

NOTES ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

* * * TRANSITION FROM THE DISPENSATIONS OF LAW TO GRACE * * *

S.L.H.
Soli Deo Gloria!

"But ye shall receive power, after the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."
Acts 1:8

AUTHOR: Luke (c. 60-62 AD)

AUTHORSHIP AND DATE. The Book of Acts was written by Luke. Acts 1:1 connects the book with the Gospel of Luke (Luk1:1-4) as the "former treatise" of the same author. The book closes with Paul under house arrest in Rome for two years (i.e., his first imprisonment; Act28:30), which occurred 60-62 AD. Thus, the Acts was written c. 60-62 AD.

WHO WAS LUKE? Luke was a physician (Col4:14) who regularly travelled and ministered with the Apostle Paul. Acts contains 3 so-called *we* sections; the use of first person pronouns in these sections indicates times during which Luke was with Paul (cf. Act16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28:16). Philemon 24 indicates Luke was with Paul during his first imprisonment in Rome (Act28:30), and 2 Timothy 4:11 indicates Luke was also with Paul during his second imprisonment.

Many presume Luke was a Gentile for three primary reasons: 1) his name is Greek (Lit., Lucas), 2) Luke's writings are very sophisticated in the Greek, seemingly closer to Classical than Koine Greek, and 3) in the closing salutation of the Epistle to the Colossians in which Paul greets fellow saints, Luke's greeting does not appear in the section that is seemingly devoted to those "who are of the circumcision" (Cp., Col4:11,14). However, none of these reasons are conclusive. Many Jews had Greek names, including the Apostle Philip and the High Priest Theophilus. Being educated as a physician¹, Luke would naturally have a greater command of the Greek language than Peter and John, who were "unlearned" (Cp., Act4:13), and even his sophisticated use of Greek is saturated with Hebraisms, Hebrew thought patterns, and quotations from and allusions to the Hebrew scriptures. Furthermore, Luke demonstrates an intimate understanding of Judaism, its feast days, the layout of the Temple and its ordinances, and distinctions between the religious sects within Judaism; such knowledge would not normally be available to a Gentile, even one who had spent much time with the Apostle Paul. Overriding all these considerations is the clear assertion that "unto [the Jews] were committed the oracles of God" (cf. Rom1:1-2; i.e., God only used Jews to record Scripture). Thus, **Luke was a Jew.**

THEME OF ACTS. The Book of Acts is an historical record beginning with the one-year period following the crucifixion/resurrection/ascension of Christ during which the offer of the kingdom was still available to the

¹ In the first century, the major medical schools in the Roman empire were located in Athens, Alexandria, and Tarsus (cf. Act21:39).

nation of Israel contingent upon national repentance (Acts 1-7; cf. **Luk13:6-9**), but which decisively ended with the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7). Subsequent to that, the narrative takes up the transition from the nation of Israel to the building of the Church (cf. **Matt16:18**), recording the first 3 decades of the Church Age (c. 32-62 AD). It begins with the ministries of the Twelve (primarily Peter) to the nation of Israel in Jerusalem (Acts 1-7) during which only Jews are converted and added to the Church, and it records the conversions of the first Samaritan (Acts 8) and Gentile (Acts 10) under the ministry of the Apostle Peter (Cp., **Matt16:19**). The Apostle Paul is converted in Acts 9, and the remainder of the book is devoted exclusively to Paul's ministry to Gentiles (Acts 13-28). Thus, Acts documents the fulfillment of Jesus' commands to "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (**Mk16:15**) and "ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (**Act1:8**; cf. **Act8:4**). See the CHART: CHRONOLOGY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS.

OUTLINE OF ACTS. Much like the Book of Revelation (cf. **Rev1:19**), the Book of Acts provides its own outline in a single verse (i.e., **Act1:8**).

I. THE APOSTLE PETER (Apostle to the <u>Jews</u> ; Gal2:8)	Acts 1-12
A. Introduction	Acts 1
B. The Gospel Preached in Jerusalem	Acts 2-7
C. The Gospel Preached in Judea/Samaria	Acts 8-9
D. The Gospel Preached in Syria	Acts 10-12
II. THE APOSTLE PAUL (Apostle to the <u>Gentiles</u> ; Rom11:13)	Acts 13-28
A. The Gospel Preached in Asia Minor	Acts 13-16
B. The Gospel Preached in Europe	Acts 17-19
C. The Gospel Preached in Rome	Acts 20-28

DISPENSATIONAL NOTE. All the great errors in interpreting the Book of Acts derive from a failure to recognize that it is an historical account of the transition from the Dispensation of the Law to the Dispensation of Grace; as such, much of what is recorded in Acts is descriptive in nature, but not prescriptive (of the Church Age). The number of transitions taking place in Acts are manifold (see CHART: TRANSITION IN THE BOOK OF ACTS). Thus, the interpreter must take great care to "rightly divide" (cf. **2Tim2:15**) the contents of the Book of Acts. In general, few normative doctrines for the Church during the Church Age are found in Acts²; rather, normative Church doctrine is found in the epistles of Paul (i.e., Romans through Philemon), the apostle to the Gentiles (cf. **Rom11:13**; **15:16**; **Gal2:8**).

² Where normative doctrines for the Church do occur in the Book of Acts, they are reiterated and confirmed in the Pauline epistles; where not confirmed by the Pauline epistles, experiences in Acts should be considered transitory in nature.

CHAPTER 1

THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Gospel of Luke ends with the resurrected Christ instructing His disciples to remain in Jerusalem until He sends the Holy Spirit, such that they may be "endued with power from on high" (Luk24:49), as well as making mention of Christ's ascension (Luk24:51). Luke's second historical volume, the Book of Acts, opens with the resurrected Christ appearing to His disciples to reiterate His instructions to remain in Jerusalem, waiting for the power to be supplied in the coming of the Holy Spirit, and provides additional details associated with His ascension. In other words, Acts begins precisely where the Gospel of Luke ended.

- [1] The "former treatise" refers to the Gospel of Luke. Much speculation/debate has ensued concerning the man named "Theophilus", meaning *friend/lover of God*, to which Luke addresses both his Gospel and the Book of Acts. Most commonly he is identified as an otherwise unknown patron who financially supported Luke's ministry with the Apostle Paul and his writing of Luke and Acts. A more interesting possibility is that Theophilus denotes the son of Annas the High Priest (Luk3:2; Act4:6), who was himself High Priest in Jerusalem from 37-41 AD. Note that "Jesus began ... to teach".

Implications for Dating. In his Gospel, Luke addresses Theophilus using the honorific title "most excellent" (Cp., Act23:26), whereas this title is omitted in Acts. This suggests Theophilus was officiating as High Priest at the time the Gospel of Luke was written, necessitating that it was written no later than 41 AD, whereas Acts was written after 41 AD when he was no longer High Priest.

- [2] Jesus' "teaching" (v1) was not complete when "he was taken up" into heaven (v9), but it would be continued and completed by His "apostles", whom He would instruct "through the Holy Spirit" (cf. Jn16:12-13).
- [3] By "his passion" is meant the suffering and death of Jesus in the crucifixion. After His resurrection, Jesus spent "forty days" with his apostles. During this time, He accomplished two things: 1) by "many infallible proofs" He demonstrated to His apostles that He was a genuinely resurrected Man (Cp., Luk24:39), which motivated their ministries on His behalf (even unto death in most cases), and 2) He continued to instruct His apostles "of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (i.e., the future Messianic Kingdom to be established on earth), which might suggest that the kingdom was still "at hand" (cf. Mk1:14-15).
- [4] This is a reiteration of Christ's command recorded in Luke 24:49. The "promise of my father" is the sending of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn14:16-17), which will be realized on the Day of Pentecost (Act2:1-4).
- [5] Here, the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost is identified to be the inauguration of the "baptiz[ing ministry] of the Holy Ghost" (Cp., Matt3:11), which is the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the new dispensation by which believers are incorporated into the

Body of Christ (cf. 1Cor12:12-13). The "not many days hence" turned out to be approximately 10 days³.

- [6] Note that in the apostles' question, "Wilt thou at this time restore **again** the kingdom to Israel?", was an implicit presupposition that the future "kingdom" would be like the past kingdom: namely, a literal kingdom of Israel on the present earth ruled by a descendant of King David (Cp., 1Chron17:11-14; Isa9:6-7; Luk1:31-33). In other words, the apostles would not have regarded a largely Gentile Church inheriting no land and having no monarchy as a fulfillment of the kingdom promises God made to Israel.
- [7] Jesus does nothing to dispel the apostles' understanding of the "kingdom" (v6), nor does he suggest that those "kingdom" promises will not be fulfilled literally; rather, He merely states that the "times" (Greek, χρονος) and "seasons" (Greek, καιρος) during which such fulfillments will be realized are the sole prerogative of God "the Father" (Cp., Mk13:32), and they have not been revealed.
- [8] The antecedent to the pronoun "ye" is "the apostles" (v2). After receiving "power" at the coming of the "Holy Ghost", the apostles were to be witnesses of Christ (Cp., Act1:22) successively in: 1) "Jerusalem" (Acts 2-7), 2) "all Judea (Acts 8-9; note Act8:1)", 3) "Samaria" (Acts 8-9), and 4) "unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 10-28). This progression can serve as the outline of the Book of Acts (Cp., Rev1:19).
- [9] The ascension of Christ, in which He was "taken up" (passive voice) to "heaven" (v11) in association with a "cloud", bears similarity to the description of the rapture of the Church (i.e., the Body of Christ; Cp., 1Thess4:17; Rev12:5 where "caught up" is the Greek verb ἁρπαζω). Christ's ascension occurred from the Mount of Olives (v12).
- [10] These "two men ... in white apparel" are often assumed to be angels, although they might have been Moses and Elijah (cf. Luk9:28-31).
- [11] Note that the eleven apostles were addressed as, "Ye men of Galilee"; that is, all the apostles were Galileans (see note on Act2:7) except Judas Iscariot. These "two men" (v10) assert that Christ will return (i.e., the second coming) "in like manner" as they saw Him depart, meaning "this same Jesus" will physically descend from heaven on a cloud in His glorified body to the Mount of Olives (cf. Dan7:13; Zech14:4; Rev19:11-14); it will be a distinct event that occurs on a particular day.
- [12] The ascension of Christ (v9) occurred from "the mount called Olivet". That the narrator (i.e., Luke) noted that the Mount of Olives was "from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey" would seem to indicate the Dispensation of the Law was still in effect.

³ Jesus was resurrected on the Feast of Firstfruits (1Cor15:20), then remained with the apostles for 40 days (Act1:3). Pentecost (Act2:1) was celebrated 50 days after the Feast of Firstfruits (Lev23:15-16). This is consistent with the birth of the Church occurring on the Day of Pentecost. In contrast, mid-Acts Dispensationalists who view the Church as beginning with the conversion of the Apostle Paul, or even later (e.g., Acts 28 Dispensationalists), must change the understanding of "not many days hence" from 10 days to many years, which is a seemingly untenable interpretation.

- [13] The apostles returned to "the⁴ upper room", apparently the same room in which their last supper with Christ occurred (Cp., Luk22:12). The remaining 11 apostles are listed by name.

Listings of the Apostles. There are 4 listings of the apostles (Matt10:2-4; Mk3:16-17; Luk6:14-16; Act1:13; see CHART: LISTINGS OF THE APOSTLES). Although all listings begin with Peter and end with Judas Iscariot (excepting his omission in Acts 1:13, which was recorded after his death), all differ slightly in order, including the listings given by Luke in his Gospel vs. Acts. One apostle's name varies: "Thaddeus" in Matthew's and Mark's listings appears as "Judas, the son of James" in Luke's listings in his Gospel and Acts.

- [14] The group which gathered in Jerusalem to await for the coming of the Holy Spirit included the 11 apostles (v13), "the women" (i.e., including Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James/the wife of Clopas/the other Mary; Salome, Jesus' mother's sister; Joanna; Susanna; and others; cf. Matt27:61; Luk8:3; 24:10; Jn19:25), "Mary, the mother of Jesus", and "his brethren" (i.e., James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas/Jude; Matt13:55). Although the brothers of Jesus did not believe on Him during His ministry (Jn7:5), they appear to have been converted after/by His resurrection (Cp., Gall1:19).

APPOINTMENT OF MATTHIAS TO REPLACE JUDAS AS APOSTLE

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CHAPTER 2

THE DAY OF PENTECOST

⁴ The article is definite in the Greek text.

Chapter 2 records the coming of the Holy Spirit in His ministries related to the new dispensation (i.e., the dispensation of the grace; Eph3:2), as promised by Christ (cf. Jn14:6,26; 15:26; 16:7). This coming occurred on the Day of Pentecost (i.e., the Feast of Weeks; Lev23:15-21), which under the Law of Moses was one of the feasts for which attendance in Jerusalem was required (Deut16:16); this explains why Jews from a multitude of nations were present to hear the preaching of the apostles. In addition, one of the new ministries of the Holy Spirit was spirit baptism, which means **the birth of the Church** began at Pentecost (Cp., Matt3:11; Act1:5 1Cor12:12-13).

THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

- [1] The "they" who were gathered "in one place" were the twelve apostles (Act1:26). This occurred on "the day of Pentecost" (a.k.a. the Feast of Weeks; Lev23:15-21), for which attendance in Jerusalem was required for all Jewish men (Deut16:16). In saying the day of Pentecost "was fully come" (a present, active, infinitive) is meant that the Feast of Pentecost/Weeks had come in fulfillment (i.e., the prophetic aspect of this feast day was fulfilled on this observance of it in 32 AD).
- [2] It is likely that Luke's use of "the house" (Greek, τοῦ οἴκου) meant "the house [of God]" (i.e., the Temple; Cp., Luk6:4), which would explain why a multitude of Jews were present to observe this manifestation of the Holy Spirit and the preaching of the apostles (cf. vv6,14).
- [3] Again, "them" are the apostles (Cp., Act1:26; 2:1). The "cloven tongues" which "sat upon each" of the apostles were a visible manifestation of God the Holy Spirit (Cp., Exod19:17-18). These were not literally "fire", but are likened to it. This is not the baptism by fire to which John referred (Matt3:11), which refers to eschatological judgment (cf. Zech13:9; Mal3:2-4).
- [4] This "fill[ing]" of the apostles "with the Holy Spirit" was an empowerment for ministry (cf. Act1:8), which is distinct from His ministries of baptism or permanent indwelling (Cp., Eph5:18). In this case, the Holy Spirit empowered the apostles to "speak with other tongues" (Greek, γλώσσα). As used in the Bible, "tongues" always refers to actual languages.

Speaking in Tongues. Speaking in "tongues" was a supernatural gift of the Spirit (cf. 1Cor12:1,10) which was prophesied to be a "sign" (1Cor1:22) for the nation of Israel (cf. Isa28:11-12; 1Cor14:21). The purpose of speaking in tongues was always for the communication of divine truth (e.g., the gospel) to Jews "out of every nation under heaven" (Act2:5). The Apostle Paul instructed that the gift of tongues was not to be used in contexts in which they could not be understood (1Cor14:27-28). The gift of "tongues" ceased as prophesied (1Cor13:8) as the focus of God's work transitioned from the nation of Israel to the Church.

- [5] "Jews" from "every nation under heaven" were present at this time because Pentecost was a feast for which the Law of Moses mandated attendance in Jerusalem (Deut16:16). That these "Jews" were "devout" is demonstrated by the fact that they complied with this requirement

of the Law, even at great personal hardship (e.g., traveling from Rome to Jerusalem was no modest undertaking); that devotion must be moderated, however, by that fact that their dwelling outside the Land of Israel represented rebellion against the LORD's will for them.

- [6] It makes sense that this event took place in the Temple (v2). As the many Jews from foreign lands present in the Temple heard the apostles "speak in [their] own language[s]", they would naturally be drawn to more closely observe this unusual and unexpected occurrence.

Reversal of Babel. In the event of Pentecost is seen a typological reversal of the judgment that occurred at Babel (cf. Gen11:7). At Babel, God confused the single language of the people such that they could not understand one another; at Pentecost, God spoke through the apostles in many languages so that the message of the gospel would be understood by all (cf. Act2:11).

- [7] All the apostles (except Judas⁵) were "Galileans", who were not expected to be educated to speak in so many diverse languages.
- [8] The "tongue[s]" spoken were the languages of the peoples present at Pentecost. Note that the phenomenon at Pentecost implies that the words of God can be authoritatively communicated in every language, also suggesting that (Bible) translation can, in principle, be perfect.
- [9] "Parthians", "Medes", "Elamites", and "dwellers in Mesopotamia" represent Jews who had come from the far east (i.e., modern day Iraq and Iran). Also present were Jews from "Judea", or Jewish cities outside Jerusalem.
- [10] "Cappadocia" (v9), "Pontus" (v9), "Asia" (v9), "Phrygia", and "Pamphylia" represent Jews who had come from the near east (i.e., the Roman province of "Asia", which is modern day Turkey). "Egypt", "Libya", and "Cyrene" represent Jews who had come from Africa. "Rome" and "Cretans" (v11) represent Jews who had come from Europe. The multitude was primarily "Jews", although some "proselytes" (i.e., Gentiles who had converted to Judaism) were present as well; no Gentiles were present, as they would not have been allowed on the Temple grounds.
- [11] Finally, Jews from "Arabia" were also present. All present heard the apostles "speak in our tongues" (i.e., languages of the peoples present at Pentecost). The purpose of speaking in all the languages of the people present at Pentecost was to communicate "the wonderful works of God" (i.e., the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus; cf. vv22-36) which proved that "Jesus of Nazareth" (v22) was "both Lord and Christ" (v36; i.e., the Messiah of which the O.T. scriptures prophesied).
- [12] Some of the Jews recognize this to be a "sign" (1Cor1:22) from God, but do not understand its meaning.
- [13] Some among the Jews believe the apostles to be "full of new wine" (i.e., drunk; cf. v15) and "mock" them (Cp., 2Pet3:3).

⁵ Judas was surnamed "Iscariot", which means "man of Kerioth" (i.e., a town in southern Judah).

- [14] "Peter" addresses the crowd present as "ye men of Judea" (Cp., "ye men of Israel"; v22), indicating his message is meant for the nation of Israel. At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus gave "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" to Peter, meaning Peter would be used to first preach the gospel (of grace) to all peoples. Here in Acts 2, Peter's preaching leads to the conversion of many Jews; in Acts 8 his preaching leads to the conversion of the first Samaritan and the first Jewish proselyte (from Ethiopia); and in Acts 10 his preaching leads to the conversion of the first Gentile (from Rome).
- [15] Peter asserts that it is not logical to presume that the apostles are "drunk", as it was only "the third hour of the day" (i.e., 9 am; as in Luke's Gospel, time in the Book of Acts is reckoned in the Jewish manner, which is numbered from sunrise; cf. Luk23:44).
- [16] The quotation of **Joel 2:28-32** by the Apostle Peter in Acts 2:17-21 is the subject of considerable confusion. Peter introduces the quotation by saying "this is that which was spoken through the prophet Joel", which has led many to conclude that Peter indicated that some (or all) of this prophecy from Joel was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. This is not the case, for several reasons. First, it is obvious that not all aspects of the quoted prophecy came to pass on the day of Pentecost (Cp., Isa61:1-2; Luk4:17-21). Second, Acts 2:16 is not the formula used by Peter in Acts to indicate prophetic fulfillment (Cp., Act1:16). Third, if it were a prophetic fulfillment, then Joel 2:28-32 was a prophecy concerning the birth of the Church, which contradicts Paul's assertion that the Church was a mystery (Eph3:1-10; Coll25-27). Fourth, the context in the Book of Joel sets the fulfillment of this passage in the day of the LORD (cf. Joel2:1,11,31), which is the 70th week of Daniel 9:27. Rather, the Acts 2 quotation of Joel is an instance of an O.T. prophecy cited by a N.T. writer, not to indicate fulfillment, but to make an application because of certain similarities (see: 4 Categories of Prophetic Citation).

4 Categories of Prophetic Citation. In the context of prophetic fulfillment, N.T. writers cite O.T. scriptures in four different ways. The four categories of prophetic citation⁶, and their use by Biblical writers, are all illustrated in Matthew 2; they are:

1. Literal (Matt2:6; Mic5:2)
2. Literal *plus* typological (Matt2:15; Exod4:22; Ps89:27; Hos11:1)
3. Literal *plus* an application (Matt2:18; Jer31:15)
4. Literal *plus* a summation (Matt2:23; summation of many prophets)

Regardless of the literary device used, the purpose of prophecy is always to convey literal truth.

Contingency Associated with the Re-offer of the Kingdom. In hindsight, the supernatural events mentioned in Acts 2:17-21 were merely an application of Joel 2:28-32 because of certain similarities. However, these events could have been a fulfillment of

⁶ This is a highly condensed summary from Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Yeshua: The Life of Messiah from a Messianic Jewish Perspective*, Vol. 1 (Ariel Ministries, San Antonio, TX: 2018) pp. 12-43.

Joel 2:28-32, in the same way that John the Baptist could have been a fulfillment of the prophecy concerning the coming of the prophet Elijah (cf. Mal4:5; Matt17:12-13), if Israel, as a nation, had repented (Cp., Act3:19-21).

- [17] Quotation of Joel 2:28. Obviously, the "sons and daughters" of Israel did not "prophesy" at Pentecost, nor did "young men see visions" or "old men dream dreams". The point of similarity is that the "Spirit" was "pour[ed] out" in a visible, supernatural way (i.e., speaking in other tongues). Note that Pentecost might have been the start of the "last days" for the nation of Israel, had they repented; since they did not, their "last days" were interrupted by the insertion of the mystery Church Age and will be resumed after the rapture of the Church (consult the CHART: RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE LAST DAYS).
- [18] Quotation of Joel 2:29. This did not occur at Pentecost.
- [19] Quotation of Joel 2:30. No supernatural, cosmological signs were present at Pentecost.
- [20] Quotation of Joel 2:31. Note that the context of the quotation from Joel is the "day of the Lord" (i.e., the Tribulation; Dan9:27), which is yet future.
- [21] Quotation of Joel 2:32a. The point of similarity is that during the Tribulation, "whosoever [among the Jews] shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered" in a physical sense, whereas beginning at Pentecost (and extending throughout the Church Age) "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord [Jesus] shall be saved" in a spiritual sense (Cp., Rom10:13).

PETER'S SERMON AT PENTECOST

Peter's sermon at Pentecost (i.e., Acts 2:22-36) serves to demonstrate that "Jesus of Nazareth" (v22) perfectly fulfilled the O.T. prophecies concerning His death by crucifixion, burial, and resurrection, of which he and the apostles were eye "witnesses" (v32), which should lead "all the house of Israel" to properly conclude that He was "both Lord and Christ" (v36; i.e., the prophesied Messiah).

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- [36] Because "Jesus of Nazareth" (v22) perfectly fulfilled the O.T. prophecies concerning His death by crucifixion, burial, and resurrection, as testified by Peter and the apostles who were eye "witnesses" (v32) of all these events, "all the house of Israel" should properly conclude that He was "both Lord and Christ" (i.e., the divine Son of God as manifested in the human person of Messiah).
- [37] Recognizing that "Jesus of Nazareth" (v22) was the Messiah, and that "we" (i.e., the nation of Israel") "crucified" Him (v36), the multitude ask, "what shall we do [now]?" (Cp., Act16:30-31).
- [38] "Peter" specifically addresses that generation of the nation of Israel that "crucified" (v36) Christ. To them he commands that they: 1) "Repent" of the specific sin of crucifying Christ, and 2) "be baptized ... for the remission of sins" (this is John's baptism for Israel, not Christian baptism; Cp., Mk1:4; Act19:1-7; Rom6:3-5); in so doing, they would "receive the gift of the Holy Spirit".
- Greek Note. In v38, the verb "Repent" is plural, as are the pronouns in "for the remission of **your**⁷ sins" and "**ye** shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit". Thus, the remission of sins and reception of the Holy Spirit are a direct result of repentance, or a change of mind concerning Jesus of Nazareth (vv22,36), and is essentially equivalent to "believe" (Cp., Act16:30-31). In contrast, the clause "be baptized every one of you" makes use of a singular verb, which sets it apart from the rest of the verse as a parenthetical remark. Thus, baptism was not necessary for the remission of sins or reception of the Holy Spirit (i.e., salvation), but was necessary to individually and visibly separate oneself from that "perverse generation" (v40) of the nation of Israel that crucified Christ in order to escape the temporal judgment that was to come (i.e., the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD).
- [39] In the broadest sense, the "promise" is the New Covenant, although in this narrower context it seems mostly focused on the "gift of the Holy Spirit" (v38; cf. Jn14:16,26; 16:7) which is an integral part of it (cf. Ezek36:26-27). The New Covenant is between God and Israel (Jer31:31), so "all who are afar off" refers not to Gentiles but to Jews of the dispersion (Cp., Jas1:1; 1Pet1:1-2).
- [40] The sermon of Peter as preserved in Scripture (i.e., vv22-36) is only a portion of the "many other words" he used to "testify" and "exhort" these "men of Israel" (v22). While the "perverse generation" of the nation of Israel that crucified Christ (Jn19:14-15) would be judged

⁷ The KJV leaves this pronoun in the Greek text untranslated.

for that national sin⁸ (i.e., blasphemy of Holy Ghost; Matt12:31-32), individual Jews could separate themselves from the sin of that "generation" and be "save[d]" (both physically and spiritually). That separation was effected by (water) baptism (v38), which fundamentally communicates identification; the baptism of John (Mk1:4) visibly designated the righteous remnant of the nation of Israel who identified with Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah.

THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH

Though not explicitly stated in the text of Acts 2, **the birth of the Church** (i.e., the Body of Christ) which Jesus prophesied He would build (Matt16:18) occurred on the Day of Pentecost. This can be deduced from Acts 11:16-18, where the Apostle Peter recalls the words of Jesus (Act1:5) concerning the baptizing ministry of the Holy Spirit, which was first manifested for Gentiles in Acts 11, but of which Peter says "God gave them the like gift as he did unto us" (v17; i.e., Jews on the Day of Pentecost; note that it was still a future event, though "not many days from now", in Act1:5), and it is the baptism of the Holy Spirit which incorporates the believer into the Body of Christ (1Cor12:12-13). It is likely unmentioned in Acts 2 due to the contingency associated with the re-offer of the Kingdom in the early chapters of Acts (Cp., Luk13:6-9).

- [41] The "they" are many of the multitude of Jews who heard "his" (i.e., Peter's) sermon. Receiving "gladly" Jesus as "both Lord and Christ" (v36), they followed Peter's command to be "baptized"⁹ (v38); as there were many mikvahs available at the Temple complex (v46), this could have been easily accomplished. Those baptized on the Day of Pentecost were "about three thousand souls", ironically the same number of Jews who were killed by the Levites for worshipping the golden calf at the time of the giving of the Law of Moses at Sinai (cf. Exod32:28); "the letter [i.e., the Law] killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (2Cor3:6).
- [42] Four priorities of the believers in the early Church (v47) are given: 1) "doctrine" as taught by the "apostles", by which is meant the new revelation given concerning the new Dispensation of Grace (Cp., Jn16:13). Many modern Bible versions read "teaching", which can be misleading; the emphasis is on the content of what was taught (i.e., doctrine¹⁰), not the activity of teaching; 2) "[the] fellowship" (Greek, *κοινωνία*, also translated as "communion"), meaning the sharing of that which was possessed in common, which in context refers to the "apostles' doctrine" (Cp., Eph4:3-6); there can be no genuine fellowship apart from doctrinal unity; 3) "[the] breaking of bread", by which is meant observance of the Lord's Supper (Matt26:26-29; 1Cor10:16; Cp., Act20:7); and 4) "[the] prayers", where the article indicates a specificity of requests (Cp., Jn14:13-14).

⁸ Judgment for the sin of failing to install the Messiah as King (Deut17:15) was included in the prescribed "curses" of the Mosaic covenant, including the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple33; Deut28:63-68) and the dispersion of Jews into all the Gentile nations (cf. Lev26:27-33).

⁹ These and other Jewish believers would be given scriptural instructions on how to escape the coming judgment on Israel (cf. Luk21:20-24).

¹⁰ Note that "doctrine" is mentioned 17x in the pastoral epistles. The teaching of sound doctrine, and the refuting of false teaching, is to be the primary activity of the pastor (1Tim5:17) and the principal desire of the church (2Tim4:2-3; 1Pet2:2).

- [43] Note that the "wonders and signs" were performed by "the apostles" (Cp., Mk16:17-18), not random believers. Miracles were associated with the ministries of the apostles and their close associates in order to validate their messages (cf. 2Cor12:12; see CHART: SIGNS OF AN APOSTLE); such is descriptive of the apostles, not prescriptive of believers during the Church Age. With the death of the apostles and the completion of the N.T. canon, miracles ceased (cf. 1Cor13:8-10).
- [44] According to Josephus, Jerusalem swelled to twice its normal population during the mandatory feast days such as Pentecost, such that it was necessary for residents of Jerusalem to open their homes in order to accommodate the pilgrims from out of town.
- [45] No support for so-called Christian communism is found in this verse. The Greek verb "sold" is in the imperfect tense, meaning it was an ongoing activity begun in the past that continued into the present without completion, "as every man had need"; it was not a one-time selling of all "possessions and goods" to be divided among believers, but a continual selling of items as needed to finance the support of ~3,000 new believers (v41) who remained in Jerusalem for an extended period of time to be instructed by the apostles. This activity was completely voluntary (Cp., Act5:4); Luke records it as descriptive of a unique period of time in the early Church in Jerusalem, not prescriptive of the Church Age (cf. 2Thess3:8-10). In fact, continuation of this practice long-term led to the saints in Jerusalem becoming impoverished (cf. Rom15:25-26).
- [46] The phrase "with one accord" is very common in the writings of Luke (i.e., used 11x in the Book of Acts); it means "singleness of heart", of "one mind" (Cp., Philip2:2), or *in agreement*. The "daily" gatherings of believers occurred "in the Temple"¹¹ (likely on Solomon's porch; Cp., Act3:11) or "from house to house", as there were no church buildings for corporate assembly. These gatherings included "breaking bread" (i.e., observance of the Lord's Supper; v42), which during the early Church was observed as part of a meal (Cp., 1Cor11:33-34) after the pattern of the Passover Seder from which it was derived (Cp., 1Cor10:16).
- [47] Here occurs the first mention of "the church" following Christ's prophecy concerning it (Matt16:18), consistent with the birth of the Church on the Day of Pentecost; the phrase "to the church" is found in the majority of Greek manuscripts, but it is missing from the modern critical Greek text, such that it is erroneously omitted from modern English versions. To what were these new believers being "added"? It cannot mean the nation of Israel, as all those present were Jews (v22); it must be something new. The clause, "such as should be saved", is a present, passive, participle in Greek that simply means *were being saved*. That is, those that "were being saved" were "added to the church", added both to the visible local "church" as well as to the invisible Church, which is the Body of Christ (cf. Eph1:22-23; Coll:18), through Spirit baptism (1Cor12:12-13).

¹¹ The early Jewish church remained closely associated with the Temple, an association that took some time to relinquish and was ultimately terminated by the Temple's destruction in 70 AD.

CHAPTER 3

PETER'S SECOND SERMON

Peter and John, and presumably many/most of the other Jewish believers, continued to go to the Temple for scheduled prayer times (v1). On one such occasion, Peter's healing of a man who had been lame from birth (vv2-8) gave rise to a second sermon (vv12-26) preached from Solomon's porch (v11) to a multitude Jews of who had been attracted by the miraculous healing. Note that Solomon's porch was on the eastern wall inside the Court of the Gentiles; thus, this sermon was again delivered exclusively to Jews (and perhaps Gentile proselytes), but without any Gentiles in attendance. This second sermon of Peter was a call for the nation to repent of the national sin of crucifying Christ and included a promise that God would send Jesus back (i.e., the Second Coming) if the nation would do so; it was, in effect, a re-offer of the Messianic Kingdom to the nation of Israel (cf. Luk13:6-9).

PETER'S HEALING OF A LAME MAN

- [1] The "ninth hour" (i.e., 3pm) was the time of the evening offerings (cf. Exod29:39; Lev6:20).
- [2] The beggar had been "lame" for >40 years (Act4:22). Since this man asked "alms" in the Temple "daily", he had undoubtedly witnessed the healing ministry of Jesus and heard His preaching, yet remained faithless (Cp., v16).
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- [7] An example of the "wonders and signs" performed by the apostles (Act2:43).
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- [9]
- [10]
- [11] Peter's second sermon occurred on Solomon's porch¹², which was a covered portico that extended the complete length (approx. a furlong) of the wall (on the inside) of the eastern side of the Temple's outer court (i.e., the Court of the Gentiles); see CHART: HEROD'S TEMPLE. Thus, the people who heard the sermon were exclusively Jews, as no Gentile was permitted to enter the Temple complex on penalty of death—which was posted prominently in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin (Cp., Matt27:25; Jn19:20) at every entrance.

¹² Solomon's porch was so named as it was the only portion of Solomon's Temple that remained intact following the Temple's destruction by the Babylonians in 586 BC.

PETER'S 2ND SERMON: A RE-OFFER OF THE KINGDOM

- [12] Peter addresses the crowd that formed following the miraculous healing as "Ye men of Israel"; since this address occurs inside the Temple (v11), only Jews are present. He asserts two points: 1) a miraculous healing should not cause these Jews to "marvel", as Jesus of Nazareth (i.e., the Messiah) had been healing all in Israel with whom He came into contact (cf. Matt8:16; 12:15; Luk6:19) for the past 3 years consistent with His announcement that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt10:7-8); and 2) it was not by the "power" or "holiness" of Peter himself that the miracle was accomplished.

Implications for the Messianic Kingdom. Peter's assertion that the men of Israel should not be surprised by a miraculous healing implies that the Messianic Kingdom was still "at hand".

- [13] The 1st coming of "Jesus", as the "Servant"¹³ of God, was a fulfillment of the promises "God" made to "Abraham" (i.e., the Abrahamic covenant) and reconfirmed to "Isaac" and "Jacob", the "fathers" of the nation of Israel. Under the Mosaic covenant, the nation of Israel was obligated to install Messiah as king (Deut17:15), which they failed to do even when "Pilate ... was determined to let him go" (Jn19:14-15).
- [14] Adding to the sin of rejecting Christ, who was "Holy" and "Just" (i.e., innocent), was that He was condemned to death in the place of the "murderer" Barabbas (cf. Jn18:40), such that two grave injustices were committed in the same act.
- [15] Ironically, Israel "killed the Prince [Lit., Author; cf. Jn5:25] of life", yet "God hath raised [Him] from the dead"; Peter and the eleven other apostles were "witnesses" of the resurrection (cf. Act1:22). In proclaiming the death and resurrection of Christ, according to the scriptures, Peter preached a nascent gospel of grace (Cp., 1Cor15:1-4).

Dispensational Note. Whereas the Apostle Paul presents the crucifixion of Christ as a great triumph (cf. Gal6:14; Eph2:16; Coll2:20; 2:14-15), making the gospel of grace and the mercy of God available to all (cf. Rom3:24-26; 1Cor15:1-4), the Apostle Peter presents it as the great national sin of Israel (cf. Act2:36; 3:13-15) for which repentance was required.

- [16] The miraculous healing (v7) was accomplished by the power of the "name" of Jesus Christ; here, "name" is a Hebraism meaning the Person (Cp., Jn1:12; 20:31; Act4:12).
- [17] Peter addressed the crowd as "brethren" in the sense of kinsmen (Rom9:3), not fellow believers. On the cross, Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luk23:34), which is the basis on which Peter claims the Jews and their "rulers" committed the sin of crucifying Christ "through ignorance". This is highly

¹³ Though translated as "Son" in the KJV, the Greek word is **paiv**, which is normally understood to be either a *child* or a *servant* (Cp., Gal4:1). In this context, "Servant" is probably the correct translation (cf. Mk10:45; Phil2:7).

significant, since under the Law of Moses (which was in force for Israel at the time of the crucifixion) only a "sin of ignorance" was eligible for atonement by means of a substitutionary sacrifice (cf. Lev4:2ff; Num15:27-29; Cp., Heb10:26).

Greek Note. A textual variant exists in Luke 23:34 in which Jesus' saying is absent from some Greek manuscripts; as a result, the modern critical Greek text casts doubt on the authenticity of the saying, which leads to its omission from some English versions. However, doing so creates a profound theological crisis, as the basis for forgiveness of Israel's national sin of crucifying Christ is eliminated! Consistent with Peter's allusion to it in Acts 3:17, the saying of Jesus in Luke 23:34 must be understood to be authentic.

[18] That "Christ should suffer" death, and even crucifixion, was not part of the mystery, but was clearly prophesied "by the mouth of all [God's] prophets" (Cp., Luk24:25-26,44; e.g., Ps22; Isa53; etc.). Peter makes clear that these prophecies were "fulfilled" at the 1st Coming of Christ.

[19] Peter calls on "the men of Israel" (v12) to "Repent"¹⁴ of the national sin of crucifying Christ (which is not an unpardonable sin; cf. Matt12:31-32). Doing so would ensure "your sins may be blotted out", specifically "when the times of refreshing shall come"; this is a reference to the Messianic Kingdom and the Jews' entrance into it.

[20] Contingent upon the nation of Israel's repentance and conversion (v19), God "shall send Jesus Christ" (i.e., His 2nd Coming). Implicit in this assertion is that if the nation of Israel would have repented at Peter's preaching, his generation could have experienced the return of Christ (i.e., Peter is re-offering the kingdom to his own generation of the nation of Israel; Cp., Luk13:6-9; Matt16:19; 24:34).

Greek Note. In v20, the verb "shall send" is in the subjunctive mood, such that its fulfillment is subject to the condition of Israel's national repentance and conversion (v19; Cp., Ezek36:37; Hos5:15; Matt23:39).

[21] Christ's present position is in "heaven" (cf. Act1:9-11; Heb1:3), where He will remain in "until the times of restitution of all things". Thus, the Messianic Kingdom that will be inaugurated at the 2nd Coming of Christ is "the times of restitution of all things", also called "the dispensation of the fullness of times" (Eph1:10).

Dispensational Note. In vv19-21, there are two issues in play that are related, although distinct. Repentance by individual Jews would result in personal salvation (v19), along with the opportunity to escape the physical judgment that was coming upon Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD (cf. Luk21:20-24). Repentance by the nation of Israel would result in Christ's return to inaugurate the Messianic Kingdom (vv20-21).

[22] This is an allusion to Deuteronomy 18:15, a prophecy of "Moses" concerning the coming of Messiah.

¹⁴ Note that "repent" (Greek, **metanoew**) means *to change the mind*. Previously these Jews had rejected the Messiahship of Jesus, now they must acknowledge it.

- [23] The judgment of "every soul" that would not "hear that prophet" (i.e., Jesus) would be "destr[uction] from among the people" (i.e., physical death; allusion to Deut18:19). This judgment would come in the years leading up to 70 AD, when Rome would destroy Jerusalem and the Temple. To escape this temporal judgment, individual Jews had to "repent" and "be baptized" (Act2:38) in order to separate themselves from the generation of the nation of Israel that crucified Christ (Act2:40). Those that did so would receive instructions as to how to escape the coming judgment (cf. Luk21:20-24).
- [24] Peter asserts that "all the prophets" from "Samuel" and after "foretold of these days" (i.e., the 1st Coming of Christ).
- [25] The "men of Israel" (v12) that Peter is addressing are "the sons of the prophets" and are a party to the "covenant" God made with "Abraham" (Gen12:1-3). Peter's quotation of Genesis 12:3, "And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed" is the third of three provisions of the covenant, and the one that specifically provides forgiveness for the sins of all people through the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished at His 1st Coming (cf. Gal3:8,14; Col2:13-14).
- [26] Although the work of Christ propitiated the sins of all peoples (1Jn2:2), the message of the gospel of grace was proclaimed "first" to the Jews (Cp., Rom1:16).

CHAPTER 4

PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH BEGINS

The powerful preaching of Peter (Act2:22-36; 3:12-26), accompanied by signs and wonders wrought by all the apostles (e.g., Act2:43; 3:1-11), led to the conversion of many Jews (e.g., "about three thousand" on Pentecost and "about five thousand" at Peter's 2nd sermon; Act2:41; 4:4). Since all this was done in the Temple, the "priests" and "Sadducees" (Cp., Act5:17) naturally came to feel threatened, since the preaching of the resurrection of Christ directly contradicted a major tenet of their theology (cf. Act23:8); thus began the persecution of the early Church by unbelieving Israel.

- [1] The "captain of the Temple" was responsible for maintaining order within the Temple complex. The "Sadducees" were in alignment with the "priests", since the priesthood came from "the sect of the Sadducees" (Act5:17).
- [2] The preaching of Peter and the apostles concerning the "resurrection" of "Jesus" directly contradicted a major tenet of the Sadducees, who "say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit" (Act23:8).

Liberalism and Religion. It might seem odd that the most liberal sect of Judaism, which denied all the supernatural aspects of their religion and rejected much of the canon of Scripture¹⁵, would be

¹⁵ The Sadducees accepted only the Torah as Scripture. It is for this reason that Jesus based his theological arguments with the Sadducees on quotations from the

employed as priests. However, such is the case today, as unbelieving men (and increasingly women) occupy the majority of pastorates, denominational roles, and seminary/academic positions within mainstream, liberal denominations of (so-called) Christianity¹⁶.

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- [6] "Annas" (a contraction of Ananias; Hebrew, Hananiah = *JEHOVAH has favored*) had been high priest from 6-15 AD, at which time he was deposed by the Roman prefect over Judea. Even after his official service ended, he remained an extremely influential figure in Jewish politics. Since several of his sons, as well as his son-in-law "Caiaphas", succeeded him as high priest, he was considered the real power behind the priesthood even after his deposition. "Caiaphas" served as high priest 18-36 AD, and "John" (probably Jonathan) was a son of Annas who served as high priest 36-37 AD. As mentioned in the discussion of dating the Book of Acts, Annas also had a son named Theophilus who served as high priest 37-41 AD.
- [7] Much as the Pharisees had desired to know "by what power" Jesus performed His miracles, erroneously attributing them to Satan (cf. Matt12:24), so the Sadducees demand to know "by what power, or by what name" the apostles perform their miracles.
- [8] This verse implicitly provides the answer to the question (v7), as Peter was "filled with **the Holy Ghost**" (i.e., God). Peter addresses his audience as "Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel" (i.e., the leadership of the nation of Israel who were directly responsible for the crucifixion of Christ; v10).
- [9] Peter characterizes the healing of the "impotent man" (i.e., lame; Act3:2) as a "good deed" (Cp., Mk3:4).
- [10] Peter addresses the "rulers of the people, and elders of Israel" (v8) as those who "crucified" Christ (perhaps very literally; cf. Matt27:20). The "name" (which is a Hebraism, meaning the totality of the person) by which the apostles performed their miracles was "Jesus Christ of Nazareth¹⁷"; note, "Christ" = Messiah (Jnl1:41). Particularly offensive to these Sadducees, Peter reiterates that "God raised [Him] from the dead" (i.e., resurrection).
- [11] Peter alludes to Psalm 118:22, and identifies the leadership of the nation of Israel as the "builders" and Jesus Christ as the "stone which was set at nought" (i.e., refused). Thus, the first clause in Psalm 118:22 was fulfilled in Israel's rejection of Christ; however, the second clause, "is become the head of the corner", will be fulfilled in the future. The "head of the corner", or cornerstone,

Torah (Matt22:23,31-33; i.e., He exposed their hypocrisy by showing even the limited portion of Scripture they accepted taught the doctrine of resurrection).

¹⁶ In his book Christianity and Liberalism, J. Gresham Machen argued that liberal Christianity is not Christianity at all, but an entirely different religion.

¹⁷ In Israel, a man was normally identified by naming his father (e.g., Matt16:17); because of His virgin birth, however, Scripture never refers to Jesus as the son of Joseph, but always as Jesus of Nazareth.

is the most important part of a foundation (cf. Isa28:16; Eph2:20; 1Pet2:6).

[12] Peter is unequivocal in asserting that "salvation" is only available through the "name" (i.e., Hebraism meaning the Person; cf. Jn1:12; 20:31) of "Jesus Christ" (v10; Cp., Jn14:6); this is the "narrow way" of which Jesus spoke (Matt7:13-14). In saying to these Jews, "we must be saved", Peter is asserting the same thing that Jesus did with Nicodemus; namely, that no Jew will enter the kingdom without being born again (Cp., Jn3:3-5).

[13] The Sadducees considered "Peter and John" to be "unlearned and ignorant men" because they had not formally trained under a Rabbi; of course, "they had been with Jesus" and trained by Him (Cp., Jn1:38,49; 3:2,26; 6:25), but the Jews also considered Jesus to be "unlearned" (Jn7:14-15).

Qualification for Ministry. Within Christianity today, there can also be an unscriptural emphasis on formal (seminary) training as the primary qualification for ministry. The scriptural qualification is "apt to teach" (1Tim3:2) and "able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Tit1:9). Pastor Justin Johnson: "Let your knowledge of the Bible be your qualification" (Cp., Luk2:46-47; 24:27,44-45).

[14] As with the ministry of Jesus (Cp., Matt12:24; Jn9:16), the Jews could not deny the authenticity of the miracles the apostles worked (v16); rather, they questioned/attacked the "power" or authority by which they were wrought (v7).

[15] Compare with John 11:47-48.

[16] When confronted with undeniable truth, unbelief has two possible actions: 1) conversion/belief, or 2) "suppress[ion of] the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom1:18; Cp., Matt12:24). Note that both Jesus and the Apostle John asserted that the "signs" Israel received were sufficient for the Jews to believe (cf. Matt12:39; Jn20:30-31).

[17] The Sadducees chose to act to suppress the truth (v16).

[18] Since they could not deny the miracle (v16), they "threaten" (v17) and "command" the apostles "not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus".

[19] "Peter and John" asserted that they were compelled by "God" to witness to the power and resurrection of Jesus Christ (cf. Act1:22). For the Sadducees to command otherwise requires one to "judge" which is "right in the sight of God" (i.e., to obey men or to obey God; Cp., Act5:29).

[20] This is the definition of a witness (cf. Act1:22).

[21] The Jews were constrained in what they could do to John the Baptist and the apostles "because of the people", who considered them to be prophets (cf. Matt21:26).

[22] The implication is that the man was of sufficient age to testify of himself to the miracle wrought on him by the apostles (Cp., Jn9:21).

SPIRIT-FILLED CHRISTIANS CONTINUE TO PREACH CHRIST

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VOLUNTARY SHARING AMONG CHRISTIANS IN JERUSALEM

It is understandable that the new believers converted at Pentecost (Acts 2) needed to remain with the apostles for an extended period of time in order to be taught the doctrines of the new dispensation, after which the applicable command of Christ's was to "go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk16:15; cf. Act1:8). There was no command, no expectation, nor even permit for these believers to form a Christian commune in Jerusalem. The practice of voluntarily sharing possessions continued too long and eventually resulted in the saints in Jerusalem becoming impoverished¹⁸ (cf. Rom15:25-26).

[32] This practice of sharing of possessions is descriptive of a unique time and place in early Church history, it is not prescriptive of the entire Church Age. The normative prescriptions and practices for the Church during the present age are found in the epistles of Paul (cf. 2Thess3:6-12; 1Tim5:8).

[33] Here, "power" (Greek, *δυναμις*) implies *miracles* performed by "the apostles" (Cp., Act2:43). These sign miracles served to validate the "witness" of the apostles to the "resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (Act1:22).

[34] Though not commanded, the general practice was to give all the proceeds of the individual sales.

[35] Although the "distribution" was organized under the administration of the "apostles", this was not commanded by them. This was a unique, voluntary practice never observed anywhere outside of Jerusalem.

[36] "Joses" is the Hebrew Joseph. "Barnabas", meaning "son of consolation" (i.e., an encourager), was a nick-name ascribed to him

¹⁸ UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher wisely observed, "The problem with socialism is that you eventually run out of other people's money".

by the "apostles". Note that when used metaphorically, "the son of" is a Hebraism used to describe the intrinsic nature of a person (e.g., "Boanerges" meant "sons of thunder"; Mk3:17; Cp., Luk9:54; "Son of God"; Jn10:33,36).

- [37] Presumably, the "land" Barnabas "sold" was in "Cyprus" (v36), since as a "Levite" he was not entitled to inherit land within Israel (cf. Num18:20,24).

CHAPTER 5

ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA

There is no suggestion in the text that Ananias and his wife Sapphira, members of the nascent church in Jerusalem, were not genuine believers. This account of Ananias and Sapphira is an illustration of a "sin unto death" to which even believers are subject (cf. 1Jn5:16).

- [1] "But" introduces a contrast; the practice of "Ananias" and "Sapphira" deviated from the general practice (Cp., Act4:32-37). "Ananias" is the Hebrew name Hananiah, meaning to *whom JEHOVAH has shown grace*.
- [2] The deviation is that Ananias and Sapphira did not give all the proceeds of the sale of their "possession" (v1), but "kept back part of the price"; note that the Greek verb translated "kept back" is in the middle voice, indicating they "kept back [for themselves]". Ananias' "wife also being privy to it" indicates Sapphira knew of and concurred with the plan to deceive the apostles (v3). Their decision to "keep back part of the price" was **not** their sin.
- [3] Their **sin** was to "lie" by asserting or implying they had given the full price of the sale. According to Peter, their deception was motivated by "Satan", indicating that even believers can be influenced (though not possessed) by Satan (e.g., Matt16:22-23).
- [4] Note that "while it remained" in the possession of Ananias, he was under no obligation to sell it, and "after it was sold" he was under no obligation to give the full price; the selling/giving was a totally voluntary practice (cf. 2Cor9:6-7). Though the "lie" of Ananias and Sapphira was to the apostles, the "lie to [God] the Holy Ghost" (v3) transcends and eclipses the lie to men in its offense (Cp., Deut23:21-23; Ps51:4).
- [5] This was an instance of a "sin unto death" (cf. 1Jn5:16). It does not mean an individual so judged by God was not saved, nor does it mean his salvation was lost if he was; unbelievers and believers alike are subject to such temporal judgment (cf. Act12:20-23; 1Cor11:29-30), akin to the "curses" of the Mosaic covenant (Lev26:14-46; Deut28:15-68). The purpose of such temporal judgment by God was to deter particularly heinous sins (Cp., Eccl8:11), as illustrated in His judgment of Nadab and Abihu¹⁹ (cf. Lev10:1-5) at the beginning of the Dispensation of the Law; that purpose was seemingly accomplished as "great fear came on all them".

¹⁹ Nadab and Abihu were priests who were held to a higher standard of conduct in the Dispensation of the Law. In the Dispensation of Grace, all believers are priests (cf. Rom12:1; Heb4:14-16; Rev1:6).

- [6] All these men were devout Jews (Act2:5), and the requirement under the Law of Moses was that a body be "buried" on the same day of its death "that thy land be not defiled" (Deut21:23).
- [8] Sapphira was also personally guilty of the sin of lying; her confirmation of Ananias' account of the price of the land reveals the deception was pre-planned collusion.
- [9] All sin demands judgment, so to commit willful sin is "to tempt the Spirit of the Lord" to judge (cf. Deut6:16; Matt4:7; Heb10:26-28). During the Dispensation of Grace, in which all believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, such behavior necessarily involves Him in the sin (Cp., 1Cor6:18-20).
- [10] See comments on v6.
- [11] See comments on v5, repeated for emphasis.

JEWISH PERSECUTION OF THE EARLY CHURCH CONTINUES

Still less than one year had passed since the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, followed by the birth of the Church on the Day of Pentecost. The bold and effective preaching of the apostles, emphasizing the resurrection of Christ and accompanied by undeniable signs, wonders, and miracles, resulted in the conversion of thousands of Jews²⁰ in Jerusalem. Naturally, opposition to the apostles and the nascent Church arose from the unbelieving leadership of the nation of Israel, particularly the priests and Sadducees.

- [12] Note that it is only "the apostles" who are working "signs and wonders"; Paul will later assert that the power to perform such miracles was "the signs of an apostle" (2Cor12:12). The gathering of believers and the ministry of the apostles continued to take place "in Solomon's porch" (i.e., inside the Temple); thus, these gatherings remained exclusively Jewish with no Gentiles present.
- [13] Here, "the rest" denotes those Jews who were present, but were not converted as a result of Peter's preaching and the ministry of the apostles. Out of fear of the prompt judgment exercised upon Ananias and Sapphira (vv1-11), no unbeliever pretended to be a believer and "join himself to [the body of believers; i.e., the church]". Thus, the divine judgment upon Ananias and Sapphira accomplished its purpose of keeping the early Jewish church pure.
- [14] Nonetheless, a "multitude" of Jewish "believers" were "added to the Lord", an expression that makes clear these Jewish believers were being incorporated into the Body of Christ (i.e., the Church) by Spirit baptism (1Cor12:13).
- [15] This miraculous ministry was specific to the apostles in general, and Peter in particular; there is no suggestion that this phenomenon is expected to be normative during the Church Age.

²⁰ At this time, no Gentiles had yet been evangelized or converted; the Church was entirely Jewish.

- [16] The fact that these Jews "were healed **every one**" by the apostles is analogous to the healing ministry of Jesus, in which all were healed (cf. Matt8:16; 12:15; Luk6:19), and suggests that the kingdom²¹ was still "at hand" (Mk1:15; cf. Luk13:6-9; Act3:19-21).
- [17] At this time, the "high priest" was Caiaphas (Jn11:49), and the priesthood was comprised of Jews of "the sect of the Sadducees". The priests were "filled with indignation" (Lit., jealousy, envy) over the popularity of the apostles with the Jews, since they were hated by the people for their rank corruption.
- [18] Apparently all twelve of "the apostles" were imprisoned.
- [19] In the O.T., "the angel of the LORD" was a designation for a preincarnate manifestation of Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Godhead (i.e., a Christophany); after the incarnation (i.e., in the N.T.), there are no appearances of "the angel of the LORD". Here, there is no article in the Greek text, so it is not "the angel" but "an angel". The deliverance of the apostles from prison by this "angel" was miraculous in nature (cf. v23).
- [20] By speaking "in the temple", only Jews would be present.
- [21] The "council" was the Sanhedrin, a Jewish assembly of elders comprised of 70 members (1/3 Sadducees, 1/3 Pharisees) plus the high priest, patterned after Moses' council of advisors (Num11:16-17). It was also called the "senate"²², and apparently all members were present for this special meeting. Meetings of the Sanhedrin were not normally held "early in the morning", indicating the emergency nature of this occasion necessitated by the fact that the apostles "taught" (imperfect tense in Greek; i.e., "continued teaching") in the Temple after having been commanded not to do so (Act4:18).
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- [23] The apostles' deliverance from "prison" was clearly miraculous, which is descriptive, not prescriptive of the Church Age. Even in the Book of Acts, Paul and Silas were similarly miraculously delivered from imprisonment in Philippi (cf. Act16:25-26), yet Paul ultimately died during imprisonment in Rome (2Tim4:6-8).
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- [26] Note that it is the leadership of the nation of Israel that resisted Christ and the apostles, not the people. The apostles allow themselves to be taken "without violence" (Cp., Jn18:36), which is prescriptive of the Church Age (cf. Rom12:12,14,17-21). The priests and Sadducees "feared the people" because they were hated for their

²¹ The healing ministries of Jesus and the apostles were about much more than simply a supernatural validation of their messages. The prophetic scriptures are clear that there will be none in Israel who are blind, deaf, sick, or demon possessed in the kingdom (cf. Isa35:5-6; Zech13:2; Luk4:18); thus, the healing of all Jews emphasized the fact that the kingdom was "at hand" (i.e., could be immediately inaugurated if the nation of Israel repented).

²² In verse 21, "council" and "senate" are connected by an exegetical **kai** in the Greek text, indicating that they are equivalent, not different, bodies.

rank corruption (and the immense wealth that was derived from it; Cp., Matt21:13; Mk11:17; Jn2:16).

- [27] The "high priest" was the de facto chairman of "the council" (i.e., the Sanhedrin).
- [28] By "this name" was meant "Jesus Christ of Nazareth" (cf. Act4:10). The high priest accused the apostles of "intend[ing] to bring this man's blood upon us", but they had previously vowed that "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matt27:25).
- [29] In the response of the "apostles", "ought" is the Greek auxiliary verb **δεῖ** meaning "must ... of necessity"; it communicates a moral imperative.

Human Government as a Divine Institution. Human government is a divine institution established after the Flood (Gen9:6). Divine institutions²³ were ordained by God to be fundamental, enduring features of society to ensure its preservation; as such, they are applicable to all men, believers and unbelievers alike. God's expectation is that human government function as a righteous minister on His behalf (cf. Rom13:1-7) for the preservation of human society. As such, all men must submit to human government when it functions righteously. However, it is a moral imperative that believers "obey God rather than men" when government acts unrighteously, and especially when it demands men do that which God has forbidden (or not do that which God has commanded).

- [30] The apostles were ordained to be eye-witnesses of the resurrection of Christ (Act1:22), because His resurrection is an indispensable element of the gospel (cf. 1Cor15:4,12-14). That "Jesus" was "slew and hanged on a tree" (i.e., crucified) is evidence that He endured the curse of God (cf. Deut21:23; Gal3:13) on our behalf (cf. Isa53:4-6; Dan9:26; 1Cor15:3). Note that "ye" is emphatic in the Greek text; Peter is addressing those individuals who were personally responsible for the crucifixion of Christ (cf. Matt26:59; 27:20; Jn18:35; 19:6,15).
- [31] The "right hand [of God]" is the most honored position in all of creation (Cp., Ps110:1; Eph1:20-22; Heb1:3). Note that Peter refers to Jesus Christ as "Prince" (Cp., Dan9:25), which denotes a king in waiting (cf. Rev19:16); in this case, Christ awaits the "repentance" of the nation of "Israel" (cf. Hos5:15; Matt23:39; Act3:19-21).
- [32] Here, "we" are the apostles (Act1:22). Whereas during the Dispensation of Grace, the "Holy Ghost" is permanently given to all who believe (cf. Eph1:13-14; 4:30), this was not the case during the Dispensation of Law (Cp., 1Sam16:14; 2Sam7:15; Ps51:11; Jn14:16-17). The contingent nature of Peter's offer of "the Holy Ghost" to "them that **obey** [God]" reflects the fact that the kingdom was still at hand, and God was dealing with the nation of Israel according to the legal requirements of the Mosaic covenant (cf. Lev26:3,14;

²³ The divine institutions are: 1) responsible human dominion as God's image-bearer (Gen1:26-30; 2:15-17; 9:1-3; Ps8:4-8), 2) marriage (Gen2:18-24), 3) family (Exod20:12; Eph6:1-4; in the Mosaic covenant, land was apportioned permanently to families), 4) human government (Gen9:6), and 5) nation states based on linguistic and ethnic diversity (Gen 10; 11:6-9). At present, all of these institutions are under attack.

Deut28:1,15). This further substantiates that the transition from Law to Grace was not complete at that time.

- [33] That the Jewish leadership would desire "to slay" the apostles, as they did of Christ Himself (Jn7:1), was prophesied by Christ to His apostles (Jn15:20). However, under Roman rule the Sanhedrin had no authority to administer capital punishment (cf. Jn18:31).
- [34] "Gamaliel", whose name means *God is my reward*, was the Rabbi under whom the Apostle Paul was trained (Act22:3). As a "Pharisee", he was highly respected "among all the people" and honored with the title of Rabban²⁴; according to the Talmud, only 6 individuals were so honored.
- [35] Gamaliel addressed "them", meaning the members of the Sanhedrin, as "Ye men of Israel" (i.e., the leadership of the nation of Israel).
- [36] Gamaliel offers the example of "Theudas", who led a prior attempted rebellion, but which came to "nought". There is no extant historical record supporting this allusion; that does not mean it is not accurate, and in fact comports well with Gamaliel's assertion that it amounted to nothing.
- [37] This second example of "Judas" is supported by the historical record, having occurred "in the days of the taxing" (i.e., under the reigns of Caesar Augustus and King Herod; cf. Matt2:1; Luk2:1).
- [38] Here, "if" is a 1st class condition in the Greek text, meaning it is presumed to be true. Thus, Gamaliel offered wise counsel; namely, trust in the sovereignty of God, who will not allow the apostles and their ministry to prosper if it is merely a movement "of men" (Cp., Dan4:17).
- [39] This "if" is also a 1st class condition in the Greek text, presumed to be true. On the contrary, if the ministry of the apostles is "of God", it cannot be thwarted by men (i.e., any actions of the Sanhedrin), and attempts to do so would constitute a "fight against God" (of which the Jewish leadership was guilty). While this might be wise counsel for the leadership of the nation of Israel, that does not translate to individual Jews who could not be indifferent to the claims of Christ and His apostles without personal consequences eternal in nature (cf. Jn3:16-18,36).
- [40] The Sanhedrin accepted the counsel of Gamaliel. Nevertheless, they "beat" the apostles and reiterated the command "not to speak in the name of Jesus", presumably hoping to discourage them, but ultimately "let them go". This "beating" would have been the 39 lashes as received five times of the Jews by the Apostle Paul (2Cor11:24; Cp., Deut25:3).
- [41] Suffering for the cause of Christ is a privilege and will be rewarded (cf. Matt5:10; Rom8:17; 2Tim2:12; Jas1:12; 1Pet3:13-14).
- [42] In obedience to God, the apostles "ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ"; consider the last verse of the book, Acts 28:31, which suggests this practice would continue unabated throughout the Church Age. However, at this point in Acts (i.e., within a year after the

²⁴ Rabbi means "my teacher", whereas Rabban means "our teacher".

death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ) the apostles' ministry continued "daily in the temple", meaning their message was still addressed exclusively to Jews.

CHAPTER 6

ORGANIZATION OF THE EARLY CHURCH

With the rapid growth of the early church (8,000+ converts in Jerusalem; cf. Act2:41; 4:4) in the months following Pentecost, the practical demands of ministry quickly became more than the apostles themselves could administer, necessitating organization (e.g., selecting men to oversee the care of widows; vv1-8); these men were clearly precursors to those who would fill the office of deacon (cf. 1Tim3:8-16).

- [1] The "number of the disciples was multiplied", with at least 3,000 converts on the Day of Pentecost (Act2:41), 5,000 converts after Peter's second sermon (Act4:4), and many more beside these not explicitly numbered. The "Grecians" and "Hebrews" were both categories of Jews. The "Hebrews" were Jews who lived in Israel and spoke Hebrew and Aramaic (and often Greek). The "Grecians" were so-called Hellenistic Jews; that is, Jews who lived outside the land of Israel and spoke Greek as their primary language (often not understanding either Hebrew or Aramaic); these were the Jews from the many nations listed in Acts 2:9-11 who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost and remained with the apostles after their conversion (Act2:41-47).
- [2] Note that "the twelve" apostles at this time included Matthias as the replacement for Judas (Act1:26). The primary ministry focus of the apostles was "the word of God" (as for elders/bishops/pastors in the established churches; cf. 1Tim3:2; 5:17; Tit1:9); in contrast, the primary ministry focus of deacons would be to "serve tables" (i.e., minister to the physical needs of church members).
- [3] These nascent deacons were selected by the "brethren" (i.e., believing members of the congregation) and "appoint[ed]" (i.e., confirmed) by the apostles. The requirements here are that they be "full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom", although the requirements will be more fully defined by the Apostle Paul (1Tim3:8-13). Note that the apostles directed that "men" (from the Greek, *άνηρ*, literally "males") be selected (Cp., 1Tim3:12).
- [4] The apostles focused on the spiritual aspects of the ministry (i.e., "prayer" and the "ministry of the word"), whereas the deacons focused on the physical needs of church members.
- [5] The seven men selected were Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas. Nicolas is noted to be a "proselyte" (i.e., a Gentile who had converted to Judaism), implying that the other six were ethnically Jewish; it is also noted that Nicolas was "of Antioch", probably because of the importance that city would come to play in early Christianity (e.g., Act11:26). Most, if not all, of these names are Greek, perhaps suggesting that these men were drawn primarily from the "Grecians" to allay the concern that their widows were the subjects of discrimination (v1). Of these seven, only the ministries of "Stephen" and "Philip" are mentioned after this verse.

- [6] The laying of hands on the deacons by the apostles as confirmation of the congregation's selection is a pattern that seems to be confirmed by the Apostle Paul (Cp., 1Tim5:22).
- [7] With the apostles' dedicated to the ministry of the word, "the word of God increased" in two possible senses: 1) more time was available to preach and teach "the word", and 2) time was available to begin composing the N.T. scriptures. This resulted in a rapid multiplication of "disciples ... in Jerusalem", including "a great company of priests". Whereas a number of Pharisees are recorded as believing on Christ in the Gospels, no such conversion of Sadducees is mentioned; however, "priests" were Sadducees (cf. Act5:17).

Was Luke a Priest? There is the possibility that Luke might have been a priest or Levite²⁵, which would logically explain the dedication of his Gospel and Acts to Theophilus the high priest (Cf. Luk1:3; Act1:1). If so, his conversion could have occurred as part of this "great company of priests" (Act6:7).

- [8] "Stephen" is the first person other than the apostles recorded as performing "wonders and miracles". Philip is also recorded to have performed "miracles" (Act8:6).

DISPUTATIONS WITH STEPHEN

- [9] The powerful ministry of "Stephen" (v8) led to his confrontation by certain Jewish sects. According to Josephus, Jerusalem had 480 synagogues, many organized by Jews who had returned to Israel from the diaspora, but who maintained a cultural connection to their kinsman from Gentile lands. Among these were the "synagogue of the Libertines" (i.e., former Jewish slaves of Rome who had been freed, and their descendants), the "Cyrenians" (i.e., Jews from North Africa), the "Alexandrians" (i.e., Jews from Egypt), and "them of Cilicia and of Asia" (i.e., Jews from the Roman province of Asia, which is modern day Turkey). Note, "Cilicia" included the city of Tarsus, which was the home town of the Apostle Paul (cf. Act21:39); this may well have been the synagogue attended by Paul, and it is possible he was involved in this "dispute" with Stephen which ultimately led to Paul's "consenting unto his death" (Cp., Act8:1).
- [10] In their disputations, these Jews (v3) were not able to prevail against the arguments of Stephen, the summary of which will be given in Acts 7.
- [11] Just as with Jesus (Cp., Matt26:59,65), when the Jews could not refute Stephen's arguments his opponents resorted to "suborn[ing]" false witnesses (v13) to charge him with "blasphemy", thus seeking his execution (Lev24:16).
- [12] The "council" is the Sanhedrin (Cp., Act5:21).
- [13] The "false witnesses" charged Stephen with "blasphemous words" against: 1) "this holy place", probably because Stephen proclaimed

²⁵ This would also comport well for those who advocate for Lucan authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Jesus' prophecy of the coming destruction of the Temple (cf. Luk19:41-44), which would anger the priests and Sadducees, and 2) "the law", because of the increasing emphasis on grace over law (cf. Jn1:17) as well as denouncing extra-biblical traditions (cf. Matt15:3-9), which would anger the Pharisees.

- [14] Both of these charges (v13) were undoubtedly misconstrued and/or intentionally perverted by the Jews. First, "Jesus" never said He would "destroy" the Temple (Cp., Matt26:61), but that it would be destroyed as a judgment against the generation of Jews who rejected Him at His first coming (cf. Luk19:41-44; 21:20). Second, Stephen likely proclaimed the end of the Law as a rule of life as a result of Christ's death (Rom6:14; Cp., Act15:5,10-11) as well as repudiating the extra-biblical "doctrines" the Pharisees had elevated to be an oral "law" equivalent to Scripture (Cp., Mk7:7).
- [15] In the face of being falsely accused of blasphemy, Stephen's face appeared as "the face of an angel"; this may suggest that it reflected the glory of God as did that of Moses when He saw the Lord (Cp., Exod34:29,35; cf. Act7:55).

CHAPTER 7

STEPHEN'S SERMON BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN

Stephen preached an extraordinary sermon when standing before the Sanhedrin accused of blasphemy against the Law of Moses in fulfillment of Jesus' promise (cf. Luk21:12-15). In it, he brilliantly reviewed the history of the nation of Israel, from God's call of Abraham to leave Mesopotamia (v2) to the murder of the Messiah (v52); his conclusion was that they, not he, had failed to keep the Law (v53). A profound point of emphasis throughout his narration was that Israel consistently failed in their first opportunities, but were successful in their second. Though unstated, the clear implication was that the rejection of Messiah by the nation of Israel at His first coming should have been recognized as consistent with that historical pattern (Cp., Eccl1:9), thus confirming (not disproving) that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Messiah (Cp., Luk24:20-21,25-27); per that pattern, Israel will receive Jesus at His second coming (Zech12:10).

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CHAPTER 8

SAUL PERSECUTES THE CHURCH

In Acts 8, Saul of Tarsus emerges as the leader of the unbelieving Jews in Israel who virulently persecuted the nascent Church with the diabolical intent of extinguishing it, yet God used that persecution to motivate believers to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk16:15; cf. Gen50:20).

- [1] Some have suggested that "Saul was consenting unto [Stephen's] death" implies that Saul was a member of the Sanhedrin and officially cast a

vote to condemn Stephen; that is not the case²⁶. Here, "consenting" means he *took pleasure in it*, or *approved of it*. Paul was likely one of the Jews of the synagogue of Cilicia over whom Stephen had prevailed in public disputations (cf. Act6:9-10), which undoubtedly engendered in Saul a degree of resentment, and seemingly outright hatred, for Stephen. The implication is that the "persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem" was spearheaded by Saul. The result of the persecution, that believers were "scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria", instigated the migration of believers and the preaching of the gospel outside of Jerusalem as commanded by Christ (cf. Matt28:19-20; Mk16:15; Act1:8); the "persecution" may have been necessitated by a reluctance to leave Jerusalem on the part of believers (Cp., Gen50:20; Ps76:10; 119:71; Rom8:28), but it also represented the grace of God in removing believers from Jerusalem in advance of its coming judgment by means of the Romans (cf. Luk21:20-24). Further, the removal of most of the believers from direct access to "the apostles", who remained in Jerusalem, would necessitate the writing and distribution of the scriptures in order to teach new believers.

- [2] "Saul"/Paul was a Pharisee (cf. Act23:6), indicating that the Jewish persecution of "the church" had expanded from the priests, Sadducees, and Temple to include the Pharisees and the synagogues (Cp., Act9:2). Here, "house" indicates small groups of believers were now meeting in homes (i.e., house churches).

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²⁶ The question of whether or not Saul was a member of the Sanhedrin cannot be established from Acts 8:1.

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PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH

After having preached the gospel to the Samaritans (vv5-25; cf. Act1:8), God directed Philip (cf. Act6:5) to go to Gaza for a divine appointment with an Ethiopian eunuch (Cp., Jn4:4). This passage is important for four reasons: 1) Philip preached Jesus from Isaiah 53, thus validating its subject is **the Messiah**, 2) although the Ethiopian eunuch was not the first proselyte converted (Cp., Act2:10; 6:5), his conversion was the first recorded for one from south (black) Africa, who returned to Africa taking the gospel with him, 3) it demonstrates blessings for eunuchs and proselytes under the New covenant that were not available under the Old (i.e., Mosaic covenant; cf. Deut23:1), and 4) it sets forth personal faith as a condition for baptism, thus repudiating the notion of infant baptism²⁷.

[26] There is no article in the Greek text, so it is not "the angel of the Lord" but "an angel" (cf. comments on Act5:19). "Gaza" was a "desert" coastal region in the southwest of Israel not commonly traveled unless one's destination was the Via Maris, the trade route leading to Egypt/Africa; thus, God's instructions for Philip to go to "Gaza" was for the purpose of arranging a divine appointment (Cp., Jn4:4).

[27] The divine appointment was with "a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch". That he had "come to Jerusalem to worship" indicates he was either a Jew of the dispersion or a proselyte (more likely a proselyte), and may indicate the encounter occurred in association with one of the required festivals (Deut16:16). Here, "eunuch" is certainly used as a title to mean he held a position of "great authority" under "Candace, queen of the Ethiopians", but also describes his physical condition (since high officials in oriental courts were generally castrated men, especially when serving female dignitaries). "Candace" (meaning *prince of servants*; Cp., Gen9:25) was not a personal name, but a title used of all the queens of Ethiopia.

Ethiopia in the Bible. Ethiopia in the Bible is not exactly equivalent to the modern nation. In the Bible, the continent of

²⁷ Infant baptism is also necessary to sustain the heretical hierarchy of a (so-called) State Church, which collapses without it.

Africa is viewed as comprised of three geographical regions that were populated by the sons of Ham (Gen10:6): 1) Egypt (also translated Mizraim, roughly equivalent to the modern nation), 2) Libya (also translated Cush, corresponding to North Africa west of Egypt), and 3) Ethiopia (also translated Put/Phut, corresponding to black Africa south of Egypt).

Eunuchs Under the Law. Under the Law of Moses, eunuchs (whether Jews or proselytes) were not permitted to enter "into the congregation of the LORD" (Deut23:1); thus, they could not enter the Temple, and their ability to fellowship with the LORD and His people was severely restricted. However, Isaiah 56:3-7 notes that in the future messianic kingdom (in which the blessings of the New covenant will have been realized for the nation of Israel), both eunuchs and proselytes will enjoy full access to and fellowship with the LORD. Furthermore, those spiritual blessings made possible by the New covenant are available to believers during the Church Age (cf. Gal3:26-28).

- [28] In order to have a personal copy of Scripture (i.e., the scroll of "Isaiah"), the Ethiopian must have been wealthy.
- [29] "Philip" approached the Ethiopian's "chariot" as directed by "the Spirit [of God]". That the Holy Spirit spoke directly to Philip is descriptive of a specific occasion in the early Church, not prescriptive of the Church Age.
- [30] Philip's evangelistic method was to simply ask the Ethiopian if he understood what he was reading in the Book of "Isaiah".
- [31] The Ethiopian did not understand what he was reading, which provided the occasion for Philip, under the power of the Spirit, to "guide" him (cf. Jn16:13).
- [32] Quotation of latter portion of Isaiah 53:7.
- [33] Quotation of early portion of Isaiah 53:8 (i.e., the Ethiopian was reading from Isaiah 53).
- [34] A great argument rages to this day within Judaism over the subject of Isaiah 53. This was precisely the Ethiopian's question, "of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself, or of some other man?"
- [35] From this "same scripture" (i.e., Isa53:7-8), Philip "preached unto him Jesus", validating that the subject of Isaiah 53 is the Messiah, who is Jesus of Nazareth (cf. Act2:36; Cp., Matt8:17; Luk24:25-27).
- [36] Obviously, the preaching of Philip had included the call to be water "baptized" (cf. Act2:38; Cp., Matt28:19; Mk16:16), which resulted in the Ethiopian's question, "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" The context to his question was obviously the grave restrictions placed on eunuchs and proselytes under the Law of Moses (i.e., his physical condition hindered him from enjoying all the blessings available under the Law, including Jewish baptisms; Deut23:1).
- [37] Philip's answer was profoundly significant for two reasons. First, "If thou believest with all thine heart" sets forth personal faith as the sole requirement for water baptism, thus repudiating infant

baptism (which was not practiced under the Law of Moses). Second, no other limitations of any kind were placed on candidates for baptism, thus making the spiritual blessings of the New covenant available to all, even eunuchs and proselytes (cf. Jn6:35-37; Gal3:26-28; Rev22:17). To such an amazing offer of grace, the Ethiopian eunuch confessed, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Cp., Matt16:16), acknowledging both His messiahship (i.e., "Christ") and deity (i.e., "the Son of God"; cf. Jn10:30-36).

Textual Note. Some Greek manuscripts²⁸ do not contain v37, and for that reason it is omitted from the modern critical text from which most modern Bible versions are translated; thus, v37 does not appear in most modern English Bibles. Omitting v37 is no small matter, as it is the only verse in the N.T. that explicitly defines personal faith as the sole requirement for baptism (thus repudiating infant baptism). Omission of v37 results in an extremely awkward and unsatisfying passage, as the Ethiopian's profound question concerning baptism is left unanswered, and Philip baptizes the eunuch without a profession of faith. Clearly, v37 is authentic.

- [38] Upon his profession of faith (v37), Philip "baptized" the Ethiopian "eunuch".
- [39] Though not stated, the implication of "when they were come up out of the water" is that the baptism was performed in a river of water by immersion (which is the meaning of the Greek word βαπτίζω; furthermore, baptisms under the Law of Moses were always by immersion; cf. Lev15:5,6,7,8,10,11,13,18,21). Following the baptism, Philip was supernaturally "caught away" (Greek, ὀρπαζω; Cp., 1Thess4:17), reinforcing the divine appointment nature of this encounter. The eunuch went on his way "rejoicing", presumably over his new intimacy with God that had not been possible under the Law of Moses.
- [40] Philip's rapture took him from the "desert" of "Gaza" (v26) to the city of "Azotus" (i.e., Ashdod, one of the 5 principal cities of Philistia). From there, he continued "preach[ing]" along the Mediterranean coast up to the port city of "Caesarea", which was the Roman capital of Judea. Philip apparently made his home in Caesarea, as he was found living there more than 20 years later (cf. Act21:8).

CHAPTER 9

THE CONVERSION OF SAUL OF TARSUS (APOSTLE PAUL)

Acts 9 records the confrontation of Saul of Tarsus by the glorified Lord Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus, which led to Saul's conversion and ultimately to his commissioning as **the Apostle Paul**. Scripture records Paul recounting this watershed event in his life (and in the history of the Church) in Acts 22 before a multitude of unbelieving Jews and in Acts 26 before King Herod Agrippa.

²⁸ Acts 8:37 is not found in Codices Vaticanus or Sinaiticus, which is the reason it is disputed by modern text critics. Though technically a minority reading, it is found in many extant Greek manuscripts, and it was quoted by Irenaeus (115-202 AD), Cyprian (200-258 AD), and Augustine (354-430 AD).

- [1] There is some ambiguity as to who the "high priest" was at this time, which is c. 36 AD; Caiaphas (Annas' son-in-law) was high priest from 18-36 AD, and Jonathan (Annas' son) was high priest from 36-37 AD.

Who was Saul? Saul of Tarsus became the Apostle Paul. He gives his own resume in Philippians 3:4-6. Namely, he was: 1) "circumcised the eighth day" (i.e., he was born to devout Jewish parents), 2) "of the stock of Israel" (i.e., ethnically Jewish), 3) "of the tribe of Benjamin" (i.e., closely associated with Judah, Benjamin was a prestigious tribe boasting the first king, Saul—Paul's namesake), 4) "an Hebrew of the Hebrews" (i.e., a Jewish idiom/superlative), 5) "as touching the law, a Pharisee" (i.e., "the straitest sect" of the Jewish "religion"; cf. Act26:5), 6) "concerning zeal, persecuting the church", and 7) "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless". He was trained for the rabbinate under Gamaliel, one of the most revered Rabbis of all time (cf. notes on Acts 5:34).

- [2] The verb "desired" is in the middle voice in the Greek text, indicating intense personal interest/investment. Because of the persecution of Christians (led by Saul; Act8:1), they had fled to "Damascus", the capital of Syria; yet Paul was not content that they had left Jerusalem/Israel, he was intent on chasing them down that he might "bring them to Jerusalem" to be tried (Cp., Mk13:9; Luk12:11-12; 21:12; Jn16:2; a type of the fulfillment that will also occur during the Tribulation). Note that the believers are said to be "of this way" (Greek, the way), the early designation for that sect of Judaism that followed Jesus Christ (cf. Jn14:6); also note that these early Jewish Christians continued to attend "synagogues".
- [3] According to Paul's recounting of this event, it occurred "about noon" (Act22:6) and that the "light from heaven" was "above the brightness of the sun" (Act26:13). The "light" would seem to be the Shekinah, which was associated with the presence of God (Cp., Ps104:2; Matt17:2). To travel in Syria at midday was difficult and to do so testifies to Paul's zealotry.
- [4] The "voice" spoke in Hebrew (Act26:14). Note that "Jesus" (v5) intimately identifies with His followers in their sufferings for Him, both: 1) His Body during the Church Age (cf. Eph2:5-6; Col1:18), and 2) the nation of Israel during the Tribulation (cf. Matt25:40,45).
- [5] Analogous to Moses at the burning bush (cf. Exod3:13), Saul's question, "Who art thou, Lord?", indicates he understood he was in the presence of God, but he wanted to know God's **name**. The response was, "I am Jesus" (Greek, Εγώ εἰμι), which is an implicit assertion that Jesus²⁹ is JEHOVAH (Cp., Exod3:14-15). According to the Apostle Paul (cf. 1Cor15:8), he saw the resurrected Christ (not a vision). That Saul was zealously persecuting the people of God, believing he was serving God (Cp., Jn16:2), is characterized as "to kick against the pricks".

Textual Note. The final clause in v5, "it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks", and the first clause in v6, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do", are omitted from the modern critical text (and,

²⁹ The name Jesus, which is Jehoshua in Hebrew (Cp., Num13:16), means *JEHOVAH saves* (Cp., Isa43:11; Matt1:21; Jude1:25).

therefore, modern English versions), but these clauses are found in Acts 22:10 and 26:14.

- [6] "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" is the question of a servant to his Master.
- [7] Though "hearing a voice", Saul's companions did not understand what was said (Act22:9).
- [8] Saul arrived at his destination, "Damascus", blind.
- [9] Saul's physical blindness was a type of his spiritual blindness (Rom11:25). To neither "eat nor drink" is a hard fast (Cp., Esth4:16), which is very difficult to do for "three days".
- [10] "Ananias" (Hebrew, Hananiah; cf. Dan1:6) means *whom God has shown grace*. By responding, "Behold, I am here, Lord", Ananias follows the pattern of all the faithful servants of God: Abraham (Gen22:1), Jacob (Gen31:11), Moses (Exod3:4), Samuel (1Sam3:4), Isaiah (Isa6:8).
- [11] Here, "in the house of Judas" connotes betrayal. Saul is residing in a house on "the street which is called Straight" (Cp., Matt7:13-14; Luk13:24; note, this important cross-reference is destroyed in modern versions which translate "straight" as "narrow").
- [12] Here it is explicitly stated that Saul saw Ananias "in a vision".
- [13] Note that "saints" (also vv32,41) is a generic term used for believers in both the O.T. and N.T., regardless of dispensational distinctions. That he had done "much evil" was confessed by the Apostle Paul (cf. 1Cor15:9; Gal1:13; 1Tim1:13,15). In 1 Timothy 1:13, Paul called his sin "blasphemy", which in Judaism was a violation of the 3rd commandment (Exod20:7). Since "name" is a Hebraism representing the whole Person, to "take the name of the LORD thy God in vain" includes misrepresenting God and His character in any way, the ultimate form of which is to do or attribute evil in His name (cf. Jn16:2).
- [14] Here, believers are characterized as "all who call on [Jesus'] name" (Cp., Act2:21; Rom10:12-13). Note, though Saul was portrayed as the leader of these persecutions of believers, he was so authorized by "the chief priests" (cf. Jn18:35; 19:6,15).
- [15] Saul is characterized as a "chosen vessel" (Cp., 2Tim2:21). Paul was commissioned by "the Lord" to "bear [Jesus'] name" before: 1) "Gentiles" (as the apostle to the Gentiles; cf. Rom11:13; Gal2:8; Eph3:8; 1Tim2:7; 2Tim1:11), 2) "kings" (e.g., Herod Agrippa, Festus, Felix, and ultimately Caesar Nero; cf. Act25:22-26; 24:24; 25:11), and 3) "the children of Israel" (i.e., in every town, Paul always preached first in the synagogues; cf. Act9:20; 13:5; 14:1; 17:1-2; 18:4; 19:8; Cp., Rom1:16; in addition, Peter states that Paul wrote an epistle "unto [Jews]", which is presumably the **Book of Hebrews**; 2Pet3:15-16).
- [16] In the Greek text, "must" is the verb **δει** meaning *it is required of necessity*; suffering for Christ will earn rewards (cf. Matt19:29; Rom8:17-18; 2Tim2:12). In Greek, the preposition **υπερ** (i.e., "for")

used with an object in the genitive case (i.e., "my name") means *on behalf of* or *for the sake of*.

- [17] "Ananias" addresses "Saul" as "Brother", acknowledging him to be a fellow believer.
- [18] In receiving his "sight", "Saul" is a type of the nation of Israel being regenerated during the Tribulation (Cp., Rom11:25; 1Cor15:8). Paul, as the Apostle to the Gentiles, "was baptized" and also baptized others (cf. 1Cor1:14-16), confirming baptism as an ordinance for the Gentile church (Cp., 1Cor11:2). However, Paul's baptism is an identification with Jesus Christ (which is a picture of Spirit baptism; cf. Rom6:3-5), not John's baptism of repentance (cf. Mk1:4; Act19:3-5).
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PETER PERFORMS TWO ADDITIONAL MIRACLES

Peter heals two Jewish believers, implying he is still ministering to Jews only, setting a contrasting backdrop from which he will be directed by God to go to a Gentile in the next chapter (cf. Act10:14). These two miracles performed by Peter on Jews, immediately preceding the gospel being extended to the first Gentile, will be found to have profound typological significance.

- [32] Note that "saints" (also vv13,41) is a generic term used for believers in both the O.T. and N.T., regardless of dispensational distinctions. "Lydda" was a town on the road from Jerusalem to Joppa, approximately 9 miles from Joppa.
- [33] Peter was visiting "saints" (v32), so "Aeneas" is presumed to be a believer. The "palsy" simply means paralyzed; that he had been

"sick" for "eight years" means he would have been well known as an invalid to the people of Lydda.

Historical Note on Aeneas. The name "Aeneas" is Latin. Aeneas was a minor character in Homer's *Iliad*, but a principal character in Virgil's *Aeneid*. A Trojan hero, reputed to be a demigod (i.e., his mother was the goddess Aphrodite/Venus; thus, he would have been a Nephilim), who after the fall of Troy to the Greeks led a remnant of Trojans to Italy and as ancestors of Romulus and Remus became the forebearers of the Romans.

- [34] Peter heals "Aeneas" in the name of "Jesus Christ" (Cp., Act3:6). That the healing ministry of Peter to the Jews continued at this time raises the question of whether the offer of the Kingdom was still "at hand" (Cp., Matt4:23)?
- [35] "Sharon" is the plain extending from Joppa to Caesarea, indicating that some time passed for word of the miracle performed in the name of Jesus Christ to become known in this extended region. Peter's miracle was a "sign" for the Jews (cf. Jn20:30-32; Mk16:20; 1Cor1:22; Heb2:4), causing many to turn "to the Lord" (the Greek preposition is ἐπι, meaning "upon", as in "resting upon").
- [36] "Joppa" was a coastal port city. "Tabitha" is a Hebrew name meaning *gazelle*, which is "Dorcas" in Greek; that she was a "disciple" indicates she was a believing Jew. Though many women followed Jesus, it is unusual for a "woman" to be called a "disciple". That "she did" (Greek imperfect tense meaning "kept on doing") testifies to her faithfulness in both "good works" (cf. v39) and "almsdeeds" (i.e., giving money; Cp., Act10:2).
- [37] The body had been "washed", but not anointed for burial (Cp., Mk14:8; 16:1). This suggests they were allowing for, if not expecting, Peter to raise her from the dead (cf. v38).
- [38] "Lydda" was approximately 9 miles from "Joppa". The desire that "Peter" would "not delay" in coming was necessitated by the requirement of the Law of Moses to bury a body the same day of its death (cf. Deut21:23); note, these Jewish believers are seemingly still obedient to the requirements of the Law.
- [39] The benevolence ministry of "Dorcas" was to make "coats and garments" for those in need (Cp., v36). The verb "showing" is in the middle voice (which can be used to express intense personal interest or involvement), which may imply the "garments" the "widows" were wearing had been made for them by Dorcas.
- [40] The two instances of the apostles raising the dead were: 1) Peter raised a Jew (here), and 2) Paul raised a Gentile (Act20:9-12). After the ascension of Christ, the apostles healed the sick, raised the dead, and cast out demons just as Jesus did; however, there is no record they ever cleansed a leper, which was a unique miracle that authenticated the messianic claims of Jesus. Had Jesus cleansed all lepers in Israel (cf. Matt4:23; 8:16; 10:1; 12:15; Luk6:19; Cp., Matt11:5; Luk7:22)?

The Sign of Jewish Healing. The purpose of the healing ministry of Jesus and His twelve apostles (including the casting out of demons)

was more than merely validating His message that "the kingdom of heaven [was] at hand" (Matt4:17; 10:7), but to prepare that generation of the nation of Israel to actually enter the Kingdom in which there would be none sick (cf. Isa32:24; 35:5-6; 58:8; Luk10:9) and none possessed by devils (cf. Isa24:21-22; Zech13:1-2; Rev20:1-3).

- [41] For comments on the use of "saints", see vv13,23. Note that Jesus had given the "twelve apostles" power to "raise the dead" (Matt10:8), although this is the first record of an apostle doing so.
- [42] See comments on v35. Here, in the Greek text the verb "believed" is in the aorist tense, which describes a completed action without reference to time (though most often occurring in the past; it is not an imperfect tense, which would communicate continuing belief). Again, "in the Lord" makes use of the Greek preposition ἐν (meaning "upon", as in "resting upon"). Note the parallelism, "turned to the Lord" (v35) vs. "believed in the Lord" (v42); thus, "turn" is equivalent to "believe".

Typological Significance of Peter's Healings. These two miraculous healings of Jewish persons that immediately precede the first Gentile conversions (Acts 10) have typological significance. The healing of the man "sick of the palsy", which on an analogous occasion Jesus connected with the need for forgiveness of sins (Matt9:2), points to the nation of Israel's need for forgiveness, made possible by the blessings secured under the New Covenant (cf. Jer31:34; Ezek36:25). The supernatural raising of a righteous Jewess, full of good works, highlights that "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified" (Rom3:20) even for Jews, and that the nation of Israel "must be born again" (Jn3:7). These spiritual works will be accomplished for the nation of Israel prior to God extending His proffered blessings to the Gentile nations (cf. Rom11:12,15).

- [43] This "Simon" is always identified as "a tanner" (Cp., Act10:6,32), distinguishing him from Simon the magician (Act8:3), but also calling attention to the fact that his profession is significant. A "tanner" regularly handled animal carcasses, making him habitually unclean under the Law of Moses (cf. Lev11:39-40), such that those in this profession were generally despised and avoided by Jews. Peter's willingness to associate closely with a tanner suggests he was already holding his Judaism lightly and sets the stage for God to command him to go to the house of a Gentile (Act10).

CHAPTER 10

THE GOSPEL GOES TO THE GENTILES

The events of Acts 10 took place in c. 40 AD, approximately 8 years after the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Although a multitude of Jews had been converted, including some proselytes and Samaritans (Acts 8), there is no record of a straight up Gentile having yet been converted. God called Peter to go preach the gospel to a God-fearing Roman named Cornelius; though initially resistant, a vision from God convinces him that it is God's will to offer salvation to the Gentiles via the gospel of grace (a **watershed** not only in the Book of Acts, but the entire Bible). The events

associated with the conversion of Cornelius were so profound in significance, Peter recounted them in his arguments found in Acts 11:4-18 and 15:6-9. This divine appointment concluded the record of God's use of the Apostle Peter as the one entrusted with "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt16:19) to open the dispensational door of salvation to the Jews (Acts 2), the Samaritans (Acts 8), and the Gentiles (Acts 10; cf. Act1:8). After this, God's program of evangelizing the Gentiles was invested in the Apostle Paul (cf. Gal2:7-8).

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[2] A God-fearer was not a proselyte, having not converted to Judaism. Note, despite "fearing God", "[giving] much alms", and "praying to God always", which might have rendered him "just" (v22) under the Dispensation of the Law (cf. Gen12:3), in the Dispensation of Grace Cornelius was not yet saved (Cp., Act11:14).

[3] The "ninth hour" is approximately 3:00 pm, since Luke reckons time in the Jewish manner.

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[6] The repeated designation of "Simon" as "a tanner" (Cp., Act9:43) calls attention to the fact that he was ceremonial unclean according to the Law of Moses (cf. Lev11:39-40), and habitually so, such that his access to God and His people was severely curtailed. That Peter closely associated with him suggests that his strict Judaism was softening, foreshadowing his divine call to go to the Gentiles.

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[14] Peter's reply, "Not so, Lord", is reminiscent of Matthew 16:22-23 and just as diabolically inspired. Here, "common" is the Greek word κοινη. Note that Peter believes his perfect adherence to the dietary restrictions of the Law of Moses has earned him merit with God above the "unclean" Gentiles, which is legalism (Cp., Act13:49).

[15] "What God hath cleansed" is a denotative reference to "all manner" (v12) of animals for food, but a connotative reference to the Gentiles (v28), made possible by the finished work of Christ. Note that all foods were "cleansed" at the cross (c. 32 AD; cf. 1Tim4:3-4), but that accomplishment was not revealed to Peter until Acts 10:11-16 (c. 40 AD), illustrating a dispensational change can be in

effect yet not revealed to the apostles until a considerable time later (Cp., Jn16:12-13).

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[17] Faith is characterized as "doubting nothing" (Cp., Jas1:6-7); in its most comprehensive sense, **faith is believing all that God has said.**

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[22] God desired for Cornelius to hear the gospel and be saved, but He always uses human instrumentality to accomplish this endeavor (cf. Rom10:14-17); in this instance, God arranged for Cornelius "to hear words" by the mouth of Peter.

[23] Note the progression: in Acts 9:43, Peter dwelt in the home of an habitually unclean Jew; here, Peter "lodged" with Gentiles. God ordained that "certain brethren" (i.e., "six" believing Jews, 7 including Peter; Act11:12) "accompanied" Peter to serve as witnesses to this watershed event in the history of the early Church.

[24] In expectation of hearing a message from God (v6), Cornelius had "called together his kinsmen and near friends".

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[26] That the Pope covets and receives the worship of men indicates Peter was not the first Pope. Peter touched a Gentile.

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[28] Peter understood the vision (vv11-16) to refer not merely to animals for food, but to "any man" as neither "common or unclean" (i.e., Jews are no more clean than Gentiles).

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PETER'S SERMON IN THE HOUSE OF CORNELIUS

[34] The "truth" revealed to "Peter" was much more profound than the mere possibility of salvation for Gentiles (which was true in the O.T.), but that during the Dispensation of Grace "God is no respecter of persons" (i.e., no spiritual distinction is made between Jew and

Gentile in the Body of Christ; cf. Gal3:27-28; Eph3:1-6; Cp., Deut10:17; Rom2:11); in the history of the world that had not been the case since the call of Abraham (Genesis 12).

- [35] God "accept[s]" those "in every nation" (Cp., Rev7:9) that "feareth him, and worketh righteousness" (Cp., Ps15:1-2; Mic6:8). This is not an assertion of salvation by works, as this was true of Cornelius (v2), yet Cornelius still had to hear and believe the gospel (v43) in order to be saved (Rom1:16). The idea seems to be that God ensures that all who seek Him will be evangelized (Cp., Act11:14).
- [36] Peter briefly presented the life and ministry of "Jesus Christ", noting up front that "he is Lord of all" (i.e., Jews and Gentiles). The "word" (Greek, *λογος*; which here may be used as a title; cf. Jn1:1) was first sent to "the children of Israel" (Cp., Act2:22; 3:12; cf. Rom1:16), but was now "preach[ed]" to Gentiles. The "peace" available to "all" comes by "being justified by faith ... through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom5:1).
- [37] The "word" concerning Jesus Christ began with His "baptism" by "John", followed by His ministry in "Galilee" and then "throughout all Judea". Note that vv37-42 perfectly parallel the earthly life and ministry of Jesus as presented in the Gospel of Mark, leading many to surmise that Peter was the apostolic authority behind that Gospel.
- [38] "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit" at His water baptism by John (cf. Matt3:16; Mk1:9-10; Luk3:21-22; Jn1:32-34). Note that Messiah/Christ means *anointed One*. That Jesus was anointed with "power" relates to His ministry of working signs, wonders, and miracles, including "healing all" (i.e., authenticating His message that "the kingdom" was "at hand"; cf. Mk1:14-15). The comment that "God was with him" refutes the allegation of the Pharisees that Jesus' power came from Satan (Matt12:24).
- [39] It was the apostles who were eye-"witnesses" of the entire ministry of Christ (cf. Act1:22).
- [40] The crucifixion (v39) and resurrection of Christ were the consummation and most important events in His life and ministry.
- [41] The resurrection of Christ was "showed ... openly" (v40); that is, it was not a secret appearance seen and known only to a select cabal, but to many "witnesses" who were still available for consultation (cf. 1Cor15:5-8). That the apostles observed Him to "eat and drink ... after he rose from the dead" dispels any notion that Jesus was merely a "spirit" (Luk24:39), but that He possessed a genuine resurrection body.
- [42] Here, "us" is the Jewish apostles, who were to "testify" that Jesus "was ordained by God to be the Judge of quick and dead" (Cp., Jn5:21-22); even those who died before the coming of Christ will be judged by Him (Cp., Act17:31; Rev20:11-15).
- [43] Peter asserts that "all the prophets" (i.e., the O.T.) "give witness" to the fact that "whosoever believeth in [Jesus Christ] shall receive remission of sins" (Cp., Joel2:32; Jn3:16; Act2:21; 16:30-31; Rom10:13). Note the evolution of Peter's preaching of the gospel to

these Gentiles, which at this point perfectly aligns with Paul's gospel of grace (cf. Act20:24; 1Cor15:1-4; Cp., Act15:11) and includes no mention of either repentance or water baptism (Cp., Act2:38).

The Four-fold Aspects of Salvation. 1) The **ground** of salvation is "through [Jesus'] name" (Cp., Jn1:12; Act4:12). 2) The **scope** of salvation is "whosoever" (Cp., Rev22:17). 3) The **condition** of salvation is "believeth in him". 4) The **result** of salvation is to "receive remission of sins".

- [44] As visible evidence of the conversion of these Gentiles, "the Holy Spirit fell on all them who heard the word" (i.e., believed the gospel). Peter will later equate this to Spirit baptism (cf. Act11:16-17), indicating they were incorporated into the Body of Christ (cf. 1Cor12:12-13). Note that their salvation, including Spirit baptism and incorporation into the Body of Christ, occurred at the moment of belief (which would become normative for the Church Age; cf. Eph1:13), even before water baptism (v48).
- [45] The believing Jews with Peter were "astonished" that God would bless the "Gentiles" in the same way He did the Jews; this marks a massive dispensational change. Note that the "Holy Spirit" was given to these believing Gentiles as a "gift" (i.e., by grace; cf. Eph2:8-9; Tit3:5).
- [46] The believing Gentiles also spoke in "tongues" as evidence that the "gift of the Holy Spirit" (v45) they had received was identical to that received by the Jews (Cp., Act2:4; 11:17; 15:8).
- [47] By believing on Jesus Christ, as visibly evidenced by having "received the Holy Spirit", these Gentiles met the sole condition for water baptism (cf. Act8:37).
- [48] Water baptism "in the name of the Lord" is nothing more than a public testimony of the believer's identification with Christ (Rom6:3-5). There is no contradiction here with Christ's command to be baptized "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt28:19) as the name of God is singular in both instances, but it is to be distinguished from the baptism of John (Cp., Mk1:4; Act19:3-5). Note that Peter did not perform the baptism, but "commanded" others to do it (Cp., Jn4:2; 1Cor1:14). These Gentiles pleaded with Peter to "tarry certain days", undoubtedly so that he could instruct them in proper doctrine (Cp., Act2:42).

CHAPTER 11

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CHAPTER 12

PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM

Continued persecution of the church in Jerusalem sets the stage for the headquarters of Christianity to shift to Antioch (Syria) in Acts 13, from which Paul's missionary outreaches to the Gentiles will be based.

- [1] "Herod" was Agrippa I, the grandson of Herod the Great (Matt2:1; Luk1:5) and father of Agrippa II (Act25:13ff). Herod the Great murdered his own son, Agrippa's father, and sent Agrippa to Rome to be raised/educated; in Rome he befriended Caligula, who became emperor in 37 AD and made Agrippa the Tetrarch of Judea (later expanding his tetrarchy to include Samaria, Galilee, and southern Syria). Heretofore the persecution of the "church" in Jerusalem was waged by unbelieving Jews working through the Sanhedrin, but now the Roman government in Judea became involved, and its targets were the apostles themselves as the leaders of the new religious movement.
- [2] Herod killed the Apostle "James" (i.e., "the brother of John") "with the sword" (i.e., beheaded, suggesting he was formally charged, tried, and convicted of some crime against Rome), fulfilling the prophecy of Jesus concerning his martyrdom (cf. Mk10:37-39). Note, this is the last mention of "John" in the Book of Acts.

Why Was James Not Replaced? Though one of the Twelve (apostles), there was no call to install a replacement for James as there was for Judas. The reason for this is that Jesus promised the twelve apostles that "in the regeneration" (i.e., the millennial kingdom) they "shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt19:28). Judas disqualified himself and had to be replaced, but James will occupy one of these "thrones"; thus, his replacement was not appropriate.

- [3] Herod had killed James to curry favor with his Jewish subjects, and when "he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded" to do the same to "Peter". A calendar note is given, that this occurred during "the days of unleavened bread" (i.e., the Feast of Unleavened Bread; Lev23:6-8).
- [4] Not wanting to conduct a public execution during a Jewish festival (v3), Herod imprisoned Peter until after "Easter" (i.e., Passover). This reference to Passover has confused some, since Passover occurs on the day before the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins (cf. Lev23:5), whereas v3 asserts that the Feast of Unleavened Bread had already begun. This apparent contradiction is resolved by understanding that the Jews came to refer to the entire week (8 days), which began with Passover and was followed by the 7 days of Unleavened Bread, as "Passover" (Cp., Ezek45:21; Matt26:17-18; Luk22:1).

Controversy over Translation as "Easter". The Greek word translated "Easter" (KJV) is πασχα; it occurs 29 times in the N.T. and is translated "Passover" everywhere except Acts 12:4. This is not a translational "error" of the KJV translators, as alleged by modern text critics, but an intentional decision to translate the sole historical reference to a post-resurrection celebration of Passover

as "Easter". The etymology³⁰ of "Easter" is Old English, from German, for a word meaning *resurrection*.

PETER MIRACULOUSLY DELIVERED FROM PRISON

- [5] God allowed James to be killed (v2), but "Peter" would be delivered, perhaps in response to "prayer" made "without ceasing" by the "church" (Cp., 1Thess5:17)? Note that Jesus had prophesied that Peter would be martyred in "old" age (Jn22:18-19).
- [6] Perhaps because of his prior escape (cf. Act5:17-19), "Herod" attempted to make Peter's imprisonment exceedingly secure. Peter was "sleeping", apparently not fearful of his impending trial/judgment.
- [7] Here, there is no article in the Greek text, so it is not "the angel" but "an angel of the Lord". Peter's deliverance was supernatural.
- [9] Peter was uncertain whether his experience of a supernatural deliverance by means of the angel was reality or a "vision".
- [10] How were they able to pass by two "guards" unnoticed? Either they were sleeping (a failure punishable by death) or supernaturally blinded by the "angel".
- [11] Peter recognizes "of a surety" that his deliverance by the "angel" was from "the Lord" and not merely a vision (v10); this is a fulfillment of the Lord's promise to the apostles that in their evangelistic efforts, "lo, I am with you always" (Matt28:20).
- [12] This is the first mention of "John Mark", who becomes an early companion of Paul and Barnabas (cf. Act12:25; 13:5,13; 15:37; 2Tim4:11; Philem24) and later of Peter (cf. 1Pet5:13), and who penned the Gospel of Mark (Cp., Mk15:51-52). A "praying" church is the heavy artillery of spiritual warfare (cf. Eph6:18).
- [13] "Rhoda" listens at the door before opening it, as the church is being persecuted.
- [14] Rhoda was so surprised to hear "Peter's voice", she ran to inform the others before opening the door to allow Peter to enter.
- [15] This was a lack of faith on the part of the church, as they refused to believe God had answered their prayers for Peter's deliverance (Cp., Jas1:2-7). They speculated it was Peter's "angel" (i.e., spirit), believing him to be dead.
- [16] The believers were "astonished" that God had answered their prayers.
- [17] Peter immediately "declared" the glory for his deliverance was due to "the Lord" (Cp., v23). Here, "James" is the brother of Jesus (Cp., Act1:14; Gall1:19), who became the leader of the church at Jerusalem (cf. Act15:13).

³⁰ The 19th century teaching of Alexander Hislop (in *The Two Babylons*) that Easter is derived etymologically from the Akkadian **Ishtar** (Greek **Astarte**, Hebrew **Ashtoreth**) and refers to a pagan celebration is not correct.

- [18] The "soldiers" are distraught, knowing they will likely be executed for allowing the escape of "Peter" (v19).
- [19] "Herod" ordered the "keepers" (presumably all 16 men; cf. v4) to be "put to death".

HEROD AGRIPPA BLASPHEMES AND DIES

The record of Herod Agrippa's death is recorded for two purposes: 1) it highlights the necessity of giving God the glory He alone deserves (Cp., v17; Isa42:8; 48:11), and 2) it provides an important marker for dating within the Acts chronology, since it is known to have occurred in 44 AD.

- [20] "Tyre and Sidon" were dependent upon grain from Galilee, but because "Herod" was "displeased with them he had enacted an embargo. Apparently they appealed to "Blastus, the king's chamberlain" to negotiate a "peace" deal.
- [22] In response to Herod's "oration" (v21), the people of Tyre and Sidon (v2) shouted, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man". Whether a sincere belief, or more likely feigned praise to curry his favor, this was blasphemy (Cp., Act14:11-18).
- [23] Because Herod "gave not God the glory" (cf. Isa42:8; 48:11; Cp., Dan4:28-37), he was divinely judged and died a horrible death; Herod's death was also recorded by Josephus (Antiquity of the Jews 19.8.2), in which he even acknowledged the Biblical account in alluding to "the narrative of Luke" (i.e., the Book of Acts). The immediate judgment of Herod was an occasion of a "sin unto death" (1Jn5:16), in this case of an unbeliever.

Herod a Type of the Antichrist. Though king of Judea, Herod was a Gentile (i.e., Idumean), not Jewish (Cp., Dan9:26-27), a race of people damned by God (Obad1,10,18). He was installed in authority over Israel by Rome (Cp., Isa28:14-15; Dan9:27). Herod took pleasure in being revered as a "god" (Cp., Dan11:36; 2Thess2:4), for which he was instantly and dramatically judged by God (Cp., 2Thess2:8; Rev19:20).

- [24] In response to the faithfulness of believers (cf. 1Cor4:1-2), "the word of God grew and multiplied" despite all opposition, even persecution; this pattern is highlighted throughout the Book of Acts (Cp., Act6:7; 13:49; 19:20).
- [25] Presumably, "Barnabas and Saul" were in "Jerusalem" to deliver the "relief" sent from Antioch" (cf. Act11:27-30); having "fulfilled their ministry", they "returned" to Antioch. Prior to beginning his apostolic ministry (Act13:9), Paul is still referred to as "Saul", and Barnabas appears as the more prominent of the two men. Note that "John Mark" was Barnabas' nephew (cf. Col4:10), which probably explains why Barnabas was more forgiving of Mark's early ministry failures than Paul (Cp., Act13:13; 15:37-38).

CHAPTER 13

THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

Acts 13 marks the beginning of the final phase of Christ's charge to "go unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Act1:8), which is a figure of speak used for the Gentile world (Cp., Isa49:6; Act13:47). Though Peter, in possession of "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt16:19) was the first to preach the gospel to a Gentile (Acts 10), it would be Paul whom God used as "the apostle of the Gentiles" (Rom11:13) to take the gospel of grace to the Gentile world (cf. Gal2:7-9; Eph3:8).

COMMISSIONING OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

- [1] After the persecution of Jews in Jerusalem/Israel developed, "Antioch" in Syria became the headquarters of Christianity (Cp., Act11:26). Note the plurality of leaders in the church at Antioch, one of which was "Saul".
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- [14] Although Paul is the apostle of the Gentiles, his evangelistic method is always to go to the Jews first (cf. Act17:1-2), which is not merely a personal or cultural convention, but a theological conviction (Cp., v46; Rom1:16).
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PAUL'S GOSPEL (OF GRACE)

The gospel of grace alone was "taught" to Paul "by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gall1:12), such that he often referred to it as "my gospel" (Cp., Rom2:16; 16:25). Acts 13:38-39 is the first record of Paul preaching the gospel of grace.

[38] Paul addresses this audience as "brethren" (i.e., Jews), since this message was delivered in a synagogue (v14). Paul's gospel includes "the forgiveness of sins" that comes "through this man" (i.e., Jesus Christ). Note that "forgiveness of sins" is a blessing made possible under the New Covenant (cf. Jer31:31,34), which the work of Christ secured (Cp., Heb10:4; 1Jn2:2). In contrast, the gospel of the kingdom which was preached by John the Baptist, Jesus, and His disciples before the cross only offered "remission of sins" (cf. Mk1:4), where "remission" has the sense of *postponement* of judgment³¹

³¹ Under the Mosaic Covenant, animal sacrifices repeated indefinitely provided an atonement, such that the remission of sins of ignorance was secured for a period of one year (Lev16:34). Under the New Covenant, the one sacrifice of Christ accomplished propitiation (1Jn2:2), securing the complete forgiveness of all sins (cf. Heb10:12,14).

(which is what the atonement that animal sacrifices accomplished; cf. Lev16:34).

- [39] According to the gospel of grace, "all that believe are justified" (i.e., by faith alone; Cp., Eph2:8-9). Justification is "from all things", emphasizing that there is no distinction between willful sins and sins of ignorance, as there was under the Law of Moses (cf. Lev4:2,13,22,27; 5:15,18; Num15:24-29; Heb10:26-28). Note that Paul asserts "ye could not be justified by the law of Moses". It is not that "the law of Moses" fails to justify because no man could keep it perfectly; rather, even if kept perfectly it did not have the power to justify (Cp., Rom3:20; Gal2:16).
- [40] For these Jews, failure to believe in Christ would bring judgment, both temporal and eternal.
- [41] There is a quotation of Habakkuk 1:5, which was spoken by the prophet to warn Judah of the coming of the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem and the Temple and to remove the Jews from the land of Israel. In this context, it is quoted as a warning that Jerusalem and the Temple will again be destroyed, and the Jews dispersed into all the world, this time by the Romans in 70 AD.
- [42] The "Gentiles" who were present in the "synagogue" are necessarily proselytes. It seems these were not yet converted, but wanted to hear the "preach[ing]" of Paul again "the next sabbath".
- [43] There was a subset of "the Jews" and "proselytes" from the synagogue who did not want to wait another week (v42) and "followed Paul and Barnabas". These were apparently believers; having turned from the law of Moses, Paul encouraged them to "continue in the grace of God" (i.e., do not return to the Law; cf. Gal3:23-25; Heb10:38); note, Jesus Christ and grace are always set in contradistinction to Moses and the law (Cp., Jnl1:17).

The Priority of Paul. Note, previously in the narrative it has been "Barnabas and Saul" (Cp., Act11:30; 12:25; 13:2,7), but it is exclusively "Paul and Barnabas" from this point forward. Paul has ascended in apostolic priority over Barnabas, and his Roman (i.e., Gentile) name is used (Latin, Paulus means *little* or *small*; cf. 1Cor15:9).

- [44] A week later, "almost the whole city" comes to "hear" Paul preach "the word of God" (Cp., Act17:6).
- [45] These "Jews" are those who did not believe. In "speaking against" Paul, who spoke "the word of God" (v44), they were both "contradicting" the scriptures and "blaspheming" God.
- [46] "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to [Jews]" indicates a theological basis (Cp., Rom1:16); this was an evangelistic pattern that Paul followed throughout his ministry (cf. Act17:1-2). Only after the Jews of a city rejected Paul's gospel did he "turn to the Gentiles"; but he would start again reaching out to the Jews first in the next city (Cp., Act14:1).

Note on Calvinism. Paul asserted that these unbelieving Jews "judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life"; thus, it is not an eternal

decree of God concerning the election/reprobation of individuals that condemns them, but their own unbelief.

- [47] Paul quotes Isaiah 49:6, which in its O.T. context related to the LORD ordaining that the Messiah should also be "a light of the Gentiles" following His rejection by the nation of Israel (Isa49:7); here, with divine authorization, Paul applies this messianic mission to himself and Barnabas (i.e., "the Lord commanded us"). This is set forth as the theological basis for going to the Jews first, then turning to the Gentiles after Jewish rejection.
- [48] In response, the "Gentiles" were "glad" and "glorified the word of the Lord" that salvation was extended to them through the Jewish Messiah, and those who "believed" received "eternal life".

Note on Calvinism. The rendering of the final clause of v48 in the KJV (i.e., "ordained to eternal life"), as well as most modern versions, has been used by Calvinists to support their doctrines of unconditional election and the predestination by God of individuals to salvation, but in doing so they read far more into this verse than it asserts. First, "ordained" does not mean foreordained (Cp., 1Pet1:20), so nothing indicates, much less necessitates, this ordination relates to an eternal decree of God. Second, God is not the subject of this clause (i.e., the one who "ordained"). Rather, the Greek participle "ordained" occurs here in the middle voice, and is preceded by the Greek verb "believed" which occurs in the active voice; thus, those who "believed" **ordained themselves** (by believing) to "eternal life" (at the moment they exercised faith). The contrast to this is seen in Romans 9:22. The profound revelation is not that an eternal decree of God concerning election/predestination included Gentiles, but that His offer of salvation to "all who believe" (v39; or "whosoever believeth"; Act10:43) includes Gentiles.

- [49] Here, "throughout all the region" signifies Galatia.
- [50] The uprising that led to "Paul and Barnabas" being "expelled" from Antioch in Pisidia (v14; i.e., Galatia, not Syria) was instigated by "the [unbelieving] Jews" (Cp., Rom11:28).
- [51] This was a visible sign of condemnation, particularly for Jews who rejected the offer of the kingdom, that Jesus instructed His apostles to employ (Cp., Matt10:14; Mk6:11; Luk9:5; 10:10-11), which was also adopted by Paul.
- [52] These "disciples" are those of the city who were converted and remained after Paul and Barnabas departed.

CHAPTER 14

1ST MISSIONARY JOURNEY CONTINUED

Paul and Barnabas continued to evangelize throughout the cities of Galatia (e.g., Iconium, Derbe, Lystra, Perga, and Attalia), then return to Antioch to report the results of their work among the Gentiles.

- [1] Paul's consistent pattern in every new city was to go first to the "synagogue" (if there was one) to evangelize the "Jews" (cf.

Rom1:16). Note, these "Gentiles" attending the "synagogue" would have been proselytes.

- [2] As noted to this point in Acts, most of the opposition to the early Church came from "unbelieving Jews" (cf. Rom11:28).
- [3] Note that the emphasis of Paul's gospel is "**grace**" (cf. Gall:6; Eph2:8-9). These "signs and wonders" are both an authentication of Paul's apostleship (2Cor12:12) as well as "signs" to a Jewish audience (1Cor1:22). Note that the antecedent to the plural pronoun is "Paul and Barnabas" (Act13:50), which means Barnabas also performed "signs and wonders" (cf. v14).
- [4] Consistent with the teaching of Jesus (Cp., Luk12:51), the preaching of the gospel of grace always "divide[s]".
- [5] The "unbelieving Jews" (v2) and the "Gentiles" that they "stirred up" (v2) intend to "stone" Paul and Barnabas, suggesting they believe them to be guilty of blasphemy (Lev24:16).
- [6] "Lystra and Derbe" are cities of "Lycaonia".
- [7] "Paul and Barnabas" (cf. Act13:50) continued to "preach the gospel" (of **grace**; v3). Since there is no mention of a synagogue (Cp., v1), there may not have been a one in the cities of Lystra or Derbe.
- [8] This (presumably) Gentile man was analogous to the Jewish man "lame from his mother's womb" who was healed by the Apostle Peter (cf. Act3:2). Note that as an implicit authentication of Paul's apostleship, he performed all the same "signs and wonders" (v3; cf. 2Cor12:12) as Peter (see CHART: SIGNS OF AN APOSTLE).
- [9] Paul's "heal[ing]" of this "cripple" (v8) was contingent upon his "faith" (cf. Matt13:58).
- [10] Paul spoke "with a loud voice" in order to command the attention of those around him. There is no indication that Paul ascribed this healing to the power of Jesus Christ (Cp., Act3:6), which may have given rise to the confusion on the part of the Lycaonians that followed.
- [11] The people who witnessed the miracle spoke "in the [language] of the Lycaonians", so their words were not understood by Paul and Barnabas. The Lycaonians believed this miracle to have been worked by the power of Paul and Barnabas, concluding them to be "gods" (Cp., Act12:22). This is consistent with the Pagan worldview which accepts many "gods", some of which are unknown to them (cf. Act17:23).

Evangelizing Pagans. Caution must be exercised when evangelizing those with a genuine and well-developed Pagan worldview. Since pagans recognize and accept many gods, they often regard the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ as the revelation of a god previously "unknown" to them (Cp., Act17:23), which they may readily accept by simply adding Him to their existing pantheon. To them, JEHOVAH must be proclaimed as "the Most High God" (cf. Dan5:18,21; Mk5:7; Act16:17) and Jesus Christ as His Son and exclusive way of salvation (Jnl4:6; Act4:12).

- [12] Pagans tend to envelope Christian evangelism into their existing worldview which already recognizes many "gods". Here, since Paul and Barnabas clearly exercised supernatural powers, the Lycaonians assume Barnabas to be "Jupiter" and Paul "Mercurius", "because he was the chief speaker" (i.e., Paul did most of the talking). Thus, rather than recognizing their own worldview to be false, they attempt to accommodate the new revelation into their false worldview without modifying its framework.
- [13] If "Jupiter" had come down to walk among men, it was only logical that pagans would attempt to worship him according to the demands of their pagan worldview. This is clear evidence that the Lycaonians had not (yet) received Paul's preaching of Jesus Christ and the gospel of grace as a disruption to their Pagan worldview.
- [14] Once they see the Lycaonians were attempting to worship them, "Barnabas and Paul" realized their gospel had been misunderstood; they immediately took action to stop the pagan reaction. Note that "Barnabas and Paul" are referred to by Luke as "apostles". Here, "apostles" is used in a lesser sense, as ones "sent forth by the Holy Spirit" (Act13:4), not equivalent to the Twelve (cf. Matt10:2; Act1:22,26; Cp., Gall:19).
- [15] First, Paul and Barnabas clarified their own natures; namely, they were "men" just like the Lycaonians. Second, they clarified the nature of "the living God" (implying their pagan "gods" are not "living") whom, in order to clearly distinguish Him from their pagan gods, they proclaimed as the Creator (cf. Gen1:1; Rev4:11); in contrast, their pagan gods are called "vanities" (Cp., Isa44:9-10; 1Cor8:4).
- [16] This verse means two things. First, before the coming of Christ there was a general revelation of God available to all men (cf. Ps19:1-6; Rom1:18-20), but no special (i.e., written) revelation provided to Gentiles (Cp., Rom16:25-26; Eph2:11-12). Second, before the work of Christ, God withheld His judgment of the sins of men (cf. Act17:30; Rom3:24-26; 5:13).
- [17] These are examples of what Reformed Christians call common grace, more appropriately understood to be the blessings of the Noahic covenant (cf. Gen8:21-9:17), a "witness" available to all men to "the living God" (v15) who is both Creator and benevolent provider.
- [18] By this clarifying testimony Paul and Barnabas were able to "restrain" the pagan worship of them by the Lycaonians, although only "scarce[ly]".
- [19] Unbelieving "Jews" from Antioch (Act13:14,50) and Iconium (vv1-2) arrived in Lystra and "persuaded the people" to turn against Paul and Barnabas. They "stoned Paul" and left his body, which they presumed to be "dead", outside the city. Paul may have been dead indeed (Cp., 2Cor12:2).
- [20] Paul was either supernaturally healed or raised from the dead by God, and he returned briefly to the "city" of Lystra as a testimony to the people of the power of "the living God" (v15; Cp., Matt27:52-53).

- [21] After evangelizing "Derbe", Paul retraced his steps back through "Lystra", "Iconium", an "Antioch" (i.e., the cities of Galatia).
- [22] Paul's purpose in revisiting the cities of Galatia was for "confirming the souls of the disciples" he had made in those cities. Apparently the disciples he had left behind were suffering persecution from the unbelievers as he had. Paul "exhort[ed] them to continue in the faith", asserting that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God". The "kingdom of God" is a reference to the coming millennial kingdom established on earth by Christ at His return. Christians are assured to be resurrected in order to participate in that glorious "kingdom" (cf. Matt25:34), but no assurance of relief from "tribulation" in this present life is offered; on the contrary, suffering and "tribulation" in this present life is to be expected (Cp., Jnl6:33; 1Tim3:12; cf. Col3:1-4).
- [23] Churches were planted in each of these cities (v21), and Paul "ordained elders" (i.e., pastors; cf. Tit1:5-9) to lead them. This implies "churches" require pastors; they are not simply gatherings of individual believers. Paul did not feel it necessary to remain with them, despite their immaturity in the faith, but "commended them to the Lord" (i.e., he was confident the "Lord" would provide for their needs; Cp., 1Cor12:27-28).
- [25] "Perga" and "Attalia" were additional cities of Galatia.
- [26] "Attalia" was a coastal city, and from there Paul and Barnabas "sailed to Antioch" (in Syria), returning to their home church (Act13:1-3). This concludes Paul's 1st missionary journey, which was largely the evangelization of the cities of Galatia.
- [27] Paul and Barnabas reported to the "church" at Antioch that God "had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles", the emphasis being upon the gospel of grace alone (cf. Rom4:4-5) which would be the subject of Paul's **epistle to the Galatians** (cf. Gall:6-9; 2:16).
- [28] Paul and Barnabas rested "with the disciples" in the church at Antioch.

CHAPTER 15

THE (SO-CALLED) COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM

Acts 15 is a watershed, not only in the Book of Acts, but in the history of the early Church. With the offer of the Kingdom to the nation of Israel in abeyance (Acts 7) and the Apostle Paul having been raised up by God to evangelize the Gentiles (Acts 9), the question of the Law of Moses in relation to the gospel comes to the fore as the preeminent issue between Peter and Paul (i.e., Jews and Gentiles). This meeting between Paul and Barnabas and the apostles at Jerusalem definitively settles the matter; the gospel for the present dispensation is grace through faith without any works of the Law for both Jews and Gentiles (Act15:11). Galatians 2 is Paul's commentary on this historic meeting and the consensus that was reached among all the apostles.

- [1] These "certain men who came down from Judea" to Antioch were Judaizers, Jews who believed in Jesus as Messiah, but who believed it

was still necessary for Jews to keep the Law of Moses in order to be "saved". In addition, "except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses" was the requirement of the Law for proselytes, such that the doctrine of the Judaizers was that both Jews and Gentiles were still required to keep the Law of Moses (in addition to having faith in Jesus Christ) in order to be "saved".

- [2] "Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them" (e.g., Titus; Gal2:1) argued against the Judaizer's requirement for Gentiles to keep the Law, such that it was determined to "go up to Jerusalem" in order to meet with "the apostles and elders" there in order to resolve "this question".
- [3] In churches along the way, Paul and Barnabas declared "the conversion of the Gentiles", which was a message welcomed with "joy" by "all the brethren", who in "Phoenicia" and "Samaria" would have been converted Jews, proselytes, and Samaritans.
- [4] In reporting to "the apostles and elders" at the "church" in "Jerusalem", Paul and Barnabas emphasized that their work among the Gentiles was "done with them" according to the will of "God" (Cp., Gall:10-12).
- [5] The Judaizers "who believed [in Jesus Christ]", but taught that "it was needful to circumcise [the Gentiles], and to command them to keep the law of Moses" were from "the sect of the Pharisees"; this was indeed required during the Dispensation of the Law, which will be resumed following the rapture of the Church (Cp., Rev12:17; 14:12). In contradistinction to this, Paul taught that in the present Dispensation of Grace all (both Jews and Gentiles) were now saved by grace through faith alone (Cp., Gall:1-9; 2:16; 3:19-25).
- [6] Here, "the apostles and elders" seems to reference those of the church in Jerusalem only (i.e., the Twelve, absent only James; cf. Act12:2).
- [7] "Peter", as the one to whom Christ had entrusted "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt16:19), and who had been commanded by Him to first preach "the gospel" of salvation with Jews (Acts 2), Samaritans (Acts 8), and Gentiles (i.e., Cornelius and his family/friends; Acts 10), "rose up" to speak authoritatively on the question.
- [8] Peter asserted that the conversion of the Gentiles was as authentic as that of the Jews, since both groups were given "the Holy Spirit" when they believed (cf. Act11:14-18; Cp., Rom8:9).
- [9] Under the preaching of the gospel by Peter, both Jews (i.e., "us") and Gentiles (i.e., "them") had been saved "by faith [alone]".
- [10] Peter referred to the Law of Moses as a "yoke" (i.e., an instrument related to work; Cp., Matt11:28-30), and asserted that "we" (i.e., Jews) were not "able to bear" (i.e., the Jews as a nation failed to keep the Law of Moses); thus, if the Law was a means of salvation, the nation of Israel would be lost.
- [11] Peter uses a surprising inversion in expressing his conclusion: "we shall be saved, even as they". In the present dispensation, both Jews and Gentiles are saved "through **grace**" (which necessarily

excludes works; cf. Rom4:4; Eph2:8-9). Whereas under the Dispensation of the Law, Gentiles were required to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses as the Jews, under the Dispensation of Grace the Jews are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ as the Gentiles.

- [12] Once Peter had validated the salvation of Gentiles by grace through faith alone, the report of "Barnabas and Paul" concerning their work "among the Gentiles" was received.
- [13] Here, "James" is "the Lord's brother" (Gall1:19). He was an "elder" (v4) in the church at Jerusalem and apparently its primary leader (i.e., pastor) as he appears to teach the "brethren" authoritatively based on the doctrine established by the Apostle Peter (v11).
- [14] "Symeon" is Peter's Hebrew name (i.e., Simon). Based on Peter's doctrine, James asserts that God's purpose in the present dispensation is to "visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name" (i.e., the building of the Church; Cp., Matt16:18; Eph3:1-11). This purpose is the reason why the Church Age is not characterized by "signs" (and miracles; cf. 1Cor1:22) which appeal to Jews but to "wisdom" (i.e., a completed written revelation of the mystery program of God; cf. Rom16:25-26; 1Cor1:22; 2:7; 13:10) which appeals to Gentiles.
- [15] James does not assert that the Church was a fulfillment of any prophecy made by "the [O.T.] prophets", since it was a mystery to them (cf. Rom16:25-26; Eph3:5). Rather, he asserts that the revelation of the Church "agree[s]" with "the words of the prophets" (i.e., it is consistent with their prophecies, since they foresaw an interruption of the prophetic program of Israel, a prophesied gap of indeterminate time, during which the Church would come into existence; cf. Dan9:26).
- [16] Verses 16-17 are an allusion to Amos 9:11-12, which is an example of the gap in the prophetic program of Israel into which the Church fits. "After this" refers to this gap which occurs between the 1st and 2nd comings of Christ, after which "[Christ] will return" to earth to "build again the tabernacle of David"; that is, after the building of the Church during this dispensation is complete (Rom11:25), Christ will return to reestablish the nation of Israel under a Davidic dynasty (i.e., inaugurate the Kingdom; Rom11:26).
- [17] Here, "the residue of men" is the believing remnant of the nation of Israel which, along with righteous "Gentiles", will be prepared to "seek after the Lord" following the completion and rapture of the Church, at which time the prophetic program resumes (i.e., the Tribulation; cf. Hos5:15-6:2; Matt23:37-39; 25:31-46). The phrase "the Lord, who doeth all these things" indicates this was always God's plan.
- [18] The Church was not "Plan B" hastily cobbled together by God after "Plan A" failed (i.e., Israel rejected Christ at His first coming). God foresaw Israel's rejection of Christ and planned for it (Cp. Ps22; Isa53). The Church was always integral to God's "eternal purpose" (Eph3:11), it was simply a part of His plan that as a "mystery" was "hidden" (i.e., unrevealed; cf. Rom16:25-26; Eph3:5) in

order to gain a strategic advantage over Satan and the fallen angels (cf. 1Cor2:6-8).

- [19] At this meeting, it was James as pastor of the church at Jerusalem (based on the doctrine established by the Apostle Peter; v11) who concluded that the Gentiles should not be expected to keep the Law of Moses in order to be saved (Cp., vv1,5).
- [20] However, Gentiles would be asked to "abstain" from certain practices that would be offensive to the Jews (cf. v21). In Paul's epistles, he would subsequently speak of a believer voluntarily limiting the exercise of his liberty in Christ so as not to hinder the reception of the gospel (Cp., 1Cor9:19-23). To "abstain" from "pollution of idols" (Lev19:4) probably had less to do with the overt worship of pagan "idols" than with practices such as eating meats sacrificed to "idols" (cf. v29; Cp., 1Cor8:9-13). Similarly, to "abstain" from "things strangled" and "blood" (Lev17:10-16) likely had to do with food preparation³². Finally, to "abstain" from "fornication" probably had less to do with overt sexual sins than with forbidden marriages (Lev18; cf. 1Cor5:1).
- [21] Clearly, the intent behind the limitations requested of Gentiles was so as not to unnecessarily offend Jews; it was not meant to imply that certain provisions of the Law of Moses remained obligatory (Cp., Rom6:14; 1Cor6:12,23).
- [22] In order to communicate the consensus reached between Paul and Barnabas and "the apostles and elders" concerning the relationship between the gospel and the Law of Moses, "chief men among the brethren" (i.e., Jews) in the church at Jerusalem were to accompany Paul and Barnabas back to "Antioch". One of these "chief men" was "Silas", who would become a companion of Paul's on his second missionary journey (Cp., vv36-40). Note that "the whole church" is a reference to what Paul would call the Church, the Body of Christ (Cp., 1Cor12:27; Eph1:22-23; Col1:18; i.e., the company of all believers in Christ that transcends any local church).
- [23] Note, "letters" were written and addressed to "the Gentiles" communicating their decision.
- [24] These "letters" (v23) made explicit that the Gentiles were under no obligation to "be circumcised" and "keep the law [of Moses]"; those who had taught such things were repudiated as false teachers.
- [25] By "one accord" the consensus nature of the decision was emphasized; "Paul", "Barnabas", the apostles, and the elders in the church at Jerusalem were all in agreement on this issue.
- [26] Both the Apostle Paul and the apostles in Jerusalem were commended for having "hazarded their lives" for the sake of the gospel of the "Lord Jesus Christ".
- [27] "Judas and Silas" accompanied the letters in order to validate them as authentic.

³² Note that the prohibition against consumption of "blood" preceded the Law of Moses (cf. Gen9:3-4).

- [28] The consensus decision was also attributed to "the Holy Spirit"; thus, this action was not mere convention, but conviction of the leading of "the Spirit of truth" (Cp., Jn16:13). The requests made of the Gentiles were "necessary things", not as works required for salvation, but as practices prohibited so as not to offend unbelieving Jews and thereby hinder their reception of the gospel.
- [29] Note that the four requests are reordered and somewhat expanded. The "pollution of idols" (v20) is revised to explicitly preclude "meats offered to idols" and is grouped with "blood" and "things strangled" since they all have to do with the preparation and eating of meats.
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THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY (PAUL AND BARNABAS SEPARATE)

Having secured definitive validation from the apostles in Jerusalem of the gospel of grace through faith for Gentiles (as well as Jews; Act15:11), Paul returned to the mission field of the Gentiles a second time.

- [36] "Paul" suggests to "Barnabas" that they visit all the cities in which they "preached the word of the Lord" on their first missionary journey (Act13:4-14:26).
- [37] Barnabas wished to take "Mark" on this second missionary journey. Barnabas was likely more willing to forgive Mark's failure on the first missionary journey since Mark was his nephew (Cp., Col4:10).
- [38] Since Mark had "departed from them" early on their first missionary journey (Act13:13), Paul was unwilling to take him again. Note that later in life, Paul's confidence in Mark as a ministry partner would be restored (cf. 2Tim4:11).
- [39] A legitimate disagreement over ministry details (not doctrine) led to a division between Paul and Barnabas, which resulted in them making separate mission trips. The consequences of this division were ultimately positive: 1) their geographical outreach was effectively doubled, and 2) additional ministry workers were trained (v40; Cp., Rom8:28). Paul and Barnabas had passed through "Cyprus" on their previous journey (Act13:4), which was formerly Barnabas' hometown (cf. Act4:36).
- [40] Barnabas took Mark (v39), and Paul recruited "Silas". Silas was one of the "chief men among the brethren" at the church in Jerusalem (Act15:22); thus, he was Jewish, and like Paul he was a Roman citizen (cf. Act16:38). Despite his Jewish ethnicity, Silas was "recommended by the brethren unto the **grace** of God".

[41] Paul and Silas took the land route through "Syria".

CHAPTER 16

TIMOTHY JOINS PAUL

- [1] Paul had visited "Derbe" and "Lystra" on his first missionary journey (Act14:6). "Timothy" is called a "disciple", thus he was a believer. His mother was a "Jewess" who "believed", but his father was an unbelieving "Greek".
- [2] Timothy had a good reputation among the "brethren" in "Lystra" and "Iconium"; his demonstrated faithfulness in ministry seemingly qualified him to be recruited by Paul to join him as a ministry worker (Cp., 1Tim3:6). As Paul would repeatedly refer to Timothy as "my son" (1Tim1:2; 2Tim1:2; 2:1), Timothy may have been converted under Paul's ministry during the first missionary journey (cf. Act14:1,6).
- [3] Timothy's "father was a Greek", which meant he had not been circumcised. Since this was common knowledge among "the Jews", Paul "circumcised him". This action, taken "because of the Jews ... who all knew", seems to have been an accommodation made so as not to offend unbelieving Jews to whom Paul preached the gospel (cf. 1Cor9:19-20) rather than an indication that circumcision remains compulsory for Jews³³ during the Dispensation of Grace.
- [4] In visiting the cities in which Paul had previously ministered, he "delivered them the decrees" that had been "ordained of the apostles and elders who were at Jerusalem"; namely, there was no requirement for Gentiles to be circumcised or keep the Law of Moses, yet certain abstentions were requested for the purpose of not offending the Jews (cf. Act15:24,28-29).
- [5] These predominantly Gentile "churches" were "established in the faith" (i.e., doctrine derived from the gospel of grace).
- [6] The "Holy Spirit" allowed Paul to minister in "Galatia" (i.e., today, north-central Turkey), as on the first missionary journey, but forbid him to "preach the word in Asia" (i.e., today, western Turkey).
- [7] Apparently, the time was not right for Asia to receive the gospel, although it would be later when Paul returned to this region and had an incredibly fruitful ministry during his third missionary journey (cf. Act19:10).
- [8] "Troas" was Troy, a city on the coast of western Turkey near Hellespont (which marks the border between the continents of Europe and Asia).

³³ It seems clear that relative to the Law of Moses, circumcision would not be required during the Dispensation of Grace. The question of whether it remains obligatory of Jews as a matter of the Abrahamic covenant (cf. Gen17:9-12) is ambiguous to some.

- [9] At Troas, Paul received a "vision" that indicated he was to proceed to "Macedonia" (northern Greece; i.e., **Europe**).
- [10] Paul understood from the vision that he was to go and "preach the gospel" in "Macedonia". Note that at this verse the narration changes from the third person to the first person (i.e., "we"), indicating that Luke has now joined Paul's party along with Silas and Timothy. Some have speculated that the "man" Paul saw in the vision might have been Luke.
- [11] Acts **16:11** represents a watershed in Church history. "Neapolis", a coastal city of Macedonia, was the first city of **Europe** (i.e., the descendants of Japheth; Gen9:27) to be reached with the gospel of grace (approximately 20 years after the Day of Pentecost). "Neapolis" means *new city*, from the Greek adjective νεος meaning *new*, often used in the sense of *recently born* and even connoting *regeneration* (cf. Matt9:17; Col3:10).
- [12] "Philippi" was an important city, originally established by Philip of Macedon (i.e., the father of Alexander the Great), and became a Roman "colony" following its support of Mark Anthony and Octavian³⁴ in their defeat of Brutus³⁵ and Cassius at the Battle of Philippi (42 BC). To be a colony of Rome bestowed citizenship on its residents and brought highly coveted benefits relative to taxation and autonomy of government.
- [13] Implication is there was no synagogue in Philippi, which required 10 Jewish men.

FIRST CONVERT IN EUROPE (LYDIA)

- [14] Lydia was of "Thyatira" (cf. Rev2:18). Here, "worshipped God" implies Lydia was a Gentile (i.e., God-fearer); the verb is a present tense participle, indicating Lydia already "worshipped God" when Paul arrived. Thus, her status was akin to that of Cornelius (Act10:2). The Greek verb "opened" is in the aorist tense, which expresses a fact not directly linked to time.

Note on Calvinism. The text of v14 indicates "the Lord opened" the "heart" of Lydia. Calvinism teaches this verse means Lydia was necessarily regenerated before she exercised faith. However, the text does not say the Lord opened her heart before she believed, nor is the opening of the heart a metaphor for regeneration (rather, regeneration = "new" heart; cf. Ezek11:19; 18:31; 36:26; or, regeneration = "circumcision" of the heart; cf. Deut30:6; Cp., Act7:51). It is the preaching/teaching of God's word that opens the heart in belief (cf. Jn6:44-45).

- [15] This was the divinely ordained pattern to be followed by traveling evangelists (Cp., Matt10:11-13).
- [16] Note, "divination" and "soothsaying" are occultic practices which seek to know/tell the future through communication with evil spirits

³⁴ Octavian, who would become Augustus Caesar in 27 BC, was the adopted son/heir of Julius Caesar.

³⁵ Brutus led the conspirators that murdered Julius Caesar in 44 BC.

(i.e., demons), which God says is an "abomination" (cf. 2Kgs23:24; Cp., Isa8:9).

- [17] Even evil spirits and those under their influence can at times make truthful statements (cf. Mk5:7), but they cannot be trusted to be always truthful (Cp., 1Jn4:2-3).
- [18] The "damsel" (v16) was possessed by a "spirit" (i.e., demon). Note that the masculine pronoun "he" is used of the "spirit".
- [19] The damsel's "masters" were motivated by the money they made by using her as a fortune-teller (Cp., 1Tim6:10).
- [20] The citizens of Philippi note that Paul and Silas were "Jews", indicating antisemitism was alive and well in the 1st century.
- [21] The citizens' concern was that the teachings of Paul were not "lawful" for them as "Romans" (Cp., Jn19:15), indicating that they feared losing their status, and the privileges it brought, as a colony (v12). Note that unbelievers always attempt to recast the commands of God as "customs" (i.e., personal preferences) in an attempt to avoid personal accountability.
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- [23] The Law of Moses limited beatings to "forty stripes" (Deut25:3), but Roman law had no such limit.
- [24]
- [25] "Paul and Silas" were likely suffering too much pain to sleep, even "at midnight", yet "sang praises to God" (cf. Phil4:11).
- [26] Paul was supernaturally delivered from prison, just like Peter (Cp., Act12:7; cf. 2Cor12:12). See CHART: SIGNS OF AN APOSTLE.
- [27] For a "keeper of the prison" to allow prisoners to escape was a capital offense (Cp., Act12:19).
- [28]
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- [31] Note the simplicity of Paul's gospel in which nothing more than faith in Christ is required (Cp., 1Cor15:1-4). In "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ", "on" is the Greek preposition **ἐν** (often translated "upon"), which in this context carries the idea of "resting upon" (i.e., trust; Cp., Prov3:5). There is much loaded into "Lord Jesus Christ"; "Jesus" is both "Lord" (i.e., **Deity**) and "Christ" (i.e., **Messiah**, the fulfillment of O.T. prophecy). It is necessary to "believe on" the right "Jesus" (cf. 2Cor11:3-4; Cp., Act2:36).
- [32] All that were "in his house" heard Paul preaching "the word of the Lord".
- [33] Here, "them" is "all that were in his house" (v32).

- [34] Thus, all those in the house "believing in God" were "baptized" (v33). There is no support of so-called infant baptism to be found in this verse, as all who were baptized had believed (Cp., Act8:37).
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- [37] Paul did not refrain from asserting his rights as a "Roman" citizen, and believers today are free to act analogously.
- [38] The Philippians had erroneously assumed that Paul and Silas were not Roman citizens; "they feared" when they realized they had violated their rights, for which the Philippians could be judged.
- [39] The city leaders attempted to bury the problem in typical bureaucratic fashion.
- [40] Paul and Silas "entered into the house of Lydia" (Cp., v15).

CHAPTER 17

TITLE

Intro...

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PAUL IN ATHENS

Even in the 1st century, long after the Greek empire had fallen and been replaced by the Romans, Athens was considered the intellectual capital of the world. The Romans greatly revered Greek thought and culture, and in many (often crude) ways merely attempted to mimic it, which is why the Roman pantheon had a one-to-one correspondence to the Greek pantheon (i.e., Jupiter = Zeus, Mercury = Hermes, Mars = Ares, Venus = Aphrodite, Diana = Artemis, Neptune = Poseidon; Pluto = Hades, etc.).

- [16] In Paul's day, "Athens" was an impressive and beautiful city. Like Rome, its art and architecture was magnificent. And yet, that art and architecture had been produced to worship pagan deities (i.e., demons; 1Cor10:20), such that "the city was wholly given to **idolatry**", which grieved Paul's "spirit".
- [17] Paul "disputed" with the "Jews" in the "synagogue", and with the Greeks in the "market".
- [18] The Athenians were confused by the preaching of Paul, thinking he was "setting forth" two "strange gods" (i.e., gods not represented in the Greek pantheon). The two "gods" were: 1) "Jesus", and 2) the "resurrection". The confusion stemmed from the fact that "resurrection" in Greek is *ἀνάστασις*, which was commonly used as a woman's name (then and now); the Athenians interpreted it as a feminine name, probably assuming it to be a divine consort of Jesus.
- [19] The pagan worldview is not opposed to new "gods"; at its foundational level it presumes them, but apart from genuine conversion and an understanding of the truth (Cp., 1Thess1:9-10), a pagan simply adds any new "god" to the existing pantheon. This explains the interest of the Athenians. "Areopagus" (Lit., hill of Ares) was the court where matters of education and religion were debated, which the Greeks loved to do (cf. v21; 1Cor1:22).
- [20]
- [21] **Philosophy** (Lit., love of wisdom) as a discipline began with the Greeks (Cp., 1Cor1:22). It is a fundamentally flawed discipline (as is psychology), in that it attempts to develop an understanding of truth apart from divine revelation (i.e., the Bible; cf. Prov1:7; 9:10). The only use of "philosophy" in the Bible occurs in Colossians 2:8, which includes a warning against being "spoil[ed]" by it. Unfortunately, philosophy has often been a pitfall for Christianity, both past and present (cf. Eph4:14).

PAUL PREACHES THE GOSPEL ON MARS HILL

- [22] "Mars Hill" is the Latin equivalent of the Greek "Areopagus" (v19). Paul's observation that the "men of Athens" were "too superstitious" was a rebuke, not a commendation³⁶. The definition of superstition is *a belief or practice resulting from ignorance* (Cp., vv23,30).

³⁶ Modern versions often render the Greek word underlying "too superstitious" as "very religious". This is a poor translation in that it gives the false impression

- [23] The Athenians had an "altar" dedicated "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD", consistent with the presuppositions of their pagan worldview that: 1) there are many gods, and 2) no particular people knew all the gods. Paul uses their confessed "ignorance" as the point of departure from which to proclaim the true God (v24).
- [24] First, the true "God" is the Creator of "the world and all things in it"; this is not true of any pagan conception of any of their gods. As Creator, "God" is "Lord" of "heaven and earth" (i.e., a Jewish figure for the entire creation; Gen1:1). Note that the whole of the pagan framework from which they seek to understand truth is corrupt, so it must be discarded and rebuilt from an entirely new foundation that begins with the Bible's account of creation. Further, as the omnipresent Creator of "heaven and earth", God "dwelleth not in temples made with hands", a fact recognized and acknowledged by King Solomon when he dedicated the first temple to JEHOVAH (cf. 1Kgs8:27; 2Chron6:18).
- [25] Note the massive contrast between JEHOVAH and pagan gods. The true God does not need the "worship" of men or any other thing outside of Himself; this is an assertion of the **aseity** of JEHOVAH, which is His preeminent attribute (cf. Exod3:14) and which has no analog in paganism³⁷. In contrast, "all" of creation is dependent on Him for "life, and breath, and all things" (Cp., Col1:16-17).
- [26] That God "hath made of one blood all nations of men" presupposes the literal, historical truth of Genesis 1-2 (i.e., Adam and Eve were the first man and woman, from whom all men have descended) and precludes any notion of an evolutionary process involved in the origin and development of humanity. Furthermore, God is responsible for the origin of nations, having "determined" both their "times" and "bounds" (i.e., Genesis 10-11; Cp., Deut32:8). In the Biblical worldview, there is no such thing as different races of men, only different "nations of men".
- [27] God's purpose in creating men was that they "should seek the Lord" (i.e., it is a moral obligation). To "feel after him" pictures the ignorance of the pagans as operating in the dark. While the Gentiles did not have direct access to the special revelation of God, as did the Jews (cf. Rom3:1-2), men are held accountable to general revelation available to all (cf. Ps19:1-6; Rom1:19-20), which is the sense in which God "is not far from every one of us".
- [28] "For in him we live, and move, and have our being" is a quote from the Cretan "poet" Epimenides (Paul also quotes from him in Titus 1:12), and "we are also his offspring" is a quote from the Cilician (i.e., the region of Paul's home town; Cp., Act21:39) "poet" Aratus. Paul's quotations from the writings of pagans is not meant to validate all their assertions, the vast majority of which would be unbiblical, but merely to point out that even pagans conclude (from general revelation; v27) there must be a God who created and sustains all life.

that Paul was commending the Athenians. The Greek word literally means "fearful of demons".

³⁷ This contrast is known as the Creator-creature distinction.

- [29] Paul conceded "we are the offspring of God" merely in the sense that all men are His creation, for which He cares and provides; nothing more than that should be read into this concession³⁸. Here, the "Godhead" (Cp., Rom1:20; Col2:9) is consistent with the Biblical revelation that the true God has a triune nature (cf. 1Jn5:7), which was utterly unknown in the pagan worldview, and which cannot be adequately be represented by "art or man's device" (and Israel was prohibited from any attempt to do so; cf. Exod20:4; Deut5:8).
- [30] The "times of this ignorance" refers to the O.T., since during the Church Age God's special (i.e., written) revelation is "made known to all nations" (Rom16:25). By "winked at" (i.e., overlooked) is meant merely that God withheld His judgment of men awaiting the coming of Christ and His work of "propitiation ... for the sins of the whole world" (1Jn2:2; cf. Rom3:25); "but now", after the completed work of Christ relative to sin (Heb9:28), and the availability of God's word to all men (Rom16:25), He "commandeth all men everywhere to repent". Here, "repent" means *to change the mind* (i.e., turn from perverted pagan conceptions of God and His creation and embrace the truths of Biblical revelation; Cp. Rom12:1-2; 1Thess2:9; 2Cor10:5). Today there is no excuse for "ignorance" concerning God.
- [31] The fact that God has withheld judgment in the past should not be taken to mean there will not come a "day in which he will judge the world". Indeed there will, and that judgment will be executed by the resurrected and glorified Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Jn5:22; Rev5:5; 19:11). Here, "assurance" is a translation of the Greek word **πιστις**, generally translated "faith"; by "he hath given [faith] to all men" means that God has offered salvation to all men by means of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His resurrection (Cp., Jn12:32; Act16:31; 1Cor15:1-4).
- [32] The mocking of "the resurrection of the dead" was probably rooted in **Gnostic** beliefs that the material world was unreal and/or evil, and that the afterlife would be non-material and purely spiritual; thus, resurrection was inherently at odds with their pagan presuppositions (Cp., 1Cor15:12-19).
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- [34] "Dionysius, the Areopagite" would have been a city elder. Though a few "believed", no church in Athens is ever mentioned in Scripture.

CHAPTER 18

PAUL AT CORINTH

No reason is given for Paul leaving Athens (Act17). From Athens he travelled to Corinth, a city strategically located on a 4-mile-wide isthmus between the Adriatic and Aegean seas and connecting Macedonia to Achaia. Whereas Athens was a city of culture and learning, Corinth was a hub of Mediterranean commerce and rampant debauchery.

³⁸ This is not a validation of the pagan conception of the universal fatherhood of God and brotherhood of men.

- [1] Paul came to Corinth alone (Cp., v5), which may explain the record of his having baptized some there (cf. 1Cor1:13-17), a task he normally delegated to others.
- [2] "Aquila" and "Priscilla" were "Jews" who had recently come to Corinth from "Italy" as a result of the expulsion of all Jews from Rome by the Emperor "Claudius". The fact of this expulsion is recorded in history, though its exact date is surprisingly ambiguous. It could have been no later than the terminus of the reign of "Claudius" in 54 AD.
- [3] It is not clear whether Aquila and Priscilla were already believers when Paul encountered them in Corinth, or whether they were converted under Paul's ministry in the synagogue there (cf. v4). Paul became acquainted with them because they were both "tentmakers" and labored together.
- [4] As was his custom (Act17:2), Paul began his preaching ministry at the "synagogue" in Corinth. These "Greeks" would have been proselytes.
- [5] The subject of Paul's preaching in the synagogue was that "Jesus was Christ" (i.e., the Messiah who had been prophesied to come); thus, Paul's message focused on the fulfillment prophecy.
- [6] When Paul's message ceased to be received by those in the synagogue, he "shook his garment" (Cp., Matt10:11-14; Luk10:10-11). "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean" is an allusion to the duty of a watchman outlined by the prophet Ezekiel (cf. Ezek3:17-21), which was to warn those in danger; the obligation to take action to escape harm rested solely on those who had been warned. At this point, Paul turned to "the Gentiles [of that city]".
- [7] "Titus Justus" was apparently a Gentile who "worshiped God" (i.e., God-fearer) who was converted under Paul's ministry.
- [8] One of the converted Jews was "Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue"; a "ruler" was not a Rabbi, but a man responsible for caring for the synagogue building and organizing/officiating at formal services. The conversion of Crispus "with all his house" would have been quite influential on the local Jewish community. Crispus was "baptized" by Paul (cf. 1Cor1:14).
- [9] Paul received supernatural encouragement in a "vision" at "night" to continue boldly preaching in Corinth.
- [10] Paul received assurance that he would not be "hurt" in Corinth, as he had been in Lystra (Cp., Act14:19). Paul was encouraged to continue his ministry in Corinth because the Lord had "much people in this city" (i.e., God foresaw that many in Corinth would believe the gospel upon hearing it, which reinforces the idea that God ensures those willing to believe, like Cornelius, will be reached with the gospel).
- [11] Paul taught "the word of God" in Corinth for "a year and six months".
- [12] Eventually, "the Jews" of Corinth organized a formal charge of "insurrection" to be brought against Paul before "Gallio", the Roman "deputy of Achaia" (Cp., Luk23:2; Jn19:12).

- [13] Here, "the law" refers to Roman law. Corinth was a Roman colony and enjoyed considerable privileges under that designation, which civil unrest in the city could jeopardize. As Roman citizens, the residents of Corinth were required to pay homage to Caesar as a god annually; Paul's preaching undoubtedly opposed this pagan practice. The "judgment seat" is a translation of the Greek word βῆμα.

Historical Note. Jews had a special dispensation under Roman law, extended to no other religion, that exempted them from the requirement to worship Caesar.

- [14] Gallio acknowledged he was obligated to render judgment if the charge against Paul were a matter of civil (Roman) law.
- [15] However, Gallio rightly recognized the dispute between the Jews and Paul to be over "[Jewish] law" (i.e., religion), over which he had no intention of ruling (Cp., Jn18:31).
- [16] Historical Note. This was a watershed decision in the history of the early Church; from the perspective of the Roman government, it served to implicitly designate Christianity as a sect within Judaism, which meant Christians also enjoyed the special dispensation that exempted Jews from the requirement to worship Caesar. This designation would eventually be changed, bringing to the fore the issue of Christian refusal to worship Caesar, but it allowed Christianity to spread throughout the empire for several decades unhindered by direct conflict with Rome.
- [17] "Sosthenes", who apparently became "chief ruler of the synagogue" after the conversion of Crispus (v8), became the object on which the Greeks of Corinth took out their frustration with the Jews (highlighting the latent antisemitism of the Greeks). Sosthenes was himself eventually converted to Christ (cf. 1Cor1:1).

PAUL TAKES A JEWISH VOW

- [18] From Corinth, Paul "sailed" to "Syria", intending to return to his home church in Antioch (cf. v22). "Cenchreae" was basically a sister city to Corinth, with Corinth having a harbor on the Adriatic Sea to the west and Cenchreae having a harbor on the Aegean Sea to the west. That Paul had "shorn his head" suggests he had taken a Nazirite³⁹ "vow" some time before that (Cp., Num6:18); to complete the vow, Paul needed to take his "shorn" hair and put it into the fire on the altar in the Temple at Jerusalem.

The Law of Moses and Christian Liberty. Paul and the other apostles had already resolved that both Jews and Gentiles were free from the obligation to keep the Law of Moses (cf. Act15:1-11). However, freedom from the Law as a requirement includes the freedom to voluntarily keep portions of it, so long as there is no conflict with the revealed doctrines of the Church (Cp., Rom14:5-6), and so long as it is not asserted as obligatory. Thus, the note that Paul as a

³⁹ Nazirite vows were normally taken for a limited period of time. The cases of Sampson, Samuel, and John the Baptist, who were lifelong Nazirites, were extraordinary.

Christian undertook a Nazarite vow does not indicate he viewed himself as subject to the Law of Moses as an obligation.

- [19] "Priscilla and Aquila" (v18) travelled with Paul as far as "Ephesus", then remained there. Paul took the occasion of stopping in Ephesus to "reason with the Jews" in the "synagogue". Ephesus was in Asia, the area of western Turkey in which Paul had been previously prevented from ministering by the Holy Spirit (cf. Act16:6).
- [20] Although Paul could not remain for an extended period at this time, there was definite interest in the gospel in Ephesus. He would return to Ephesus and stay for almost three years on his 3rd missionary journey (Act19).
- [21] Paul could not stay in Ephesus because he was obligated to "keep" a "feast" in "Jerusalem" (presumably as the conclusion of the Nazarite vow he had voluntarily undertaken). Paul personally intended to return to Ephesus, but he qualified his intention with "if God will" (Cp., Jas4:13-15) in acknowledgment of the sovereignty of God.
- [22] Thus, Paul's 2nd missionary journey concluded with his arrival back in "Antioch".

PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY

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CHAPTER 19

PAUL AT EPHEBUS

- [1] Paul arrived first in Ephesus, having stopped there briefly on the return to Antioch at the end of his second missionary journey and promising to return (cf. Act18:19-21). Here, he found "certain disciples" (i.e., believers).
- [2] However, the content of the faith of these believers was incomplete for this dispensation; they had neither "received the Holy Spirit" nor been instructed concerning that doctrine (cf. Rom10:14).
- [3] Their instruction and "baptism" had been under John (the Baptist). Thus, they were O.T. believers like Apollos (Cp., Act18:24-25) who had not yet heard the gospel of grace (i.e., Jesus Christ).
- [4] John's Baptism. John the Baptist had identified Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah (Jn1:29), he preached "the gospel of the kingdom"

(Matt3:11; Mk1:14-15), and his baptism was "of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mk1:4). John's gospel and baptism were associated with the Dispensation of the Law. Thus, the faith of these disciples lacked the finished work of Christ and the offer of salvation for all by faith in the Person and work of Christ alone.

- [5] Upon believing the gospel of grace, Paul **re-baptized**⁴⁰ these believers. This demonstrates that baptism in the Dispensations of Law and Grace are different baptisms. Under Law, baptism was "of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mk1:4); under grace, baptism is identification with Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (cf. Rom6:3-4; Cp., 1Cor15:1-4).
 - [6] These disciples "spoke with tongues, and prophesied" as visible confirmation that they had received "the Holy Spirit" (Cp., Act8:14-17) and been **regenerated** (Tit3:5), neither of which were associated with conversion in the O.T.
 - [7] The number "twelve" is typologically significant in that it represents the nation of Israel (Cp., Jn3:5; Rom11:5).
 - [8] In Ephesus, Paul first preached in the "synagogue" (i.e., to Jews), as was his custom (Act17:2). He attempted to persuade them relative to "things concerning the kingdom of God", especially that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ who had offered that kingdom (Cp., Act17:3).
 - [9] Eventually Paul's preaching was rejected in the synagogue. Note, the followers of Jesus Christ are referred to as "that way" (cf. Jn10:1,7; 14:6) by the unbelieving Jews, an implicit confirmation that Paul's gospel asserted faith in Jesus Christ as the only "way" of salvation (Cp., Act4:10-12).
- The School of Tyrannus. This was probably not a "school" as we think of it, but a lecture hall made available to traveling teachers/philosophers to hold public "disput[es]" (Cp., Act17:19-21).
- [10] Paul "continued" in Ephesus for "two years" (Cp., 1Cor16:8-9), at the end of which "all they who dwelt in Asia" had "heard" the gospel; there is no record of how many were converted. As Scofield taught, the mission of the Church is not the conversion of the world, but the evangelization of the world (Cp., Mk16:15-16). Presumably it is Paul's ministry during this timeframe that gave birth to the seven churches in Asia (cf. Rev1:11).
 - [11] Paul "wrought miracles" because these were the "signs of an apostle" (cf. 2Cor12:12; see CHART: SIGNS OF AN APOSTLE).
 - [12] Compare these miracles to Acts 5:15. Attempts to reproduce these miracles by preachers today are not only ineffective, but dispensationally misplaced; such signs ceased with the death of the apostles and the completed canon of Scripture (cf. 1Cor13:8-10).
 - [13] Unbelieving "Jews" attempted to mimic the miracles of Paul in casting out "evil spirits", even making use of the name of "Jesus". This illustrates that merely using the name of "Jesus", apart from

⁴⁰ From this it can be logically concluded that believers who have received an improper baptism should be re-baptized.

personal faith in Him, is powerless. The cult of Roman Catholicism operates under this damnable misconception.

- [14] The "seven sons of Sceva" were "priests"; priests were of the sect of the Sadducees and were generally unbelievers (Cp., Act5:17; 23:8). That they were living so far from the land of Israel further suggests they did not have faith under the Dispensation of Law, much less Grace.
- [15] An "evil spirit" is a demon, and demons have knowledge of who God and Jesus are (Cp., Luk4:33-34; Jas2:19); mere knowledge of who God/Jesus are is not faith. From this verse, we also learn that the demons are aware of those who fight on behalf of "Jesus", such as "Paul". This evil spirit does not recognize the sons of Sceva as being associated with either "Jesus" or "Paul", and apart from faith in God they have no power.
- [16] The "evil spirit" has power over the sons of Sceva because they are not believers and do not have the Spirit of God (cf. 2Tim2:25-26; 1Jn4:4).
- [17] The message communicated by this event was that it is a dangerous thing to impersonate a servant of God, thus perverting the Person and character of God, without faith. This is a violation of the 3rd commandment, "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain" (Exod20:7; Cp., Matt12:31-32).
- [18] That those who "believed" came and "confessed, and showed their deeds" was probably an attempt to demonstrate their faith was sincere, so as to distinguish themselves from the false professions of the sons of Sceva.
- [19] Ephesus was wholly given over to the worship of the pagan goddess Diana⁴¹ (also known as Artemis; Cp., vv27-28); thus, it was steeped in the occult and its practices, as demonstrated by the enormous mass of occultic literature possessed by its residents. Note that occultic practices are known for their use of special words and phrases (i.e., spells) that can effect results through interactions with evil spirits, which may have contributed to the presupposition of the sons of Sceva that their mere use of the name "Jesus" would have intrinsic power (Cp., v13).
- [20] Compare with Acts 2:47; 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 28:30-31.
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⁴¹ The temple of Diana/Artemis in Ephesus was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It stood for a thousand years and was finally destroyed in 401 AD.

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CHAPTER 20

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PAUL WITH THE EPHESIAN ELDERS

This meeting between Paul and the elders from the church in Ephesus took place at the coastal city of Miletus with Luke present (cf. "us"; v17); it includes the only lengthy discourse of Paul in Acts recorded by Luke as an eyewitness. Note that only Christian leaders were present.

[16] Paul "hasted" in his travel to "Jerusalem" because he was bringing a collection for the poor saints there (cf. Rom15:25-26; 1Cor16:1). The text does not say Paul intended to keep the Feast of "Pentecost", which was required under the Law (Deut16:16; note, "if it were possible"), but his mind still reckons time according to the Jewish calendar.

[17] "Miletus" was a coastal city approximately 30 miles from Ephesus. Note that a single "church" has multiple "elders".

Elders, Bishops, and Pastors. The three titles for the plurality of leaders of a local church can all be seen as equivalent in this passage. "Elder" (Greek, **πρεσβυτερος**) emphasizes spiritual maturity (Cp., 1Tim3:6). "Bishop" (Greek, **ἐπισκοπος**), which means overseer (v28), emphasizes rulership (Cp., 1Tim3:1; 5:7). "Pastor" (Greek, **ποιμην**), which means shepherd (v28), emphasizes leadership and feeding (i.e., teaching; Cp., Jn10:3; 21:15,16,17; Eph4:11; 1Tim1:2; 1Pet5:2).

[18] Paul had lived in Ephesus for 3 years (Cp., v31; Act19:10).

[19] Paul notes that the plots against him and his ministry were led by unbelieving "Jews" (Cp., Rom11:28).

[20] Paul had "taught ... publicly" in Ephesus for two years at the school of Tyrannus (Cp., Act19:9-10). His repeated assertion that "I kept back nothing" (Cp., v27) refutes the notion of secret knowledge possessed only by a few chosen elites (i.e., **Gnosticism**).

[21] Paul's gospel (v24) was the same for both "Jews" and "Greeks". It had two aspects: 1) "repentance toward God", and 2) "faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ"; the Granville Sharp rule applies to this construction in the Greek text, which makes these two expressions equivalent and implicitly asserts the deity of Christ (Cp., Jn14:1). The preposition "toward" is a translation of the Greek **εἰς**.

[22] Prophets and apostles were not omniscient (e.g., "not knowing"), they only knew those things that God revealed to them.

- [23] God the "Holy Ghost" had revealed to Paul that he would be imprisoned at some point in the future (Cp., Act21:11).
- [24] In this verse, "so that" is the Greek **ὥς**, which introduces a purpose clause. Paul did not consider his possible imprisonment or even death when determining his course of action. His decisions were made for these purposes: 1) "I might finish my course with joy"; Paul's concern was to persevere in faithfulness until death so as not to suffer the loss of rewards (Cp., 1Cor3:12-15; 9:23-27; 2Tim4:6), and 2) "testify the gospel of the grace of God" (i.e., Paul's gospel; cf. Rom2:16; 16:25; Gall:11; Eph3:2).
- [25] Paul preached "the kingdom of God" (i.e., the future Messianic kingdom) to the Jews in order to correct their misconceptions concerning it (e.g., Matt11:12; Luk16:16; Jn3:5; Act1:6-7) and to Gentiles in order to proclaim their participation in it (e.g., Matt25:32,34; 1Cor6:9-10; Col3:24).
- [26] This is an allusion to the duty of a watchman (cf. Ezek3:17-21).
- [27] Again (v20), this was an implicit refutation of latent **Gnosticism** that was emerging even in the days of the apostles which asserted that there was secret knowledge (necessary for salvation) possessed only by an elite or illuminated caste. Here, "counsel" is the Greek **βουλή**, meaning *decree, will, or plan*. There is no portion of God's revelation that should be excluded or neglected in the teaching ministry of the churches.
- [28] Paul exhorts the Ephesian elders to "take heed" (i.e., closely guard): 1) "yourselves" (i.e., the leadership of the church), and 2) "all the flock" (i.e., the membership of the church). Note that "the [universal] church" is God's possession because He "purchased" it. The expression "blood [of God]" implicitly assumes the deity of Jesus Christ; furthermore, "blood" should be understood literally and is not merely synecdoche for life/death (cf. Rom3:25; Eph1:7; Coll:14; Heb9:12; 1Pet1:19; Rev5:9).
- Bishops and Pastors. Recognize that "overseers" is a literal translation of the position of **bishop**, and to "feed" the flock is the role of a **pastor** (cf. Eph4:11; 1Pet5:1-2). Both of these terms apply to the "elders" in the church at Ephesus (cf. v17).
- [29] Grievous "wolves" are the natural enemies of sheep, and it is the duty of the shepherd (i.e., pastor) to protect the flock from them (Cp., Jn10:11-13). Here, the concern is false teachers from outside the local assembly who "enter in among you". Gnostics were particularly dangerous since they used theological language and terms that were equivalent or similar to Biblical terms, allowing them to infiltrate undiscerning local churches (analogous modern threats come from Roman Catholics, Mormons, Jehovah's witnesses).
- [30] The other concern was "also of your own selves shall men arise" (i.e., apostasy of leaders within the local church). Here, "speaking perverse things" is the teaching of false doctrine. Note that Paul's epistles to Timothy, who was ministering to the church in Ephesus, focus on the importance of teaching sound doctrine (cf. 1Tim1:3,10; 4:1,6,13,16; 5:17; 6:1,3; 2Tim3:10,16; 4:2,3), and Jesus' letter to

the church at Ephesus commended them for their doctrinal discernment and testing of their teachers (cf. Rev2:2).

- [31] Church leadership is commanded (i.e., imperative mood) to "watch".
- [32] By "commend[ing]" the church at Ephesus and its leadership to "God" and to "the word of his grace" implies that these resources are sufficient. All believers are positionally "sanctified" (Cp., 1Cor1:2) and can expect an "inheritance" what will be enjoyed in the kingdom (Cp., Matt25:34; Col3:24).
- [33] Paul did not serve the Lord Jesus Christ for "filthy lucre" (Cp., 1Tim3:3; Tit1:7).
- [34] While in Ephesus Paul labored as a tentmaker to pay for his own expenses and those of his companions.
- [35] The "weak" refers to spiritually immature believers (Cp., Rom14:1). Here, Paul records unique "words of the Lord Jesus" that are not recorded elsewhere in Scripture (i.e., the Gospels).
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- [38] The Ephesian elders were most distraught by the revelation that they would not see Paul again (v25).

CHAPTER 21

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CHAPTER 22

PAUL'S DEFENSE IN JERUSALEM

Paul gives a defense of his actions and his teaching ministry before a Jewish mob (led by Jews from Asia; Act21:27) who seized him in the Temple in Jerusalem. Their charge against Paul was that he taught: 1) "against the people" (i.e., the Jews), 2) "and the law [of Moses]", 3) "and this place" (i.e., the Temple), and 4) and that he "brought Greeks also into the temple" (Act21:28). Their concern was over "Trophimus", a companion of Paul's who was a "Greek", "whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple" (Act21:29). Note that Luke was also with Paul (e.g., "we"; Act21:17), but only Trophimus raised this concern; the implication is that Luke was recognized to be a Jew.

- [1] Paul addresses this Jewish audience as "Men, brethren, and fathers", just as he had witnessed Stephen do before the Sanhedrin (Cp., Act7:2).
- [2] Paul spoke to these Jews "in the Hebrew tongue" (not in Aramaic, as suggested by the majority of scholars). Paul's lengthy "defense" spoken in Hebrew (v1) was recorded by Luke in Greek, which has been preserved to today. This implies that perfect translation from one language to another is possible.
- [3] Though born in the Gentile city of "Tarsus", in "Cilicia" (i.e., southeastern Turkey), he was trained "in this city" (i.e., Jerusalem) by "Gamaliel" (i.e., one of the most respected Rabbis of all time; see comments on Acts 5:34); under Gamaliel's teaching, Paul's understanding of "the law" was "perfect" (Cp., Philip3:6). Furthermore, he asserted that he was as "zealous toward God" as they were.
- [4] Paul illustrated his religious zeal in that he "persecuted **this way**" (i.e., Christians; Jn14:6) in his ignorance, even as they (Cp., Rom10:2; Philip3:6).
- [5] This zeal could be testified by the "high priest" and "council of the elders" (i.e., Sanhedrin), from whom he had received "letters" to pursue Christians even to Damascus (i.e., outside the Land of Israel).
- [6] Paul's encounter with the glorified Lord Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus occurred at "about noon", the time at which the brightness of the sun was its greatest; but this was outshone by "a great light" from "heaven" (i.e., the appearance of Christ to him was a supernatural event).
- [7] The "voice" of Jesus called "Saul, Saul" (Cp., "Abraham, Abraham"; Gen22:11; "Moses, Moses"; Exod3:4). Note that Christ identifies with the Church, His body, in that He considers persecution of the Church to be persecution of Him (cf. 1Cor15:9; Gall1:13; Cp., Matt25:40,45).
- [8] Paul's question, "who art thou, Lord", indicates he knew it was the "Lord" speaking to him. Paul in effect asked what the Lord's name is, as did Moses (Cp., Exod3:13). Paul must have been mortified to learn that the "Lord" was "Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest".

Paul was an example of "whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (Jn16:2).

- [9] Paul's account seems to contradict Acts 9:7. The reconciliation is likely that Paul's companions saw the "light" and heard a noise, but they were not able to discern it as a "voice" speaking words (Cp., Jn12:28-29).
 - [10] "What shall I do, Lord?" is the question of a servant to his Master. Note that the Lord's purpose for Paul concerns "all things which are appointed for thee to do", which would seem to be true of all believers (cf. Eph2:10).
 - [11] As a result of the "great light" (v6), Paul was temporarily blinded.
 - [12] "Ananias" is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Hananiah, which means *JEHOVAH is gracious*. He was apparently a Jewish believer in Jesus, being "a devout man according to the law".
 - [13] Ananias' address of "Brother Saul" was likely a reference to their shared Jewish heritage, although perhaps he recognized that Paul had been converted and is now a Christian brother. Paul's temporary blindness seems to have been more of a supernatural sign to Paul than a natural consequence of seeing the "great light" (v6), as his sight returns immediately after his encounter with Ananias (Cp., Act9:17).
 - [14] Ananias relates to Paul that he has been "chosen" (Lit., appointed) by "God" for three purposes: 1) to "know [God's] will", 2) to "see that Just One (i.e., the glorified Lord Jesus Christ), and 3) to "hear the voice of his mouth" (Cp., Gall:11-12).
- Note on Calvinism. God's choice of Saul/Paul is not stated to be his personal salvation, although that was a necessary means to a desired end. God's choice concerned the role Paul would play in His plan (i.e., Paul was to be the apostle to the Gentiles; cf. Act26:16; Rom11:13; Gal2:7-8).
- [15] As an apostolic "witness" (Cp., Act1:22), Paul was to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 1Cor15:1-8).
 - [16] Paul was "baptized", but Ananias' stated purpose of his baptism was seemingly in line with the Jewish baptism of John (Mk1:4); Paul will come to reveal that more than the mere washing away of sins (by the Spirit, not the water; cf. 1Cor6:11; Tit3:5), Christian baptism pictures the believer's identification with Christ (cf. Rom6:3-4).
 - [17] As an apostle (Cp., 2Cor12:12), God spoke to Paul in unusual and supernatural ways (i.e., in a "trance") that are not normative for believers during the Church Age. Paul taught that "scripture" would be sufficient for the believer (2Tim3:16-17; Cp., 1Cor13:8-12).
 - [18] Paul's apostolic ministry was to be to the Gentiles (cf. Gall:7-8), not Jews in "Jerusalem"; in general, the Jews did not "receive" the "testimony" of Paul concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - [19] Note that at the time Paul "persecuted the church" (Act8:1-3; 1Cor15:9; Gall:13), the Church was entirely Jewish and continued to attend "synagogue".

- [20] Paul may have considered his "consenting unto [Stephen's] death" to be his greatest sin.
- [21] Because of his vicious and notorious persecution of the Jewish Church, Paul's witness to Jews would never be very effective. In God's wisdom, He determined to "send [Paul] far from [Jerusalem] unto the Gentiles" (Cp., Gal2:7-8). Note the dispensational change highlighted by the commissioning of Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles (Cp., Matt10:5-7).

PAUL'S DEFENSE INTERRUPTED

Paul's defense of himself was abruptly interrupted at his mention of Christ's commission of Paul to "go unto the Gentiles" (v21).

- [22] The disdain unbelieving Jews held for Gentiles is evident. The mere mention of "this word" (v21) made it impossible for the Jewish "audience" to listen any further. This is the same reaction (i.e., a desire for His death) Jesus received when He alluded to God's sovereign program involving Gentiles (Cp., Luk4:24-28).
- [23] This response reveals an irrational hatred harbored by the Jews for Gentiles.
- [24] This "castle" is an allusion to the Antonia fortress, a citadel built by Herod the Great to overlook the Temple for the purpose of housing Roman soldiers tasked with keeping the peace. The "scourging" the "chief captain" intended to inflict on Paul was the same Jesus received (Cp., Matt27:26; Mk15:15; Jn19:1). Being a Roman, the "chief captain" did not understand the "reason" for the dispute between Paul and the Jewish mob, but his duty was to quell any civil unrest.
- [25] Paul alerted the "centurion" of his "Roman" citizenship, which was unknown and presumably unexpected, for it was not "lawful" to "scourge" a Roman citizen without due process. Though Paul taught that for a Christian, "our citizenship is in heaven" (Philip3:20) and "we are ambassadors for Christ" (2Cor5:20) living on earth as in a foreign land, he did not hesitate to assert his Roman citizenship when it benefitted him.
- [26] By saying "this man is a Roman", the "centurion" recognized that Paul's citizenship entitled him to due process, which the "chief captain" was in danger of violating.
- [28] Paul's Roman citizenship was unexpected. Most living within the Roman empire were not citizens. This "chief captain" had purchased citizenship for a "great sum". That Paul was "free born" indicated that he was born to a father who held Roman citizenship.
- [29] The "chief captain" was fearful that even having "bound" Paul without due process was a violation of his rights as a "Roman" citizen.
- [30] To understand the "reason" for this Jewish dispute, the chief captain ordered the "chief priests and all their council" (i.e., the Sanhedrin) to appear before him along with "Paul" for questioning.

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CHAPTER 24

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CHAPTER 26

PAUL'S DEFENSE BEFORE HEROD AGRIPPA

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- [16] The glorified Lord Jesus Christ "appeared" to Paul for this "purpose": 1) to make him a "minister [of the new testament]" (2Cor3:6), and 2) to make him a "witness", both of the resurrected Christ (Act1:22) and "those things in which I will appear unto thee" (i.e., to give new revelation; Gall:11-12).
- [17] Christ's commission for the Apostle Paul was to go to "the Gentiles" (Cp., Rom15:16; Gal2:7-9).
- [18] The "eyes" of the Gentiles needed to be "open[ed]" because of Satanic deception (cf. 2Cor4:3-4). Note the Hebrew parallelism; "darkness" is associated with "the power of Satan", whereas "light" is associated with "God" (cf. Jn1:4-5; 3:19; Coll:13). The verb "may receive" is in the subjunctive mood, conditioned upon "faith that is in [Christ]"; thus, believers receive both "forgiveness of sins and inheritance". Note, there is an "inheritance" that is in addition to mere salvation (cf. Col3:24, where "inheritance" is equated to "reward" and is conditioned upon "serv[ice]").
- [19] Paul responded to his encounter with the glorified Lord Jesus Christ in faith (v18).
- [20] Paul's geographical pattern of ministry was consistent with the Lord's command to the Twelve (Cp., Act1:8). Note, "repent and turn to God" is equivalent to believe, since salvation is through faith alone (Eph2:8-9; Tit3:5), whereas "do works meet for repentance" is the post-salvation expectation of all believers (Eph2:10; Cp., 1Thess1:9).
- [21] In the early decades of Church history as recorded in the Book of Acts, it was unbelieving Jews who were the source of persecution of believers and opposition to the gospel (cf. Rom11:28).
- [22] All that Paul preached concerning the Lord Jesus Christ was consistent with the testimony of "the [O.T.] prophets and Moses" (Cp., Luk24:25-27,44-46; Act17:2-3; Rom1:1-2).
- [23] "That Christ should suffer, and that he ... should rise from the dead" is the historical basis of the gospel (cf. 1Cor15:1-4). Christ's resurrection was the "first" (1Cor15:20). Here, "light" is a metaphor for the gospel, to be "show[n]" first to "the people" (i.e., Jews), "and to the Gentiles"; Paul explicitly followed this ministry mandate (Rom1:16), which he justified based on the prophecy of Isaiah 49:5-6 (Cp., Act13:46-47).
- [24] Unlike Jesus and the Twelve, who were "unlearned" (cf. Jn7:15; Act4:13), Paul was highly educated from both a Greek and Jewish perspective. It was Paul's preaching of **resurrection** (v23) that led Festus, a Roman steeped in Greek Gnosticism which taught that all that was material was inherently evil and the afterlife would be purely spiritual, to conclude that Paul was "mad" (Cp., Act17:32; 1Cor15:12).

- [25] Paul spoke "the words of truth" and was not ashamed to be considered foolish by unbelieving men (Cp., 1Cor1:18-31).
- [26] Paul turned from Festus to appeal to "king" [Herod] Agrippa II (v19). Being the great grandson of Herod the Great and "king" of the Roman province of Judea, Agrippa was very familiar with the Jewish religion and their scriptures (which claim throughout a coming resurrection of the dead). Further, Paul asserts that all that he preached concerning Jesus of Nazareth "was not done in a corner" (i.e., it was a well-known matter of public record to the residents of Israel).
- [27] Paul asserted that King Agrippa believed "the prophets" (i.e., the Jewish scriptures), which implied that he believed in resurrection.
- [28] This is seemingly an admission by Agrippa that the case Paul made for Jesus of Nazareth as the Jewish Messiah was very compelling, so much so he was tempted to become "a Christian" (i.e., a follower of Jesus as the Messiah).
- [29] Paul was a "Christian" (v28), and his desire was for all who heard the gospel of Jesus Christ that he preached would be "such as I am", but that they would not suffer persecution for their faith in Christ as he had.
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- [31] Analogous to Pilate's interrogation of Jesus (Cp., Luk23:4,14,22; Jn18:38; 19:4,6), Agrippa concluded that Paul "doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds".
- [32] Paul had "appealed to Caesar" (Act25:11), which was his right as a Roman citizen (Act22:27). That Paul would testify of the Lord Jesus Christ before Caesar was always part of God's sovereign will for him (Cp., Act9:15).

CHAPTER 27

PAUL SENT TO ROME

Paul's journey to Rome is reminiscent of the Book of Jonah. After miraculously surviving a storm at set, both prophets preached to the Gentile capitals of their day: Jonah to Nineveh and Paul to Rome. In each case, it was God's will that Gentiles be evangelized by Jewish prophets. For the Apostle Paul, the violent storm which caused his shipwreck was Satanic opposition (Cp., Mk4:35-41) to his gospel going "unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Act1:8), but such opposition could not thwart the sovereign purpose of God (cf. Act23:11; 27:24).

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- [18] To cast the ship's cargo overboard would have been a great financial loss; it represents a final act of desperation.
- [19] On "the third day" of the storm, they even cast overboard the ship's "tackle", meaning they lost the ability to direct the ship by its sails.
- [20] Having seen "neither sun nor stars in many days, the sailors had no idea of their location in the Mediterranean Sea, and they had no "hope" of survival.

PAUL ASSUMES LEADERSHIP

- [21] Their "long abstinence" from food suggests they were unable to eat because of extreme sea-sickness caused by the violent storm (Cp., v33). As Paul stepped up to assume leadership in this desperate situation, he began by reminding them of his counsel to "not have loosed from Crete" because of the "harm and loss" it would bring (cf. v10; i.e., a validation of his record as a prophet; Cp., Deut18:20-22).
- [22] As a prophet, Paul exhorted the passengers by revealing that "there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but only of the ship".
- [23] Paul's revelation came from "an angel of God", emphasizing the supernatural source of his knowledge. His description of his "God", and his relationship to Him, to these Gentiles is reminiscent of that of the prophet Daniel (Cp., Dan6:16,20).
- [24] God revealed that "all them that sail with thee" would be spared death because of God's purpose for "Paul" to "be brought before Caesar", yet another instance in the Bible of God's temporal blessing

of the unrighteous for the sake of the righteous (Cp., Gen18:32; 19:20-21; 1Cor7:14).

- [25] Paul's assertion that "I believe God" (Cp., Gen15:6) was an implicit declaration before these Gentiles that God was faithful and could be trusted in all that He declared. Faith is "being fully persuaded that, what [God] had promised, he was able also to perform" (Rom4:21).
- [26] As a prophet, the future has been revealed to Paul.
- [27] Their ship had been caught in the storm in the "Adria[ti]c" Sea (between Greece and Italy) for fourteen nights. The "shipmen" sensed they were drawing near to land.
- [28] By "sounding" they confirmed they were nearing land as the sea was getting increasingly shallower.
- [29] Not knowing where they were, and fearing they might be driven into a rocky shoreline, they "cast four anchors out of the stern" to slow/arrest their progress toward the shore, and "wished for the day" to give light that they might ascertain whether it was safe to proceed toward the shore.
- [30] Pretending to "cast anchors out of the foreship", the shipmen actually intended to let down a "boat" to head for shore.
- [31] Paul revealed that in order for them to be saved, all must remain in the "ship".
- [32] To their credit, the "soldiers" believed Paul and his revelation from God, to the extent that they cast away the "boat" so that none could use it to leave the ship.
- [33] They had not eaten for fourteen days, likely due to sea-sickness.
- [34] Paul exhorted them to eat, realizing they would need strength to make it to shore, and reiterated that none of them would be harmed.
- [35] Before eating, Paul "gave thanks to God in the presence of them all" (Cp., 1Thess5:18); Paul's thanksgiving was undoubtedly earnest (cf. Philip4:11-12), but also intended to be a testimony before these Gentiles.
- [36] Paul's confidence in God moved the Gentiles to "good cheer", such that they ate also.
- [37] Note that use of the pronoun "we" indicates Luke with Paul on the "ship". That there were 276 "souls" on board the "ship" indicates it was a very large ship, and also emphasizes that the eternal destinies of those aboard the ship were at stake.
- [38] They had previously cast the cargo overboard (v18), and now they cast their food overboard as well. As a result, the ship must be abandoned.

- [39] When day brought light to see, the shipmen did not recognize the coastline ("Melita"; Act28:1; i.e., Malta), but they "discovered a certain creek" into which the ship might be safely driven.
- [40] They took up the anchors and set sail "toward shore".
- [41] The ship eventually ran aground and was "stuck fast" some distance from shore, at which time the "violence of the waves" against the "unmovable" stern of the ship threatened to break it up.
- [42] The Roman "soldiers" feared that in the chaos of the attempt to make it to shore, some of their prisoners might "escape", which would result in their own executions (Cp., Act12:19). As a result, the soldiers intended to "kill the prisoners", presumably to allow them to argue that they had died at sea.
- [43] Because the "centurion" was unwilling to kill "Paul", he kept the soldiers from killing any of the prisoners (Cp., v24). He commanded those "who could swim" to attempt to swim to shore.
- [44] The "rest" (i.e., presumably those who could not swim) attempted to float to shore clinging to "boards" or "broken pieces of the ship". In the end, "all escaped to the land" as Paul had prophesied (v24).

CHAPTER 28

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