[5]

25But someone came and told them, "Hey, the men whom you put in the jail are standing in the temple and teaching the people!" **26**Then the captain went with the operatives and brought them without violence, because they were afraid that the people might stone them. **27**So bringing them they set them before the Sanhedrin; and the high priest addressed them **28**saying: "Did we not emphatically command you not to teach in this name? Just look, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood on us!"[6]

Apostles infuriate Sadducees

29So in answer Peter and the Apostles said: "One must obey God rather than men. **30**The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. **31****Him** God has exalted to His right hand as Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of

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1 They were being upstaged, and how, and did not like it—the true merits of the case were beside the point.

2 That is what the Text says, "this Life". To belong to Jesus not only means spiritual life in the place of spiritual death, but it means a way of life—a system of values, a set of presuppositions, a worldview.

3 From the prison they went 'home', for a little refreshment. During the night there would be no one to teach.

4 Some 9% of the Greek manuscripts omit "the high priest" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

5 Come now, the only possible explanation was supernatural intervention. There is no one more blind than he who refuses to see.

6 Those very men had said, "His blood be upon us, and upon our children!" But of course, a good memory is not always convenient. However, in this case the priest was just being perverse. Well, actually, having committed the unpardonable sin he was under satanic control.

sins.[1] 32And we are witnesses to these statements about Him, as also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those obeying Him."[2]

Gamaliel counsels Sadducees

33Well upon hearing it they became infuriated and started plotting to kill them. 34But someone in the council stood up[3] (a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law respected by all the people) and commanded to put the Apostles out for a bit. 35He then said to them: "Men, Israelites, take heed to yourselves concerning these men, as to what you are about to do. 36For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody; with whom about four hundred men joined up; who was killed, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing. 37Later Judas the Galilean rose up, in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed. 38So now I say to you, keep away from these men and leave them alone; because if this counsel, or this work, should be of men, it will be abolished; 39but if it is of God,[4] you will not be able to overthrow it—lest you even be found to be fighting against God!"[5]

Sadducees beat and threaten Apostles

40Well they were persuaded by him,[6] and summoned the Apostles; after beating them they commanded them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41So they went out rejoicing[7] from the presence of the council, in that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name of the Christ.[8] 42And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not stop teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.[9]

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[1] I was tempted to render, "to give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel", but the Text does not have that order (though it could have), perhaps so as not to limit the forgiveness of sins to Israel.

[2] The Apostles are impressive—no fear, no apology, no toning down. "You murdered Him!" "God raised Him!" "He is Prince and Savior!" "The Holy Spirit exists!" All these affirmations were things they absolutely did not want to hear, as their reaction attests. Many in our day do not want to hear that the Holy Spirit is given to those who obey God.

[3] I gather that Gamaliel just took over, and something about his demeanor made the high priest let him do it.

[4] The conditional clauses are not the same—the first is a condition of doubt, the second is a condition of fact. Gamaliel makes clear that he personally thinks it is of God.

[5] Of course they were fighting against God, and presumably knew it, but Gamaliel gives them the benefit of the doubt.

[6] Up to a point—they did not kill them, but still beat and threatened them. They had known all along that they were in fact fighting against God, but for some reason they decided to humor Gamaliel.

[7] The impression I get is that they started rejoicing right there in the council. What do you suppose the effect was upon the members?

[8] I here follow what I consider to be the best line of transmission, albeit making up only some 35% of the manuscripts, at this point. But the evidence is badly split: 35% have 'of the Christ', 14% have 'of Jesus', 10% have 'of the Lord Jesus', 20% have 'his', and 21% omit.

[9] It bears repeating: the Apostles are impressive.

Enter deacons

6 [1]Now in those days, as the disciples were multiplying, a complaint arose from the Hellenists against the Hebrews, because their widows[1] were being overlooked in the daily distribution. [2]So summoning the multitude of the disciples the twelve said: "It is not advantageous that we should forsake the Word of God to serve at tables. [3]Therefore, brothers, select from among you seven men[2] of *good* reputation, full of Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we will appoint over this need. [4]But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word."[3]

[5]The statement pleased the whole multitude; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and Holy[4] Spirit, and Philip and Prochorus and Nicanor and Timon and Parmenas and Nicholas, a proselyte from Antioch,[5] [6]whom they set before the Apostles; and after praying they laid hands on them.

[7]Well the Word of God kept spreading, and the number of disciples in Jerusalem kept multiplying at a great rate, and a large company of the priests were obeying the faith. [8]While Stephen, full of faith[6] and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people.[7]

Stephen in a kangaroo court

[9]Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen. [10]And they were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke.

[11]Then they instigated men to say, "We have heard him speaking blasphemous words against Moses and God." [12]And they stirred up the people, and the elders and the scribes;[8] and coming upon him they seized him, and brought him in to the Sanhedrin; [13]and they put forward false

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[1] Wait a minute! Where did all those foreign widows come from? (There must have been a fair number, to have caused the problem.) Would a widow have traveled alone from Asia to Jerusalem to attend the Passover? Had their husbands died in Jerusalem? I would imagine more probably the latter, since time was passing and there were many thousands of believers; people would be dying, getting married, etc. as usual.

[2] The term here refers only to males.

[3] Prayer and the ministry of the Word—how many pastors, missionaries, 'apostles' and such today would fit that description? Don't you suppose we ought to start moving back in that direction?

[4] Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit "Holy" (as in NIV and NASB.).

[5] Nicholas is declared to be a foreigner, but some of the other names also sound foreign, so the plaintiffs were well represented. Here we see love and grace in action.

[6] For 'faith' some 20% of the Greek manuscripts have 'grace' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[7] Would not signs and wonders already be miraculous, without being "great"? Stephen was something else! Please notice that Stephen was not an Apostle, so the doing of miracles was not limited to them. Stephen and Philip (chapter 8 below) were deacons.

[8] What follows is obviously a put-up job; the Sanhedrin is waiting for him.

witnesses who said: "This man never stops speaking blasphemous words against the holy place and the law; 14for we have heard him saying that this Jesus the Natsorean will destroy this place and change the customs that Moses delivered to us."[1] 15All who sat in the council, looking intently at him, saw his face like the face of an angel.[2]

Stephen's discourse

7 1Then the high priest said, "Can these things be so?"[3] 2So he said: "Men, brothers and fathers, listen:[4] The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he resided in Haran, 3and said to him, 'Leave your country and your relatives, and come into a land that I will show you.' 4Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and resided in Haran.[5] From there, after his father died,[6] *God* moved him to this land in which you now live;[7] 5yet He did not give him an inheritance in it, not even a footstep. He promised to give it to him for a possession, that is, to his seed after him, though he had no child.[8] 6Further, God spoke like this: that his offspring would be aliens in a foreign land—and that they would be enslaved and oppressed—four hundred years.[9] 7'I will judge the nation to which they will be in bondage,' said God,[10] 'and after that they will come out and serve Me in

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[1] Big deal! Those guys were really hard up.

[2] I wonder how many of them had ever seen an angel, to know what one looked like. Perhaps his face had a supernatural shine. Something like that should have given them pause, but they were too far gone.

[3] The man knows it is all a farce, but he pretends astonishment.

[4] Stephen knows he is in a kangaroo court, so he wastes no time with the ridiculous charge; he delivers a prophetic, and condemnatory, sermon.

[5] But he took his father and a nephew along, and Haran was not that land. 'Our father Abraham'—the Jews began their history with Abraham, who started out with incomplete obedience.

[6] There went fifteen years of his life. And he took his nephew Lot along, who would be a **big** headache (he fathered the Moabites and the Ammonites—not good news—under circumstances that would not have happened had he been left in Haran).

[7] Stephen ties his hearers into the story.

[8] Abraham was 100 when he begot Isaac, who was 60 when he begot Jacob and Esau. Abraham died at 175, so lived to see his two grandsons. But before Isaac there was Ishmael…

[9] Stephen cites Genesis 15:13, which should be understood as a chiasmus, a frequent structure in the Bible:

A. his offspring would be aliens in a foreign land
B. and they would be enslaved
B. and oppressed
A. four hundred years.

A careful comparison of the relevant texts shows that the 400 years includes from the weaning of Isaac to the Exodus (1891 to 1491 BC); since Jacob moved to Egypt in 1706, Abraham's descendants were aliens in Canaan for 185 years, then were aliens in Egypt, where they came to be enslaved, for 215 years (the Exodus was 144 years after Joseph's death, so the period of slave labor was presumably somewhat less, perhaps around 100 years). (I owe the understanding given above to Dr. Floyd N. Jones.)

[10] And He did, with a vengeance. By wiping out the Egyptian army God guaranteed that Egypt would not be a threat to the developing nation of Israel for hundreds of years.

this place.' 8And He gave him a covenant of circumcision;[1] and so he begot Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day;[2] and Isaac did the same to Jacob, and Jacob to the twelve patriarchs.

Down to Egypt

9"The patriarchs, being envious, sold Joseph into Egypt; yet God was with him 10and delivered him out of all his adversities, and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house. 11And a famine came upon all the land of Egypt and Canaan, even a great affliction, and our fathers could not find food. 12But upon hearing that there was wheat in Egypt, Jacob first sent our fathers. 13On the second *trip* Joseph was made known to his brothers, and Joseph's family was presented to Pharaoh. 14Joseph sent and summoned his father Jacob and all his relatives, seventy-five souls.[3] 15So Jacob went down to Egypt; and he died, he and our fathers; 16and they were transferred to Shechem and placed in the tomb that Abraham bought for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor of Shechem.[4]

Enter Moses

17"Now as the time of the promise was approaching which God had sworn to Abraham, the people increased and were multiplied in Egypt, 18until a different[5] king arose who had not known Joseph. 19This man took advantage of our race and oppressed our fathers, making them

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[1] Women whose husbands are circumcised do not get cervical cancer—the procedure is not a sadistic bit of gore; there is a medical reason for it.

[2] Modern medicine has verified that on the eighth day of a male's life his defenses against infection are at their peak—it is the best day in his whole life for minor surgery. Now then, 3900 years ago who but the Creator could know that?

[3] Comparing this verse with Genesis 46:26-27 we get three numbers: 66, 70 and 75. The 66, being 'out of his loins', of course excludes Jacob himself and the wives (Joseph is already there). The 70 includes Jacob, Joseph and his two sons. The 75 excludes Jacob and Joseph, but includes nine wives; some had evidently already died in Canaan. For further discussion, please see: "How many people?" on my website: www.prunch.org

[4] The only record we have of someone buying from Hamor is Jacob (Genesis 33:19); Abraham bought from Ephron (Genesis 23:17)—Shechem and Hebron are presumably different places. Assuming that Stephen's statement is correct (if he was full of the Spirit as he spoke, verse 55), then presumably Abraham actually bought both places, though Moses only records one, and Jacob was obliged to re-buy one or bought a larger area around it. A variety of historical records existed, made during OT times, that were not included in the Canon and of which we have no copies—but they were still available in Stephen's day. (For instance, Jude [verse 14] cites Enoch—we have no Hebrew copy of Enoch's prophecy today, but Jude must have had access to one.) In any case, notice that the Text says 'they' were taken to Shechem—this would refer to Jacob's sons, since he himself was buried at Hebron. Going back to Genesis 34:29, after killing all the men of Shechem, Jacob's sons kept the women, which is presumably where they got wives for so many men. They also got rich on the spoils of the town. So why not be buried there? For further discussion, please see: "Who bought what from whom?" on my website: www.prunch.org

[5] The word here suggests a different kind; either a different dynasty or a different race.

expose their babies so that they would not stay alive.[1] **20**At that time Moses was born, and was well pleasing to God; he was nurtured in his father's house for three months. **21**When he was exposed, Pharaoh's daughter took him to herself and brought him up as her own son. **22**So Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; he was mighty in words and deeds. **23**Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brothers, the sons of Israel.[2] **24**Well seeing one of them being wronged, he defended and avenged the one being oppressed, striking down the Egyptian. **25**Now he supposed that his brothers understood that God was giving them deliverance by his hand,[3] but they did not understand. **26**The next day he appeared to them as they were fighting and tried to reconcile them, saying, 'Men, you are brothers; why do you wrong one another?' **27**But the one who was wronging his neighbor pushed Moses away, saying: 'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? **28**Do you want to kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?' **29**Well Moses fled at that word, and became a stranger in the land of Midian, where he begot two sons.[4]

Moses commissioned

30"And when *another* forty years had passed, Angel of the LORD[5] appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai,[6] in a flame of fire in a bush. **31**Well upon seeing it Moses was amazed at the sight, but as he approached for a closer look the voice of the LORD came to him: **32**'I am the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and

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[1] My rendering here is round about because the Text is round about.

[2] Comparing Hebrews 11:24-26, it appears that Moses had formally refused the status of being the son of Pharaoh's daughter, with the political and other advantages pertaining to that status. This attitude probably did not sit well with Pharaoh, which is why he was prepared to kill Moses, when the opportunity presented itself.

[3] This evaluation of Moses' thinking is not in the O.T., at least not at this juncture. Did Moses really suppose that killing an Egyptian would make a difference, or that God would give deliverance in that way? When we see him in heaven we can ask him. But comparing this with verse 23 above we may conclude that it was God who put the idea of visiting his people in his heart.

[4] I find Stephen's selection of details to be curious. Moses' two sons were not prominent in the history of Israel, so why mention them? Well, Moses' failure to circumcise them almost cost him his life! See Exodus 4:24-26. Although Moses himself was certainly circumcised as a baby, he was brought up as an Egyptian, and the importance of the procedure had not been ingrained in him; his wife was not an Israelite and was against it. But how could Moses lead the covenant people while ignoring the sign of the covenant?

[5] There is no definite article with "angel". Comparing Exodus 3:2 and 4 it is clear that "the Angel of the LORD" was Jehovah Himself, presumably the Son. Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit 'of the Lord' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[6] Moses was in Midian, so the real Mount Sinai is in Midian, which is part of Arabia, not the peninsula between the 'rabbit ears' of the Red Sea. For a discussion of this, please see: "Where is Mt. Sinai?" on my website: www.prunch.org

the God of Jacob.'[1] Moses started trembling and did not dare to look. 33So the LORD said to him: 'Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. 34I have definitely seen the mistreatment of my people in Egypt, and have heard their groaning; and I have come down[2] to deliver them. So now come, I will send you to Egypt.'

35"This Moses whom they refused, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge?'—God sent him as leader and deliverer by the hand of the Angel who appeared to him in the bush. 36This man led them out, performing wonders and signs in the land of Egypt and in the Red Sea, and for forty years in the wilderness.

Israel's rebellion

37"This is the Moses who said to the sons of Israel, 'The LORD our[3] God will raise up to you a Prophet from among your brothers, like me.'[4] 38This is he who was in the assembly in the wilderness, who was with the Angel who spoke with him on Mount Sinai and was with our fathers,[5] who received living oracles[6] to give to us; 39to whom our fathers did not want to be obedient; rather they rejected him and turned back in their heart to Egypt, 40saying to Aaron, 'Make us gods that will go before us; because this Moses, who led us out of the land of Egypt—we do not know what has become of him.'[7] 41Well they made a calf in those days and brought a sacrifice to the idol, and started rejoicing in the works of their hands. 42But God turned away and gave them over to serve the army of the heaven,[8] just as it is written in Book of the Prophets: 'House of Israel, did you offer me slaughtered animals and sacrifices during forty years in the wilderness? 43Actually you took along the tent of Moloch, and the star of your god, Rephan, the images that you made to worship; so I will relocate you beyond Babylon.'[9]

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[1] See Exodus 3:6. The Lord Jesus made use of this passage to demonstrate the fact of resurrection (Matthew 22:32). Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit "the God" before Isaac and Jacob (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[2] 'Come down' from where? From Heaven, presumably—I imagine that whenever God 'comes down' it is to intervene in human affairs.

[3] Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit "the Lord", and they are joined by another 3% in omitting 'our' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[4] I take it that here Stephen sets up the main thrust of his speech: God sent Moses, but his contemporaries rejected him; God sent the Prophet, but those present rejected Him. Both rejections resulted in judgment. Some 15% of the Greek manuscripts add 'Him you shall hear' (as in AV and NKJV).

[5] I take it that Stephen is emphasizing that Moses was with both the Angel and the people; he was a mediator, as would be 'the Prophet'—"like me" (verse 37).

[6] What makes an oracle 'living'? It continues to function, to be applicable.

[7] See Exodus 32:1.

[8] Presumably the reference is to Satan's army of fallen angels, see Ephesians 2:2. Those who choose idolatry are really turning themselves over to Satan [even if they don't believe in him]. If God gives you over, what are your chances?

[9] See Amos 5:25-27. Amos prophesied to the northern kingdom. He appears to be saying that those nine tribes took these gods with them out of Egypt, kept them all the time in

A dwelling for God

44"The tent of the testimony, according to the pattern that Moses
had seen, just as the One speaking to him had commanded to make it,
was with our fathers in the wilderness; 45which, having received it in
turn, our fathers with Joshua brought into the possession of the nations,
whom God drove out before the face of our fathers, until the days of
David; 46who found favor before God and asked to find a dwelling for the
God[1] of Jacob, 47but Solomon built Him a house. 48However, the Most
High does not dwell in handmade sanctuaries, just as the prophet says:
49'Heaven is my throne, while the earth is a footstool for my feet. What
kind of house will you build me,' says the LORD, 'or what place for my
rest? 50Did not my hand make all these things?'[2]

Stephen attacks

51"You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You
always oppose the Holy Spirit;[3] as your fathers did, so you do. 52Which
of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those
who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, of whom you have now
become betrayers and murderers;[4] 53you who received the Law as
'ordinances of angels' and have not kept it!"

Stephen is martyred

54Well as they heard these things their hearts were being sawed in
half,[5] and they started gnashing their teeth at him. 55But he, being full
of Holy Spirit and looking intently into the heaven, he saw the glory of
God and Jesus standing[6] on God's right, 56and said, "Wow! I see the
heavens opened and the Son of the Man standing at God's right!"
57Yelling at the top of their voice[7] they covered their ears and rushed at
him all at once, 58and throwing him out of the city they stoned him![8] (The

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the wilderness, and even took them into the Promised Land! In fact, they were indeed scattered all over, "beyond Babylon".

1 The same handful of early manuscripts of inferior quality that NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc. usually follow have 'house' instead of 'God', but are abandoned by their usually faithful followers.

2 See Isaiah 66:1-2. This could be an oblique defense against their allegation that he had blasphemed the temple—if God does not dwell there (and in fact Jesus had formally abandoned it) [and Josephus says that the Ark was no longer there] it has lost its importance.

3 In fact, the Sadducees even refused to acknowledge His existence!

4 Stephen states plainly that they murdered the Messiah.

5 That is what the Text says. It is a graphic figure of speech. If you are sliced with a sharp object you may scarcely feel it at the moment, but if someone starts sawing on you… No wonder they were mad! (They had long since figured out that Stephen was not being conciliatory.)

6 There are several texts that have Jesus seated at the Father's right, not standing. Apparently the Lord stood up to receive Stephen—he got a hero's welcome.

7 They tried to drown out his voice, as well as covering their ears—they really did not want to hear any more! Not a few today do not want to hear the truth either.

8 They were beside themselves with rage, and forgot all about getting permission from the Roman authorities—typical mob action, but doubtless demonically inspired.

witnesses placed their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.)
59Yes, they stoned Stephen as he called out and said, "Lord Jesus,
receive my spirit." 60Then kneeling down he called out at the top of his
voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" And upon saying this he
fell asleep.[1] (Saul was in full agreement with his murder.)

Under persecution the Church moves out

8 1At that time a major persecution arose against the church that was
in Jerusalem, so all, except the Apostles, were scattered throughout
the regions of Judea and Samaria. 2(Devout men had buried Stephen
and made a great lamentation over him.) 3As for Saul, he was trying to
destroy the Church; invading house after house and dragging away both
men and women, he was putting them in prison. 4So on their part those
who were scattered abroad went about preaching the Word.

Philip's ministry

5Now Philip, having gone down to a city of Samaria,[2] was proclaim-
ing the Christ to them; 6and the crowds gave heed with one accord to
what Philip was saying, as they heard the words and saw the signs that
he kept performing.[3] 7Because unclean spirits came out screaming from
many who had them, and many who were paralyzed and lame were
healed. 8Yes, there was great joy in that city![4]

Simon, the sorcerer

9Now a certain man named Simon was in the city first, practicing
sorcery and astounding the people of Samaria, affirming himself to be
someone great, 10to whom they used to pay attention, from the least to
the greatest, saying, "This man is the great power of God."[5] 11They
listened to him because he had amazed them with his sorceries for a long
time. 12But, when they believed Philip, as he proclaimed the good news
concerning the Kingdom of God and the name, Jesus Christ,[6] they were
baptized, both men and women. 13Even Simon himself believed, and
having been baptized he stayed right with Philip; observing miracles
and signs occurring, he was amazed.[7]

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[1] Sleep is frequently used as a figure for death in the Bible, especially with reference to believers. Stephen's death reminds me of the Lord's—both let out a shout, and then died. In the Lord's case we are explicitly told that He dismissed His spirit. I wonder if Stephen was somehow able to dismiss his (if he was able to shout, he still had strength, and death by stoning took a while).

[2] Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have 'the city', instead of "a city", to be followed by most versions, including AV and NKJV.

[3] He did not just talk, he demonstrated God's power. So how about us—do we just talk?

[4] Not bad, for a deacon.

[5] That is what the Text says. I would expect 'has' the power or 'shows' it, or whatever, but the Text has 'is'. Perhaps the Samaritans thought he was the Messiah. Around 9% of the Greek manuscripts have 'is called'.

[6] He was proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah.

[7] Why? If he himself had really been producing miracles and signs, he could have said, "business as usual". Presumably he had been faking it (or else doing it by demonic power), so when he saw the real thing, by God's power, he was genuinely impressed.

14Now when the Apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, 15who upon coming down prayed about them, so that they might receive Holy Spirit, 16because He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had only been baptized into the name of Jesus, the Christ.[1] 17Then they laid their hands upon them and they received Holy Spirit.

18Well, upon observing that the Holy[2] Spirit was given through the laying on of the Apostles' hands, Simon offered them money 19saying, "Give this power to me also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive Holy Spirit." 20But Peter said to him: "May your silver go with you into perdition,[3] for thinking that the gift of God could be acquired with money! 21You have neither part nor portion in this matter, because your heart is not right before God. 22Turn away therefore from this your wickedness and make petition to God,[4] in case the intent of your heart may be forgiven you; 23for I see you being into a gall of bitterness and a fetter of unrighteousness."[5] 24So in answer Simon said, "You[6] make petition to the Lord on my behalf, so that nothing of what you have spoken may come upon me!"

25So when they had both[7] thoroughly testified and spoken the Word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem; they also evangelized many Samaritan villages.

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1 Some 30% of the Greek manuscripts read 'Lord' instead of 'Christ', as in most versions.

2 'Holy' is omitted by two (2) manuscripts (against over 600), to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, etc. Those two are ancient, but of objectively inferior quality.

3 Peter is really upset and does not mince words; he evidently felt that the sin was so serious as to place Simon's eternal destiny in doubt (see verse 22, "in case"). Well, the Lord Jesus Himself had taught them that to blaspheme the Holy Spirit was unpardonable, and Peter evidently figured that Simon had come close.

4 Some 5% of the Greek manuscripts read 'Lord' instead of 'God' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

5 The Text has 'into' not 'in', thereby emphasizing (I suppose) that this was a long-standing condition. Since gall is bitter, very, I take it that Peter is saying that Simon was controlled by a terrible bitterness. Isaiah 58:6 speaks of "fetters of wickedness", where the fetters have been placed on the victim(s) by wicked men (or angels), presumably [the LXX uses the word that Peter uses here, 'unrighteousness']. We don't know if Peter was thinking of this text, and since Simon was into sorcery/spiritism, the fetter could have been of his own forging. The inspired author says that Simon believed, so I take it that he really did. But the consequences to his soul of years spent in sorcery/spiritism were not immediately, miraculously obliterated. Those in our day who have discipled people converted out of Satanism/spiritism (especially mediums—witches, warlocks) know that those consequences can hang around for quite a while, and be difficult to eliminate.

6 The Text is emphatic. Simon is not being disrespectful; he doubts that his own pleading will do much good, so he begs them to do it for him (God is much more likely to listen to them).

7 This word goes with the verbs 'testify' and 'speak', not Peter and John. I suppose the 'thorough testifying' would be with reference to the Lord's ministry, teaching, death and resurrection (they were eye witnesses).

The Ethiopian treasurer

26Then an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Get up and go south on the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza;[1] it is desolate." **27**So he got up and went; and there, a man, an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court-official of Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who was over all her treasury, who had come worshipping to Jerusalem[2]—**28**he was returning, sitting in his chariot and reading aloud the prophet Isaiah. **29**And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go forward and join this chariot." **30**So running up Philip heard him reading the prophet Isaiah and said, "Do you really understand what you are reading?" **31**So he said, "Well how can I, unless someone guides me?" And he urged Philip to come up and sit with him.[3]

32Now the portion of the Scripture that he was reading was this: "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He does not open His mouth. **33**In His humiliation His justice was removed, and who will recount His generation? Because His life is removed from the earth."[4] **34**So continuing the eunuch said to Philip, "I ask you, about whom does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" **35**So opening his mouth and beginning from this Scripture, Philip preached Jesus to him.

36Now as they were going down the road they came upon some water, and the eunuch said: "Look, water! What is keeping me from being baptized?"[5] **38**So he ordered the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. **39**Now when they came up out of the water, Spirit of the Lord[6] snatched

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[1] From Samaria to the Gaza-road would be a walk of at least 60 miles, over accidented terrain. Notice that God removes Philip from a very successful ministry to reach one man (albeit a very strategic one).

[2] So how did this man know about Jehovah, and why had he learned to read Hebrew (unless he was reading a Greek translation)? Although nearly a millennium had intervened, this could be a result of the Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon.

[3] The Holy Spirit was obviously in charge of this whole operation and moved upon the man to trust Philip.

[4] See Isaiah 53:7-8.

[5] The AV and NKJV have verse 37: Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." It is the sort of thing that makes us think, "If Philip did not say that, he should have". And maybe he really did, but the question immediately before us is whether Luke wrote it. 88% of the Greek manuscripts, including the best line of transmission, do not have the verse—I imagine that the verse originated in the Latin tradition, during the second century. Philip doubtless recounted the event many times (his house in Caesarea received <u>many</u> visitors), and if the exchange recorded in verse 37 actually took place it would be part of the story that he told, and could easily have been added to the Text of Acts. (The addition appears in eighteen slightly different forms, which does not inspire confidence.)

[6] Again there is no definite article with 'Spirit', nor with 'Lord'—I would like to translate 'Spirit of Jehovah', but God's personal name never occurs in the New Testament. In the NT Jehovah the Son has a new name: Jesus.

Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him anymore, because he went on his way rejoicing.[1]

40Philip was found at Azotus,[2] and as he passed through, he evangelized all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

Saul of Tarsus

9 1Meanwhile Saul, still exhaling murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2and asked for letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he should find any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Jesus chooses Saul

3So it happened, as he was going, that he got close to Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him; 4and falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" 5So he said, "Who are you, Lord?" So the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting;[3] 6but get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." 7The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the sound[4] but seeing no one. 8Then Saul got up from the ground, and upon opening his eyes he saw no one; so leading him by the hand they brought him into Damascus. 9He was without sight for three days, and neither ate nor drank.[5]

Ananias sent to Saul

10Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias!" So he said, "Here I am, Lord." 11So the Lord said to him: "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas inquire by name for Saul of Tarsus; because, you see, he is praying, 12and in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and placing a hand on him, so that he might recover *his* sight." 13But Ananias answered: "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how many evil things he has done to Your saints

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1 He did not stop to look for Philip or attempt any further contact with him; Ethiopia was a long way away and he just kept on going. He doubtless understood that Philip's 'visit' was a supernatural present, and let it go at that.

2 The verb is in the passive voice, but I am tempted to translate, 'found himself'. The Spirit put Philip down in a near-by town, perhaps 10-15 miles away. Caesarea was some 50 miles on up the coast; speaking of which, Philip evidently decided to settle there.

3 At this point AV and NKJV, following the TR, add: "It is hard for you to kick against the goads." So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "…" The addition comes from the Latin tradition; the Greek manuscripts do not have it. Some of the information may be found in the parallel accounts in Acts 22 and 26.

4 They heard the sound, but did not distinguish the words.

5 Saul was in total shock; his world was being turned upside down.

in Jerusalem. 14Moreover here he has authority from the chief priests[1] to bind all who are calling on Your name." 15But the Lord said to him: "Get moving, because this man is a chosen vessel to me, to carry my name before nations and kings, also the children of Israel; 16for I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake." 17So Ananias went and entered the house, and placing his hands on him he said, "Brother[2] Saul, the Lord,[3] who appeared to you on the road by which you came, has sent me so that you may recover your sight and be filled by Holy Spirit." 18Immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he recovered his sight forthwith;[4] and getting up he was baptized,[5] 19and upon receiving food he was strengthened. So Saul was with the disciples in Damascus for a number of days.

Saul starts preaching

20Immediately he started proclaiming Jesus[6] in the synagogues, that He is the Son of the God. 21Well, all who heard him were astounded and started saying: "Isn't this the one who tried to destroy, in Jerusalem, those who called on this name? Even here he had come with that purpose, that he might take them bound to the high priests." 22But Saul kept growing stronger and kept on confounding the Jews who lived in Damascus, proving that 'This One is the Christ.'

Saul escapes death

23Now when a good many days had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him; 24but their plot became known to Saul. They started watching the gates day and night, so that they might kill him; 25so the disciples[7] took him by night and passed him through the wall, lowering him in a hamper.[8]

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[1] I find it to be curious that the authority of the chief priests extended all the way to Damascus, but how did Ananias know about that? I suppose that Saul's companions gave out that information.

[2] That was a nice touch. At that moment it no doubt meant a lot to Saul to be called 'brother'.

[3] Some 10% of the Greek manuscripts add 'Jesus', to be followed by most versions.

[4] Perhaps 70% of the Greek manuscripts do not have 'forthwith', and they are followed by printed editions of the Majority Text. However, the best line of transmission does have the word, as in AV and NKJV.

[5] Any water in the house had to be carried there, so it is improbable that there could have been enough to immerse Saul.

[6] 'Jesus' is read by Family 35 and the earliest MSS, albeit representing only some 20% of the Greek MSS here; the rest have 'the Christ'. To teach that the Messiah was the Son of God would be 'old hat', no problem—but Saul was showing that Jesus was God's Son. Notice the end of verse 22, "this One is the Christ"—what is the antecedent of "this"? To say that the Christ is the Christ would be stupid, which neither of the authors is.

[7] Evidently Ananias was not the only disciple of Jesus in Damascus, but we are not told how many there may have been. Of course, Saul's preaching may have added to the number. In fact some 3% of the Greek manuscripts add 'his' [i.e. Saul's] (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[8] From Paul's mention of this in 2 Corinthians 11:32-3, I gather that he felt this to be humiliating.

Barnabas vouches for Saul

26Now upon arriving in Jerusalem Saul kept trying to join himself to the disciples;[1] but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. **27**But Barnabas took him in tow and brought him to the apostles, and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken fearlessly in the name of the Lord Jesus.[2] **28**So he was with them in Jerusalem, going in and out, and speaking fearlessly in the name of Jesus.[3] **29**He kept on speaking and debating with the Hellenists, so they started trying to kill him.[4] **30**Upon finding it out, the brothers brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

A brief respite

31So then the congregations[5] throughout all Judea and Galilee, and Samaria, had peace and were built up; and proceeding in the fear of the Lord and in the enabling of the Holy Spirit[6] they were being multiplied.

Peter's ministry

32Now it happened, as Peter went through all *those parts*, that he also went down to the saints who were living in Lydda.

Peter heals Aeneas

33And there he found a certain man named Aeneas who was paralyzed—he had been lying on a pallet for eight years. **34**Peter said to him: "Aeneas, Jesus the Messiah[7] is healing you. Get up and make your bed!"[8] And immediately he stood up! **35**All who were living in Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned[9] to the Lord.

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1 I get the impression that he made repeated efforts; after all, he probably had a very good idea of where different groups could be found. Either he didn't know where the apostles were, or lacked the courage to approach them. It was probably after several efforts that Barnabas got wind of what was happening; however, the news doubtless spread through the community quite quickly.

2 How did Barnabas know all that? Perhaps he grilled Saul, before deciding he was on the up and up. I follow some 45% of the Greek manuscripts, including the best line of transmission, in reading 'Lord Jesus'.

3 Some 67% of the Greek manuscripts have 'Lord Jesus'; I follow the best line of transmission (just 24% of the manuscripts here) in reading 'Jesus'; (another 8% have only 'Lord').

4 I imagine that it was at this juncture that Saul received the vision mentioned in Acts 22:17-21.

5 8% of the Greek manuscripts have 'church', singular (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). The true Text emphasizes that there were groups of believers scattered throughout that whole area.

6 Does the Holy Spirit enable those who do not fear the Lord? Probably not very often.

7 The Text being in Greek has "the Christ", but Peter was probably speaking Hebrew, and he was declaring Jesus to be the Messiah. Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit the definite article (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

8 It had been eight years since the last time he could make a bed! You can believe that it gave him great pleasure.

9 The idea is of a change of direction in belief or course of conduct.

Peter raises Dorcas

36Now there was a certain disciple in Joppa named Tabitha, which
is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable
deeds that she kept doing. 37But it happened in those days that she took
sick and died; so when they had washed her they placed her in the upper
room.[1] 38Now Lydda was near Joppa; the disciples, having heard that
Peter was there, sent to him imploring him not to delay in coming to
them. 39So Peter got up and went with them; upon arriving they took
him up to the upper room; all the widows stood around him weeping and
showing the coats and garments that Dorcas was making[2] while she was
with them. 40So Peter put them all out,[3] kneeled down and prayed. Turn-
ing to the body he said, "Tabitha, get up!" So she opened her eyes, and
upon seeing Peter she sat up.[4] 41Then he gave her a hand and lifted her
up, and calling the saints and widows he presented her alive. 42And it
became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord.
43So it was that he stayed many days in Joppa with a certain Simon, a
tanner.

The case of Cornelius

1Now there was a certain man in Caesarea named Cornelius, a cen-
10 turion of what was called the Italian Regiment, 2devout and fearing
God with all his household, both giving alms generously to the people
and praying to God about everything.[5] 3About the ninth hour of the day,[6]
in a vision, he saw clearly an angel of God entering his presence and
saying to him, "Cornelius!" 4Well, staring at him and being frightened
he said, "What is it, Lord?" So he said to him: "Your prayers and your
alms have come up for a memorial before God. 5Now send men to Joppa
and summon Simon, who is surnamed Peter; 6he is lodging with one
Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea."[7] 7So when the angel who
spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household ser-
vants and a devout soldier from among those who were faithful to him,
8and explaining everything to them he sent them to Joppa.

God prepares Peter

9Now on the next day, as they were traveling and drawing near to
the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray at about noon.[8] 10Well he

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1 The upper room of her house; she was presumably reasonably well off.
2 That is what the Text says; I get the impression that Dorcas used a production line method, and left a variety of unfinished garments.
3 You could not hear yourself think in there; he had to do that so he could hear the Holy Spirit.
4 She had been dead for a number of hours.
5 How about us; do we pray to God about everything?
6 That would be 3 p.m. in Hebrew time, one of the Jewish hours of prayer.
7 The familiar "He will tell you what you must do" (as in AV and NKJV) comes from the TR, which is here based on a very few late Greek manuscripts plus part of the Latin tradition.
8 The Text has "the sixth hour".

became hungry and wanted to eat; but while they were preparing, a trance fell on him, 11and he saw the heaven opened and a container like a great sheet descending to him—it was tied at the four corners and was being let down to the earth—12in which were all *kinds* of four-footed *animals* of the earth (both wild animals and reptiles) and birds of the sky.[1] 13Then a voice came to him, "Get up, Peter, slaughter and eat!" 14But Peter said: "No way, Lord! Never have I eaten anything 'common'[2] or unclean!" 15So the voice came to him a second time, "What (pl) God has made clean you must not call 'common'!" 16Well this happened three times, and then the object was taken back up into the sky.

The messengers arrive

17Now as Peter was really perplexed within himself as to what the vision that he had seen might mean, well the men who had been sent by Cornelius, having inquired and found Simon's house, stood before the gate, 18and calling out they inquired whether Simon, who was surnamed Peter, was staying there as a guest. 19So as Peter was pondering the vision the Spirit said to him: "Listen, some men are looking for you; 20so get up and go downstairs; and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them." 21So going down to the men[3] Peter said: "Yes, I am the one you are looking for. For what reason have you come?" 22So they said: "Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous and God-fearing man, well spoken of by all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by an angel[4] to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you." 23So he invited them in and put them up.

On to Caesarea

The next day Peter set out with them, also some of the brothers from Joppa went with him; 24and the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them,[5] having called together his

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[1] What the Text actually says, literally, is: "all the four-footed of the earth, and the wild animals, and the reptiles, and the birds of the sky"—a re-run of Noah's ark! Well, if the sheet were large enough… However, from Peter's response it appears that no 'clean' animals or birds were included. I am tempted to translate: "all the four-footed of the earth—that is, the wild animals and the reptiles—and the birds of the sky" wherein the 'birds of the sky' are carrion fowl (songbirds and game birds generally stay close to the ground).

[2] That is, something ritually or ceremonially impure (and therefore not to be eaten).

[3] Some 35% of the Greek manuscripts add "who had been sent to him from Cornelius", as in AV and NKJV.

[4] I follow the best line of transmission in not adding 'holy', although here representing only 20% of the manuscripts. To be giving divine instruction the angel was evidently from God.

[5] Let us try to get the 'feel' of this watershed event. Cornelius is a Gentile, but he REALLY wants to know God; yet he 'knows' that Jehovah has a thing with the Jews and is not too big on Gentiles. But he is convinced that Jehovah is the true God and is doing his very best to please Him. So one day God gives him a special dispensation of grace; He sends an angel! Was Cornelius excited, or was he excited!! Like, **wow**. So he sends his messengers hotfooting it to Joppa (some 60 km), and they do it in less than 24 hours. So what does Cornelius do while he waits? He prays and fasts. Surely, he

relatives and close friends. 25So when Peter actually arrived, Cornelius met him, fell at his feet and worshipped. 26But Peter lifted him up, saying: "Stand up! I myself am also a man." 27And conversing with him he went in and found many gathered *there*. 28Then he said to them: "You know how it is unlawful for a Jewish man to associate with or to approach a different race; but God has shown me that I should not call any man 'common' or unclean. 29Therefore also I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. So I ask, for what reason did you send for me?"

30So Cornelius said: "I have been fasting[1] during four days until this very hour; yes, *it was* the ninth hour,[2] I was praying in my house when wow, a man stood before me in shining clothing 31and said: 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms are remembered before God. 32Send therefore to Joppa and summon Simon, who is surnamed Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea; upon arriving he will speak to you.'[3] 33So I sent to you at once, and you did well to come. Now then, we are all present before God to hear all the things

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was already a man of prayer (verse 2) so how is he going to show his appreciation to God for the special favor? He fasts—now that he has God's attention, marvel of marvels, he wants to stay tuned in so as not to miss anything. And after allowing for the minimum time necessary for the roundtrip, he is at the door looking down the road—well, being a military commander he doubtless had lookouts and probably had someone on duty to tell him when the group came into view. Enter Peter. He lays on the bit about Jews not contaminating themselves with Gentiles, but God told him to come, and so what does Cornelius want. Now it is his turn—he is looking at a Jew who is not exactly oozing enthusiasm at being there, but he is Jehovah's messenger and the centurion understands about rank and authority; so he plays the only cards he has: his own sincerity and seriousness and God's revealed will. (See the second note with verse 30 below.)

[1] Some 3.5% of the Greek manuscripts omit the 'fasting' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[2] "I have been fasting during four days until this very hour" (the first card) and "the ninth hour…" (the second card). About the sequence, we observe the following:
verse 3—1st day: Cornelius sees angel, about 3 p.m., and sends messengers forthwith;
verse 9—2nd day: Peter has vision, after 12 noon, and messengers arrive (& are lodged for the night);
verse 23—3rd day: Peter and company leave Joppa;
verse 24—4th day: they enter Caesarea (probably before noon).
So, by western reckoning we have not quite three full days, but by Hebrew and Brazilian reckoning we have a situation that involves four days.

The messengers, under urgent orders, did the 60 km in under 24 hours (whether they went all night, we do not know, but they were probably obviously tired when they showed up at Peter's gate). Peter was not about to be stampeded into action; he had to eat, sort things out in his mind, talk it over with the others—since they decided to send a committee, preparations had to be made. So they set out the next day, but they are dignified Jews and are not going to run—they set a steady pace and probably make some 45 km before stopping for the night. The remaining 15 km they knock off before noon the next day. So, the "this very hour" refers to the time of Peter's arrival.

[3] Less than 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit "upon arriving he will speak to you" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

commanded you by God."[1]

Peter preaches

34So opening his mouth Peter said: "Really, I comprehend that God
is not One to show partiality, 35but in every ethnic nation whoever fears
Him and works righteousness is acceptable to Him.[2] 36The word that He
sent to the sons[3] of Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus
Christ—He is Lord of all—37that spoken word you know, that was pro-
claimed throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism
that John preached:[4] 38Jesus of Natsareth, how God anointed Him with
Holy Spirit and power, who went about doing good and healing all those
being oppressed by the devil,[5] because God was with Him—39yes, we are
witnesses of all that He did, both in the country of the Jews and in Jeru-
salem—whom they also killed, hanging Him on a tree. 40**Him** God raised
on the third day, and gave Him to become visible, 41not to all the people
but to witnesses who had been chosen beforehand by God, to us, who ate
and drank with Him after He arose out from the dead.[6] 42And He ordered

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[1] Cornelius does not beat around the bush, he wants to hear from **God**. Instead of 'God' some 5% of the Greek manuscripts have 'the Lord' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[2] This statement of Peter's does not fit in very well with the doctrine of salvation (soteriology) as taught in many schools and churches. God deals with people where they are, within the context that they are. Surely, because He cannot deal with people where they are not.

[3] 'Sons' is often translated 'children' when referring to the descendants of Jacob—Peter is referring to the current generation, the one that received the revelation of 'Jesus Christ'.

[4] As soon as John was put in prison, which was the end of his preaching and baptizing, Jesus moved out of Judea into Galilee—He spent over a year there before returning to Judea. Peter is assuming that Cornelius would have followed the career of Jesus with interest. He gives a very brief, almost disjointed, review of some salient points.

[5] The devil is Satan. Did Peter mean that every time Jesus saw an oppressed person He healed them, or did he mean that everyone whom Jesus healed was oppressed, or both? The episode at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:2-13) would appear to eliminate the first option, that every time He saw an oppressed person He healed them, because there was a "great multitude" of oppressed people there, and Jesus obviously saw them, but He did nothing to help them. This leaves us with the clear conclusion that it is the second meaning that is correct, everyone whom Jesus healed was oppressed, which means that Satan is involved in all maladies. [With reference to John 5:2-13, less than 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit the last clause of verse 3 and all of verse 4 (as in NIV, NASB, LB, [TEV], etc.). But obviously all those people would not stay there (in discomfort) day in and day out, year in and year out, if nothing was happening. Obviously people got healed, and verse 7 makes clear that it had to do with the stirring of the water—so why did not those manuscripts omit verse 7 as well? The UBS editions do us a considerable disservice by following a very small minority of manuscripts and making the angel "of the Lord". Since angels can be good or fallen, it seems most likely to me that the angel involved was fallen. A capricious, occasional healing condemned all those people to added suffering (being at the pool instead of the comfort of home), including the frustration and despair of those who never made it (like the man Jesus healed). A sadistic procedure is just like Satan.]

[6] Here we have an interesting bit of information not recorded elsewhere. Jesus ate and drank with some of them after His resurrection.

us to proclaim to the people, that is, to testify that He is the One who has been ordained by God as Judge of living and dead. 43To **Him** all the prophets bear witness[1] that through His name[2] everyone who believes into Him will receive forgiveness of sins."[3]

The Holy Spirit falls

44While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all who were hearing the message.[4] 45Well the believers of the circumcision [Jews] who had come with Peter were astonished, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had also been poured out on the Gentiles, 46in that they heard them speaking languages[5] and magnifying God. Then Peter responded: 47"Surely no one can forbid the water, can he, that these should not be baptized[6] who received the Holy Spirit just like we did?" 48So he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.[7] Then they asked him to stay a few days.

Peter has to explain

11 1Now the Apostles and the brothers throughout Judea[8] heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. 2When Peter went up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision *party* started contending with him, 3saying, "You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!"[9]

4So Peter began by explaining it to them in order, saying: 5"I was in the town of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision: a certain object like a great sheet coming down out of the sky, being lowered by its four corners; and it came to me. 6Upon peering into it I observed and distinguished the quadrupeds of the earth—both the wild animals and the rep-

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1 Presumably the prophets all bear witness to the Messiah in some way.

2 I take "through His name" to mean something like 'because of His identity' as Messiah and Jehovah the Son.

3 This was the crucial bit of information they were waiting for, what they had to do to be saved. The minute Peter said, "believe into Jesus", they did! And the Holy Spirit came upon them! Believe "into" not "in"—a change of location is involved, from being outside to being inside, which requires commitment.

4 If anyone present was not 'hearing' they would neither believe nor receive.

5 The term often rendered 'tongue' is the ordinary word for 'language'—these were presumably real languages, though unknown to the hearers (and speakers). What happened here went against the Jews' worldview.

6 Baptism followed immediately upon conversion (not after weeks of instruction and observation). I believe they were formally severing any and all connection with Satan and the world controlled by him, and placing themselves under the protection of the Lord Jesus. The sooner a new convert does that the better. Did the centurion have a swimming pool in his house? Would there have been enough water there to immerse all those people?

7 The Greek manuscripts are divided among three main variants here ('the Lord Jesus' [35%], 'the Lord' [57%], 'Jesus Christ' [8%]); I have followed what I understand to be the best line of transmission.

8 Talk about news spreading like wildfire; well this news was really 'hot'!

9 In Matthew 28 the resurrected Jesus had commanded that disciples be made among all ethnic nations—so how can you disciple someone without talking to him or associating with him? In fact, the 'Great Commission' imposed a significant shift in worldview upon Jesus' Jewish followers. The transition was not easy, and many never made it.

tiles—and the birds of the sky. 7Then I heard a voice saying to me, 'Get up, Peter, slaughter and eat!' 8So I said: 'No way, Lord! Never has anything 'common' or unclean entered my mouth!' 9But the voice answered me, a second time, from heaven, 'Things that God has made clean you must not call 'common'.' 10Well this was done three times, and it was all pulled back up into the sky. 11At that very moment three men stopped in front of the house where I was, having been sent from Caesarea to me. 12The Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. These six brothers also went with me,[1] and we entered the man's house. 13He then related to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying to him, 'Send to Joppa and summon Simon, who is called Peter, 14who will speak words to you by which you and all your household will be saved.' 15Well as I began to speak,[2] the Holy Spirit fell on them, just as on us at the beginning. 16I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you will be baptized with Holy Spirit.'[3] 17So if God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed upon the Lord Jesus,[4] who was I to be able to withstand God?" 18Upon hearing these things they acquiesced and started glorifying God, saying, "So then, God
has also granted to the Gentiles repentance into life!"[5]

Enter Barnabas

19Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that came about in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews only.[6] 20But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who upon entering Antioch started speaking to the Greek-speakers,[7] preaching the good news of the Lord Jesus. 21And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. 22Well the report concerning them reached the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. 23Upon arriving and seeing the

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1 Peter presumably knew he would be called on the carpet, so he took his witnesses along.

2 Peter was set to give a proper discourse, but the Spirit intervened.

3 See Acts 1:5. This was spoken by the Lord Jesus just before His ascension.

4 Notice that there is no mention of keeping the Law, being circumcised, or following Jewish customs. Peter is saying that what God did indicates that the key to salvation is believing upon the Lord Jesus, whether Jew or Gentile. I follow the best line of transmission that reads 'the Lord Jesus'; some 75% of the Greek manuscripts add 'Christ'.

5 Their religious culture had twisted the OT Scriptures so as to exclude Gentiles. So now they are surprised.

6 This was before the Cornelius episode.

7 In verse 19, those who spoke to Jews only, presumably used Hebrew, which would not be understood by outsiders. In verse 20, by preaching in Greek, the whole populace could understand, even if Greek-speaking Jews were the main target. Verse 21 implies that the number of believers exceeded the number of Jews, so Gentiles also were believing.

grace of God, he was glad, and he kept encouraging them all to remain true to the Lord with purpose of heart[1] 24(for he was a good man, full of Holy Spirit and of faith). And a considerable crowd was added to the Lord.

25Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to look for Saul, 26and upon finding him he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they met with the congregation and taught a great many people. The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

Enter Agabus

27Now in these days, prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28One of them, named Agabus, stood up and indicated by the Spirit that a great famine was about to come upon the whole world (this indeed happened while Claudius was Caesar). 29Then the disciples, to the extent that any had plenty, each of them determined to send relief to the brothers who lived in Judea; 30which they also did, sending it to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

Enter Herod

12 1Now about that time, Herod the king laid hands on some from the church to mistreat them. 2James, the brother of John, he put to death by sword.[2] 3When he saw that it was pleasing to the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter as well (it was during the days of the unleavened loaves) 4—upon seizing him he put him in prison, turning him over to sixteen soldiers[3] to guard him, intending to bring him out to the people after the Passover.

Enter angel

5Well Peter was being held in the prison all right, but the congregation was making earnest prayer to God on his behalf. 6So when Herod was about to bring him out,[4] that night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, with guards protecting the prison in front of the doors. 7Suddenly, an angel of the Lord was there, and a light shone in the cell; striking Peter on the side he roused him saying, "Quick, get up!" and the chains fell away from his wrists. 8Then the angel said to him, "Fasten your belt and put on your sandals." So he did. Then he said to him, "Put on your cloak and follow me." 9So he went out and started following him, not realizing that what the angel was doing was real; he supposed he was seeing a vision. 10Passing through the first and second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads into the

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[1] Barnabas gives us a good example to follow.

[2] So far as we know, James was the first of the Apostles to die (discounting the Iscariot), and he was martyred.

[3] Why so many? Had he heard about Peter's spiritual power?

[4] 'Bring him out' means to execute him.

city, that opened for them by itself;[1] upon exiting they advanced one block, and suddenly the angel left him.

Enter Rhoda

11When Peter had come to himself he said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord sent His angel and delivered me out of Herod's hand and from all the expectation of the Jewish people." **12**Upon reflection he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John (the one called Mark), where a considerable number had gathered and were praying. **13**When Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer. **14**Upon recognizing Peter's voice, she was so glad she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter was standing before the gate! **15**But they said to her, "You're crazy!" but she kept insisting that it was so. So they said, "It is his angel." **16**But Peter kept on knocking; so when they opened the door and saw him, they were astounded.[2] **17**Motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he related to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. Then he said, "Tell these things to James[3] and the brothers." And going out he went off to a different place.[4]

Poor guards!

18Now as soon as it was day, there was no small commotion among the soldiers about what had become of Peter! **19**Well after searching for him and not finding him, Herod examined the guards and ordered that they be executed. Going down from Judea to Caesarea, he stayed there.[5]

Herod gets his 'comeuppance'

20Now Herod was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; so they came with one accord to him, and having won over Blastus, the king's chamberlain, they asked for peace, because their country was supplied with food from the king's.[6] **21**So on an appointed day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on the throne and started to deliver an address to them. **22**But the crowd started calling out, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" **23**Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because

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[1] The angel used supernatural power; and if we ever learn how to do it, we can too—Ephesians 3:20.

[2] They evidently did not expect their prayer to be answered. After all, they had probably prayed for James first, and he was killed anyway. When we pray about a difficult situation, we should start out by asking what the Father is doing—John 5:19.

[3] This James is the Lord's half-brother; he became the leader of the church in Jerusalem.

[4] Presumably this means that he left Jerusalem; it was prudent to disappear for a while.

[5] He had doubtless told the Jews that he had Peter, and when he couldn't produce him he lost face. But the circumstances probably left him uncomfortable as well, so he decided to get away for a while—none of which saved the poor guards. The guards were part of an evil system, and presumably would never have converted (although, if Peter had preached to them, some may have believed before the execution).

[6] The famine mentioned in chapter eleven may have made them especially dependent.

he did not give glory to God, and being eaten by worms, he died.[1]

24And the Word of God kept growing and multiplying.[2]

The Gentile Church

25Now Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch,[3] having fulfilled their mission, also taking with them John, the one called Mark.

Missionary journey I—Barnabas and Saul→Paul

13 **1**Now in the congregation that was in Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon (the one called Niger), Lucius the Cyre-nian, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch), and Saul. **2**As they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart to me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them!" **3**Then, having fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them off.

1st stop—Cyprus

4So, having been sent out by the Holy Spirit,[4] they went down to Seleucia; and from there they sailed to Cyprus.[5] **5**And upon arriving in Salamis, they started proclaiming the Word of God in the synagogues of the Jews (also they had John as assistant). **6**Now when they had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew named Bar-Jesus, **7**who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man summoned Barnabas and Saul, really wanting to hear the Word of God. **8**But the sorcerer Elymas (for so his name is translated) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.

9Then Saul, also called Paul,[6] filled with Holy Spirit and looking intently at him, **10**said: "O full of all deceit and all trickery, son of a devil, enemy of all righteousness![7] Will you not stop perverting the straight ways of the Lord? **11**Well <u>now</u>, the Lord's hand is against you and you will be blind, not seeing the sun until *next* season!" Immediately mist and darkness engulfed him, and he started going around looking for someone to lead him by the hand. **12**Then the proconsul believed, when he saw[8] what had happened, being astonished at the teaching of the

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[1] The worms, of unusual size and impressive number, would come out of the corpse, indicating the cause of death—really gross!

[2] Growing in influence and multiplying its effects.

[3] We have here an important set of variant readings, wherein the evidence is rather badly divided. The discussion is quite complicated and extensive, so I refer the interested reader to: "Where to place a Comma—Acts 12:25" on my website: www.prunch.org.

[4] Note the emphasis on the Holy Spirit's agency.

[5] Recall that Barnabas was a native of Cyprus (Acts 4:36); he was doubtless eager to evangelize his own country and would also know his way around.

[6] It is at this point that Luke starts using 'Paul' instead of 'Saul'.

[7] To be an 'enemy of all righteousness' one would have to be pretty bad! If 'son of a devil' is literal, Elymas was a humanoid, and would indeed be completely evil.

[8] Demonstrated supernatural power has a way of lending credence to the spoken word.

Lord.

On to Pisidian Antioch

13Then Paul and his party set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphilia (here John left them and returned to Jerusalem).[1] 14Going on from Perga they arrived in Antioch of Pisidia; and entering the synagogue on the Sabbath day, they sat down. 15After the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the synagogue leaders sent to them, saying, "Men, brothers, if you have a word of encouragement[2] for the people, do speak."

Paul expounds the Gospel

16So standing up and motioning with his hand, Paul said: "Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen. 17The God of this people chose our fathers, and prospered the people during their sojourn in the land of Egypt, and brought them out of it with an uplifted arm. 18For a period of about forty years He put up with them in the wilderness. 19And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He gave them possession of their land. 20After these things, He gave judges for about four hundred and fifty[3] years, until Samuel the prophet.[4] 21And then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul, a son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years.[5] 22And removing him He raised up for them David as king, about whom He gave witness and said, 'I have found David son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.' 23God, from this man's seed, according to promise, has brought[6] Salvation[7] to Israel, 24John having heralded beforehand, in advance of His coming, a baptism of repentance to Israel.[8] 25Well, as John was fulfilling his course, he said: 'Whom do you suppose me to be? No I am not—but indeed He comes after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.'[9]

26"Men, brothers, sons of the stock of Abraham, and those among you who fear God: to <u>you</u>[10] the word of this salvation has been sent. 27The

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1 When the party arrived in Cyprus, Barnabas was the leader; when it left, Paul had taken over. Barnabas was John's uncle, and quite possibly John did not like the change.

2 Or 'exhortation'.

3 The events recorded in the book of Judges, plus Eli's 40 years, equal 450.

4 Along with his other functions, Samuel was a prophet.

5 Saul reigned for forty years—a considerable period of time.

6 Instead of 'brought', some 25% of the Greek manuscripts have 'raised up', as in AV and NKJV.

7 Instead of 'Salvation', some 15% of the Greek manuscripts have 'a Savior, Jesus', as in most versions.

8 Instead of 'to Israel', some 20% of the Greek manuscripts read 'to all the people of Israel', as in most versions.

9 At first people speculated that John the baptizer might be the Messiah, but John was quick to deny it.

10 Instead of 'to you', perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts have 'to us' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). How was that word sent? By Paul and Barnabas.

Jerusalem dwellers and their rulers, understanding neither Him nor the voices of the prophets that are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning Him. **28**Though they found no cause for death, they asked Pilate to have Him executed. **29**When they had fulfilled all things that were written about Him, they took Him down from the cross[1] and placed Him in a tomb. **30**But God raised Him from the dead; **31**and for many days He was seen by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are[2] His witnesses to the people.

32"Yes we proclaim to you the good news: the promise that was made to the fathers, **33**God has fulfilled the same to us, their children, when He raised up Jesus;[3] as also it stands written in the second Psalm: 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you.'[4] **34**And that He raised Him from the dead,[5] no longer to return to corruption,[6] He has spoken thus, 'I will give you the holy things guaranteed to David.'[7] **35**Further, it is stated elsewhere, 'You will not allow your Holy One to see decay.'[8]

36"Now David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw decay; **37**but the One whom God raised up did not see decay.[9] **38**Therefore, let it be known to you, men, brothers, that through this One forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you; **39**and by Him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the Law of Moses.[10] **40**So take care, lest there come upon you that which has been spoken in the prophets: **41**'Look you despisers, marvel and perish! For I am working a work in your days to which you will <u>not</u> give credence, even if someone were to explain it in detail to you.'"[11]

The reaction

42Now as the Jews were going out of the synagogue, the Gentiles implored repeatedly[12] that these words might be spoken to them the

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1 Literally 'tree'. Note that Paul emphasizes the fulfillment of prophecy.

2 Paul says 'are'—evidently many/most of the original Apostles were still alive.

3 The "raised up" here presumably refers to the incarnation; the resurrection comes in verse 34.

4 See Psalm 2:7.

5 The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is crucial; without it we have no Gospel.

6 People like Lazarus who were returned to life, had to die again (and decompose); with Jesus it was different: His resurrection was definitive, and involved a glorified body.

7 See Isaiah 55:3.

8 See Psalm 16:10.

9 Only supernatural intervention could forestall decay after physical death.

10 The Law as a means of justification was sadly deficient; the resurrected Jesus is marvelously efficient.

11 See Habakkuk 1:5. According to 2 Thessalonians 2:10-11, to those who reject the love of the truth God Himself sends active delusion, so they will believe the lie. The 'despisers' are rendered incapable of understanding the explanation.

12 We have here an important set of variant readings, wherein the evidence is rather badly divided. I have decided to give the Greek, for those who can handle it, but will here give a literal rendering of the four variants, for those who can't. However, the discussion includes 'the Gentiles', as being part of the puzzle: 1) now as the Jews were

next Sabbath. 43The synagogue service having been dismissed, many of the Jews and the devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who started addressing them, urging them to continue in the grace of God. 44Well the next Sabbath almost the whole city was gathered to hear the Word of God.[1] 45But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with envy[2] and started speaking against the things said by Paul, contradicting and[3] blaspheming.

46But Paul and Barnabas speaking boldly said: "It was necessary that God's Word should be spoken to you first.[4] But since you reject it,

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going out of the synagogue; 2) now as they were going out; 3) now as they were going out of the synagogue of the Jews; 4) now as they were going out of the synagogue.

1) *εξιοντων δε εκ της συναγωγης των ιουδαιων*	**f**[35] (60.2%) HF,RP,TR
2) *εξιοντων δε αυτων*	ℵA,B,C,D (16.2%) NU
3) *εξιοντων δε αυτων εκ της συναγωγης των ιουδαιων*	(20.8%) OC,CP
4) *εξιοντων δε αυτων εκ της συναγωγης*	(2.3%)
(two other readings)	(0.4%)

I believe this variant set must be considered along with the presence of *τα εθνη* after *παρεκαλουν*, but *TuT* does not include the second set. However, from UBS[3] it appears that virtually the same roster of witnesses, including the three ancient versions (!), read variant 2) and omit "the Gentiles". Where then is the Subject of the main verb *παρεκαλουν*? Presumably for those witnesses it would be the Jews and proselytes who had just heard Paul and wanted to hear it all over again the next Sabbath. So why are they (Jews and proselytes) mentioned overtly again in verse 43? And on what basis would the whole city show up the next week (verse 44)? But to go back to verse 42, why would the first hearers want to hear the same thing (*τα ρηματα ταυτα*) again anyway? The really interested ones stuck with Paul and Barnabas to learn more (verse 43), just as we would expect.

The witnesses to variants 1) and 3) join in support of "the Gentiles", giving us a strong majority (over 80%). So the Subject of *παρεκαλουν* is *τα εθνη*—**they** want a chance to hear the Gospel too, and the whole city turns out. It fits the context perfectly. So, variant 3) appears to be a conflation and the basic reading is variant 1). The witnesses to variant 3), because they have "the Gentiles", are really on the side of variant 1), not 2), so presumably 1) may be viewed as having 80% attestation. For the witnesses to variant 1) the antecedent or referent of *εξιοντων* must be Paul's group, since the Gentiles would presumably address their request to the teacher.

In variant 2) *αυτων* presumably serves as Subject of both the participle and the main verb, but in that event the main verb should take precedence and the pronoun should be nominative, not genitive. However one might explain the motivation for such a change—from 1) to 2) and deleting "the Gentiles"—variant 2) is evidently wrong, even though attested by the three ancient versions. Perhaps someone faced with variant 1) took "of the Jews" to be the referent of the participle instead of modifying "synagogue" (like NKJV), and thought it should be Subject of the main verb as well—then, of course, "the Gentiles" were in the way and were deleted. Then 1) might have been shortened to 2) for 'clarity'. I take it that the original text had: *εξιοντων δε εκ της συναγωγης των ιουδαιων παρεκαλουν τα εθνη* etc.

[1] Instead of 'God' perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts have 'the Lord' (as in NIV, LB, TEV, etc.).

[2] Isn't human nature wonderful?

[3] Perhaps 20% of the Greek manuscripts omit "contradicting and" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[4] Note the "it was necessary". The apostles had a clear conviction that the Jews should be given the first chance.

and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life,[1] now we are being turned to the Gentiles. 47Because that is just how the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you to be a light for ethnic nations, that you should be for salvation up to the last place on earth.'"[2] 48Now upon hearing this, the Gentiles rejoiced and glorified the Word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal live believed.[3]

49Well the Word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region.[4] 50But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women[5] and the chief men of the city, and raised up a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their borders. 51So they shook off the dust from their feet against them,[6] and went to Iconium. 52But the disciples were filled with joy and with Holy Spirit.[7]

Iconium

14 1Now it happened in Iconium that they went together into the synagogue of the Jews, and they spoke to such effect that a large number of both Jews and Greeks believed. 2But the disobedient Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. 3Even so they stayed there a considerable time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, giving signs and wonders to take place by their hands.[8] 4Well the population of the city became divided; some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles. 5But when a plot was hatched by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to mistreat and stone them, 6they became aware of it and escaped to the cities of Lycaonia—Lystra, Derbe and the surrounding area—7where they continued to preach the Gospel.

Lystra

8Well in Lystra a certain man with helpless feet was sitting (lame from his mother's womb, who had never walked). 9This man was listening to Paul speaking; who looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be healed, 10said with a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" And the man jumped up and began to walk![9] 11Now when the crowd saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in

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1 This sounds a little bit like sarcasm to me.

2 See Isaiah 49:6. The prophecy refers to the Messiah, but Paul and Barnabas are representing Him.

3 Here God's sovereignty and human responsibility are placed side by side—God appoints, but we have to believe.

4 This presumably means that a fair number of local congregations sprang up there.

5 When the women get stirred up, watch out!

6 They were following an instruction given by the Lord Himself (Matthew 10:14-15, Luke 9:5), and that He illustrated by example (Matthew 11:23-24), although He spoke the curse. I believe that history records that Pisidian Antioch entered into decline at that point.

7 The apostles went on their way, but they left Life and joy behind them.

8 As stated in this verse, the signs and wonders were the result of God's initiative.

9 As in chapter 3, the miracle included his head, not just his limbs, since he had never learned to walk.

Lycaonian, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!" 12And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. 13Then the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of their city, brought bulls and garlands to the gates, intending to make a sacrifice, along with the crowd.[1]

14But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard it, they tore their clothes and rushed into the crowd, crying out 15and saying: "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, giving you good news, telling you to turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them; 16who in the former generations allowed all the ethnic nations to walk in their own ways. 17Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, doing good, giving you rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and glad-ness."[2] 18Even saying these things, they barely stopped the crowd from sacrificing to them.

Paul stoned

19Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came, and having persuaded the crowd and having stoned Paul,[3] they dragged him out of the city,[4] supposing him to have died. 20But as the disciples stood around him,[5] he got up and entered the city. The next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

The return to Antioch

21When they had evangelized that city and discipled a good number, they returned to Lystra[6] and Iconium and Antioch, 22strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God."[7] 23When they had appointed elders for them in every congregation,[8] having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord into

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1 Within their belief system this was the appropriate thing to do.

2 Now there you have an extemporaneous speech! It was a totally unexpected situation, and they had no prepared sermon. They emphasize the Creator God. Probably that is the place to start with any pagan people.

3 Crowds can be fickle, and the apostles had called their religion "useless". Several days had elapsed, presumably, which gave them time to mull things over. There was probably some demonic involvement as well.

4 He was probably dragged by the feet, like an animal.

5 I suppose that the attack was sudden and unexpected (planned that way), so the disciples did not have time to try to defend him. Paul certainly looked dead, but as the disciples were standing there trying to assimilate what had happened, he got up! His recovery was such that he could set out the next day on foot.

6 One might suppose that they would avoid Lystra, but no. Perhaps upon reflection the locals were ashamed of what they had done; besides, what do you do to a man you have already killed?!

7 Is that what they preach in your church? Does that sound like 'easy street'?

8 The congregations needed some sort of leadership.

whom they had believed.[1] 24After going through Pisidia, they came to Pamphilia. 25When they had declared the Word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. 26From there they sailed to Antioch, from where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had completed. 27So upon arriving and gathering the congregation, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. 28And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

The Jerusalem Council

The conflict

15 1Then some men came down from Judea and started teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." 2Well this provoked serious dissension and argument between Paul and Barnabas and them, so Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with certain others of them, to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders about this question. 3So being sent on their way by the congregation, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brothers. 4Upon arriving in Jerusalem, they were received by the congregation and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. 5But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the Law of Moses."[2]

The Council

6So the apostles and the elders came together to consider this matter. 7When there had been plenty of discussion, Peter got up and said to them: "Men, brothers, you know that a good while ago God made a choice among you,[3] that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the message of the Gospel and believe. 8And the heart-knowing God acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us; 9and He made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. 10Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? 11Rather, we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus,[4] in the same manner as they."[5]

12Then the whole assembly kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul reporting what signs and wonders God had done among the

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1 People need to learn to walk with God on their own.

2 In essence they were demanding that the Gentiles become Jewish proselytes, as a prior condition. Those Pharisees did not understand salvation by faith.

3 I follow the best line of transmission in reading 'you'; some 60% of the Greek manuscripts have 'us', as in AV and NKJV.

4 Some 5% of the Greek manuscripts add 'Christ', as in AV and NKJV.

5 Peter states the crucial point: salvation comes through grace and faith, for everyone, not by keeping the Law. Legalism is out.

ethnic nations through them. 13Now when they finished, James reacted saying: "Men, brothers, listen to me. 14Simeon has described how God first intervened to extract from the Gentiles a people for His name. 15And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: 16'After these things I will return, and I will rebuild David's tent, the fallen one; yes, I will rebuild its ruins and restore it; 17so that the remnant of mankind may seek the LORD, even all the Gentiles—the ones, that is, upon whom my name has been called—says the LORD who does all these things.'[1] 18All His works are known to God from eternity.[2]

19"Therefore I judge that we should not create difficulty for those who are turning to God from among the ethnic nations,[3] 20but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from fornication, from what is strangled, and from blood. 21For from ancient generations Moses has in every city those who preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

The edict

22Then it pleased the apostles and the elders, with the whole congregation, to send chosen men from among them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas: Judas (the one called Barsabas) and Silas, leading men among the brothers. 23They wrote by their hand the following:

"The apostles and the elders and the[4] brothers, to the Gentile brothers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia: Greetings.

24Since we have heard that some who went out from among us have disturbed you with words, unsettling your souls, saying that you must be circumcised and keep the Law[5]—to whom we gave no such authorization—25it seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26men who have risked their lives for the sake of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27So we have sent Judas and Silas, who will also confirm these things by word of mouth.[6] 28It

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[1] See Amos 9:11-12.

[2] God had not changed; it was always His purpose to include the Gentiles. Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit "all His works are known to God" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[3] This way of stating it leaves an opening for making a distinction between Gentile and Jewish believers. By chapter 21 this had become a serious problem. James begins the verse saying, "I judge", emphasizing the pronoun, and his position was a bit of a compromise; this in spite of Peter's plain statement in verse 11. In verse 23 the edict is addressed to the "Gentile brothers" (the distinction between Jew and Gentile is maintained).

[4] Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit "and the" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). This changes the meaning; the three groups are reduced to two.

[5] Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit 'saying that you must be circumcised and keep the law' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[6] The Law required at least two witnesses.

seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us,[1] to place no greater burden upon you than these necessary things: 29to abstain from things offered to idols,[2] from 'blood', from anything strangled and from fornication;[3] it will be in your own best interest to keep away from these things. Farewell."

Good results

30So when they were sent off they came to Antioch, and gathering the crowd they delivered the letter. 31When they had read it, they rejoiced over the encouragement. 32Both Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words. 33After some time, they were released with peace from the brothers to the apostles.[4] 35But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the Word of the Lord, with many others also.

Missionary journey II—Paul and Silas

Paul and Barnabas separate

36Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return now and visit our brothers in each city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, to see how they are doing." 37Now Barnabas resolved to take John (the one called Mark) along as well. 38But Paul insisted on not taking someone who had deserted them in Pamphilia and not gone with them to the work. 39Well the contention became so sharp that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus;[5] 40while Paul chose Silas and set out, having been commended by the brothers to the

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[1] James affirms divine approval for the decision.

[2] The idols represented demons, and to deliberately worship an idol would give its demon a 'legal' basis for working in the worshipper.

[3] In the Greek Text each item in the list is a single word; such brevity could give rise to ambiguity. However, items 1 and 4 seem clear enough. Item 3 presumably harks back to Genesis 9:4, where ingesting blood is forbidden. So item 2, 'blood', must mean something else. In the Bible 'blood' is repeatedly used to refer to violent death and the responsibility for it. This harks back to Genesis 9:5-6. The prohibition against fornication is implied in Genesis 2:24. That God did not accept Cain's offering (Genesis 4:3-5) implies that He had given instruction on the subject, which would presumably include idolatry. So the four items in the list are all far older than the Law of Moses and are independent of it.

[4] Verse 34, as in the AV, is to be found in about 30% of the Greek manuscripts, but contradicts verse 33, that seems to require that Silas returned to Jerusalem; "they were sent back…to the apostles", and "they" refers to Judas and Silas. The 'problem' is that in verse 40 Paul chooses Silas to accompany him, so he had to be in Antioch, not Jerusalem. Accordingly the longer reading was created to solve the 'problem'. The "some days" of verse 36 could well have been a month or two. From Antioch to Jerusalem would be a trip of less than 400 miles. Silas had time to go to Jerusalem and get back to Antioch.

[5] This is the last we hear of Barnabas, but not of Mark. Barnabas was an encourager. He had seen the potential in Saul of Tarsus and helped him along on at least two occasions. Now he sees the potential in Mark and invests in him, to such good effect that Paul himself later recognizes Mark's value (2 Timothy 4:11). Peter had taken Mark under his wing and helped him write the second Gospel.

grace of God.[1] 41He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the congregations.

Paul finds Timothy

16 1So he came to Derbe and Lystra. Well now, a certain disciple was there named Timothy, son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was a Greek; 2he was well spoken of by the brothers in Lystra and Iconium. 3Paul wanted to have him go on with him, so he took and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, because they all knew that his father was a Greek.[2] 4As they were going through the cities they were delivering the dogmas to them, to keep—the ones that had been determined by the apostles and the elders in Jerusalem.[3] 5So the congregations kept on being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.[4]

The 'Macedonian call'

6Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia, 7they approached Mysia and tried to go to Bythinia, but the Spirit[5] did not permit them. 8So they bypassed Mysia and went down to Troas.[6]

9A vision appeared to Paul during the night: a man of Macedonia was standing, appealing to him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." 10So when he saw the vision, we[7] immediately prepared to go over to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord[8] had called us to evangelize them.

Philippi

11So setting sail from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day to Neapolis; 12and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony.[9] We stayed some days in that city. 13On the Sabbath day we went outside the city by a

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[1] Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts have 'Lord' instead of 'God' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[2] Paul had been stoned at Lystra, at the instigation of the Jews, so why is he concerned to please them? And after he joined Paul how much time was Timothy going to spend in his home town? A curious proceeding.

[3] One of the dogmas was that circumcision was not necessary, so was Paul hedging?

[4] Evidently they were enthusiastically sharing the Good News. There must have come to be hundreds of congregations throughout Asia Minor.

[5] Perhaps 6% of the Greek manuscripts add 'of Jesus' (as in NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[6] Paul and Silas were sufficiently in tune with the Holy Spirit that He could lead them. The areas mentioned were basically unevangelized, so their attempt was a 'natural', but those areas would be reached later as the News radiated out from Ephesus to all Asia. God wanted to get the Church started in Europe, and in particular the area where Greek was the mother tongue.

[7] At this point Luke joined the party.

[8] Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts have 'God' instead of 'Lord' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[9] A Roman colony—this conferred status and some privileges.

river, where prayer was customarily made,[1] and sitting down we started speaking to the assembled women.[2] 14A certain woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God, really listened, whose heart the Lord opened to give heed to the things spoken by Paul. 15When she and her household were baptized, she appealed saying, "Since you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." So she persuaded us.

Prison

16Now it happened, as we were going to prayer, that a certain slave girl having a spirit of divination met us, who brought considerable profit to her owners by divination. 17Following Paul and Silas[3] this girl kept calling out, "These men are servants of the Most-High God, who are proclaiming to us the way of salvation!"[4] 18She kept this up for many days![5] So Paul, becoming increasingly annoyed,[6] turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out that very hour.

19But when her owners saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place to the rulers,[7] 20and bringing them before the magistrates they said, "These men, being Jews, are agitating our city, 21and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or do." 22The crowd joined in the attack against them, and the magistrates tore the clothes off of them and ordered a beating with rods. 23When they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them securely; 24who, having received such a charge, threw them into

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[1] Instead of "where prayer was customarily made", perhaps 2% if the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have 'where we supposed a place of prayer to be' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[2] Evidently there was no synagogue in Philippi. Prayer meetings usually have more women than men.

[3] I follow the best line of transmission in reading 'Silas'; some 60% of the Greek manuscripts have 'us', as in most versions. Luke, who was there, is focusing the account on the two who were put in prison.

[4] I find it to be curious that what the demon said was precisely true! So why did that truth not result in many conversions? Presumably because the Holy Spirit did not apply it, coming from a demon. Instead of "to us", perhaps 20% of the Greek manuscripts have 'to you' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). Did the demon have the girl include herself, or not?

[5] The 'hour of prayer' was observed every day by God-fearing Jews. So the apostles would pass at a predictable time each day.

[6] But Paul, she was giving you free advertising! Evidently he didn't want advertising from the enemy, and in this he followed the Lord's example (Mark 3:11-12).

[7] This was a put up job. It would take a day or two to make clear that the girl was now useless. The magistrates had probably been getting a 'cut'. Some rabble had been mobilized to join in—the whole proceeding had been organized in advance. They figured they could beat up on two Jews with impunity.

the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.[1]

The jailer converts

25Well about midnight Paul and Silas were singing hymns to God
in prayer; and the *other* prisoners were listening to them. **26**Suddenly
there was a great earthquake, enough to shake the foundations of the
prison; immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains
were loosed.[2] **27**But the jailer, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison
doors open, drew sword, intending to kill himself, supposing that the
prisoners had escaped.[3]

28But Paul shouted out, "Don't harm yourself, because we are all
here!"[4] **29**So calling for a light he ran in and fell down trembling before
Paul and Silas. **30**He then brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must
I do to be saved?"[5] **31**So they said, "Believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ[6]
and you will be saved, you and your household." **32**Then they spoke the
Word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. **33**In that same
hour of the night he took them aside and washed their wounds, and
thereupon he and all his family were baptized.[7] **34**Then he brought them
into his house and set a meal before them, and he was really rejoicing,
having believed in God with his whole family.

Magistrates rebuked

35Now when it was day the magistrates sent the officers saying, "Let
those men go." **36**So the jailer reported these words to Paul, "The magi-
strates have sent to release you; so now you can leave and go in peace."
37But Paul said to them:[8] "After severely beating us in public, although
we were uncondemned Romans, they threw us into prison, and now do
they toss us out on the sly? No way! Rather, let them come themselves
and escort us out!" **38**So the officers reported these words to the

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[1] Their backs are bleeding from 'many stripes' and their feet are in stocks (you try to sit up so as not to lie on your wounded back; all of which gets pretty 'old' pretty fast)—a great time for a praise meeting!

[2] A proper earthquake could shake the doors open, but not unlock chains (unless it was their anchors that came loose from the walls).

[3] Better a quick death than the humiliation that would follow (culminating in a slow death).

[4] For the prisoners to be free and not run was <u>really</u> supernatural! The jailor understands that he is in the presence of a higher power.

[5] Philippi was not all that large, and the members of his household would be information gatherers. He was doubtless aware of the slave girl's 'advertising', etc.

[6] Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit 'Christ' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[7] Very appropriate—he washed their wounds and restored their dignity, so they could baptize him. Note again that baptism followed immediately. (Would there have been enough water there to dunk them? Probably not.) Note that everyone in the family was baptized, which would put them under Christ's protection, but that procedure was imposed by the head of the household, whether or not there was personal commitment to Jesus on the part of each one.

[8] The officers were still there. Paul decided to give the magistrates a much-needed lesson, but then acquiesced in leaving the city without further fuss.

magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans; 39and they came and appealed to them, and leading them out they asked them to leave the city. 40So departing from the prison they entered Lydia's place, and upon seeing the brothers they encouraged them and departed.

Thessalonica

17 1Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2So Paul, as was his custom, went in to them and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3explaining and demonstrating that the Messiah had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and that "this Jesus whom I proclaim to you is the Messiah." 4Some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of devout Greeks and not a few of the prominent women.

5But the disobedient Jews[1] rounded up some wicked men from the marketplace, and forming a mob they created an uproar in the city; and attacking the house of Jason, they wanted to bring them out to the crowd. 6But not finding them they dragged Jason and some other brothers before the city officials vociferating: "These who have upset the whole world[2] have come here too, 7to whom Jason has given lodging. These all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king—Jesus." 8Well they agitated the crowd and the city officials when they heard these things. 9Then they took a security bond from Jason and the rest and let them go.

Berea

10Immediately, during the night, the brothers sent both Paul and Silas away to Berea; on arriving they went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all good-will, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things might be so.[3] 12Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men. 13But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the Word of God was also being proclaimed by Paul in Berea, they came too, agitating the crowds. 14So then, without delay, the brothers sent Paul away, as if to go by sea, while both Silas and Timothy remained there. 15But those who were conducting Paul actually took him all the way to Athens;[4] and receiving a command to Silas and Timothy that they

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1 They were fundamentally disobedient to God, and so fell in with Satan's agenda. (Some 20% of the Greek manuscripts add 'becoming envious', but they do so in a variety of ways—the confusion is reflected in the versions.)

2 Of course this was not intended as a compliment, but I personally wouldn't mind having this epithet/ epitaph on my tombstone (if I ever have one).

3 So I wonder why Paul wrote to the Thessalonians and not to the Bereans.

4 They started toward the sea, to mislead any pursuers, but actually went overland to Athens; his escort stayed with him all the way.

should come to him as quickly as possible, they started back.

Athens

16Now while Paul was waiting for them in Athens, his spirit was increasingly aroused within him as he observed that the city was full of idols. 17So he reasoned both in the synagogue with the Jews and devout persons, and in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. 18Then certain philosophers, both Epicureans and Stoics, encountered him. Some said, "What might this idea-scavenger[1] want to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign deities"—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. 19So taking him in tow they led him to the Areopagus and said: "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? 20Because you are bringing some strange things to our ears, and we would like to know what they might mean."[2] 21(Now all Athenians and resident foreigners spent their time in nothing else but to tell, or else to hear, some novelty.)

Paul's Areopagus address

22So standing in the middle of the Areopagus Paul said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; 23because as I went along and scrutinized the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO UNKNOWN GOD. Now then, the one you worship as 'unknown', this is the One I proclaim to you: 24The God who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples built by hands, 25neither is He cared for by men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself has always given life and breath to all.[3] 26And from one blood[4] He made every ethnic nation of men to dwell on all the surface of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings,[5] 27so that they should seek the Lord,[6] if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28because in Him we live and move and have our being.[7] As also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also his offspring.'[8] 29Therefore, since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divinity is like gold or silver or stone—something shaped by human skill and

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1 They were not trying to be nice.

2 Here they are reasonably polite.

3 I would say that Paul illustrates the best strategy to use with an audience that has no biblical background—start with the Sovereign Creator. Note that Paul affirms that everyone owes his life to Him.

4 Modern medicine has discovered this to be true; blood transfusions across racial boundaries are perfectly possible. So how could Paul have known that 2,000 years ago? Some 4.5% of the Greek manuscripts omit 'blood' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

5 God is involved in human history. Paul may have been thinking of Deuteronomy 32:8.

6 Instead of 'the Lord', some 45% of the Greek manuscripts read 'God' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

7 Here is a fundamental truth, whether people recognize it or not. All God has to do is deprive you of oxygen for a few minutes and you die. See Job 12:10.

8 Paul demonstrated a knowledge of their literature.

imagination.[1] 30Such times of ignorance God did indeed overlook, but
now He commands all people everywhere to repent, 31because He has
appointed a day in which He will judge the inhabited world in righteous-
ness by the Man whom He has ordained; He has given assurance of this
to all by raising Him from the dead."[2]

32Well when they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some
started scoffing,[3] while others said, "We will hear you again about this."[4]
33And with that Paul went out from among them.[5] 34However some men
believed and joined him, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, also a
woman named Damaris, and others with them.

Consolidation of the Gentile Church

Corinth

1Now after these things Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. 2And
18 encountering a certain Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who
had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius
had ordered all the Jews to depart from Rome), he joined them; 3and
because he practiced the same trade, he stayed on with them and worked
(their trade was tentmaker).[6] 4Every Sabbath in the synagogue he would
reason with both Jews and Greeks, trying to persuade them.

5But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul
was constrained by the Spirit,[7] solemnly insisting to the Jews: Jesus is
the Christ.[8] 6But since they kept contradicting and blaspheming, he
shook his clothes[9] and said to them: "Your blood be upon your own heads!
I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

The house of Justus becomes the base

7So he moved from there into the house of a man named Justus, a
worshiper of God, whose house was next door to the synagogue. 8Then
Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his
household; and as they were hearing, many of the Corinthians were

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1 If we are God's offspring, He must have all the capabilities we have, only bigger and better; and we are not metal or stone.

2 The resurrection of Jesus is central to our Faith for several reasons. Here Paul says it guarantees that we will be judged, righteously.

3 Satan hates the resurrection, and people controlled by him almost always react adversely to it (as Festus will do in chapter 26).

4 Evidently they never got another chance. People who try to impose their agenda on God usually do not do very well.

5 Corinth became the hub of the Church for Greece, not Athens (see 18:11 below).

6 Paul supported himself.

7 Instead of 'Spirit', some 6% of the Greek manuscripts read 'word' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.)

8 Paul could now turn physical details over to Silas and Timothy (who evidently did not get to Athens before Paul left there) and concentrate on the spiritual. The Holy Spirit has him really bear down on the Jews, obliging them to make a choice. Paul then turned his full attention to the Gentile population.

9 The idea was presumably to get rid of any dust; this was far less serious than shaking the dust off the feet, but he was clearly severing 'diplomatic relations' with them.

believing and being baptized. 9Now the Lord said to Paul by a vision at night: "Do not be afraid; rather speak and do not keep silent, 10because I am with you and no one will attack you to harm you,[1] because I have many people in this city." 11So he stayed on for a year and six months, teaching the Word of God among them.[2]

Gallio

12Now while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat, 13saying, "This fellow persuades the people to worship God contrary to the law." 14But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews: "If there really was some misdeed or wicked crime, O Jews, there would be reason for me to bear with you; 15but since it is an issue over a word and names and your own law, see to it yourselves; because I refuse to be a judge of such matters." 16And he drove them from the judgment seat. 17Then all the Greeks[3] took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue,[4] and beat him in front of the judgment seat. But none of this was a delay to Gallio.[5]

To Ephesus and Antioch

18Paul still remained there a good while, then took leave of the brothers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila (he had shaved his head in Cenchrea, because he had a vow).[6] 19He came to Ephesus and left them there (after having entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews). 20When they asked him to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent; 21rather he took leave of them saying, "I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem;[7] but I will return again to you, God willing."[8] Then he set sail from Ephesus.

22When he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up and greeted the church [in Jerusalem],[9] he returned to Antioch. 23After spending some

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1 He had been stoned and left for dead in Lystra, and been severely beaten in Philippi, so this was doubtless an encouraging word.

2 They got a reasonably good theological education, which, however, did not exempt them from problems. It is not enough to know the truth; it must be lived, it must be applied.

3 Less than 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit 'the Greeks' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

4 Since Crispus had 'defected' to Christianity, he was replaced as ruler of the synagogue by Sosthenes.

5 Instead of 'delay', some 15% of the Greek manuscripts read 'concern', as in most versions. Gallio was doubtless a busy man, with his own plans, and did not want to be detained.

6 Apparently such a vow could only be brought to a satisfactory conclusion in the temple at Jerusalem. I take it that this was a leftover from his Jewish religion.

7 Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit 'I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

8 In fact, God did will it.

9 Because Jerusalem was at a higher elevation than most of the rest of the country, travel to and from there is almost always described as 'up to' and 'down from'.

time there, he departed and went through the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

Apollos

24Now a certain Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, an eloquent man, mighty in the Scriptures, arrived in Ephesus. **25**This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in the Spirit he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus,[1] although he knew only the baptism of John. **26**So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

27When he decided to go across into Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to receive him;[2] upon arriving he was a great help to those who had believed through the Grace; **28**because he kept refuting the Jews vigorously, publicly, demonstrating Jesus to be the Christ, from the Scriptures.[3]

Back to Ephesus

19 **1**Now it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul, having passed through the upper country, came to Ephesus.

Disciples of John

And finding certain disciples **2**he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "But we have not so much as heard that there is a Holy Spirit!" **3**So he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism."[4] **4**So Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe into the One who would come after him, that is, into Jesus, the Christ."[5] **5**So upon hearing this they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. **6**And as Paul laid his hands on them the Holy Spirit came upon them,[6] and they started speaking languages and prophesying. **7**There were about twelve men in all.

The school of Tyrannus becomes the base

8During three months Paul kept going to the synagogue and speaking boldly, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the Kingdom of God. **9**But when some became hardened and disobedient, maligning the Way before the crowd, he withdrew from them and separated the

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[1] I follow the best line of transmission in reading 'Jesus'; some 65% of the Greek manuscripts read 'the Lord', as in AV and NKJV.

[2] Letters of introduction are a good safeguard against opportunists.

[3] Since he explained the Scriptures the same way that Paul did, it was no longer just one man's interpretation.

[4] Perhaps they were the result of some of Apollos' early ministry. Paul evidently sensed that there was something lacking in them.

[5] Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit 'the Christ' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[6] This was an important confirmation that Paul's clarification was correct.

disciples, reasoning daily in the school of a certain Tyrannus.[1] 10Now this continued for two years, so that all who lived in Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the Word of the Lord Jesus.[2]

11Further, God kept working unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, 12so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that he touched were applied to the sick, and the diseases left them and the wicked spirits went out from them.[3]

Some fake exorcists

13Well some among the itinerant Jewish exorcists attempted to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had wicked spirits saying, "We adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." 14In fact there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who were doing this. 15But a particular wicked spirit reacted and said, "Jesus I know, and I am acquainted with Paul, but who are you?" 16And the man in whom the wicked spirit was jumped on them and overpowered them; he was so much stronger that they ran out of that house naked and wounded. 17Now this became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was being exalted.

18And many of those who had believed started coming, confessing and disclosing their practices. 19In fact, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them up, in front of everybody[4] (they had calculated their value and it totaled fifty thousand *pieces* of silver). 20With power like that it was that the word of the Lord kept growing and prevailing.

21Now after these things were accomplished, Paul resolved in his spirit to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."[5] 22So he sent two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, on to Macedonia, while he himself stayed on in Asia for a time.

Demetrius

23Now it was during that time that a serious disturbance concerning the Way occurred. 24A certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, habitually brought in plenty of business for the artisans; 25he called them together, along with the workmen in related trades, and said: "Men, you know that our prosperity depends on this trade. 26And you observe and hear that not only in Ephesus but throughout almost all Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that hand-made things are not gods.

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1 Paul had already done this sort of thing in Corinth; it was a good strategy.

2 Perhaps 13% of the Greek manuscripts omit 'Jesus' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

3 This sort of thing is definitely 'news', and it would spread far and wide.

4 When people start doing this, you know their faith is real, and to do it in public would really have an impact on the populace (that was a lot of money!).

5 His apostolic spirit wanted not only Rome, but Spain (Romans 15:28).

27So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute,[1] but
also the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be discredited, and
even her own majesty be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world
worship."

28Now upon hearing this they were filled with anger and began
shouting, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" 29So the whole city was
filled with confusion, and they rushed into the theater with one accord
(they had seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul's traveling
companions). 30When Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples
would not let him. 31Even some of the officials of Asia, being his friends,
sent word to him and urged him not to venture into the theater.[2] 32The
assembly was in confusion: some were shouting one thing and some
another; most of them did not know why they had come together. 33Then
the Jews pushed Alexander forward,[3] out from the crowd. So Alexander
motioned with his hand and would have made a defense to the people.
34But when they realized he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for
about two hours,[4] "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

35When the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said: "Men of Ephe-
sus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians
is temple guardian of the great goddess Artemis and of what fell from
Zeus?[5] 36Therefore, since these things are undeniable, you ought to be
quiet and not do anything rash. 37You have arrested these men who are
neither temple thieves nor blasphemers of your goddess. 38Now if Dem-
etrius and his fellow artisans have a complaint against anyone, courts
are available, and there are proconsuls; let them bring charges against
one another. 39But if you want to debate any other matter, it will be
settled in the legal assembly. 40Indeed, we are in danger of being charged
with a riot, because of today, there being no reason at all that we can
give to account for this commotion." 41And having said these things he
dismissed the assembly.

Paul makes his own plans

Greece

20 1Now after the uproar had ended, Paul summoned the disciples, took
leave of them, and set out for Macedonia. 2When he had gone
through those parts and encouraged them with many words, he came
into Greece. 3When he had stayed three months, as he was about to set
sail for Syria, the Jews made a plot against him, so he decided to return
through Macedonia. 4Now Sopater of Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus

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1 The crucial point was the threat to their finances, not that to Diana's reputation!
2 After two years of fruitful ministry, some of the city officials would have converted, or at least appreciate the healing and deliverance he had brought.
3 I wonder whether those Jews were friends or foes, and what they hoped to achieve.
4 How could their voices last for two hours? And what animated them to keep on going for so long? I suspect there was a little demonic participation.
5 They had an image that reputedly had fallen intact from the sky.

of the Thessalonians, Gaius of Derbe, Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia were going to accompany him as far as Asia;[1] **5**so having gone on ahead, these men were waiting for us[2] in Troas. **6**But it was after the Days of Unleavened Bread that we sailed from Philippi, and in five days we joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days.

Troas

7Now on the first day of the week,[3] the disciples being assembled to break bread, Paul started addressing them, and because he intended to leave the next day he continued his message until midnight. **8**There were many lamps in the upper room where we[4] were assembled. **9**Well a certain young man named Eutychus sat in a window and was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul kept on talking; when he was overcome by the sleep he fell down from the third story and was picked up dead. **10**So Paul went down, threw himself on him and embracing him said, "Do not be distressed, because his life is in him!" **11**Then he went back up and broke bread, ate, and kept on speaking until daybreak—that is how he left! **12**(On their part, they led the boy away alive, and were greatly comforted.)[5]

13As for us, we went to the ship and set sail for Assos, intending to take Paul on board there—so it had been arranged, he himself intending to go on foot.[6] **14**When he met us at Assos we took him aboard and went on to Mityline. **15**Sailing from there, the next day we arrived opposite Chios, and the day after we crossed over to Samos and stopped in Trogylium;[7] the following day we came to Miletus. **16**(Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, to avoid being detained in Asia, because he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, if he possibly could.)

Miletus

17From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and summoned the elders of the

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[1] Just 1.1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit 'as far as Asia' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[2] At this point Luke joins Paul again, and will stay with him until he gets to Rome, several years later.

[3] Note that the disciples are meeting on Sunday.

[4] Instead of "we", perhaps 15% of the Greek manuscripts have 'they' (as in AV and NKJV).

[5] One gets the impression that Paul simply imposed his will on the local congregation (he had already taken the bit in his teeth and was doing things his own way). They let him do it, but were probably relieved when he left. Apparently they walked Eutychus back to his home.

[6] His baggage went on the boat, so he walked without a load—good exercise.

[7] Samos is an island, so Trogylium was presumably a settlement on that island (though we are no longer sure just where it was). Some 6% of the Greek manuscripts omit 'and stopped in Trogylium' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

congregation.[1] 18So when they had come to him he said to them: "You yourselves know, from the first day that I arrived in Asia, how I lived the whole time I was with you, 19serving the Lord with all humility, and with many tears and trials, the ones that happened to me by the plots of the Jews; 20how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, teaching you publicly and from house to house, 21solemnly proclaiming to both Jews and Greeks the repentance toward God and the faith into our Lord Jesus.[2] 22Now then, I am going to Jerusalem bound in my spirit,[3] not knowing the things that will happen to me there, 23except that the Holy Spirit keeps warning me in every city, saying that fetters and afflictions are just waiting for me. 24However none of this moves me, nor do I regard my life as valuable to myself,[4] just so that I may complete my course with joy,[5] even the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to solemnly proclaim the Good News of the grace of God.

25"Furthermore, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the Kingdom of God[6] will ever see my face again.[7] 26Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all; 27because I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.[8] 28So take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers, to shepherd the congregation of the Lord and God[9] which He purchased with His own blood. 29Because I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30Yes, men will rise up from among you yourselves, speaking distorted things, to draw away the disciples after them.[10] 31Therefore be alert, remembering that during three years, night and day,[11] I never stopped admonishing each one, with tears.

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[1] The distance was some 30 miles, as the crow flies, and the elders had not received advance warning, so at least two days would have elapsed before they arrived (even if the messenger ran, the elders would not).

[2] Some 25% of the Greek manuscripts add 'Christ', as in AV and NKJV.

[3] This was his own spirit, not the Holy Spirit, as the next verse makes clear. I have a hard time trying to understand what happened to Paul. The Holy Spirit kept telling him not to go to Jerusalem, but he is bound and determined to go anyway, only to spend years of his life in chains. Why did he do it?

[4] Paul's statement is a *non sequitur*. When the Holy Spirit gives repeated warnings, He is telling us to STOP!

[5] How can you complete your course with joy if you are disobedient? He is not thinking clearly. Some 3% of the Greek manuscripts omit 'with joy' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[6] Some 3% of the Greek manuscripts omit 'of God' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, etc.).

[7] How did he know this?

[8] The congregation in Ephesus had been very well grounded indeed, but even so they lost their 'lampstand' (Revelation 2:5).

[9] The sheep belong to the Lord, not to the elders. Some 7% of the Greek manuscripts omit 'the Lord and', as in most versions. "The Lord and God" refers to Jesus.

[10] Whenever you see someone trying to create his own group of followers, beware!

[11] I suppose Paul is saying he was always available.

32"And so now, brothers, I entrust you to God and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all those who have been sanctified.[1] 33I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. 34You yourselves know that these hands have supplied my own needs, and of those who were with me.[2] 35In every way I showed you that working hard like this it is necessary to help the weak, and to remember the word of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"[3]

36When he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. 37Then they all wept freely, and falling on Paul's neck kept kissing him, 38sorrowing most of all because of the word that he had spoken, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.

Paul is warned—<u>again</u>

21 1So after disengaging ourselves from them we were able to set sail, and running a straight course, we came to Cos, and the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. 2We found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, went on board and set sail. 3When we had sighted Cyprus we passed it on the left, sailed on to Syria and landed at Tyre, because it was there that the ship was to unload the cargo. 4Upon finding disciples we stayed there seven days; these, through the Spirit, told Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.[4] 5But when our time was up, as we left to go on our way, they all, including women and children,[5] accompanied us out of the city, and kneeling down on the beach, we prayed. 6After we had taken our leave of one another, we boarded the ship and they returned to their homes.

7Now upon arriving in Ptolemais, the voyage from Tyre ended; so greeting the brothers we stayed with them one day. 8Leaving the next day, we[6] came to Caesarea; and entering the house of Philip the evangelist (being of 'the Seven'), we stayed with him. 9(This man had four virgin daughters who prophesied.)[7]

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1 Yes. When we receive God's Word as having objective authority over us, and interpret it honestly under the Holy Spirit's direction (without preconceived doctrinal 'packages'), we will indeed grow in understanding and sanctification.

2 He did receive offerings from time to time, but material gain was never an objective.

3 This precise statement is not recorded in the Gospels, but Paul got it from one of those who actually heard it. It is an important truth. (Compare Luke 14:12-14.)

4 After repeated warnings, God plainly tells Paul not to go! What sort of mental block might Paul have had that would cause him to disobey a plain command?

5 Luke makes a point of recording that even the children went along—interesting. Evidently those families actively involved their children in their practice of the Christian Faith. Now that is an excellent example!

6 AV and NKJV have 'we who were Paul's companions', based on some 13% of the Greek manuscripts. Some 46% have 'those who were Paul's companions'. I follow the best line of transmission, with some 39% here, in reading "we".

7 What does this information contribute to the account? Why are we told that they were virgins? Is it risky to marry a prophetess?

Agabus, again

10Now as we stayed there a number of days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11Joining us he took Paul's belt, bound his feet and hands, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit: 'In this way, in Jerusalem, the Jews will bind the man who owns this belt, and will deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" 12Well, when we heard these things, both we and the local residents, we kept pleading with him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13But Paul answered: "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die[1] in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." 14When he would not be dissuaded, we stopped, saying, "Let the will of the Lord be done."[2]

Jerusalem

15So after those days we got ready and went up to Jerusalem. 16Some of the disciples from Caesarea also went with us, bringing us to a certain Mnason, of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to lodge. 17And when we arrived in Jerusalem the brothers received us gladly. 18The next day Paul, with us, went to see James, and all the elders were present.[3] 19After greeting them he reported one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

Paul submits to a false agenda

20But after listening they 'glorified' the Lord[4] by saying to him:[5] "You see, brother, how many tens of thousands are the Jews who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; 21but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to our customs.[6] 22What then? The assembly will certainly gather,[7] since they will hear that you have come. 23So do this that we say to you: There are four men with us who have taken a vow. 24Take them and purify yourself with them and pay their expenses so that they

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1 His being willing to suffer and die was totally beside the point—God told him not to go!

2 What else could they do, short of tying Paul up? However, they were asking the Lord to overrule.

3 This was obviously a put-up job. They were ready and waiting for him.

4 Instead of 'the Lord', some 30% of the Greek manuscripts read 'God' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

5 They listened politely, but had a different agenda. What follows is an obvious 'put down'. There probably were not 'tens of thousands' of believing Jews, and if they were genuine followers of Jesus Christ, they should not have been so bound to Jewish customs. Besides 'putting Paul in his place' they were imposing a false legalism on him, to which he should not have capitulated. But he was disobeying God anyway, just by being there.

6 I suspect that this was a false charge. There is no record that James did anything whatsoever to help Paul after he was arrested. I wonder if the Jews were tipped off that Paul would be in the temple.

7 Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit 'the assembly will gather' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

may shave their heads, and that all may know that there is nothing to the things that they have been informed about you; rather that you yourself are in line, keeping the law. 25But concerning the Gentiles who believe we have written, having judged that they need observe no such thing, except[1] that they should keep themselves from that offered to idols, from the blood, from anything strangled, and from fornication."[2]

Paul arrested

26Then Paul took the men and purified himself with them; the next day he entered the temple to give notice of the completion of the days of purification, when the offering would be made for each one of them. 27Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, having seen him in the temple, mobilized a whole crowd and seized him, 28shouting: "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place. Not only that, he has even brought Greeks into the temple and defiled this holy place!" 29(They had seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple.)

30The whole city was aroused and a mob of people formed. So having seized Paul they dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut. 31As they were trying to kill him,[3] news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. 32He immediately took soldiers and centurions and ran down among them, and when they saw the commander and the soldiers they stopped beating Paul. 33Then the commander came up and took hold of him,[4] commanded that he be bound with two chains, and started inquiring who he was and what he had done. 34Well some in the crowd shouted one thing and some another; so when he could not ascertain the truth, because of the uproar, he commanded him to be taken into the barracks. 35When he reached the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers, because of the violence of the mob.[5] 36Because the crowd kept following and shouting,

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[1] Some 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit 'that they need observe no such thing except' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[2] What happened here was exceedingly serious: to James there were two classes of Christian, Jew and non-Jew. He still sees the Jew as superior to the Gentile, which is contrary to the doctrine of the Church as expounded in Paul's letters, that we believe to be inspired. To James it was not enough for a Jew to believe into Jesus; he still had to obey the Law of Moses **and** the Jewish customs. This was evidently the prevailing view in Jerusalem and environs. Such a view actually represented rebellion against God. Then came judgment: Jerusalem was destroyed, which included its church, and the Aegean area became the heartland of the Church. For centuries Judea was no more than a backwater on the fringes of the Christian river.

[3] Why didn't they succeed? Maybe they got in each other's way (but probably God didn't allow it).

[4] I like this commander; he did not hide behind his men. This was a *chiliarch*, who commanded up to a thousand men.

[5] But since they had really been trying to kill him, he was doubtless wounded and weak.

"Away with him!"[1]

37As Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the commander, "May I speak to you?" So he said: "Do you know Greek? 38Aren't you the Egyptian who some time ago started a revolt and led the four thousand men of 'the Assassins' out into the wilderness?" 39But Paul said, "I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of a not insignificant city; but I beg you, allow me to speak to the people." 40So when he had given him permission, Paul stood on the stairs and motioned to the people with his hand. When there was a great silence, he addressed them in the Hebrew language, saying:

Paul addresses the mob

22 1"Men, brothers and fathers, listen to my defense before you now." 2When they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they were even more quiet, and he said: 3"I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, educated strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, just as you all are today. 4I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, 5as also the high priest and all the council of elders can bear me witness. I even obtained letters from them to the brothers in Damascus, to bring those also who were there bound to Jerusalem to be punished. 6Now it happened, as I was going and approaching Damascus, about noon, suddenly a strong light from heaven shone around me. 7I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' 8So I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' He said to me, 'I am Jesus the Natsorean,[2] whom you are persecuting.' 9Those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid,[3] but they did not understand the voice of the One speaking to me. 10So I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told about all that has been appointed to you to do.' 11And since I could not see, because of the brightness of that light, I entered Damascus being led by the hand of those who were with me.[4] 12Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well-spoken of by all the Jews who lived in Damascus,[5] 13came to me, and standing by me said, 'Brother

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[1] But really, why should they be so stirred up? Presumably there was supernatural participation.

[2] The glorified Jesus did not say 'Nazarene', He said "Natsorean"; He presented Himself to Saul as the Messiah. For a fuller discussion, please see "The Natsorean" on my website: www.prunch.org.

[3] Some 10% of the Greek manuscripts omit 'and were afraid' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[4] But they too had been in that light, so the blindness was a judgment applied specifically to Paul (Saul).

[5] Paul is establishing the credibility of Ananias as a witness, since he will attest that it was 'the God of our fathers' who was dealing with Paul (Saul). Some 25% of the Greek manuscripts omit 'in Damascus', as in most versions.

Saul, receive your sight!' And at that very moment I looked up at him. 14Then he said: 'The God of our fathers has chosen you to know His will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear words from His mouth.[1] 15For you shall be a witness for Him to all men of the things that you have seen and heard. 16And now, why hesitate? Get up, be baptized and wash away your sins, invoking the name of the Lord.'[2]

17"Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I came to be in a trance 18and saw Him saying to me,[3] 'Hurry up and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not receive your testimony concerning me.' 19So I said: 'Lord, they know that I used to imprison and beat those believing into you,[4] from one synagogue to another; 20and when the blood of your witness Stephen was shed, I myself was standing there and agreeing to his murder,[5] even guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.' 21And He said to me, 'Get going, because I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'"

A Roman citizen

22Well they kept listening to him until this statement, and then they raised their voice and shouted, "Rid the earth of this fellow, for it isn't fitting for him to live!" 23As they were shouting, tearing off clothes and throwing dust into the air, 24the commander ordered him to be taken into the barracks, directing that he be interrogated with lashes, in order to learn for what crime they kept shouting against him like that.[6] 25But as they stretched him out with the thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?" 26Well when the centurion heard that, he went and

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[1] Jesus had identified Himself as 'Jesus' on the road and was obviously supernatural. Here Ananias confirms that Saul saw the Messiah ('the Natsorean') and adds that all is under the Father's direction. Saul was chosen to be a world-wide witness; indeed, through his letters he continues to be one!

[2] By invoking the Lord, he was placing himself under His direction and protection, but also believing into Him, which was what took care of his sins, not the baptism. There probably was not enough water in the house for a complete bath, in any case, so the baptism was by aspersion (as it was in the house of Cornelius, the house of the Philippian jailor, etc. etc.). Instead of 'of the Lord', some 6% of the Greek manuscripts read 'his' (as in NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.).

[3] This is the only record we have of this encounter. Perhaps Paul is reinforcing that his going to the Gentiles was at God's insistence. I wonder if Luke wasn't in that crowd, and close enough to hear what went on.

[4] I follow the best line of transmission in reading "into", albeit with only 20% of the Greek manuscripts here. Almost all versions follow the 80% in reading 'upon'.

[5] Some 2.3% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit 'to his murder' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, etc.).

[6] Poor commander! He presumably did not understand Hebrew, so Paul's speech meant nothing to him. But he saw that the mob listened quietly, and then suddenly erupted! He had already tried to get an answer from the mob, without success. He doubtless did not understand the Jewish mindset either, so by Roman logic Paul must have done something pretty awful to provoke such a violent reaction. So by proper Roman procedure, he orders a flogging.

reported to the commander saying, "Consider[1] what you are about to do, because this man is a Roman!" 27So the commander went and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman?" So he said, "Yes." 28The commander replied, "I acquired this citizenship at considerable cost."[2] And Paul said, "But I was so born." 29So those who were about to interrogate him withdrew immediately; and even the commander was apprehensive when he realized that he had put chains on a Roman.[3]

The Sanhedrin

30But the next day, desiring to know for certain why he was accused by the Jews, he freed him from the bonds[4] and ordered the chief priests and all their council to come, and brought Paul down and set him before them.

23 1Then Paul, looking intently at the council, said, "Men, brothers, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." 2So the high priest Ananias commanded those standing by him to strike his mouth. 3Then Paul said to him: "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall![5] You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you command me to be struck contrary to the law!" 4So those standing by said, "Do you reproach God's high priest?" 5Then Paul said, "I did not know, brothers, that he is high priest; for it is written: 'Do not speak evil of a ruler of your people.'"[6]

6Now when Paul perceived that one part were Pharisees and the other Sadducees,[7] he called out in the council, "Men, brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of a Pharisee; I am being judged concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead!" 7When he had said this, an argument started between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided.[8] 8(Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel or spirit, but Pharisees confess both.)[9] 9There was a great clamor, and the scribes of the Pharisee party stood up and started arguing vigorously, saying, "We find nothing wrong with this man; but if a spirit or angel has spoken

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1 Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit "Consider" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

2 He was not just making conversation; he was trying to be sure that Paul was not lying.

3 Perhaps the reference is to the 'when' and 'how' they were first used, since chains became part of Paul's life.

4 Some 10% of the Greek manuscripts omit 'from the bonds' (as in NIV and NASB).

5 One is reminded of the Lord's calling the Pharisees 'whitewashed tombs' (Matthew 23:27); what Paul said was probably not as bad, but definitely not a compliment!

6 See Exodus 22:28. Ananias was presumably the true high priest, but someone else was probably the political 'high priest' that year, and the political one would be wearing the priestly attire; presumably that is why Paul did not recognize the real high priest. Note that he sort of apologizes, but he does not revoke the curse!

7 I follow the best line of transmission in putting 'Pharisees' first; 80% of the Greek manuscripts reverse the order, as in most versions.

8 That was presumably Paul's intention, only the situation got out of hand!

9 The Greek term here means precisely 'both'; angel and spirit are treated as a single category.

to him, let us not fight against God!"[1] 10Well the dissension became such that the commander, fearing that Paul might be torn in pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and snatch him out of their midst and bring him into the barracks.

A plot exposed

11Now the following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Take courage, Paul, because as you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome."[2] 12And when it was day, some of the Jews formed a conspiracy by binding themselves with a curse neither to eat nor to drink until they had destroyed Paul.[3] 13Now there were more than forty who formed this plot. 14They came to the chief priests and the elders and said: "We have bound ourselves with a terrible curse not to taste anything until we have killed Paul. 15Now you, therefore, together with the council, explain to the commander that he should bring him down to you tomorrow, as though you are going to determine more accurately the facts in his case; but we are ready to destroy him before he comes near."

16But when Paul's sister's son heard about the ambush, he went and entered the barracks and told Paul. 17So Paul called one of the centurions and said, "Take this young man to the commander, because he has something to tell him." 18So he took him and brought him to the commander and said, "Paul the prisoner called me over and asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you." 19So taking him by the hand,[4] the commander went aside and asked privately, "What is it that you have to tell me?" 20So he said: "The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down to the council tomorrow as though intending to inquire somewhat more accurately concerning him. 21But you should not believe them, because more than forty of their men are lying in wait for him, who have bound themselves with a curse neither to eat nor to drink until they have destroyed him; even now they are ready, looking for your promise." 22Then the commander dismissed the young man commanding, "Don't tell anyone that you have revealed these things to me!"

Paul sent to Felix

23Summoning two of the centurions he said: "Prepare two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen[5] to go to

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[1] Some 4.5% of the Greek manuscripts omit 'let us not fight against God' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[2] Paul is in Jerusalem in disobedience against a clear divine prohibition, and things definitely are not going well. God appears to Paul and assures him that he will indeed get to Rome [although he is not going to enjoy the trip!].

[3] When the plot failed, they presumably did eat and drink and resume normal life, but I wonder if they suffered any consequences of the curse.

[4] This is cute! The commander has a sense of humor.

[5] A centurion commanded 100 men, so there were probably at least five centurions that set out with Paul.

Caesarea at the third hour of the night;[1] 24and provide mounts to set Paul on so as to deliver him safely[2] to Felix, the governor." 25He wrote a letter with this content:

> 26"Claudius Lysias, to the most excellent governor Felix: Greetings. 27This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them; but I came with the troops and rescued him, having learned that he is a Roman.[3] 28And wanting to know the reason they were accusing him, I took him down to their council. 29I found that he was being accused about questions of their law, but there was no accusation worthy of death or bonds. 30When I was told that the Jews[4] were about to execute a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once, also directing his accusers to state the charges against him before you. Farewell."

31So the soldiers, according to their orders, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris. 32The next day they left the horsemen to go on with him and returned to the barracks.[5] 33When they entered Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him. 34When the governor read it, he asked what province he was from; learning that it was Cilicia, 35he said, "I will give you a hearing when your accusers also arrive." And he commanded him to be guarded in Herod's Praetorium.[6]

Caesarea

Felix

24 1Now after five days the high priest Ananias went down with the elders and a certain orator, Tertullus, and they informed the governor against Paul.[7] 2So when he had been called in, Tertullus began his accusation, saying: "Seeing that by you we enjoy much peace, and your foresight has brought prosperity to this nation, 3we recognize this, most noble Felix, with full gratitude, always and everywhere. 4But so as not to detain you unduly, I would request that you be kind enough to hear us briefly. 5We have found this man to be a plague, a creator of discord

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1 Earlier in the book, referring to the Jewish hour of prayer, Hebrew time is used, and on that basis this would be 9 p.m. But I find it scarcely credible that a Roman commander (not a Jew) addressing his troops (none of whom were Jews) would use Hebrew time; I would expect him to use Roman time, which would make it 3 a.m. (People would still be awake at 9 p.m., but not at 3 a.m.)

2 Why more than one horse for Paul? Was he allowing for the chance that they might have to run for it? Well, the nature of the curse implied some level of desperation, and 40+ desperate men could cause unforeseen complications.

3 Nothing like stretching the truth to make yourself look good.

4 Perhaps 11% of the Greek manuscripts omit 'the Jews' and 'about to' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, etc.).

5 Horsemen could move faster without the footmen, and presumably the greatest danger had been in and near Jerusalem.

6 The quarters would be reasonably decent, not a dungeon.

7 This effort represented a considerable inconvenience. They were really determined.

among all the Jews throughout the world,[1] a ringleader of the Natsorean sect, **6**and he even tried to profane the temple; so we arrested him.[2] **8**By examining him yourself you may ascertain all these things of which we accuse him." **9**And the Jews also joined in the attack, affirming that these things were so.

10When the governor had nodded to him to speak, Paul answered: "Knowing, as I do, that you have been an equitable[3] judge of this nation for many years, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself, **11**because

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[1] Wow! They are giving Paul a reputation!

[2] We have here a bothersome set of variants, and the only way to do justice to the situation is to give the evidence in Greek. Even those who do not read Greek can get some notion as to the high level of confusion. The translation of the addition (more or less) may be had from AV or NKJV.

1) (without the long addition) $\mathbf{f}^{35}$ ℵA,B (58.9%) HF,RP,NU

2) - 36): *7 και κατα τον ημιετερον νομον ηθελησαμεν κριναι παρελθσν δε λυσιας ο χιλιαρχος μετα πολλης βιας εκ την χειρων ημων αρηγαγεν κελευσας τους κατηγορους αυτου ερχεσθαι επι σε*. The five principle variations hinge on the three underlined words; they are:

2) *κριναι … επι σε*	(9.7%)	[6 variants]
8) *κριναι … επι σου*	(10.5%)	[14 variants]
22) *κριναι … προς σε*	(5.3%)	[8 variants]
30) *κρινειν … επι σου*	(4.4%)	[4 variants]
34) *κρινειν … επι σε*	(1.7%) OC,TR	[3 variants] [OC is in small print]

37) replaces *απηγαγεν* with five words, plus two other changes:

κριναι … επι σου	(3.2%)	[2 variants]

39) completely rewrites the material:

κριναι … προς σε	(3.4%) CP	[6 variants]
(eight further variants)	(2.9%)	[8 variants].

Variant 2) presumably has the best claim to be the standard form of the addition: *κριναι* clearly bests *κρινειν*, *επι* clearly bests *προς, σε* barely bests *σου*. [Although variant 8) appears to be slightly stronger than 2) numerically, the 14 internal variants, compared to 6, effectively diminish its credibility. The main variant in 2) is far stronger than that of 8).] It is also attested by syr and lat^{pt}. However, although some form of the addition commands 41.1% of the MSS, there are no less than 51 variants!

What about the context? The addition makes good sense, and it fits nicely. But, it is not really necessary; that information Felix already knew. The text reads quite well without the addition also. I conclude that the short form was judged to be abrupt or incomplete, giving rise to the addition; presumably the Autograph did not contain it. Since Tertullus was an orator he may well have actually said what is in the addition, plus a good deal more besides, but did Luke write it? (The incidents recorded in Acts were well known by many contemporaries, and there were many written accounts in circulation [Luke 1:1], so it was entirely predictable that a variety of historically correct material would be added, here and there, to Luke's account.)

The external evidence, though divided, is adequate to resolve this case: 58.9% against a severely fragmented 41.1%. The ancient versions, being divided, do not help us much this time. Although 59% is not a strong majority, by any means, still, the severe fragmentation of the 41% sort of leaves variant 1) without a worthy opponent. Variant 1) wins in "Antiquity", "Number", "Variety" and "Continuity", so I have no doubt that it is original. [The reading of the TR, variant 34), really has little to commend it.]

[3] I follow the best line of transmission in reading "equitable", albeit with only 25% of the Greek manuscripts here. Almost all versions follow the 75% in omitting the word.

you can ascertain that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship. 12They did not find me disputing with anyone or stirring up a crowd—not in the temple, not in the synagogues, not around the city. 13Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me. 14But I do profess this to you, that according to the Way that they call a sect, that is how I worship the ancestral God, believing all things that stand written throughout the Law and the Prophets, 15having hope in God, which these themselves also look for, that there will be a resurrection of the dead,[1] both the just and unjust.[2] 16And so I really apply myself to this, always having a clear conscience before both God and men. 17Now after many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation, 18in the midst of which certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, with neither crowd nor confusion. 19They are the ones that had to be here before you and make accusation, if they had anything against me.[3] 20Or let these themselves say what wrong they found in me, when I stood before the council, 21unless it be for this one statement that I called out, standing among them, 'Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you today.'"

22Upon hearing these things Felix, having an accurate knowledge of the things concerning the Way, adjourned the proceedings and said, "When Lysias the commander comes down I will decide your case." 23And he ordered the centurion that Paul should be kept in custody but have some freedom, and not to forbid any of his friends to provide for or to visit him.[4]

24Now after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith into Christ Jesus.[5] 25But as he expounded on righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix became afraid and answered, "Go away for now; when I have occasion I will summon you."[6] 26At the same time he was also hoping that Paul would give him money, that he might release him; so he frequently summoned and conversed with him.

27But after two years, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus; so Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul in prison.[7]

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[1] Some 6.6% of the Greek manuscripts omit 'of the dead' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, etc.).

[2] Everyone will be resurrected, but the two resurrections are very different—which is why Paul applied himself.

[3] According to Roman law, the accusers had to be there.

[4] Both Lysias and Felix knew that Paul was not really guilty; and the Jews had figured out that they were not going to get what they wanted from either of them. Felix should have released Paul, but it was not part of the Plan.

[5] Some 45% of the Greek manuscripts omit 'Jesus', as in AV and NKJV.

[6] To believe into Jesus would require changes that Felix was not prepared to make.

[7] During those two years Paul had been eating at the empire's expense, but apparently this did not represent a problem to Felix. But why did Felix want to do the Jews a favor? Perhaps the Jews could influence the choice of governor.

Festus

25 [1]Now upon assuming the province, after three days Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem. [2]Then the chief priests[1] and the principal men of the Jews informed him against Paul and started importuning him, [3]begging a favor from him, that he would summon him to Jerusalem—preparing an ambush to kill him along the way.[2] [4]However Festus answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, he himself being about to go there shortly. [5]He said, "So let those who are competent among you go down with me; if there is anything against this man, let them accuse him." [6]When he had stayed among them more than ten days, he went down to Caesarea; the next day he sat on the judgment seat and commanded Paul to be brought. [7]When he had come, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem made a circle,[3] bringing against Paul many serious charges that they could not prove, [8]while he defended himself, "Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar did I commit any sin." [9]But Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor,[4] answered Paul by saying, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem to be judged by me there concerning these things?" [10]So Paul said: "I am standing before Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be tried. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as even you know very well.[5] [11]Now if I really am in the wrong and have perpetrated anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die; but if there is nothing to the things of which these are accusing me, no one has the right to give me to them.[6] I appeal to Caesar!" [12]Then Festus, when he had conferred with his counsel, answered: "You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you shall go!"[7]

Agrippa

[13]Now when some days had passed, Agrippa the king and Bernice arrived in Caesarea to congratulate Festus. [14]Since they were spending many days there, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying: "There is a certain man left a prisoner by Felix; [15]about whom, when I was in Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, asking for punishment against him; [16]to whom I answered that it is not

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[1] Some 60% of the Greek manuscripts have 'high priest', as in AV and NKJV.

[2] Those guys were really good haters!

[3] This was presumably a tactic to intimidate, and to form a decent circle would require a number of people. Paul was not impressed, but Festus may have been.

[4] I wonder if those Jews had been involved in the decision to replace Felix (who didn't play ball with them) with Festus. If so, and if Festus was aware that he owed them a favor, that would account for his attitude here.

[5] Paul could tell that Festus was not on the 'up and up'.

[6] Paul knew, and Festus knew, what the Jews had in mind.

[7] I suspect that this took Festus by surprise; and it put him in a bad light—on what basis is he going to send an innocent man to the Emperor? Presumably he could have just released Paul, but that would have turned the Jews against him. And then there was the Plan.

a custom with Romans to deliver any man to destruction[1] before the accused has his accusers face to face and has opportunity for defense against the accusation.[2] 17So when they had assembled here, without any delay, the next day I sat on the judgment seat and commanded the man to be brought. 18When the accusers stood up, they brought no charge against him of such things as I supposed, 19but had certain issues against him about their religion, and about a certain dead Jesus whom Paul affirmed to be living. 20And since I was at a loss how to investigate such matters,[3] I asked whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and be judged there concerning these things. 21But when Paul appealed to be reserved for the decision of the Emperor, I commanded him to be kept until I can send him to Caesar."

22Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I myself would also like to hear the man." So he said, "Tomorrow you shall hear him." 23So the next day, when Agrippa and Bernice had come with great pomp and entered the auditorium, with the commanding officers and the more prominent men of the city, at Festus' command Paul was brought in. 24And Festus said: "King Agrippa, and all you men who are here with us: consider this man,[4] about whom the whole Jewish community petitioned me, both at Jerusalem and here, vociferating that it was not fitting for him to live any longer. 25But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death,[5] besides he himself having appealed to the Emperor, I decided to send him. 26But I have nothing certain to write to my lord concerning him. Therefore I have brought him before all of you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the examination I may have something to write. 27Because it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him."[6]

Paul's defense

26 1Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." So Paul stretched out his hand and began his defense: 2"I consider myself fortunate, King Agrippa, in that I am to make my defense before you this day concerning the things of which I am accused by the Jews, 3especially because you are expert in all the Jewish customs and issues; therefore I beg you to hear me patiently. 4Really, the Jews all know my way of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation in Jerusalem, 5since they have known me for a long time, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived as a Pharisee. 6And now I stand here being

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[1] Some 7.5% of the Greek manuscripts omit 'to destruction' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[2] I wonder if he really said that.

[3] This would likely be true, whether or not it was his motivation at the time.

[4] Festus is not being complimentary.

[5] Festus declares Paul's innocence.

[6] Precisely. Festus is in a pickle (of his own making).

judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers, 7to which our twelve tribes, earnestly serving *God* night and day, hope to attain. It is because of this hope that I am accused by the Jews, King Agrippa. 8Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?[1]

How he persecuted Christians

9"However, I myself thought that I had to perpetrate many things in opposition to the name of Jesus the Natsorean; 10I actually did this in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. 11Yes, I punished them often in every synagogue, trying to force them to blaspheme; I was so excessively enraged against them that I persecuted them even to foreign cities.[2]

How Jesus chose him

12"It was on one of those journeys, as I was going to Damascus with authority and a commission from the chief priests, 13at midday, O king, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven brighter than the sun, blazing around me and those traveling with me. 14Well we all fell to the ground and I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language:[3] 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' 15So I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And He said: 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 16Now get up and stand on your feet; because I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and a witness both of the things you have seen and of the things I will reveal to you, 17delivering you from 'the people' and the ethnic nations, to which I am sending you: 18to open their eyes, so as to bring them back from darkness into light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified, by faith into me.'[4]

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[1] The resurrection was the sticking point.

[2] Paul states his blame very plainly. The trip to Damascus was only "one of those journeys" (verse 12). So far as I know, we have no record of the other journeys.

[3] A conversation between two Jews would naturally be in Hebrew.

[4] Of specific interest to us here is the missionary commission that Paul (he was still Saul) received. Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:15, John 20:21 and Acts 1:8 took place between the resurrection and the ascension, but to commission Paul Jesus returned from Heaven! One other detail deserves special notice—the responsibility that Paul received was primarily concerned with the ethnic nations ("Gentiles" is a translation of the same word that in Matthew 28:19 is rendered "nations"). For these reasons it seems to me that this missionary commission takes on a special importance for us, and the more so for whoever is going to do transcultural work. So let us consider this commission in more detail.

Paul is sent to the nations (defined ethnically), "to open their eyes so as to bring them back from darkness into light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified, by faith in Me."

I rendered the second verb as 'bring back' rather than 'turn' or 'convert' because I take that to be the correct nuance of the Text. It gives the impression that someone is in the wrong place or situation and needs to be brought to the correct one. And now for

19Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision—20first to those in Damascus and Jerusalem, then to all the region of Judea and to the ethnic nations, I still preach: 'repent and turn back to God, doing works worthy of repentance.' 21That is why the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. 22So then, having experienced the help that is from God, I stand to this day testifying to both small and great, saying nothing beyond what both the prophets and Moses said would happen—23that the Messiah would suffer; that as the first to rise

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the main point: the purpose clause introduced by the conjunction 'that' is subordinated to the verbal phrase dominated by the verb "bring back". In other words, before someone can receive forgiveness of sins, even, he must be freed from the power of Satan! Before a person can be saved someone must do something about Satan's influence upon him.

The Lord Jesus had already said the same thing in different words during His earthly ministry. We find it in Mark 3:27. "No one can plunder the strong man's goods, invading his house, unless he first bind the strong man; then he may plunder his house." I have used the definite article with the first occurrence of 'strong man' because the Greek text has it, the point being that this particular strong man has already been introduced in the immediate context. 'The strong man' here is Satan. (The Jewish leaders tried to explain Jesus' authority over the demons by saying that He expelled them by the power of Beelzebul, prince of the demons. In His retort Jesus does not waste time with that name but uses the enemy's proper name, Satan.)

So then, the Lord Jesus declares that it is impossible to steal Satan's goods unless we bind him first. (From His use of 'no one' it seems clear that the Lord is enunciating a general principle or truth.) And what might the nature of those 'goods' be? In the context (see Matthew 12:22-24) Jesus had delivered someone from a demon that caused blindness and dumbness, and in their comments the scribes and Pharisees include other instances where Jesus had expelled demons—it seems clear that the 'goods' are people who are subject to Satan's power, in one way or another. Thus we have the same essential truth as that declared in Acts 26:18—we have to do something about Satan's power over a person so that he or she can be saved! But what does Satan do to people that makes it necessary to 'bind' him?

We find the answer in 2 Corinthians 4:4. Let's begin with verse 3. "If our gospel is veiled it is veiled to them who are perishing, in whom the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers so that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine in them." The Text clearly states that Satan, 'the god of this world', is in the business of blinding the minds of unbelievers when they hear the Gospel, so they will not understand, so they will not be convicted, so they will not repent and convert. This is a terrible truth. The enemy has access to our minds, access in the sense that he has the power or ability to invade them, whether by introducing thoughts or by jamming our reasoning. The Lord Jesus had already declared this truth previously, when He explained the parable of the sower. "These are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown; but, as soon as they hear it Satan comes and takes away the word that was planted in their hearts" (Mark 4:15). In the parallel passage in Luke 8:12 Jesus adds the following words: "lest they believe and be saved". Note that the Word is already in the mind or heart of the person, but then Satan comes, invades the mind and 'takes away' that word. I am not sure just how this intrusion by the enemy works, perhaps he causes a mental block of some sort, but the practical effect is that the Word becomes ineffective, as if the person had not even heard it.

It seems obvious to me that whoever does not take this truth into account will be condemning himself to produce little effect in the spiritual realm, to work hard and achieve little.

from the dead[1] He would proclaim light to both 'the people' and the ethnic nations."[2]

Festus interrupts

24Well as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice:
"Paul, you are crazy! Your great learning is driving you insane!"[3] 25So he
said: "I am not crazy, most excellent Festus; rather I pronounce words
of truth and reasonableness. 26For the king knows about these things,
before whom I speak freely; for I am convinced that none of this has
escaped his notice, since it was not done in a corner. 27King Agrippa, do
you believe the prophets? I know that you believe."[4] 28So Agrippa said to
Paul, "You will soon persuade me to become a Christian!" 29So Paul said,
"Whether sooner or later, I would to God that not only you but also all
who are hearing me this day may become such as I am, except for these
chains."

30Upon his saying this, the king stood up, along with the governor
and Bernice and those sitting with them; 31and when they had with-
drawn they started talking among themselves, saying, "This man is
doing nothing deserving of death or chains." 32And Agrippa said to
Festus, "This man could have been set free, if he had not appealed to
Caesar."[5]

Paul sent to Rome

27 1Now when it was decided that we[6] should sail for Italy, they deliv-
ered Paul and certain other prisoners to a centurion named Julius,
of the imperial cohort. 2So we embarked in a ship of Atramytium, being
about to sail to points along the Asian coast, and we put to sea; Ari-
starchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, was with us. 3The next day we
landed at Sidon; Julius treated Paul kindly and permitted him to go to
his friends and receive care. 4Putting to sea from there, we sailed under
the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. 5And when we had
sailed across the sea that is off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at
Myra in Lycia. 6There the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing
for Italy and put us on board. 7When we had sailed slowly many days
and scarcely arrived opposite Cnidus, the wind did not allow us to go
forward, so we sailed for the lee of Crete[7] by way of Salmone; 8sailing
along it with difficulty we came to a certain place called Fair Havens,

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1 Yes, Jesus was the first one out, but only the first!

2 How did Jesus do this after His resurrection? Presumably He did it, and continues to do so, through His followers.

3 Festus in not happy. Paul is talking to Agrippa, not to him. As a 'son of the disobedience' (Ephesians 2:2) he was open to demonic interference, and Satan does not like the resurrection. So Paul's mention of Jesus' resurrection is Festus' clue to interrupt, which he does in rather insulting terms.

4 Paul knows that the hearing is over, but he likes Agrippa and nudges him to believe.

5 Of course, but now it is too late.

6 I take it that Luke has been around all the time.

7 They had been sailing west along the coast of Asia Minor and now turn south to Crete.

near the town of Lasea.

A difference of opinion

9Much time had been lost and sailing was already dangerous,
because even the Fast had already taken place; Paul repeatedly warned
them 10saying, "Men, I perceive that the voyage is about to be with
damage and great loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but even of
our lives." 11But the centurion[1] was persuaded by the pilot and ship
owner rather than by what Paul said. 12And since the harbor was not
suitable to winter in, the majority advised sailing on, to see if they could
get to Phoenix in order to winter, it being a harbor of Crete facing
southwest and northwest.[2]

The storm

13So when the south wind blew gently, supposing that they had
obtained their purpose, they weighed anchor and sailed along Crete,
close to shore. 14But not long after, a cyclonic wind blasted down from
the land (it is called Euroclydon). 15Well the ship was caught and could
not head into the wind, so we gave up and were driven along.[3] 16Running
under the lee of a small island called Clauda, we barely managed to
secure the skiff; 17when they had hoisted it aboard, they used cables to
undergird the ship; and fearing that they might fall into the Syrtis,[4] they
lowered the sea anchor and so were driven along. 18We were being so
violently battered by the storm that the next day they began to jettison
things, 19and on the third we threw off the ship's tackle with our own
hands. 20When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and a
major storm was still pounding us, all hope that we would be saved was
now taken away.

21Now after long abstinence from food, Paul stood up in the midst
of them and said: "Well men, it would have been better to take my advice
and not sail from Crete, only to 'gain' this damage and loss.[5] 22But now
I urge you to take heart, because there will be no loss of life among you,
only of the ship. 23This night an angel of the God whose I am and whom
I serve stood by me 24and said: 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand
before Caesar. Furthermore, God has granted you all those who sail with

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1 It appears that the centurion had the last word.

2 I suppose the point to be that it was completely open to the west; there is such a spot on the present coastline of Crete, though the name 'phoenix' has disappeared.

3 The blast of wind was sudden and they were too close to the shore to have much room to maneuver. To remain broadside to the wind was to be swamped, so they turned tail and the wind drove them out to the open Mediterranean. I imagine that a little supernatural activity was involved.

4 By the time they finished undergirding the ship they were probably about a fifth of the way across the Mediterranean (the wind was driving them south, in a hurry). The Syrtis evidently referred to two shallow bays on the African coast that had shifting sand bars and liked to snare boats. The sea anchor was presumably dropped off the stern to provide drag and slow their progress.

5 Paul's 'I told you so' is really quite bland and is followed by good news.

you.' 25So take courage, men, because I believe in God that it will be just as it was told me. 26Also, we must run aground on a certain island."

27Now when the fourteenth night had come, as we were being driven here and there in the Adriatic,[1] about midnight the sailors sensed that they were nearing some land. 28They took a sounding and found twenty fathoms; going on a little they took a sounding again and found fifteen fathoms. 29So fearing that we might be driven into a rocky area, they dropped four anchors from the stern and started praying for day to come. 30Now under pretense of putting out anchors from the prow, the sailors lowered the skiff into the sea, intending to flee from the ship; 31so Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, "Unless these stay in the ship, you cannot be saved." 32Then the soldiers severed the ropes of the skiff and let it fall away.[2]

33While the day was coming on, Paul started urging them all to receive food, saying: "Today is the fourteenth day of waiting—you continue without eating, having taken nothing. 34Therefore I urge you to take nourishment, because this is for our survival, since not a hair will fall from the head of any of you." 35Upon saying this he picked up some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all; then he broke it and began to eat. 36So they all were encouraged and took food themselves. 37(In all, we were two hundred seventy-six souls on the ship.) 38So when they had eaten enough, they started lightening the ship by throwing out the wheat into the sea.

39When it was day, they did not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, onto which they planned to run the ship, if possible. 40Casting off the anchors they left them in the sea, at the same time untying the rudder ropes; and hoisting the foresail to the wind, they made for the beach. 41But they fell into a place where two seas met and ran the vessel aground; the prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern began to be broken up by the violence of the waves.

42Now the plan of the soldiers was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim away and escape. 43But the centurion, wanting to save Paul, stopped them from doing it and ordered those who could swim to jump in first and go toward the land, 44followed by the rest, some on planks and some on things from the ship. And in this way they all escaped safely to the land.

Malta

28 1Following the rescue, they learned that the island was called Malta. 2Now the natives showed us unusual kindness, in that they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold. 3But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and placed them on the

[1] This term presumably took in a larger area than it does today.

[2] This seems a pity, since a skiff would have been useful in getting people to land later. But in any case, the centurion believed him!

fire, because of the heat a viper came out and fastened itself on his hand.
4So when the natives saw the beast hanging from his hand, they started
saying to each other, "This man must be a murderer, whom Justice has
not allowed to live, even though rescued from the sea." 5But he just
shook the beast off into the fire and suffered no harm. 6Well they were
expecting him to swell up, or suddenly fall down dead; but after waiting
for quite a while and seeing nothing unusual happening to him, they
changed their mind and started saying he was a god.

7Now in that region there were properties belonging to the chief
man of the island, named Publius, who welcomed us and in a friendly
manner took care of us for three days.[1] 8Well it happened that the father
of Publius was sick in bed with fever and dysentery; Paul went in to him,
prayed, and laying his hands on him, healed him. 9So, when this had
happened, the rest of those on the island who had diseases started com-
ing and being healed; 10who also honored us in many ways, and when
we put to sea they provided the necessary things.[2]

Rome

11Now after three months we put to sea in an Alexandrian ship that
had wintered in the island, whose figurehead was 'the Twin Brothers'.
12We put in at Syracuse and stayed there three days; 13from there we
tacked back and forth[3] and arrived at Rhegium. After one day a south
wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli, 14where we
found brothers who urged us to stay there seven days[4]—that was how
we went toward Rome. 15And the brothers there, when they heard about
our circumstances, came out to meet us as far as Appii Forum and Three
Inns. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage.

16Now when we entered Rome, the centurion delivered the prison-
ers to the commander;[5] but Paul was allowed to live by himself, with the
soldier who guarded him.[6]

Paul and the Jews

17It happened that after three days Paul called together the leaders
of the Jews; and when they had assembled, he said to them: "Men,
brothers, though I had done nothing against 'the people' or the ancestral

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1 To feed 276 people for three days would be a considerable expense—and they were hungry!

2 Paul proved to be a valuable person to have along, the more so since they were there for three months.

3 Since Luke makes a point of saying that at Rhegium they got a south wind, between Syracuse and Rhegium the wind was not favorable and they had to tack. Most versions miss the point here.

4 The seven days gave them time to send news on ahead so there would be a welcoming committee at Three Inns. The centurion evidently cooperated.

5 Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit 'the centurion delivered the prisoners to the commander' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

6 This was surely an unusual proceeding; I assume it was a privilege granted in recognition of services rendered.

customs, still I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans, 18who, when they had examined me, were intending to release me, because I was not guilty of any crime deserving death. 19But when the Jews spoke against it, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar; not that I had anything about which to accuse my nation. 20For this reason therefore I asked to see you and speak with you; it is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain." 21So they said to him: "We have neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brothers who came reported or spoken any evil about you.[1] 22But we desire to hear from you what you think; because as for this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere."

23So arranging a day with him, even more people came to him at his lodging, to whom he kept expounding from morning until evening: solemnly testifying about the Kingdom of God and trying to convince them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets. 24Well some were persuaded by what had been said, and some kept refusing to believe.

25So being in disagreement among themselves they started to leave, after Paul had said this one word: "The Holy Spirit spoke correctly to our[2] fathers through Isaiah the prophet, 26saying: 'Go to this people and say, "You will keep on hearing, but never understand; you will keep on seeing, but never perceive"; 27because the heart of this people has become sluggish, and their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; in order that they not see with their eyes, nor hear with their ears, nor understand with their heart, nor turn back, so I could heal them.'[3] 28Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen!" 29And when he had said these things the Jews went their way, having a great dispute among themselves.[4]

Two tranquil years

30Paul stayed two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to see him, 31proclaiming the Kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, with all boldness, without hindrance.[5]

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[1] When Paul appealed to Caesar, his enemies evidently gave up, knowing they did not have a valid case.

[2] Instead of "our", some 20% of the Greek manuscripts have 'your' (as in NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.).

[3] See Isaiah 6:9-10. Here we have a chiastic structure: heart, ears, eyes; eyes, ears, heart.

[4] Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit verse 29 entire (as in NIV, NASB and LB, but all three have a footnote saying that "some manuscripts" add the verse—their way of referring to 95%! Will not the uninformed reader be misled?).

[5] It has often been observed that the book seems to lack a proper conclusion. If we consider that the book is actually about God working through people, then of course that

work has been in operation throughout the intervening centuries and continues in our day—even through us.