The Acts of the Apostles

Teacher's Manual

The Acts of the Apostles
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Lesson 1
Introduction to the Book

I. Why should we study the Book of Acts?

A. The Book of Acts is a bridge connecting the Gospels and the Epistles.

1. It is the outcome of the Gospels.

   a. In the Gospels, Jesus is seen as a grain of wheat who falls to the ground and dies (John 12:24).

      Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.

   b. The book of Acts gives us the result of Jesus' willingness to lay down His life. It is the "much fruit" that is brought forth.

2. It is a sequel to the Gospels.

   a. In the Gospels, Christ purchases the Church with His blood. In the Book of Acts, that Church rises to actual existence.

   b. In the Gospels, Jesus gives His famous prophecy stating, "I will build my church" (Mt. 16:18). In the Book of Acts, we see the fulfillment of that prophecy.

   c. In the Gospels, Christ issued the commands to His followers to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. In the Book of Acts, we get a glimpse of just how the apostles responded to those commands under the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit.

3. It is an introduction to the Epistles

   a. It gives the background and occasion for much of what will follow.

   b. It helps us to understand the Epistles in their historical context.

B. The Book of Acts is the only book in the New Testament that focuses on practical theology.

1. It establishes for us the foundational truths and principles of the Church "in word and deed."

2. It demonstrates for us in living form all of the teaching of Christ in the Gospels.

3. It illustrates the life application of all the doctrine outlined in the Epistles.

4. It provides a textbook on such things as:

   a. Evangelism
   b. Ministry in the spirit
   c. Missions
   d. Church planting
   e. Church government
   f. Team ministry
   g. Prayer life of the church
   h. Character of a biblical Christian
   i. The training and releasing of leaders

C. The Book of Acts is a book of inspiration in these days of the restoration of the Church.

1. It provides a record of the early rain outpouring of the Spirit.

2. It gives us a description of much that God is restoring.

3. It provides us a glimpse of and stirs our faith in regard to what God wants to do in the Church today.

D. The Book of Acts is the only unfinished book in the Bible.

1. It is one book that has no "amen" to it.

2. It closes with the continued preaching of the Kingdom of God (Acts 28:30-31).

   Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.

3. Our lives are to help complete this book throughout the ages.

II. What is the significance of the title of this book?

A. This book is titled "The Acts of the Apostles," or more literally "Acts of Apostles."

Although many would suggest other titles, this one has merit because:

1. It is the story of how God uses weak human vessels to implement His eternal purposes.

2. It shows us what can be accomplished as we stand "in Christ?" I can do all things…

3. One of the key words in the Book of Acts is "apostle" or "apostles."

   a. *Apostolos* (apostle) is used 30 times
   b. *Apostello* (sent) is used 25 times.
   c. *Apostolee* (apostleship) is used once.

B. Some have suggested other titles.

1. Some have suggested in jest, "Some of the Acts of Some of the Apostles."

   a. It neither contains all of the acts of some of the apostles,

   b. Nor some of the acts of all of the apostles.

   c. It focuses on two apostles. In the first twelve chapters, Peter is the central figure. In the rest of the Book of Acts, the central figure is Paul.

2. Others feel it could more appropriately be called "The Acts of the Holy Spirit in the Church."

   a. Nearly every chapter contains reference to the Holy Spirit.
   b. There are 50 (Pentecost) references to the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts.

3. It could be called the "Life of Paul."

   Even though Peter is a central figure in the early chapters, as soon as Paul is introduced the focus of the book changes. It could be argued that even the material surrounding the ministry of Peter only provides an introduction to Paul and his ministry to the Gentiles. The events that are recorded prior to Paul's apostolic work all have a bearing on such a ministry.

4. Other suggestions include:

   a. Acts

   b. The Acts of the Holy Spirit

   c. The Gospel of the Holy Spirit

   d. The Gospel of the Resurrection

   e. The Acts of the Ascended and Glorified Lord

   f. Luke-Acts

g. The Book of the Continual Doing and Teaching of the Living Christ by the Holy Spirit through His Body Which Is the Church (G. Campbell Morgan)

III. Who wrote the book of Acts?

A. The real author is the Holy Spirit (II Pet. 1:21; II Tim. 3:14-17).

B. The human author was a man by the name of "Luke."

1. Luke was referred to by Paul as the "beloved physician" and is the only Gentile author in the New Testament (Col. 4:14)

2. Luke also wrote the gospel that bears his name, which is an account of Christ's earthly ministry – "Christ according to the flesh."

3. Luke wrote Acts as a continuation recording Christ's heavenly ministry – "Christ according to the spirit."

4. Because of the way the Book of Acts ends, many have suggested that he was planning on writing another book to finish the story.

5. There is much evidence to establish Luke as the author.

   a. Both Acts and Luke are addressed to the same person—Theophilos (Acts 1:1; Luke 1:3).

   b. The writer refers to a former treatise—the Gospel of Luke (Acts 1:1).

   c. The style of both the Gospel and the Book of Acts are the same (medical language).

      Fifty words are used in common to the two books that are not found anywhere else in the New Testament.

   d. Luke was a companion of Paul and, therefore, qualified to write the book (Acts 16:10, 20:4-6, 28:16; Col. 4:14; II Tim. 4:11; Phil. 4).

      Notice the use of the pronoun "we" (Acts 16:19, 20:4-5).

   e. Luke's authorship of both books is unanimously attested to by Early Church tradition.

IV. When was the Book of Acts written?

A. The Book of Acts was most likely written between 63 and 65 A.D.

1. Paul was still in prison in Rome and had not come to trial.

2. The reign of Nero included these years.

3. It was obviously written before the death of Paul.

4. It was very likely written shortly after the close of the time covered in the book, after Paul had been two years in Rome.

B. The Book of Acts covers approximately 33 years from the ascension of Jesus to the time when Paul had been in prison in Rome for two years (See Chart on the Chronology of the Book of Acts).

V. What is a general overview of the contents of the Book of Acts?

A. This is the first history of the church and the only unfinished book in the Bible.

1. It is simply a sketch history (John 21:25).

2. The history of the Church continues to be recorded in the book of heaven.

3. We can expect the end to be greater than the beginning (Eccl 7:8).

B. The book, like Genesis, is the book of beginnings and it is just as important. It contains the following beginnings:

1. The Holy Spirit's work of evangelism

2. The gospel of preaching (I Cor 15:1-4)

3. A new dispensation (the Holy Spirit)

4. The Church of our Lord

5. World-wide evangelism

6. Salvation through the blood of Christ

C. The book centers on the work of two great apostles.

1. Peter to the Jews (Chapters 1-12)

2. Paul to the Gentiles (Chapters 13-28)

D. The book revolves around four geographical centers.

1. Jerusalem - home missions

2. Antioch - foreign missions

3. Ephesus

4. Rome

5. Thus, the gospel begins in Jerusalem, the religious hub of the world, and ends in Rome, the political hub of the world.

E. The book gives to us a glimpse into the divine execution of the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20; Luke 24:46-47).

VI. What is the key verse and how is it fulfilled in the Book of Acts?

The key verse in the Book of Acts is Acts 1:8. It is the key verse because it gives the order of witness in the Book of Acts.

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

A. Jerusalem (Acts 1:4, 8; Luke 24:47)

B. Judea (Acts 2:9, 14, 8:1, 9:31, 10:37, 11:1, 19, 15:1)

Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Acts 8:1

C. Samaria (Acts 8-10)

Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. Acts 8:4-5

D. Uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 11:19, 23:11, 28:14-31).

Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. Acts 11:19-21

But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome."
Acts 23:11

VII. What was the purpose for which this book was written?

There are many possible reasons that have been suggested for which Luke may have written this book.

He may have written it…

A. To preserve an historical record of the origins of the Early Church. Luke, being a man of education, would be concerned that these happenings were recorded for future generations.

B. To demonstrate the continuing work of Christ through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:1).

C. To defend the church from the Roman Empire's antagonism toward the Jews by showing that while they share common scriptures, they are a separate religious group that the Romans need not fear.

D. To demonstrate the pattern by which Christ builds His church.

E. To provide a defense of Christianity in a time when world-wide persecution was foreseen. From this book could be demonstrated the past Roman policy of ignoring but never persecuting the early Christian leaders.

F. To assist in the evangelization of the Jews by showing that Christianity is indeed the fulfillment of the Old Testament.

G. To provide a biographical sketch of the life of one of the greatest apostles in the early church.

H. To provide a defense brief to be presented at Paul's trial to explain his arrest and the charges that were against him.

VIII. What are the key words used in the Book of Acts?

Key words often give insight into the main message of a book. Some of the key words in the Book of Acts include the following:

- Paul – 154

- Peter – 64
- (Holy) Spirit – 50
- Word (of God) – 48
- Name (of Jesus, the Lord) – 34
- Apostle(s) – 30
- Witness (or some form of the word) – 30
- Prayer – 28

IX. What is the key message of the Book of Acts?

Note to Teacher: Have the class make a sentence with all the key words in it.

Sample: The story of how God equips people with supernatural equipment (Holy Spirit, Name of Jesus, Word of God, Prayer) and sends *(apostello*) them out to be His witnesses and accomplish His purpose.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

KEY EVENTS	ACTS Chapter/s	DATE/s	HIGH PRIESTS	RULERS IN JUDEA	PAULINE EPISTLES WRITTEN
Ascension of Christ	1:9-11	30	Caiaphus	Pontius Pilates	
Pentecost	2:1-41	30			
Martyrdom of Stephen	6-7	32-33			
Conversion of Saul	9:1-19	33			
Saul's First Visit to Jerusalem	9:26-30	36	Jonathan, Theophilus	Marcellus	
Saul in Tarsus	9:30	36-44	Simon, Matthias	Marullus, Herod Agrippa I	
Saul Moves to Antioch	11:25-26	44	Elioenai	Cuspius Fadus	
Saul's Second Visit to Jerusalem	11:29-12:25	46	Joseph	Tiberas Julius Alexander	
First Missionary Journey	13-14	47-49	Ananias		
The Jerusalem Council	15	49		Cumanus	Galatians
Second Missionary Journey	15:40-18:22	49			
Paul in Corinth		51-52			I & II Thessalonians
Paul's Fourth Trip to Jerusalem	18:22	52		Antonius Felix	
Third Missionary Journey	18:23-21:4	52-58			
Ephesus		53-56			I Corinthians (54)
Troas, Illyricum, Achala		56-58			II Corinthians (56)
Paul's Fifth Visit to Jerusalem	21:5-23:22	58	Ishmael		Romans (57)
Paul's Ceasarean Imprisonment	23:23-25:32	58-60		Porcius Festus	
Paul Sails for Rome	27:1	60	Joseph		
Paul's Roman Imprisonment	27-28	61-63	Ananus, Jesus	Albinus	Prison Epistles
Paul's Release from Prison		63	Jesus, Son of Gamaliel		I Timothy, Titus
Paul's Final Imprisonment		65			II Timothy
Paul's Death		65	Matthias	Gessius Florus	

* It should be noted that because of limited historical records, dates are approximate

Lesson 2-3
The Keys of the Kingdom in the Book of Acts

I. What is the purpose of a key?

A. A key is an instrument used to lock or unlock something.

B. A key is anything that is used to disclose, open, unlock or solve something.

C. Symbolically, keys speak of authority, power and right.

II. What is Jesus' relationship to keys?

A. Jesus has all power and authority (Mt. 28:18).

B. Jesus has control over many keys.

1. He holds the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 16:19).

   And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

2. He has the keys of hell and death (Rev. 1:18).

   I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.

3. He has the key of David (Is. 22:22; Rev. 3:7).

   The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; so he shall open, and no one shall shut; and he shall shut, and no one shall open. Isaiah 22:22

4. He has the key to the bottomless pit (Rev. 9:1; 20:1).

C. Jesus said that He would give His followers the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 16:18-19).

And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

III. What are the keys of the kingdom that functioned in the Book of Acts?

What are the keys that unlock the Book of Acts? What are the keys to the success of the disciples in the Book of Acts? What were the keys that opened the doors to the Gospel in the Book of Acts? What were the tools in the hands of the disciples that made it possible for them to carry out the Great Commission?

A. Key Number One: The Holy Spirit

1. The Church cannot function or even attempt to fulfill the Great Commission without a relationship to and a reliance on the Holy Spirit.

2. The apostles in the Book of Acts lived in the conscious awareness of being motivated by, empowered by, and under the authority of the Holy Spirit.

3. The work and ministry of the Holy Spirit is central to the Book of Acts, being mentioned some 50 times.

    a. The Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts had a nine-fold role. The Holy Spirit was:

    - The Commander-in-Chief (1:2)
    - The Inspirer of Prophecy (1:16; 11:28; 13:2, 4)
    - The Fulfillment of Prophecy (2:17-18)
    - The Promise of the Father (2:33)
    - The Gift of God (2:28, 15:8)
    - The Comforter of the Churches (9:31)
    - The Confirmer of the Word (10:38, 44-47)
    - The Rain from Heaven (2:11-18; 10:38, 44-47)
    - The Bringer of Joy (13:52)

    b. The disciples in the Book of Acts had a ten-fold relationship to the Holy Spirit. They were:

    - Empowered by the Spirit (1:8)
    - Baptized in the Spirit (1:5)
    - Recipients of the Spirit (8:15; 19:2-6)
    - Filled with the Spirit (Acts 2:4; 4:8; 6:3, 5)
    - Co-witnesses with the Spirit (5:32)
    - Prompted by the Spirit (18:5)
    - Appointed by the Spirit (20:23, 28)
    - Separated and sent by the Spirit (13:2, 4)
    - Transported by the Spirit (8:39)
    - Led, guided and directed by the Spirit (8:29)

    Philip was directed by the Spirit to join himself to the Ethiopian man in the chariot (Acts 8:29). The Holy Spirit orchestrated the meeting between Peter and

Cornelius that opened the door of faith to the Gentiles (Acts 10:19). The conclusions of the council at Jerusalem were inspired by the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:28). Paul was led by the Holy Spirit to go to Macedonia and open a whole new region to the Gospel (Acts 16:6-7). Agabus was inspired by the Holy Spirit to warn Paul concerning his arrest in Jerusalem (Acts 21:11).

What would have happened in these instances if these individuals had not been open and responsive to the voice of the Holy Spirit in their lives?

4. All through the Book of Acts we find that the Holy Spirit is the dynamic in the ministry of the apostles, and to be filled with the Spirit is absolutely essential for effective and acceptable service.

5. "In the Book of Acts there is a strong and vivid realization of His presence, a manifest and victorious sense of His working, which is sadly lacking in the experience of the Church today." Wilbur Smith

6. Every worker for God must be filled with the Holy Spirit. No lower standard is either accepted or suggested. Even for the work of serving tables, this was regarded as an indispensable necessity.

B. Key Number Two: Prayer

Prayer is the pipeline of the Holy Spirit. Prayer is the link that connects the saints with the Lord of heaven. Prayer is the channel of the supply of the Spirit. It is the way in which we access our heavenly instructions. The Apostles in the Book of Acts demonstrated an absolute dependence on God which is evidenced by their continual watchfulness in prayer.

At least 17 out of the 28 chapters in the Book of Acts have a reference to prayer.

Someone has once said that you can measure your dependence on God by the amount of time that you spend in prayer.

1. They "continued steadfastly" in prayer (Acts 2:42).

   And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

   a. To continue steadfastly is "to persevere; to give constant attention to a thing; to adhere to one; be devoted to; not to faint; to show oneself courageous; to be in constant readiness for; to wait on continually."

   b. Other translations state…

They...devoted themselves to... --NLT

And they steadfastly persevered, devoting themselves constantly to…
--Amp

2. They "gave themselves" to prayer (Acts 6:4).

   …but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.

   This word means "to be earnest toward, to persevere in and to be constantly diligent in prayer."

3. They prayed on a regular basis (Acts 3:1; 10:2, 4; 12:5; 16:13).

   Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. Acts 3:1

   When you maintain your hour of prayer, you never know when God is going to meet you in a special way. On this day Peter and John would see the miracle working power of God displayed as they went up to pray.

   There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!" Acts 10:1-3

   When you "pray always" there are those times when you get new visions and revelation from the Lord.

   Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church. Acts 12:5

   When you maintain "constant prayer" for something you will see chains fall off, prison doors opened and the captive set free.

   And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there. Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. Acts 16:14

   When you maintain a custom of prayer you will have divine appointments that will open doors for you that you could never plan for yourself. This meeting with Lydia would be one of the things that opened the door for Paul's work in Philippi.

4. They prayed in specific situations.

    a. In selecting leadership (Acts 1:24)
    b. In setting in leaders (Acts 6:6)
    c. In sending out ministries (Acts 13:3)
    d. In ordaining elders (Acts 14:23)
    e. In departing from friends (Acts 20:26; 21:15)

5. They prayed for special requests and needs.

    a. For boldness (Acts 4:31)
    b. To receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:15)
    c. To raise the dead (Acts 9:40)
    d. Peter's release (Acts 12:12)
    e. The mind of the Lord (Acts 16:16)
    f. Deliverance (Acts 16:25)
    g. Healing (Acts 28:8)

The Church in the New Testament was born in prayer. From then on, prayer was a vital key to their success. The Christians in the Book of Acts breathed the atmosphere of prayer, believed in the power of prayer, began, continued, and ended all their work with prayer. A prayer-less church is a powerless church.

C. Key Number Three: The Word of God

The Word of God is seen as the Sword of the Spirit in the Book of Acts. The Apostles in the Book of Acts looked solely to the Word of God to impart faith and life to their hearers.

1. The Word of God was central to all of their teaching and preaching. Every message is totally saturated with the word of God. All of the sermons are saturated with Old Testament references and allusions.

    a. Peter quoted Joel and David in his message on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16, 25).

    b. The apostles went everywhere, preaching the word (Acts 8:4).

    c. They preached the word to the Jews and quoted the references (Acts 2:16, 25).

    d. They preached the word to the Gentiles and stated the content (Acts 17:22-34).

2. The Word of God as seen in the Book of Acts was a complete word. It was:

    a. The Word of exhortation (Acts 13:15)

b. The Word of salvation (Acts 13:26)
c. The Word of the Lord (Acts 13:48-49; 16:32)
d. The Word of the gospel (Acts 15:7)
e. The Word of His grace (Acts 14:3; 20:32)

So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. Acts 20:32

3. The Word of God evoked many positive responses from people.

a. They heard the Word (Acts 4:4).

b. They received the Word (Acts 2:41; 8:14, 11:1), not just the preacher of the Word.

c. They believed the Word (Acts 4:29).

d. They desired to hear the Word (Acts 13:7, 42, 44), not just stories.

e. They received the Word with readiness of mind (Acts 17:11).

f. They gave themselves to the Word (Acts 6:4) and continued steadfastly in the Word (Acts 2:42).

g. They searched the Word (Acts 17:11).

These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men. Acts 17:11-12

h. They glorified the Word (Acts 13:48).

Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region. Acts 13:48-49

4. The Word of God was used in many ways by the apostles in the Book of Acts.

a. They spoke it boldly (Acts 4:29, 37).

You can only speak boldly when it is God's Word. The boldness itself gives testimony to the Word (Acts 14:3).

b. They preached the Word everywhere (Acts 8:4, 11:19, 13:5, 14:25, 15:35-36).

c. They taught the Word (Acts 15:35, 18:11).

d. They testified the Word (Acts 8:25).

e. They spread or published the Word (Acts 13:49).

f. They used the Word to determine policy (Acts 15:15).

g. They commended people to the Word (Acts 20:32).

5. The Word of God brought forth powerful results.

a. The Word moved in power (Acts 10:44). This is what happens when the Word and Spirit are working together.

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.

b. All in the area heard the Word (Acts 19:10).

And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

c. The Word of God increased (Acts 6:7, KJV).

And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

d. The Word of God grew and multiplied (Acts 12:24).

But the word of God grew and multiplied.

e. The Word of God grew mightily and prevailed (Acts 19:20).

So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

The word that is translated "prevailed" in this verse means "to have force." The Word of God is a force to contend with and ultimately, if it is upheld above the words of man, it will overcome or prevail.

D. Key Number Four: The Name of the Lord

When Jesus left the earth He extended His authority to His followers (Mt. 28:18-20). He gave them the right to use His name (Mark 16:17-18; John 16:23-24).

And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. John 16:23-24

The day that Jesus' spoke of had now arrived. The Apostles in the Book of Acts were totally dependent on the name of the Lord to effect results and empower their ministry.

1. The apostles understood that their own resources were limited.

   a. Their money would never accomplish the task (Acts 3:6).

      So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. Acts 3:5-7

   b. Their holiness would never be sufficient (Acts 3:12).

      So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?"

   c. Their own natural abilities would only fall short (Acts 3:16; 4:7-12).

      And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. Acts 3:16

      And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?" 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: 9 If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, 10 let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. 11 This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' 12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Acts 4:7-12

2. The apostles understood that the name of the Lord was God's special gift to them.

   a. As the rod was a special gift to Moses (Ex. 4:1-4, 17).

      And you shall take this rod in your hand, with which you shall do the signs. Exodus 4:17

   b. As the mantle was a special gift to Elijah and Elisha (II Kgs. 2:8, 13-14).

3. The apostles understood that His name was equal to His person and represented His authority (Acts 4:7).

   And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?"

   And they set the men in their midst and repeatedly demanded, By what sort of power or by what kind of authority did [such people as] you do this [healing]?
   –Amp

4. The apostles in the Book of Acts saw the name of the Lord bringing:

   a. Salvation (Acts 2:21, 4:12)
   b. Deliverance (16:18)
   c. Healing (Acts 3:6, 4:10)
   d. Signs and Wonders (Acts 4:30)
   e. Forgiveness and remission of sins (Acts 10:43)

5. The Apostles in the Book of Acts related to the name by:

   a. Having faith in His name (Acts 3:16)
   b. Calling on the name (Acts 2:21; 9:14; 22:16)
   c. Baptizing in the name (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5)
   d. Teaching and preaching in the name (Acts 9:21, 27, 29)
   e. Teaching and preaching the name (Acts 4:17; 8;12)
   f. Magnifying the name (Acts 19:17)
   g. Taking out a people for His name (Acts 15:14)
   h. Bearing His name (Acts 9:15; 15:17)
   i. Doing signs and wonders in His name (Acts 4:30)
   j. Suffering for His name (Acts 5:41; 9:16)

      So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.
      Acts 5:41-42

   k. Risking their lives for His name (Acts 15:26)

   l. Being willing to die for His name (Acts 21:13)

      Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

   They truly did whatever they did in the name of the Lord (Col 3:17).

And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

6. The Apostles in the Book of Acts faced challenges relative to the name.

   a. They faced pressure from other religious leaders not to use the name (Acts 4:17; 5:28, 40).

      But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, 16 saying, "What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. 17 But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name." 18 So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. 20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." 21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done. 22 For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.
      Acts 4:15-22

      Those who oppose the name try to keep us from using the name of Jesus. The challenge for us today is to keep our message general and do not refer to Jesus in specific terms. The challenge is just to refer to God in general terms so as not to offend those who have a different concept of God.

   b. They understood that the use of the name cannot be a magic formula (Acts 19:13-16). They understood that the key to using the name is having a personal relationship to Jesus.

      Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." 14 Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. 15 And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" 16 Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

   c. They realized that people can live contrary to the name (Acts 26:9).

      Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

      Since we bear His name we should live a life that is consistent with His name.

Lesson 4-6
Acts Chapter 1

I. General Outline of Chapter 1

A. The Prologue to the Book (1:1-3)

B. Jesus' Final Instructions (1:4-8)

C. Jesus' Ascension into Heaven (1:9-11)

D. The Upper Room Prayer Meeting (1:10-14)

E. The Selection of Matthias to Replace Judas (1:15-26)

II. The Prologue to the Book (Acts 1:1-3)

The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, 2 until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, 3 to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

A. The author of the Book of Acts was a man by the name of Luke. Luke was not only the author of the book, but he was a player in the book

1. He was born in Antioch of Syria (at least this is where his parents resided [Eusebius]).

2. He was not a Jew (Col 4:11, 14).

3. He was educated in the science of medicine (Col 4:14).

    a. He was, in this sense, distinct from the twelve apostles.

    b. He was, therefore, more concerned about historical records.

    c. He was, therefore, a likely candidate for close fellowship and relationship to Paul.

    d. His writing is, therefore, more lofty and technical in its design.

    e. He, therefore, gives a great place to and detailed description of the healing power of the Lord (all of us see things through different eyes).

4. He was very likely a convert of the apostle Paul.

    a. He was not an eyewitness of Christ in His earthly ministries (Luke 1:2).

    b. He may have been converted in Antioch or later in Troas.

5. He was a companion of Paul.

    a. His first linking up with Paul seems to have been at Troas on Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 16:18-11).

    b. He accompanied Paul to Philippi (Acts 16:10-12).

    c. He seems to have remained in Philippi (Acts 17:1).

    d. He rejoined Paul whenever he got near to Philippi (Acts 20:5).

6. He was most likely discipled into leadership by Paul.

    a. Paul seems to have sent him with Titus to carry the second letter to the Corinthians (subscription to that letter).

    b. Luke seems to have developed into an influential church leader in Macedonia (II Corinthians 8:18 - Early tradition applies this passage to Luke).

7. He was one of Paul's most intimate friends.

    a. Paul refers to him as beloved (Col 4:14).

    b. He met Paul and traveled with him anytime Paul got close to his home.

    c. He was with Paul on his last trip to Jerusalem (Acts 20:6-21:18).

    d. He was shipwrecked with Paul on the prison ship to Rome (Acts 28:2).

    e. He stayed with Paul in Rome during his imprisonment there, and was a fellow-laborer with him when he wrote Colossians (Col. 4:14) and Philemon (Phm. 24).

    f. He was with Paul during his second imprisonment in Rome when Paul wrote II Timothy (II Tim. 4:11).

    g. He remained faithful to Paul to the end when others were forsaking him (II Tim 4:11).

8. There are other traditions regarding Luke that have some credibility.

    a. He never married.

    b. He most likely returned to Philippi after Paul's death.

    c. He is believed to have died in Bithynia of natural causes (although there are some less-reliable traditions that suggest he was martyred at the age of 80 by crucifixion).

B. The author of the book makes a reference to a previous work. This is most likely the Gospel that bears his name—the Gospel according to Luke.

1. Luke's gospel was to be an orderly account (Luke 1:3-4).

a. Luke was a stickler for detail.

b. As such, Luke's gospel is the fullest account we have of the life of Christ. It begins with the birth announcement for John the Baptist and extends all the way to the ascension of Jesus.

2. There is a widely held view that Luke intended to write a third book. Two reasons are given for this view:

a. The use of the superlative "first" (Gk. *proton*) instead of the comparative "former" (Gk. *proteron*) is strictly used only when more than two are in mind.

b. Acts ends abruptly (Acts 28:30-31) without revealing whether Paul was released or was put to death. It is said that he left his readers in suspense, which would be relieved in his third book, which was apparently never written.

C. The author of the Book of Acts wrote to a man by the name of Theophilus.

1. It is difficult to know to whom this title or name refers.

a. Theophilus may be a general title and not a name at all.

Since oldest manuscripts of our Bible are written in all capital letters, it cannot be determined certainly whether THEOPHILUS is to be taken as a proper name, and, therefore, a Christian friend by that name (Luke 1:3), or to be treated as a common noun, and translated "friend of God" or "lover of God."

If it is a general designation, it is a universal letter, written to all Christians everywhere who were eager to learn more about the work of God.

b. Theophilus may be a specific individual to whom Luke was writing.

If Theophilus was a specific individual (which is most likely the case), there are many theories as to who he might have been.

i. He may have been a Roman official such as a governor or procurator (For Luke's use of "most excellent" see Luke 1:3; Acts 23:26, 24:2, 26:25.).

ii. He may have been some person of standing in Rome whose influence was sought for Paul's trial.

iii. He may have been the magistrate who was due to hear Paul's case.

iv. He may have been a Gentile of rank who came under the influence of Luke or under that of Paul in Rome, and was converted to the Christian faith.

v. He may have been a person of nobility who was the patron of Luke, and who funded the production of this book.

c. Certainly, for the purpose of our reading and study, we will take this to be a book personally written to us.

D. The author of the Book of Acts indicated that his former work or account only contained what Jesus began to do and to teach (Acts 1:1).

1. It is interesting the order that Luke uses in relation to Jesus—doing first and then teaching.

a. The Pharisees taught but they did not practice or "do" the word (Mt. 23:3).

b. Jesus "did" the word for thirty years before he ventured to teach the word.

2. It is interesting that even though Luke's gospel is the most complete gospel he indicates that it only represented what Jesus "began" to do and to teach.

3. It is interesting because the implication of this statement is that Jesus is continuing to work and minister.

Even though Jesus ascended into heaven, He still has a vested interest in what goes on in relation to the building of the Church. He is still working in the Church through the Holy Spirit and through His followers.

The former account (Luke) was concerning all that Jesus began to do and teach, and this new account (Acts) is concerning the things He continues to do and to teach. The Gospel, therefore, was only the first chapter of the long story of the work and teaching of Jesus which is still being written today. The Book of Acts represents the second chapter in Jesus' ministry. Many other chapters of His achievements through His Church have been written in the past 2,000 years.

"Hence, the grand history of what Jesus did and taught does not conclude with His departure to the Father; but Luke now begins it in a higher strain; for all the subsequent labors of the apostles are just an exhibition of the ministry of the glorified Redeemer Himself, because they were acting under His authority, and He was the principle that operated in them all." (*Jamison, Fausset & Brown*)

4. It is interesting to see how the Lord Jesus Christ functioned as a principle worker in the Book of Acts. Jesus is seen as the:

- Commander and Instructor of His people (1:2-9)
- Great Hope of the Church (1:10-11)

- Guide to His people in church matters in times of perplexity (1:24, 10:13-16, 16:10, 22:18-21)
- Giver of the Holy Spirit (2:33)
- Burden of all sermons and addresses (2:22-36, 3:13-15, 4:10-33, 5:30, 6:14, 8:5, 35, 10:36, etc.)
- One who added to the Church (2:47)
- Only Hope for a perishing world (4:12)
- Active Partner in our service (3:16, 26, 18:9-10)
- Personal Agent in the conversion of Saul (9:3-6)
- Encourager of His much-tried ones (7:55-56, 23:11)

E. The author of the Book of Acts indicated that Jesus spent a good deal of His time between the resurrection and ascension giving commandments to His apostles.

1. Jesus gave these commandments through the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:2).

   The emphasis here is on Jesus' utter dependence on the Holy Spirit. All that was lacking for Jesus to complete His earthly mission was His physical ascension and His glorification by the Father. This power and ability to depend on the Spirit is what He intended His Church to have throughout the Church Age (John 3:1-5; Eph 3:17-19; I Pet 1:11-12; Acts 8:5-7; II Cor. 1:21; Rom. 8:2, 13; John 5:19).

2. Jesus gave general commands relative to their mission.

   He commissioned or commanded them to:

   - Preach the Gospel in all the world and to every creature (Mark 16:15).
   - Be witnesses to Him from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8; Luke 24:47-48).
   - Bring deliverance and healing (Mark 16:17-18, See Luke 9:1-6; 10: 1-12).
   - Make disciples of all nations (Mt. 28:18).
   - Baptize those who respond (Mt. 28:19, Compare Acts 2:38-39).
   - Tend to them as a shepherd (John 21:15-20).
   - Teach them the whole counsel of God (Mt. 28:20, Compare Acts 20:27).

3. Jesus gave specific commands regarding the next few days (Acts 1:4).

   a. He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem (Luke 24:49).

      Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high." Luke 24:49

b. He instructed them to wait for the empowering of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-8).

F. The author of the Book of Acts indicated that Jesus appeared to a number of people providing many "infallible proofs" of His resurrection

We know of at least twelve appearances of Jesus during this time.

a. He appeared to Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9).
b. He appeared to women (Mt. 28:9).
c. He appeared to Peter (I Cor. 15:5).
d. He appeared to two disciples (Luke 24:15-31).
e. He appeared to ten apostles without Thomas (John 20:19, 24).
f. He appeared to the eleven with Thomas (John 20:26-28).
g. He appeared to seven disciples who were fishing (John 21:1-24).
h. He appeared to eleven apostles (Mt. 28:16-17).
i. He appeared to five hundred people (I Cor. 15:6).
j. He appeared to James (I Cor. 15:7).
k. He appeared to the eleven apostles (Acts 1:4).
l. He appeared to the eleven apostles again (Acts 1:6, implied).

Luke is the only writer who gives this information, and the Greek makes it clear that Jesus did not remain with His disciples continuously, but appeared from time to time. This is part of God's fullness of times. Jesus was very much aware of the ordained times and seasons (see vs. 7).

G. The author of the Book of Acts indicated that Jesus spoke of many things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.

1. Jesus began His ministry preaching the Kingdom (the rule of God in men's lives).
2. Jesus gave His apostles the keys of the Kingdom (Matthew 16 and 18).
3. Jesus prepared His apostles for His departure with a Kingdom message (Acts 1:3).
4. The Apostles preached the kingdom throughout the Book of Acts as they build the Church—God's instrument of the Kingdom (Acts 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31).
5. Jesus is seen in the Book of Acts as the King of the Kingdom (Acts 17:7).

III. Jesus' Final Instructions (Acts 1:4-8)

And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; 5 for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." 6 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked

Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. 8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Jesus would give His final instructions to His apostles as He was assembled together with them.

The Greek word used here to describe this meeting is used only once in the New Testament. It literally means "to have salt together." The Phillip's Translation states, "while He was at a common meal with His disciples."

A. In this setting Jesus commanded them.

This Greek verb occurs three times in the Book of Acts relative to the Lord making commands and, therefore, expresses the Lord's threefold charge to His people.

1. He charged people to repent of sin (Acts 17:30).

   Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent…

2. He charged His followers to wait for the Spirit (Acts 1:4).

3. He charged His followers to preach the Gospel (Acts 10:42).

   And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead.

B. In this setting Jesus commanded them to wait. Why wait?

1. They were to remain in Jerusalem because it was to be from Jerusalem that the word of the Lord would go forth (Is. 2:3).

   Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

   Jerusalem was extremely important as the center of the Jewish religious world.

   a. This city was captured from the Jebusites about 1,000 B.C. by David.
   b. It was made the capital of the Hebrew monarchy.
   c. It became the Holy City when Solomon's Temple was built there.
   d. It was the scene of all the writing prophets except Amos and Hosea.

e. It remained the capital of Judah after the split.

f. It fell to the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

g. It was rebuilt after the exile by Nehemiah about the mid-fifth century B.C.

h. It was destroyed by Titus, the Roman general, in 70 A.D.

i. According to the Gospels, Jesus visited the city seven times:

- At the presentation (Luke 2:22-39)
- At the Passover when he was 12 years old (Luke 2:41-50)
- At the Passover near the beginning of His ministry (John 2:13-22)
- At the unnamed feast (John 7:1-8:59, most likely the Feast of Tabernacles).
- At dedication (John 9:1-10:39)
- At another visit to the Temple (Mark 11:11)
- At His final visit at Passover (John 13:1; Mark 11:27f)

j. The first Christian Church was founded there.

k. It was the scene of the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 7:54-60).

l. It was the scene of the martyrdom of James (Acts 12:1-2).

m. An important Church council was convened there (Acts 15).

n. Paul made five visits (that we know about) to the city after his conversion.

- To visit Peter (Gal 1:18; Acts 9:26-30)
- To give famine relief (Gal 2:1; Acts 11:27-30)
- To attend the council (Acts 15:1-35)
- At the close of his second missionary journey (18:22)
- At the close of the third journey to carry the offering he had gathered among the Gentiles (Acts 21:17)

2. They were to wait because there was a "fullness of time" in God's timetable that needed to occur (Acts 2:1; Gal. 4:4).

3. They were to wait until the promise of the Father (i.e. the baptism of the Spirit) became part of their experience. The command to preach is not enough; we must also be equipped or empowered by the Holy Spirit to do so.

4. They were to wait until Jesus ascended to the Father, which was a prerequisite to the Holy Spirit's outpouring (Acts 2:33).

D. In this setting Jesus made reference to them receiving the Promise of the Father.

This is a reference to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit which is clarified in the next few verses.

1. The Promise of the Father, mentioned earlier by Luke in his gospel (Luke 24:49), refers to a promise made to Jesus by the Father prior to His incarnation. It would be Jesus' reward for His obedience in His redemptive work.

   Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.

2. The Promise of the Father was collected by Jesus and rewarded by the Father after the ascension of Christ (Acts 2:33).

   Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.

3. The Promise of the Father would later be poured out upon the Church by Christ as the Church entered into the fulfillment of Pentecost (see also John 14:16, 15:26, 16:7).

4. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit had been clearly promised (Mt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33).

E. In this setting Jesus made it clear that the outpouring of the Spirit would happen in "not many days."

   1. It should be noted that no specific time was given.

   2. It should be noted that ten days would actually transpire (Compare Acts 1:3-4, 2:1-4; Lev. 23:15-16).

F. In this setting the disciples asked Jesus about the restoration to the Kingdom to Israel.

   This statement reveals several things about the disciples both negative and positive.

   1. On the negative side

      a. It reveals their lack of understanding in regard to the Kingdom of God.

         The disciples, as Jews, still conceived of the Kingdom of God in terms of a material kingdom centered in Jerusalem, free from Roman domination (Mark 10:35-41).

      b. It reveals that they had no conception of the new spiritual mission to which they were called.

c. It reveals their need for the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

2. On the positive side

a. It reveals that they recognized Jesus' Lordship, addressing Him as Lord.

b. It reveals that they understood Jesus' power or ability to bring the ancient economy back into reality (compare Mt. 16:22 and Luke 24:21).

Jesus knew that their understanding would change when the Holy Spirit came upon them. In a sense, He put them off implying that this was not only not the time, but that the question was irrelevant to their present business and present work.

It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.

G. In this setting Jesus made it clear that the when the apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit they would receive power (Acts 1:8).

There are two different Greek words for power—*exousia* and *dunamis*.

1. In this case it is not *exousia*, meaning "privilege or authority" (John 1:12; Mt. 10:1). This is the authority that is ours through the new birth as we find ourself "in Christ." It is the authority of Christ that is given to His followers (Mt. 28:18).

2. In this case it is *dunamis*, meaning "power or ability" Luke 4:14). This is power or divine ability that is ours through immersion in the Holy Spirit. It is the ability of the Spirit.

H. In this setting Jesus challenged them to be witnesses.

The Greek word for "witness" is *martyr*. It includes opposition, persecution and tribulation for the name and cause of Christ. As true witnesses, they were not to testify to themselves, but to another (as Christ did in relation to the Father in John 5:30-40; 15:26-27).

They were to be witnesses in four identifiable areas:

1. Jerusalem (Acts 1:4, 8; Luke 24:47)

2. Judea (Acts 2:9, 14; 8:1; 9:31; 10:37; 11:1, 19; 15:1)

This term is used in three senses in the New Testament.

a. The district about Jerusalem originally occupied by the tribe of Judah

b. The province of Judea, embracing the districts of Samaria, Judea and Idumea

c. The whole of Palestine (most likely it is used here in this sense)

3. Samaria (Acts 8-10)

This term is also used in three senses in the Bible.

a. Originally Samaria was the name of the city founded by Omri in about 880 B.C. situated about 35 miles north of Jerusalem. It became the capital of Israel after the nation divided

b. Samaria came to be applied to the whole Northern Kingdom (Amos 3:9).

c. At the time of Jesus, the name was limited to a district, twenty miles by forty miles, lying between Galilee on the north, and Judea on the south. Here it seems to be used in this sense.

4. The Ends of the Earth (Acts 11:19, 23:11, 28:14-31)

This could mean the whole world, but an interesting use of this phrase is found in apocryphal literature in Psalms of Solomon, written about 50 B.C. In 8:16, it uses this phrase in the sense of Rome, referring to Pompey who came from Rome; it said that he came from "the end of the earth." If this is true, this goal of reaching Rome was accomplished in the book of Acts.

IV. Jesus' Ascension into Heaven (Acts 1:9-11)

Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, 11 who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

A. Jesus was taken up.

1. This is a reference to His ascension into heaven.

a. This going up was different from Old Testament translations. Here, Jesus ascended of His own power.

b. This "ascension" was the act of going back to the Father in His resurrection body.

2. He came as God in the incarnation and went back to God in the ascension.

3. This was not His first ascension (See John 20:17).

4. The Lord ascended for several purposes.

    a. To receive again the glory which He had with the Father before the world began (John 17:5)

    b. To be our intercessor and High Priest at the right hand of God (Rom. 8:34)

    c. To prepare a place for us (John 14:2-3)

    d. To rule all things on our behalf (Eph. 1:20-23)

    e. To await the preparation of His Bride—the Church

B. Jesus was received by a cloud.

What cloud? Just any cloud?

1. The "cloud" had significance in the Old Testament.

    a. The cloud led Israel out of bondage was called "the Lord" (Ex. 13:21-22).

    b. The cloud led them through the Red Sea (I Cor. 10:1-4).

    c. The glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud (Ex. 16:10).

    d. The cloud rested on Sinai and received Moses (Ex. 19:9-19; 24:15-18; 34:5-7).

    e. The cloud filled the Tabernacle (Ex. 40:34-38).

    f. The cloud filled Solomon's Temple (I Kgs. 8:10-11; II Chr. 5:13-14).

    g. The cloud departed from the Temple (Ezek. 10:1-22).

3. The "cloud" has significance in relation to Christ.

    a. He was overshadowed by a cloud on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mt. 17:5; Mark 9:1-7; Luke 9:28-36)

    b. He went up in a cloud at His ascension (Acts 1:9).

    c. He is clothed with a cloud (Rev. 10:1).

    d. He is seated upon a white cloud (Rev 14:14-16).

    e. He will come in a cloud of glory (Luke 21:17).

    f. He will also come in the clouds of glory with His saints (Mt. 26:64; Mark 14:62; I Th. 4:17).

4. The glory-cloud speaks of the presence of the Holy Spirit. He is the Cloud of God's presence who fulfills, in ministry and operation, all that the typical glory-cloud foreshadowed.

C. Jesus was taken from their sight (Acts 1:9).

This was their last glimpse of "Christ after the flesh." He ascended with His resurrection body. That body did not cease to be, but for their sakes, it vanished from sight to make way for the Body in which He would continue to do and to teach, which is His Church, the "the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Eph. 1:23).

D. The disciples looked steadfastly toward heaven as He ascended (Acts 1:10).

1. In this sense the apostles were true "witnesses" of the ascension.

   a. It occurred while they were watching.

   b. Christ did not merely slip through the crowds as He had done on previous occasions, and so was only concluded to have gone into heaven. It is expressly said that while they were looking, He was received out of sight.

2. In this sense the apostles were much like Elisha of old who watched his master go up before him (II Kgs. 2:9-14).

   And so it was, when they had crossed over, that Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?" Elisha said, "Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me." 10 So he said, "You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so." 11 Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. 12 And Elisha saw it, and he cried out, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!" So he saw him no more. And he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces. 13 He also took up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan. 14 Then he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, and said, "Where is the LORD God of Elijah?" And when he also had struck the water, it was divided this way and that; and Elisha crossed over.

   a. As such, the apostles were anxious about His departure.

   b. As such, they were waiting for his mantle to fall on them.

   c. As such, they were waiting for the double portion of the Spirit.

E. Two other mysterious men were witnesses of the ascension.

It is significant that all through the life of Jesus, there were at least two witnesses, men or angels (messengers), at the most important events.

1. At His birth there were wise men, at least two of them, possible three (Mt. 2:1-2).
2. At His temptation angels ministered unto Him (Mt 4:11).
3. At His transfiguration, Moses and Elijah appeared (Mt. 17:3-12; Luke 9:28-35).
4. At Gethsemane an angel strengthened Him (Luke 22:43).
5. At the open grave two angels were present (John 20:12).
6. At His ascension two men appeared (Acts 1:10).
7. At His second coming there will be two witnesses (Rev. 11:1-14).

F. The two witnesses carried a Second Coming message.

This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

1. This message was no doubt said to comfort the apostles. The same friend who had been so faithful to them would return.

2. This message was said, no doubt, in reference to the Second Coming of Christ. When Christ returns, it will be the same Jesus, not another Jesus (II Cor. 11:1-4).

   The same:

   a. Virgin born
   b. Sinless
   c. Spotless
   d. Crucified
   e. Resurrected
   f. Ascended
   g. Glorified . . . Son of God!

3. This message was also an affirmation of Jesus' immutability. He is the same yesterday, today and forever.

4. This message was very specific about how Jesus would return again. He would return "in like manner" as He went into heaven.

   This tells us several about the second coming of Christ:

   a. He will come literally, or bodily.
   b. He will come personally.
   c. He will come visibly.

d. He will come in the clouds.

e. He will come gloriously.

f. He went as the God-man and He will return as the God-man.

See: I Thessalonians 4:15-17; Matthew 26:64; Revelation 10:1

V. The Upper Room Prayer Meeting (Acts 1:10-14).

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey. 13 And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James. 14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

How did the apostles respond to Jesus' command to wait?

A. They went to Jerusalem (even though there may have been some danger involved).

1. They went in immediate obedience to Christ's request (Acts 1:4)

2. They went in a spirit of joy and rejoicing (Luke 24:52)

And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy…

B. They gathered together in the upper room instead of waiting in their own homes (Mt. 18:20).

For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.

1. This may have been the same "large upper room" in which Jesus and His disciples ate the Last Supper (Luke 22:12).

2. Some think that this could have been the house of Mary the mother of Mark, in which the early Christians of Jerusalem met (Acts 12:12). However, the evidence is not positive.

C. They were gathered in one accord.

This gathering was composed of the eleven apostles, Jesus' natural family and many others, making up about 120 people (Acts 1:14-15).

1. The word "one accord" is a compound Greek word literally meaning, "with one heart and mind," indicating perfect unanimity of feeling and desire and purpose. There were no divisions, no divided interests and no personal ambitions.

2. This word occurs only once outside of the Book of Acts (Rom. 15:6), but it is found often in Acts.

    a. With one accord in supplication (Acts 1:14)

    b. With one accord in expectation (Acts 2:1)

    c. With one accord in consecration (Acts 4:24)

    d. With one accord in separation (Acts 5:12)

    e. With one accord in cooperation (Acts 15:25)

    See also: Acts 2:46; 7:57; 8:6; 12:20; 18:12; 19:29

3. This unity was one of the secrets of power and blessing in the Book of Acts (Ps. 133).

4. This type of atmosphere is necessary for any outpouring of the fire and blessing of God (II Chr. 5:11-14).

5. Unity is a tremendously powerful force (Mt. 18:15-20; Dt. 32:30; Eccl. 4:9-12).

6. Unity will be a witness to the world (John 17:20-24).

D. They waited on the Lord in prayer and supplication.

1. Supplication means humble (self abasement) and earnest prayer in worship. It means to kneel down, to entreat, to implore and to call upon humbly.

2. Prayer here means to petition.

3. This is how they tarried in persistent, earnest prayer (Luke 24:49; Acts 2:42, 6:4; Rom. 12:12; Col. 4:2).

    a. They did not take the promise of Jesus for granted. They asked specifically for what Jesus promised. There was no presumption on their part.

    b. They understood their personal responsibility to enter into the promise of God.

    c. They fulfilled the conditions for answered prayer.

        i. Prayer or Asking. You have not because you ask not (Jam. 4:2). Ask for rain in the time of latter rain (Zech. 10:1).

ii. Unanimity (Mt. 18:15-20)

iii. Perseverance (Luke 11:5-10)

VI. The Selection of Matthias to Replace Judas (Acts 1:15-26)

And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said, 16 "Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; 17 for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry." 18 (Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out. 19 And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own language, Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood.) 20 "For it is written in the Book of Psalms: 'Let his dwelling place be desolate, and let no one live in it'; and, 'Let another take his office.' 21 Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection." 23 And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. 24 And they prayed and said, "You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen 25 to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place." 26 And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

A. The process for the replacement of Judas was initiated by Peter (Acts 1:15).

As was customary, Peter assumed the role of spokesman for the apostles. He stood up in the midst of the believers and related the facts of Judas' treachery and terrible end (could it be that he had been recently found?).

B. This process was important for several reasons.

1. The Scriptures needed to be fulfilled (See Ps. 41:9; 69:25; 109:8).

Judas' office needed to be filled.

The Greek word used here for "office" is *episkopera* which literally means his "overseership." The apostles felt on the basis of scriptural authority, that Judas' position should be replaced because of his apostasy, not because of his death. They did not feel that later apostles who died or were martyred needed the same replacement (see Acts 12 in regard to James).

2. The number twelve was important as it related to the apostles.

There is no question that the Twelve Apostles were special in their day and they have been given a special place in the eternal plan of God. Because of their unique relationship to twelve thrones and twelve foundation stones, the number twelve was important.

The Twelve Apostles are eternally unique for the following reasons:

a. The Twelve Apostles have a unique title.

These twelve men are the only ones referred to as "Apostles of the Lamb" in the Scripture (Rev. 21:14). The word "apostle" is very common in the New Testament, but this special title is reserved for only the Twelve.

b. The Twelve Apostles have a unique function.

These twelve men are one day going to be involved with Jesus in judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Mt.19:28).

c. The Twelve Apostles will have unique placement.

These twelve men will find a unique placement in the twelve foundations of the Eternal City (Rev. 21:14). This position is theirs most likely because their ministry was foundational to the establishing of not just the first local church, but the universal or mystical church, which is called the City of the Living God (Heb. 12:22).

C. This process was handled with both natural and Holy Spirit direction.

1. The qualifications were established for this unique role.

This is a unique set of qualifications for a unique group of leaders (see Rev. 21:14; Eph. 2:19-22).

a. The replacement for Judas needed to be a companion of Jesus and the apostles from the beginning of Jesus' ministry up to His ascension (Acts 1:22).

Jesus imparted much to this select group when He chose "to be with Him" (Mark 3:14). Before we can go forth in the power of the Spirit, we must have been "with Him"

b. The replacement for Judas needed to be a witness of the resurrection (Acts 1:22).

The seventy would be the most likely group from which to draw.

Some use these qualifications as proof that there are no more apostles today since no one can possibly meet these criteria. However, if that were true, then Timothy, Paul,

Apollos and others would be eliminated also. It is true that the Twelve Apostles of the Lamb is a closed group, but when Jesus ascended on high He inaugurated another level of apostolic ministry which He gave to us for our work today (Eph. 4:7-11).

2. The candidates were narrowed to two individuals based on a decision by the Twelve (Acts 1:23).

3. The final choice was made by prayer and the activity of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:24-26).

   a. They prayed.

      This is the first prayer specifically cited in which the disciples address their risen Lord. They are going to place the final decision into the hands of the Lord who personally chose the other eleven apostles. (Compare Acts 1:2 and Acts 1:24, same Greek word)

   b. They cast lots.

      It is to be remembered that the Holy Spirit had not yet been outpoured. The disciples were still in the transition period emerging from the Old Covenant in the New Covenant era. The choice of Matthias was by lot and of the Lord. The apostles had a precedent for the use of the lot.

      - In choosing the scapegoat (Lev. 16:7-10)

      - Of assigning the inheritance to the twelve tribes (Num. 34:13; Josh 14:2)

      - See also Proverbs 16:33, Numbers 26:55-56 and Jonah 1:3-7.

        The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.
        Proverbs 16:33

      According to ancient custom, names were written on paper or stones and then placed in the lap or an urn, which was shaken to and fro, and the first name cast out of the lap or urn was recognized as the choice of the Lord.

      This is the last time in the scripture that decisions were to be made this way.

4. The process was ultimately effective for several reasons.

   a. It was done in an atmosphere of prayer.

   b. It was done in an atmosphere of unity.

   c. It was done at the prompting of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

   d. It was done in a manner befitting the time zone in which they lived.

D. This process was accepted by all and Mathias was numbered with the Twelve.

Notice the later reference to "The Twelve."

1. The Twelve in the Book of Acts (Acts 2:14; 6:2)

2. The Twelve acknowledged by Paul (I Cor. 15:3)

V. How are the two accounts of Judas's death to be reconciled?

There is an apparent contradiction between the account found in Matthew and the one found in Acts:

Matthew 27:3-10	Acts 1:18-19
3 Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 4 saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." And they said, "What is that to us? You see to it!" 5 Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself. 6 But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood." 7 And they consulted together and bought with them the potter's field to bury strangers in. 8 Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. 9 Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced, 10 and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me."	18 (Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out. 19 And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own language, Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood.)

A. When you study these two accounts there seem to be some conflicting issues.

For instance:

1. Who bought the field? Judas or the chief priests?

2. How did Judas die? By hanging or by falling?

3. Why was the place called a field of blood? Because it was purchased with blood money or because it was the scene of a bloody death?

B. When you study these two accounts you realize that there are pairs of things that have to be reconciled.

1. There were two transactions.

a. In Matthew's account the chief priests "bought" a field. (Mt. 27:7).

The Greek word used to describe this purchase is *agarazo* which literally means "to buy on the open market."

b. In the Acts' account Judas "purchased" a field (Acts 1:18).

The Greek word used to describe this purchase is *ktaomai* which literally means "to get, acquire, or procure a thing for one's self."

2. There were two purchases.

a. In Matthew's account the field was a vacant lot that was used for clay for pottery (Mt. 27:7).

The Greek word for field is *agros* and literally means "a piece of land, a bit of tillage, or a farm."

b. In the Acts' account the field was a piece of land that Judas bought for himself (Acts 1:18).

The Greek word for field is *chorion* and literally means "a parcel of ground, a farm or estate" (see Acts 4:34; 5:3, 8; 28:7).

3. There were two sums of money that came from two sources.

a. In Matthew's account the land was purchased with thirty pieces of silver that was given to Judas as "the price of blood" or the "value of Him who was priced" (Mt. 27:3, 6, 9).

b. In the Acts' account the land was purchased with the "wages of iniquity" or the "reward of unrighteousness" (Acts 1:18). This was not the same as the thirty pieces of silver that the chief priests used to buy their field, but it was the "ill-gotten gain" that Judas obtained from stealing from the bag (John 12:4-6).

But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given

to the poor?" This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it.

4. There were two purchase dates.

   a. In Matthew's account the field was purchased after the betrayal of Jesus (Mt. 27:7).

   b. In the Acts' account the field was purchased much earlier during the 3½ years of ministry with Jesus and the other apostles (Acts 1:18). It was most likely a farmstead that Judas' purchased on which he would some day live.

5. There were two reasons for calling the field a "field of blood."

   a. In Matthew's account it was called the field of blood because "blood money" or betrayal money was used to purchase the field (Mt. 27:8).

   b. In the Acts' account it was called the field of blood because of the defilement caused to the land by the shedding of Judas' own blood (Acts 1:19).

C. When you study these two accounts you realize that the manner in which Judas died is consistent.

Judas hanged himself, not in the chief priest's field, but in his own field. The priest's field had not as yet been purchased. His body was evidently not discovered for a long time being in some quiet, out-of-the-way place. Because this was Judas' secret place, the corpse hung for quite some time before it was discovered. Due to the decomposition of his body and from its own weight the body fell rupturing the walls of the stomach with the result described here by Peter.

D. When you study these two accounts with the above understanding they can be easily woven together.

Acts' Account	**Matthew's Account**
Judas purchased a farmstead.	
Judas used money that he stole.	
	Judas betrayed Jesus for money.
	Judas had remorse.
	Judas returned the blood money.
	Judas went and hanged himself on his property.
Judas fell headlong.	
Judas burst open	
Judas was finally discovered.	
	The priests bought a field with the blood money.

Lesson 7-8
Chapter 2

I. General Outline of Chapter 2

A. The Holy Spirit Descended (Acts 2:1-4)

B. The Crowd Responded (Acts 2:5-13)

C. Peter Preached to the Crowd (Acts 2:14-39)

D. The First Local Church Established (Acts 2:40-47)

II. The Holy Spirit Descended (Acts 2:1-4)

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

A. The Holy Spirit descended according to God's timetable.

1. It was on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1).

   Pentecost is the Greek name for a Jewish feast. It is a transliterated word meaning "fiftieth." The Hebrew "Feast of Weeks" or "Day of the First Fruits" as it was called, came seven weeks after Passover. It was one of the three great annual festivals held in Jerusalem, the other two being Passover and Tabernacles. All males, no matter where in the world they lived, were required by law to attend these feasts (Ex. 34:22-23). Consequently, the city of Jerusalem was filled with devout Jews on this day of Pentecost. It was Sunday, fifty days (counted inclusively) after the day of Passover.

   In the days of the apostles it was the most numerously attended of all the Jewish feasts since the dangers of travel (especially by sea) during the early spring and late autumn prevented many from coming to either the Passover or the Feast of Tabernacles.

2. It was the actual fulfillment of Pentecost (Acts 2:1). Verse one could also be translated, "When the Day of Pentecost was being fulfilled…"

   a. This Pentecost was a manifestation of God's timetable or God's fullness of time.

      Just as there had been a fullness of time for the birth of Christ (Gal 4:6) and a fullness of time for the death of Christ (John 7:6-8), there was now a fullness of time for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

b. This Pentecost would be different from all other Pentecost's just as the previous Passover had been different from all other Passovers.

   This Pentecost would be the reality to which all of the Old Testament shadows pointed. This was the fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophecies.

3. It was foreshadowed by the first Pentecost or fiftieth day experience that took place at Sinai.

   In order to better understand what was happening here, it is good to see what happened on the first Pentecost at Sinai. It should be noted that this event was not yet called "Pentecost" because there had been no giving of the law as yet. But it is significant that it did occur 50 days after the first Passover.

   a. The initial giving of the law occurred on the 50th day from the original Passover.

      The children of Israel left Egypt on the 15th day of the first month. There were 15 days left in the month. When you add another 30 days for the second month the total comes to 45 days from Passover. They arrived at Sinai on the first day of the third month making the total 46 days (Ex. 19:1). Moses waited for three days for the people to be sanctified bringing the total to 49 days (Ex. 19:10-11). On the 50th day, God began to write (Ex. 20:1).

   b. The Law was given on tables of stone (Ex. 31:18). While in the New Covenant the law is written on the tables of our heart (Rom. 2:15; II Cor. 3:3).

   .

      You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart. II Corinthians 3:2-3

   c. There were supernatural manifestations of God's power including thunder, lightning, thick clouds, fire, wind storm, smoke and the sound of a trumpet (Ex. 19:16-19; Heb. 12:18-19).

      Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. Exodus 19:16-19

d. The Law was written by the finger of God (Ex. 31:18). In the New Testament Jesus indentified the finger of God as the Spirit of God (Compare Mt. 12:28 and Luke 11:20).

And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God. Exodus 31:18

e. Three thousand were slain as a result of the disobedience of the people when the law was being given (Ex. 32:28). In the New Covenant three thousand were given new life by the obedience of faith (Acts 2:41).

So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day. Exodus 32:28

4. It was an appropriate day in every respect.

a. As the day when a cosmopolitan assembly was gathered in Jerusalem, it provided a tremendous opportunity for the first great dissemination of the Gospel.

b. As the day of the first fruits of the grain harvest, it was a suitable one for the conversion of the three thousand, the first fruits of a greater harvest yet to be gathered in.

c. As the day which spoke of the going forth of the great Law from Sinai, it was a fitting one for the first great going forth of the Gospel from Jerusalem (Is. 2:2-3).

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

B. The Holy Spirit descended on those who were positioned to receive.

1. They were all assembled together in one place.

It is most likely that this was now an apartment in the Temple and not the upper room where they had previously gathered, for the following reasons:

The circumstances of preaching to thousands would not lend itself to this taking place in a private residence. Whereas, all the twelve needed to do in the temple apartment, which faced the temple area, was to turn to the patio side of the

apartment, and there would be the very large temple area which would easily accommodate such a crowd.

Since this was a great feast day for the Jews and the temple was the headquarters for the celebration it would not seem logical that the apostles would be in their homes on such an occasion.

Luke says "They were continually in the temple blessing God!" (Luke 24:53). What more appropriate time to be in the temple worshipping God than upon this great day of the Feast of Firstfruits
.
The group either consisted of the 120 of Acts 1:15 or the eleven plus Matthias from Acts1:26. It was most likely the larger group.

a. There is something about the corporate gathering of God's people that sets a stage for God to move.

b. They experienced many things together in this chapter.

- They were all assembled (v. 1).
- They were all filled (v. 4).
- They all preached (v. 7, 17).
- They were all witnesses (v. 32).
- They all shared their possessions (v. 44).

2. They were in unity of mind and purpose.

C. The Holy Spirit descended accompanied by supernatural signs.

Notice how verse 2 begins, "And suddenly…"

Even though they were waiting for it and expecting it, it came suddenly. This is often the way God works. It seems like the promises are delayed in being fulfilled. Then, all of a sudden, God begins to move and we find it difficult to keep up with Him.

1. There was a supernatural sound from heaven like a rushing mighty wind (Acts 2:2).

God announced His feast with a supernatural sound. When He comes again, the trumpet sound will precede Him.

a. There was no actual wind on this occasion, only the sound of a rushing, mighty wind.

The Greek words used for this phrase include the following:

- *Phromenes*, which means driving or rushing (See Acts 27:15; II Pet. 1:21).

…knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were ***moved by*** *the Holy Spirit.* II Peter 1:20-21

- *Pnon,* which mean breath, wind, a blowing or a blast of air.

- *Biaios*, which means violent.

  Literally, "a sound as of a mighty blast of air driven along."

b. Wind is one of the biblical symbols of the Holy Spirit (Ezek. 37:9-14; John 3:8).

c. In the Old Testament, the mighty power of God is also denoted by the violence of a mighty tempest or wind (I Kgs. 19:11; Ps. 18:10; 104:3).

Note that they were sitting when all of this happened. God is not limited. He can even move while we are sitting. I can just picture the disciples standing and singing and kneeling and praying, doing everything they can to "bring the Holy Spirit down." Finally, when they are exhausted of all their efforts, they "sit down" and then the Holy Spirit comes.

2. There appeared a supernatural manifestation of fire.

   It is worthy of note that this is something that they both heard and saw, making them true witnesses (I John 1:3).

   a. Fire has always been associated with God (Gen. 15:17; Ezek. 1:4; Ps. 18:12-14).

      Fire came down on the Tabernacle of Moses and the Temple of Solomon and now it comes on the Church. The appearance of fire or flame has always been regarded as a most striking emblems of deity. It is a symbol of God's holiness, purifying, cleansing and warming His people. Other places where God is associated with fire include:

      - The cherubim and flaming sword kept the gate to Eden (Gen. 3:24).

      - Moses stood before the burning bush from which God spoke (Ex. 3:3).

      - God descended on Mt. Sinai in the midst of thunder, lightning and fire (Ex. 10:16-20).

      - God is called a consuming fire (Deut. 4:24; Heb. 12:29).

      - God manifest Himself to the children of Israel as a pillar of fire (Num. 14:14).

b. This fire is the same holy fire that fell at the dedication of two Old Testament sanctuaries (See: Lev. 9:23-24; II Chr. 7:1-3).

The fire speaks to me of the Shekinah glory of God or that supernatural manifestation of God's presence which now filled the New Testament sanctuary on its day of dedication even as it had filled all of the other typical sanctuaries in days past.

And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of meeting, and came out and blessed the people. Then the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people, and fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces. Leviticus 9:23-24

When Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. And the priests could not enter the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD's house. When all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD on the temple, they bowed their faces to the ground on the pavement, and worshiped and praised the LORD, saying: "For He is good, for His mercy endures forever." II Chronicles 7:1-3

c. This fire seems to have first appeared as a large mass (Acts 2:3).

The phrase translated "divided tongues" literally means "distributing tongues."

Other translations include:

Tongues parting asunder… --ASV

Tongues of what appeared to be flame, separating, so that one settled on each of them. –TCNT

Tongues like flames that were distributed and that settled on each one of them. –Berkley

These tongues being distributed among them, and one of these tongues took up a position upon each of them. –Wuest

Literally the phrase would be translated, "Tongues like as of fire, distributing themselves."

The sense of this expression implies that from one flame there was a distributing of individual flames upon each one.

This is a graphic picture of what was taking place in the spirit realm. Jesus had ascended on high and now He was gifting His spiritual body with elements of His ministry (Eph. 4:7-16; I Cor. 12:11).

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men"…11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers…

Ephesians 4:7-8, 11

d. The fire distributed itself over each of them in the form of a "tongue of fire."

Anything long, narrow, and tending to a point was called a tongue in the Hebrew and Greek. The word here means, therefore, slender and pointed appearances of flame.

3. There was a supernatural impartation of speech—speaking with unknown languages.

Note the progression in the Bible relative to languages:

a. The Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-10)

Here we have the origin of diverse tongues. The change in languages here was a sign of God's judgment on mankind for disobedience and idolatry.

b. Pentecost (Acts 2:4)

Here the effects of Babel are reversed. God gave the sign of tongues as a sign of grace. It came as a result of obedience and it came as a blessing.

c. Heaven (Rev. 5:9-10; 7:9)

Every kindred, nation, tribe and tongue will be united in praise to the Lamb.

III. The Crowd Responded (Acts 2:5-13)

And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. 6 And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. 7 Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? 9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabs--we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God." 12 So they were

all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could this mean?" 13 Others mocking said, "They are full of new wine."

A. The crowd consisted of devout Jews representing many nations of the world (Acts 2:9-11).

1. These were devout people (Acts 2:5).

   That is, they were people who were still very conscientious about their celebration of the God ordained feasts.

   The term is applied to those who are cautious about offending God and who are careful to observe His commandments. It is a general expression to denote pious or religious men (Acts 8:2; Luke 2:25). The English word "devout" means "yielding a solemn reverential attention to God in religious exercises, particularly in prayer; pious, sincere, solemn" (Webster).

   It is interesting that it would be those who did not slack off during the silent years or the dry times that would be the first to receive Pentecost.

2. Most of these were Jews who had been born in other nations (Acts 2:5). Notice the nations that were represented:

   a. Parthians - Men of Jewish descent or religion who had lived, or were living in Parthia, a mountainous land southwest of the Caspian Sea (modern Iran). It was a part of the Persian Empire and later became an independent empire between the Euphrates and Indus Rivers.

   b. Medes - Men of Jewish descent or religion, who had lived or were living in Media, the land that was situated north of Parthia and south of the Caspian Sea. It was about the size of Spain and was one of the richest parts of Asia.

   c. Elamites - Men of Jewish descent or religion who had lived or were living in Elam, a land lying east of Babylonia and southwest of Media, whose capital was Susa. It was the eastern part of Iraq. This nation was descended from Elam, the son of Shem (Gen. 10:22).

   d. Mesopotamians - Men of Jewish descent or religion who had lived or were living in Mesopotamia, the territory lying between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, the modern eastern Syria and northern Iraq.

   e. Judeans - Men of Jewish descent or religion who had lived or were living in Judea. In this case it would very likely include all of Palestine (see 1:24).

   f. Cappadocians - Men of Jewish descent or religion who had lived or were living in Cappadocia, the Roman province, created in 17 A.D., extending from Lake

Tatta on the west to the Euphrates on the east, and from the Taurus mountains on the south to Pontus on the north. It was the eastern part of modern Turkey.

g. Pontusians - Men of Jewish descent or religion who had lived or were living in Pontus, the territory lying east of the Halys River along the southern shore of the Black Sea.

h. Asians - Men of Jewish descent or religion who had lived or were living in the Roman province in western Asia comprising Mysia, Lydia, Caria and the greater portion of Phrygia.

i. Phrygians - Men of Jewish descent or religion who had lived or were living in Phrygia which originally consisted of the whole central part of Asia Minor.

j. Pamphylians - Men of Jewish descent or religion who had lived or were living in Pamphylia, also part of Asia Minor.

k. Egyptians - Men of Jewish descent or religion who had lived or were living in Egypt.

l. Libyans - Men of Jewish descent or religion who had lived or were living in Libya or that part of northern Africa which lies between the province of Africa on the west, and Egypt on the east, stretching approximately six hundred miles along the southern Mediterranean coast (Cyrene was a city in the western portion of the province).

m. Sojourning Romans - Although most of the time the term "Romans" is used in the Book of Acts to mean Roman citizens, here it means Jews of Rome.

n. Cretans - Men of Jewish descent or religion who had lived or were living on the island of Crete which was situated sixty miles south of Greece.

o. Arabians - Men of Jewish descent or religion who had lived or were living in Arabia, the area south of the Dead Sea.

When you plot all of these nations on a world map you see how extensive this first encounter with the Gospel would be in relation to the world.

B. The crowd was confused by what they heard (Acts 2:6).

They were confounded, amazed or bewildered. This is the exact word used in the Septuagint regarding the tower of Babel experience when God confounded or confused the language of mankind (Gen. 11:9).

Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

Why were they confused?

1. They were confused because of an unusual sound.

    a. This sound was different than the sound in the upper room (the sound of wind).

    The word that is used for "sound" here is a different word in the Greek (*phone*) than the word in verse two and is usually rendered, "voice or utterance." It occurs over 140 times in the New Testament and is translated "voice" in all but seven instances. The most natural interpretation is that the sound that attracted the attention of the multitudes was a miraculous voice or utterance.

    b. This sound was the "speaking with other tongues" by the apostles. In this case it appears to have been speaking in languages that were known to the world but unknown to the speakers (I Cor. 13:1).

    Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

        i. This speaking was not the same as Peter's preached message which was most likely in the language common to all.

        ii. This speaking was summarized as "speaking…the wonderful works of God" (Acts 2:11).

2. They were confused because they heard them not in the Hebrew or Aramaic language, but in the languages of their birth nations (Acts 2:6).

    a. This was most likely the case of various disciples speaking in various languages, each person speaking one.

    b. The word "language" used here corresponds to our word "dialect" and is used only in the Book of Acts (1:19, 2:8; 21:40; 22:2; 26:14).

3. They were confused because those doing the speaking were Galileans.

    It was remarkable that they should speak in this manner because:

    a. Galileans were proverbially ignorant, rude and uncivilized (John 1:46). The term "Galilean" was used as an expression of deepest contempt and reproach (Mark 14:70; John 7:52).

    And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"
    John 1:46

They answered and said to him, "Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee." John 7:52

b. Galileans were regarded as outlandish people, unacquainted with other nations and languages. Their dialect was considered barbarous and corrupt. The people were amazed that they could address them in the refined language of other people (Mt. 26:73).

And a little later those who stood by came up and said to Peter, "Surely you also are one of them, for your speech betrays you."

C. The members of the crowd reacted in different ways (Acts 2:12-13).

All of us react to new things. However, there are good reactions and bad reactions.

1. Some were amazed (*existami*). This word means "to throw out of position, to throw into wonderment, astonish or astound."

2. Some were perplexed (*diaporeo*). This word means "to be entirely at a loss." They had no context for what was happening. They could not understand or explain what was going on. They could not explain what they were seeing rationally.

3. Some mocked them (*xieuazontes*). This word means "to deride or jeer at". This is a most dangerous reaction to the moving of the Holy Spirit. This particular word occurs but one other time in the New Testament. It describes how the Athenians reacted when Paul spoke of the resurrection of the dead (Acts 17:32). God will treat men as they treat Him (Ps. 18:26; see also Pro. 1:24-26).

   In the Book of Acts we see a progression of opposition against the apostles:

   a. From mocking
   b. To questioning (4:7)
   c. To threatening (4:17)
   d. To imprisonment (5:18)
   e. To blows (5:40)
   f. To murder (7:58)

4. Some felt that they were drunk with wine (Acts 2:13).

   When the Holy Spirit comes upon people He causes many of the effects of wine (without producing a hangover or the regret):

   a. Refreshes (Tit. 3:5)
   b. Stimulates (II Pet. 1:21)
   c. Produces joy (Rom. 14:17; I Th. 1:6)
   d. Induces singing (Eph. 4:18-19)
   e. Helps to forget trouble (Pro. 31:6)
   f. Produces unusual actions (Acts 2:1-2)

g. Cleanses and heals (Luke 10:34)
h. Induces visions (Acts 2:17)
i. Produces boldness (Acts 4:31)

Peter's response was, "These are not drunk as you suppose…" (Acts 2:15).

IV. Peter Preached to the Crowd (Acts 2:14-41)

Peter, who seems to have risen to the place of spokesman for the Twelve, rose to the occasion.

Notice the change in Peter from his previous denial. The baptism of the Spirit seems to have had a powerful affect on all of the disciples.

A. Peter assured the people that the state of the disciples is not due to wine.

Peter answers the charge of drunkenness and argues that it was only the third hour (9:00 a.m.). This charge of drunkenness was not reasonable because:

1. It was the hour of morning worship, and thus highly improbable that they would be intoxicated by that time.

2. It was unusual even for drunkards to get drunk in the daytime (I Th. 5:7).

3. It was a regular practice with the Jews not to eat or drink anything until after the third hour of the day (prayer time), especially on the Sabbath or feast days.

B. Peter based their new experience with the Holy Spirit and his message on the word (Acts 2:16-21).

Peter drew upon a prophecy from the Book of Joel. What happened here was not a literal fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. The fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel began with Peter and the Apostles but it continues throughout the last days, culminating in the signs in the heavens prior to the Second Coming of Christ.

C. Peter's message focused on Jesus (Acts 2:22-26).

The heart of the message involved who Jesus was. Peter spoke of:

1. His sinlessness (v. 22).
2. His life and ministry (v. 22).
3. His crucifixion (v. 23).
4. His resurrection (v. 24-25).
5. His exaltation (v. 33).
6. His ascension (v. 34).
7. His enthronement (vs. 34-35).

8. His glorification (v. 34-36).

Peter's message reflected a great deal of understanding about Christ's death, burial, resurrection and exaltation. It probably reflects much of what Jesus shared with them during the 40 days. It also reflects that Peter was under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and was receiving revelation while he was speaking. This is truly "prophetic preaching."

D. Peter explained what was happening in the heavenly realm (Acts 2:33-36).

Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: "The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'" Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.

1. Jesus was exalted at the right hand of God.

2. Jesus received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father.

3. Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit on the waiting disciples.

4. God established Jesus as both Lord and Christ.

   The two titles, Lord and Christ, contain, in embryo, much of what the Christian church came to understand of the exalted nature of Jesus. The title "Lord" was an accepted title for God in the Old Testament times, and the term "Christ" was the equivalent of Messiah or Anointed One, a title for the widely expected leader who was to come for the deliverance of Israel. This revelation forms the basis for Jesus' triune name—Lord Jesus Christ.

E. Peter concluded his message with a response from the people (Acts 2:37-40).

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation."

1. The message was for "whosoever" (Acts 2:21, 39).

2. The message produced the conviction of sin.

   The people were "cut to the heart." The Holy Spirit worked with the Word to bring conviction of sin (John 16:8-9). This Greek word is used only here and means

literally, "to be sore pricked as by a sharp point." It points to the emotion of pain in their hearts that was caused by Peter's words.

3. The message evoked the question, "What shall we do?"

   Their conviction led to the question, "What shall we do?' True conviction will always lead to this question.

   Note the Philippian jailor later on in Paul's ministry (Acts 16:30).

   And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

4. The message concluded with specific instructions.

   These devout people were instructed by Peter to…

   a. Repent (Acts 3:19; 5:31; 8:22; 11:18; 13:24; 17:30; 19:4; 20:21; 26:20)

   b. Be baptized (Acts 8:16; 19:4-5)

   c. Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39; Acts 5:32)

   d. Be saved from this perverse generation (literally, "separate yourselves from").

      And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." Acts 2:40

      Peter had much to say about this subject. It had to do with the ongoing nature of their response. The word perverse means "crooked, bent, curved, winding, twisted, or warped." It is used to apply to anything that will not go toward, that is, straight onward, but will go now on this side and then on that side, making a crooked path.

      i. It is used of a horse that will not follow the leading of the driver, but rebels by pushing in this direction and that, instead of the way it is supposed to go.

      ii. It is used to describe the movement of a serpent who crawls along the ground, never in a straight line, but always from this side to that side.

      iii. It is used of someone who does not know the correct path, but goes to the left hand and to the right hand, never arriving to his proper destination.

      iv. It is used of a drunkard who reels and staggers from one side to another instead of going forward.

      This is the kind of generation in which we are living today (Pro. 30:11-14).

F. Peter witnessed the miracle conversion of 3000 people (Acts 2:41).

Peter used the keys of the Kingdom to open the door of faith to the Jews (Gal. 2:7-8). This is the sheaf of firstfruits that was gathered in and presented to the Lord on this great day of the firstfruits (Lev. 23:10-17).

V. The First Local Church is Established (Acts 2:42-47)

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. 44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. 46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

This very first harvest tells us a great deal about the dynamics of the Early Church.

A. The ingredients of the first church are a model for us today. Notice the twenty ingredients of a successful church right here from the very beginning.

1. Repentance and Faith
2. Water Baptism
3. Baptism of the Holy Spirit
4. Separation or Holiness of Life
5. Prayer
6. Teaching
7. Fellowship
8. Breaking of Bread
9. Fear of God
10. Signs and Wonders
11. Practical Love
12. Generosity
13. Unity
14. Corporate Gatherings
15. House to House Gatherings
16. Joy
17. Simplicity of Heart
18. Praise toward God
19. Favor of the People
20. Evangelism

This is what an "Acts 2 Church" looks like. Could this be how the New Testament Church "delivered itself" from their perverted generation?

B. The steadfastness and commitment of the first church is evident.

1. They continued steadfastly (Acts 2:4; see Acts 1:14). The verbs in this passage indicate continuous, ongoing, dedicated activity in these areas.

2. They continued daily (Acts 2:46),

   The verb used in both of these passages (*proskartereo)* means "to be earnest toward, to persevere, to be constantly diligent and to adhere closely to."

   a. It ties into the verbs that are used in most of the examples given. The verbs are used in the imperfect tense which indicates "ongoing, continuous action."

   b. The real force of these verbs is preserved by reading "kept" with each of the verbs:

      i. The disciples kept being filled with awe.
      ii. They kept sharing everything in common.
      iii. They kept selling their goods when individual needs arose.
      iv. And the Lord kept on adding to them.

3. This was not "on again, off again" Christianity. This was the persistent lifestyle of the Early Church.

C. The lifestyle of the early believers is challenging.

1. They maintained a love for teaching and preaching—the apostles doctrine (Acts 2:42; I Tim. 1:10, 4:1, 6, 13, 16; Heb. 13:9).

2. They maintained fellowship with one another (Acts 2:42). This involves focusing on relationships and sharing our lives regularly with one another (I Cor. 1:9; Eph. 3:9, 5:11; Phil. 3:10; I John 1:3, 6-7).

3. They maintained the breaking of bread together (Acts 2:42). This may refer to the celebration of the Table of the Lord (I Cor. 10:16; Luke 24:35; Acts 10:7, 11) or eating bread from house to house in hospitality (Acts 2:46).

4. They maintained a corporate expression of prayer together (Acts 2:42).

5. They maintained a healthy fear of the Lord and His God ordained leaders (Acts 2:43; 5:5, 11; 19:17).

6. They maintained a lifestyle of generosity and practical expressions of love (not commanded, but a natural response).

   a. They had all things in common.

   b. They sold possessions and goods to be able to help others in need.

7. They maintained a spirit of rejoicing and worship (Acts 2:46-47).

D. The Lord worked with them to add people to the church (Acts 2:47).

VI. Question for Discussion

When it says that they had all things in common, was this a Christian form of Communism?

A. The usual interpretation

The usual interpretation is to regard these words and the whole description, in 2:44-46 and again in 4:32-37, as of that of a communistic society in which all the members sold their possessions, pooled the proceeds, and received their sustenance out of this common store. The enthusiasm for this communism was engendered by the vivid expectation of the immediate return of Jesus, it is said, when property would have no significance.

B. Other facts to consider

There are some facts that seem to go against this interpretation.

1. The case of Barnabas seems to be singled out as unusual, going beyond what was commonly done when he sold all.

2. Ananias and Sapphira were told by Peter that they had the right to retain their property or any part of the proceeds derived from the sale of the same (Acts 5:4). It was their lying and deception, not the owning of things that was condemned.

3. Mark's mother (Acts 12:12) and Mnason (Acts 21:16) seem to have retained their dwellings.

4. Outside Jerusalem, the early Christians seem to have retained possessions from which they made voluntary gifts, as in the case of Dorcas at Joppa (Acts 9:36, 39), of the Christians at Antioch (Acts 11:39), and of those at Corinth (II Cor. 8:12, 9:7).

5. Paul and James speak of both the rich and the poor in other assemblies (I Tim 6:17; Gal. 2:10; I Cor 16:2; II Cor 7:13, 15, 9:6-7; James 2:1-5, 4:13).

6. Many of the first churches were started in the dwellings of people in the church (Col. 4:15; Phm. 2).

C. A unique challenge

In this day when 3,000 were saved, perhaps something very unique was taking place.

1. The 3,000 were very likely mostly out-of-towners.

2. They decided to stay in Jerusalem where they had no jobs, no houses, etc.

3. The local believers gladly accepted the challenge of care for these converts and the obvious sacrifices that went with it.

4. This most likely continued until these people were absorbed into the community, were established on their own or went back to their land of origin.

5. This was not a pattern found in other churches later on. It seems to have been part of the uniqueness of this "birthday" experience.

6. Some have even suggested this act by the church was not a positive thing and actually contributed later on to the poverty of the church at Jerusalem that is emphasized later on in the Book of Acts (Rom. 15:26).

Lesson 9-10
Chapter 3-4

I. General Outline of Chapter 3-4

A. The Healing of a Lame Man (Acts 3:1-8)

B. The Response of the People (Acts 3:9-12)

C. Peter's Message to the People (Acts 3:13-26)

D. Peter and John Arrested (Acts 4:1-4)

E. Peter and John before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:5-22)

F. The Disciples Pray for Boldness (Acts 4:23-31)

G. The Nature of the Early Church (Acts 4:32-37)

II. The Healing of a Lame Man (Acts 3:1-8)

Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. 2 And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple; 3 who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms. 4 And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, "Look at us." 5 So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. 6 Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." 7 And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. 8 So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them--walking, leaping, and praising God.

Let's break this section down phrase by phrase.

A. Peter and John were often seen walking and ministering together (Acts 3:1).

1. The apostles were accustomed to ministering by twos. This is how Jesus had sent them out in team ministry (Luke 10:1).

2. Peter and John, two of the more prominent apostles, seemed to have been a team in life and in ministry (Acts 4:13; 8:14; Gal. 2:9).

   Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. Acts 8:14-15

   a. They had been friends well before this.

i. They had been partners in business (Luke 5:10).

ii. Jesus paired them up for work assignments (Luke 22:8).

And He sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat."

iii. They were both part of Jesus inner circle with James (Mt. 17:1; Mark 5:37; 14:33).

iv. They both came to the tomb of Jesus together (John 20:3-4).

v. They both shared a ministry to the Jews (Gal. 2:9).

b. They were totally opposite in many ways.

Peter	John
Older	Young
Man of Action	Man of Love
Didactic	Prophetic
Teacher	Visionary

c. God enjoys the blending of opposites in accomplishing His work.

B. Peter and John were going to the temple as they often had before (Acts 3:1).

1. The Jerusalem church never really abandoned their normal temple involvements. While there is no specific mention of animal sacrifice, they did seem to maintain their prayer life and some vows according to the Old Testament ceremonial order (Acts 21:23-25).

Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow. Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law. But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written and decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality.

We will discuss this more later when we get to chapter 15.

2. As the Book of Acts unfolds we will see how the Jerusalem church had some difficulty understanding how the New Covenant affected the Old or the Mosaic Covenant.

C. Peter and John came to the temple at the ninth hour.

1. The ninth hour was about 3:00 p.m., between noon and sunset.

2. The ninth hour was the time of the evening sacrifice.

   a. It was a time when God promised to meet with His people (Ex. 29:41-42).

      And the other lamb you shall offer at twilight; and you shall offer with it the grain offering and the drink offering, as in the morning, for a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the LORD. This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the LORD, where I will meet you to speak with you.

   b. It was a time when the end of the day was approaching. The end of the day for the Jew was 6:00 p.m. or sunset.

   c. It is a time when Cornelius received heavenly vision (Acts 10:3, 30).

   d. It is a time for prayer and seeking God.

D. Peter and John encountered a man who had been lame from birth (Acts 3:2).

1. This man was born lame (Acts 4:22).

   For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

2. This fact that Luke, the physician, is careful to point out only magnifies the extent of the miracle that would be done in this man.

3. There would be no doubt of this man's healing when it occurred.

It should be noted that because of where this man was placed by his friends on a daily basis, Jesus most likely passed by this man on numerous occasions.

E. Peter and John encountered this man at a gate called "Beautiful" (Acts 3:2).

It is not certain exactly which gate is being referred to in this verse. The most probable conjecture is that it is identical with the gate of Herod's temple which was known as "the gate Nicanor." This was on the east side of the "Court of the Israelites" and was reached by a flight of fourteen or fifteen steps from the "Court of the Women." In other words, it was the main entrance from the east into the innermost court. All the temple gates to this innermost court had folding doors, covered with gold and silver; but Josephus tells us that this one was much larger than the rest, being fifty cubits high and

forty cubits broad. It was made of Corinthian brass, "adorned after a most costly manner" with thicker and richer plates of gold than the other gates.

Note the contrast here. You have a gate called "Beautiful" with a man sitting at it who is very much less than "beautiful" by virtue of his condition.

F. Peter and John were asked for alms (Acts 3:2-3).

All he wanted from the disciples was alms. He didn't know that they could offer something better.

1. The word "alms" originally meant "pity or mercy" and then later it came to mean the outcome of mercy in the form of charitable gifts.

2. A man in this condition could do nothing much more than beg to meet his basic needs.

3. This was a good spot to beg.

   a. People are more prone to give while on their way to worship.

   b. Women would be more likely than men to express pity (near the Court of Women).

G. Peter and John ministered to the man in need (Acts 3:4-7).

1. Peter was willing to establish eye contact with the man.

   a. He told the man to look at them.

   b. Notice the contrast later when the crowds would acknowledge this miracle. Peter says, "Why do you look so intently at us?" (Acts 3:12).

      So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?"

2. Peter built on the expectation in this man. The man expected to receive something. Little did he know that what he received would be neither silver nor gold.

3. Peter indicated that he did not have silver and gold to give him.

   a. Peter had no silver and gold (literally, "Silver and gold I do not posses."), but he had something of much greater value.

b. What Peter had was a gift to be given. It was a gift of grace or unmerited favor. You cannot give what you do not have.

c. What Peter had he was willing to give. Some people have things to give but they are unwilling to give.

4. Peter used one of the Keys of the Kingdom to set this man free.

   Peter used the key of the name of Jesus. The name includes all that Jesus stands for, including His authority, His teaching, His life, and most especially, Himself (see Mark 16:17-18).

   And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.

5. Peter saw immediate results (Acts 3:7).

   …immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

   The word "immediately" is a favorite word of Luke. It only occurs outside of his writing once in Matthew 21:19-20 when Jesus cursed the fig tree and it immediately withered (See Acts 5:10; 9:18; 12:23; 13:11; 16:26, 33).

   This was not a gradual healing that would be experienced over time.

   a. This word means that it happened "at once" or "on the spot." This happened to Paul when he was prayed for by Ananias to receive his sight (Acts 9:18).

      Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.

   b. Christ's miracles were all characterized by the features of immediateness and completeness. They are miraculous in every way and cannot be explained by or ascribed to natural causes.

   c. The man's feet and ankle bones received strength.

      In this verse we see Luke's medical terminology coming through. This is the only use of these words in the New Testament.

   d. The man was restored to perfect soundness (Acts 3:16).

And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

This word denotes integrity of parts, freedom from defect; and it here means that the healing was perfect and entire and that he was completely restored to the use of his limbs.

H. Peter and John witnessed the man's response to the miracle (Acts 3:8).

1. He leaped up, stood and walked (Isaiah 35:6).

   He had been lame from a child. He had never walked, and there was more in the miracle than merely giving strength. The act of walking is one that is acquired by long practice. All of this was bypassed.

2. His response was to praise God.

   The disciples must have performed miracles in such a way that pointed men to God rather than to themselves. Notice that the healed man didn't even thank the disciples. He praised God.

   Notice that the apostles did not have to teach him how to praise God. It was a natural response to the grace of God.

III. The Response of the People (Acts 3:9-11)

And all the people saw him walking and praising God. Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly amazed.

A. The people reacted in wonder and amazement.

1. Wonder and amazement are the common reactions of natural man when confronted with divine power and the unexplainable.

2. The word translated "amazement" is more one of astonishment and denotes a state of great disturbance or distraction of mind arising from wonder or terror. It occurs three more times in Acts (Acts 10:10; 11:5; 22:17) and is usually translated "trance"

B. The people came together at Solomon's Porch.

The porch adjacent to the wall on the east side of the Court of the Gentiles was about 600 feet long and consisted of two rows of white marble columns. The roof of carved cedar provided protection from the weather. It was called Solomon's because it was thought to have survived from the time of Solomon. It was a favorite meeting place of the early Christians (Acts 5:12).

And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch.

C. The people wanted to magnify the apostles.

Peter said, "Why look at us?" Peter turned them away from himself unto God. It wasn't because of their own goodness that they were able to help this man. It was not about them, it is about Jesus. This is God's power. It is His mercy.

IV. The Healing of the Lame Man Seen Symbolically

A. The healing of this lame man can be seen as a parable or type of God's healing of a lame church. This is not an interpretation of this story but an application of this story to this present generation.

1. This can be applied because of the key focus of this incident and this chapter is restoration (Acts 3:19-21).

Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

The word "restoration" in this passage means to "restore a thing to its former situation, as restoring a dislocated limb to its former soundness."

2. This can be applied because of the prominent place given to this miracle in the Book of Acts (all of chapter 3 and much of chapter 4). The prominent place suggests that it has significance beyond the local setting.

B. There are many things in this story that parallel what God is doing today to bring healing to the church.

1. The healing came at an appointed time.

a. The ninth hour or time of the evening sacrifice was God's appointed time.

b. There will be an appointed time for God to favor the church (Ps. 102:13).

You will arise and have mercy on Zion; for the time to favor her, yes, the set time, has come.

2. The healing came to a man who had never walked.

   While the Early Church certainly functioned the way God originally intended, the church of today has never really walked. This man was in a helpless and hopeless condition apart from the miraculous moving of the Holy Spirit.

3. The healing came from a source other than the established religion of the day.

   This man was in a place where religion and charity could have been expected, but he was not strengthened by the "isms" of his day.

   He was sitting at the gate "Beautiful." One has to wonder how the gate got its name. Was it just a beautiful gate or does the name speak of some beautiful experience at the gate? In either case it retained the name but it had lost the power of the name.

4. The healing came to a man who had misplaced expectations.

   This man had been disappointed so long that he no longer had a desire for the thing that he needed the most. He thought that money was the answer. What he really needed was the power of the Name of Jesus.

5. The healing came when the man received unlikely messengers.

   These messengers did not come in priestly robes. They were common men who had experienced something powerful. When he received God's messengers and the message that they brought, he experienced the transforming power of the name of the Lord. It is important today that we do not react to the messenger and miss the message that God want to bring to His church today.

6. The healing cost the man his relationship to established religion.

   Little did this man know that when he entered into his healing he would no longer be accepted by the established religions of the day. Not everyone was excited about his healing. He would actually be forced to deny what had taken place or leave.

7. The healing resulted in full and complete restoration of the man.

   The word "restitution" means to restore a thing to its former situation, as restoring a dislocated limb to perfect soundness."

a. This included a restoration and new release of praise and worship.

b. This included a restoration of proper placement and alignment (the body coming together).

c. This included a restoration of the man's walk.

d. This included a restoration to perfect soundness or unity.

8. The healing was a catalyst for two conflicting events.

a. It was a catalyst for the first real persecution of the church (Acts 4:13-21).

b. It was a catalyst for a great harvest (Acts 4:4).

However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

But many of the people who heard their message believed it, so that the number of believers totaled about five thousand men, not counting women and children. –NLT

V. Peter's Message to the People (Acts 3:13-26)

A. Peter took advantage of this opportunity to preach the Gospel.

1. Peter assumed the role of preacher again in this context and once again reached out in his particular ministry to the Jews (Gal. 2:8-9).

For the same God who worked through Peter for the benefit of the Jews worked through me for the benefit of the Gentiles. In fact, James, Peter, and John, who were known as pillars of the church, recognized the gift God had given me, and they accepted Barnabas and me as their co-workers. They encouraged us to keep preaching to the Gentiles, while they continued their work with the Jews.

2. Throughout the Book of Acts signs, wonders and miracles were a catalyst for gathering crowds and preaching the Gospel (Acts 8:4-8; 14:8-11).

B. Peter tied this event to the past Jewish history.

Peter tied this event to the past. He wanted his audience to know that what was taking place here was not the establishment of a new religion, but it was the outworking and fulfillment of the promises given by God to the patriarchs.

1. He tied everything to the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Acts 3:13).

2. He indicated that what was taking place (even Christ's suffering) was a fulfillment of prophecy (Acts 3:18).

   But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.

3. He quoted from Moses and the prophets who had foretold of Jesus' coming and "these days" (Acts 3:22-25).

   Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. Acts 3:24

   The authority of Moses among the Jews was absolute and final. It was of great importance, therefore, to show not only that they were not departing from his law, but that Moses had actually foretold these very things.

C. Peter contrasted what God did and what many of the people had done.

   Peter called them to personal responsibility for what had been done. God did one thing and you did another.

   1. On the one hand, the people acted negatively when they…

      - Delivered Jesus for trial (vs. 13).
      - Denied the Holy One in the presence of Pilate (vs. 13-14).
      - Asked for a murderer to be granted to them instead of Jesus (vs.14).
      - Killed the Prince of Life (vs. 15.).

   2. On the other hand, God was at work positively when He…

      - Sent Jesus to bless the people (vs. 26).
      - Raised Jesus from the dead (vs. 15).
      - Glorified Jesus (vs. 13).

D. Peter gave the people the benefit of the doubt.

   1. He addressed them as brethren (Acts 3:17).

      This expression shows that he regarded them as of the same nation as himself, as having the same hopes, and as being entitled the same privileges. The expression also shows that he was not disposed to exalt himself as being more holy than they.

   2. He indicated that what they had done they had done in ignorance (Act 3:17).

      Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers.

The crucifixion was a sin of ignorance for most of the Jewish people and for some of their rulers as well.

a. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34).

b. Paul said, "For had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory" (I Cor. 2:8).

c. Paul indicated that what he had done to persecute Jesus and the church he had done in ignorance (I Tim. 1:12-13).

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

God treats sins of ignorance different from other sins. In the Old Testament He provided a sacrifice for sins of ignorance (Lev. 4). Sins of ignorance often find mercy (I Tim. 1:13).

3. He also indicated, however, that now was the time to repent (Acts 3:19; Compare Acts 17:30-31).

Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead. Acts 17:30-31

Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord… Acts 3:19

To repent and be converted means to change your way of thinking and turn around and walk the other way. Without true repentance, their sins could not be blotted out (literally, "erased or wiped away").

4. He indicated that true repentance would lead to times of refreshing (Acts 3:19).

5. He indicated that Jesus would be coming again when all was fulfilled (Acts 3:20-21).

…and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

6. He indicated that the Gospel was to come to the Jews first (Acts 3:26).

    a. God offered salvation to the Jew first. Paul also followed this approach in every community that he entered (See Rom. 1:16-17; Acts 13:46).

    Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles."
    Acts 13:46

    b. The word "first" here also implies that the message will be taken beyond the Jews, again setting the stage for Paul's later ministry.

E. Peter exalted Jesus throughout as he did in all of his preaching.

1. Notice the titles that are ascribed to Jesus by Peter.

- The Servant of God (vs. 13, 26)
- The Holy One (vs. 14, Compare Luke 1:35; 4:34; Mark 1:24; Ps. 16:10)
- The Just One (vs. 14, Compare Mt. 27:19; Luke 23:47; Is. 53:11)
- The Prince of Life (vs. 15, Compare Acts 5:31)
- Abraham's Seed (vs. 25, Implied)

2. He indicated that Jesus alone was the source of their power (Acts 3:16).

    a. Their power was not the result of their own strength or goodness (Acts 3:12).

    So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?"

    b. Their power was because of the name of Jesus (Acts 3:16).

    And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

    c. They accessed that power by faith in the name of Jesus (Acts 3:16).

VI. Peter and John Arrested (Acts 4:1-4)

Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in

custody until the next day, for it was already evening. However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

A. There were different responses to the preaching of Peter.

1. There were those who rejected.

It is interesting to conjecture as to why the three groups were present to listen to Peter in addition to the people.

a. The priests were there because of the fact that the apostles were teaching in the temple area. Teaching was the official duty of the priests, and if anyone was going to teach, they were going to do it. The priests were "greatly disturbed" that these ignorant fishermen were teaching the people.

The word of the Lord had passed by Annas and Caiaphas under John's ministry. The power of God had passed them by under Jesus' ministry. And now that the disciples were teaching, they were being passed by again.

b. The captain of the temple was there because he was the head of the temple police force. It was his duty to keep order and was concerned about the commotion or confusion that was caused by this miracle. He was there to keep order and quench any potential for riot.

c. The Sadducees were there because the apostles were teaching resurrection doctrine and they needed to guard the faith and warn the people (Acts 4:2 with Acts 23:8).

2. There were those that accepted (Acts 4:4).

However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

There were many who accepted the message and now the number of the believers is growing dramatically. Persecution has never done anything but cause the church to grow. The 5000 referred to in this passage could represent men only, in which case, the total number of disciples could have been closer to 20,000 people.

For those who like "small churches," this is the kind of church that God likes and inspires.

B. Peter and John were put into prison.

Unfortunately those that rejected the preaching were the ones who had the power to have the disciples arrested. The expression used in verse 1 implies that when they came upon the apostles, they came upon them in a violent manner. As you go

through the Book of Acts and observe the relationship of apostles to authority it is clear that they never resisted the authorities or incited a riot. If the scene contained violence, the violence was inspired by their opponents (Acts 5:17-18, 26).

Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. Acts 5:17-18

Then the captain went with the officers and brought them without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned. Acts 5:26

1. They put them into prison overnight because it was too late to have a legal trial.

2. They did not take this same step when it came to trying Jesus.

VII. Peter and John before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:5-22)

A. Peter and John were called to give an account for their behavior (Acts 4:7).

And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?"

The religious leaders wanted to know who authorized them teach and to heal.

B. Peter and John made the source of their commissioning clear (Acts 4:8-12).

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: 9 If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, 10 let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. 11 This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' 12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

C. Peter and John had some serious evidence on their side.

1. There was the matter of the man who was healed (Acts 4:14-16).

And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, "What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it."

2. There was the matter of the approval of the multitudes (Acts. 4:21).

   So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done.

D. Peter and John were forbidden to teach and preach in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:13-18).

   1. This was an all out attack on the name of Jesus. The key word in this section is "the name" of the Lord (Acts 3:6, 12, 26; 4:2, 7, 10-12, 17-20, 30).

   2. Notice how the religious leaders avoided using the name of this condemned man—Jesus (Acts 4:17).

E. Peter and John were threatened (Acts 4:17, 21).

F. Peter and John made it clear how they would treat the sentencing (Acts 4:19-20).

   But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

   Notice that even though the apostles felt it necessary to resist the higher authority, they were doing in on the grounds that they had receive opposing instructions from a higher authority—God (Mt. 28:19; Mark 16:15).

VIII. The Disciples Pray for Boldness (Acts 4:23-31)

And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. 24 So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, 25 who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: 'Why did the nations rage, and the people plot vain things? 26 The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the LORD and against His Christ.' 27 For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. 29 Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, 30 by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." 31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

Notice several things about this gathering.

A. The apostles did not take the threats of the Sanhedrin lightly.

B. The apostles did not presume that they would have the power to continue in their own strength.

C. The apostles understood the strength that comes in the relationship to the other members of the Body of Christ.

D. The apostles were not backing down from trouble, in fact, they were asking for more trouble. They were actually praying for the very things that got them into trouble in the first place.

E. The apostles' answer to prayer came in the form of a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit.

These men who had been born of the Spirit and baptized in the Spirit were now filled with the Holy Spirit (See Ephesians 5:18).

IX. The Nature of the Early Church (Acts 4:32-37)

Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. 33 And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. 34 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, 35 and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. 36 And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, 37 having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

We will discuss this section a bit more in the next lesson but notice the qualities that were possessed by the Early Church.

A. They were filled with or full of the Spirit.

B. They were bold in their witness.

C. They were in perfect unity (one heart and soul).

D. They were selfless in their attitude toward others.

E. They had great power to give witness to Christ.

F. They had great grace upon them.

G. They were extremely generous with those in need.

H. They saw their possessions as tools for kingdom expansion.

X. The True Source of Boldness

The apostles in the Book of Acts understood the need for boldness if they were to fulfill the commission that Christ had given to them.

A. Boldness is important for the spread of the Gospel.

1. The word "boldness" means "frankness, bluntness, openness." It speaks of speech that is unreserved, free, fearless and confident. It refers to those who are brave, courageous and daring.

   When we speak of boldness, we are not talking about being obnoxious, reactionary, abrasive or abusive, but bold in faith, convinced of our message and full of the Spirit and power of God.

2. Boldness is the opposite of silence, timidity and shame. It is the opposite of cowardly, fainthearted, fearful and chickenhearted.

   We are not to be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16).

3. Boldness was demonstrated by the apostles in the Book of Acts.

   a. Peter was bold and spoke frankly before the gathered crowd on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:22-23, 29. 36).

   b. Peter and John spoke boldly before the Sanhedrin and religious leaders (Acts 4:13).

   c. Paul spoke boldly before kings and officials of government (Acts 26:26).

B. Boldness is not a natural quality.

1. The natural tendency is to be silent when your message is controversial.

2. The natural tendency is to draw back in the face of threats or persecution (John 7:13).

   a. The apostles understood this problem and took specific action to overcome it (Acts 4:24-31).

      No longer was Peter boasting as to how he would never deny the Lord. They were familiar with their own weakness and failures. They had demonstrated many weaknesses when they were with Jesus.

- They had failed the compassion test (Mt. 14:15; Luke 9:54).
- They had failed the humility test (Mt. 26:35).
- They had failed the prayer test (Mt. 26:40).
- They had failed the faith test (Mt. 8:26).
- They had failed the servants' heart test (Mark 10:35-45).
- They had failed the prejudice test (Mt. 15:21-28).
- They had failed the loyalty test (Mark 14:50).

b. Paul realized the tremendous temptation to back off in times of pressure (Phil. 1:14; Eph. 6:19-220 Col. 4:2-3; Phm. 8).

Of all the things that Paul asked people to pray for him, the primary thing was boldness. The prayers must have worked because at the end to the Book of Acts we find Paul in prison, but speaking boldly the things of the kingdom of God (Acts 28:31).

C. Boldness can be a testimony in and of itself (Acts 4:13).

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

D. Boldness is not dependent upon personality or natural training (Acts 4:13).

E. The boldness of the apostles was dependent upon five things.

1. Their boldness was dependent upon their relationship to Jesus (Acts 3:13).

Now when they saw the boldness and unfettered eloquence of Peter and John and perceived that they were unlearned and untrained in the schools [common men with no educational advantages], they marveled; and they recognized that they had been with Jesus. –Amp

The closer that you are to someone, the easier it is to defend them.

2. Their boldness was dependent upon their personal experience of salvation (Acts 4:19-20).

But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

3. Their boldness was dependent upon their understanding of their message (Acts

4:12).

Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

4. Their boldness was dependent upon their hearts of love and compassion for the lost (II Cor. 5:14).

   Whatever we do, it is because Christ's love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for everyone, we also believe that we have all died to the old life we used to live. –NLT

5. Their boldness was dependent upon the infilling of the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:31).

   And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

   When you are filled with the Spirit…

   a. You have a greater boldness and power to witness (Acts 4:31; 11:24).

   b. You have a greater sensitivity to operating in the gifts of the Spirit (Acts 6:8).

   c. You become more qualified and effective even in natural tasks (Acts 6:3, 5).

   d. You become more of an encourager in the House of God (Eph. 5:18-19).

   e. You experience greater freedom and liberty in spiritual realms (II Cor. 3:17).

   f. You are able to forgive others more easily (Acts 7:55-60).

   g. You will be able to challenge the demonic world with greater authority (Acts 13:9).

Lesson 11
Chapter 5

I. General Outline of Chapter 5

A. The Contrast of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11).

B. The Church Rises in Miraculous Power (Acts 5:12-16)

C. The Apostles were Imprisoned and Released by an Angel (Acts 5:17-25)

D. The Apostles were Rearrested and Charged (Acts 5:26-33)

E. Gamaliel Gave Valuable Advice (Acts 5:34-39)

F. The Apostles were Beaten and Released (Acts 5:40-42)

II. The Contrast of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11)

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. 2 And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? 4 While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." 5 Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. 6 And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him. 7 Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 And Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?" She said, "Yes, for so much." 9 Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." 10 Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband. 11 So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.

A. It is important to understand what the story of Ananias and Sapphira is not.

1. It is not an example of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit or the "unpardonable" sin.

   The actual sin involved here was withholding a certain amount of money over against that which had been promised which was represented as the entire amount. Remember that they most likely gave a significant offering toward the needs of the poor.

   In other words they made a vow to the Lord and did not pay it (Eccl. 5:1-6).

Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil. 2 Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; therefore let your words be few. 3 For a dream comes through much activity, and a fool's voice is known by his many words. 4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; for He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed--5 Better not to vow than to vow and not pay.

2. It is not meant to be a pattern for discipline in the Church Age.

   Fortunately this is the only time in the New Testament where God took such drastic judgment into His hands. The pattern for New Testament discipline was given by Christ Himself (Mt. 18:15-20). The authority for discipline in the local church has been given to human authority.

B. It is important to understand what the story of Ananias and Sapphira is.

1. It is a study in contrasts in the Early Church.

   This story follows hard on the heels of the example of Barnabas in the previous chapter (Acts 4:36-37).

   And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles feet.

2. It is an indication of the purity of the Early Church.

   God is very jealous over this new church that is being formed. He does not want it spoiled by wrong motives (hypocrisy). If the church was being judged in this manner today, we would all be in trouble.

3. It tells us of the first recorded sin in the Early Church.

   It is very interesting that the first recorded sin against the Children of Israel when they entered the Promised Land was in regard to covetousness or the love of money (Josh. 7:1). Now the first recorded sin in this New Testament Church is over the issue of money. The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil (I Tim. 6:9-10).

4. It represents the first case of discipline in the Early Church.

   This was a sin of premeditation and mutual consent. Ananias and Sapphira were under no compulsion to dedicate the proceeds of their land sale to the Lord. However, they were caught up in the spirit of the church and made some kind of

pledge to that effect. After they had the money in their hand, their heart changed and they conspired to keep a small portion of the money back for themselves (Compare James 1:13-15).

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

5. It affirms the place of human authority in the local church.

   It is clear that God stands behind the authority that He has established in the church. To lie to Peter and to lie to the Holy Spirit are seen to be one and the same (Acts 5:3-4, 9).

6. It highlights the fact that while the church cannot be destroyed from forces outside of the church (i.e. Satanic opposition and persecution), it can be destroyed from forces within the church (disunity, ambition and greed).

C. It is important to learn the lessons from Anaias and Sapphira.

   If we do not learn the lessons from them, their death would have been in vain.

1. God searches the heart of man and knows his thoughts and intents.
2. God is more concerned about the motive of a man more than his external acts.
3. God will often expose secret sins that man will not be able to detect.
4. God hates hypocrisy.

III. The Church Rises in Miraculous Power (Acts 5:12-16)

And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. 13 Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. 14 And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women. 15 so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. 16 Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

When sin had been dealt with, the power of God was manifest.

A. The fruit of godly disciple was positive in every way.

1. Great fear came on the disciples (Acts 5:11, Compare Is. 33:14-16).

2. There was a fresh release of the miraculous (Acts 5:12).

3. There was a fresh unity among the believers (Acts 5:12). You discipline one child and you get them all.

4. Hypocrites were afraid to join their ranks (Acts 5:13).

5. There was a renewed respect for authority in the local church (Acts 5:13).

6. There was a new wave of evangelism (Acts 5:14).

There is a big difference between joining and being added. Hypocrites were fearful of joining, but the Lord added to the church by the multitudes.

The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness has seized the hypocrites: "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, he who despises the gain of oppressions, who gestures with his hands, refusing bribes, who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed, and shuts his eyes from seeing evil: He will dwell on high; his place of defense will be the fortress of rocks; bread will be given him, his water will be sure. Isaiah 33:14-16

B. The apostles were beginning to move in the "greater works than these" of which Jesus spoke (John 14:12).

Here we see even the shadow of Peter had power to heal. The woman had touched Jesus' hem, but here the crowds touched the shadow of Peter (Mt. 9:21-22).

IV. The Apostles were Imprisoned and Released by an Angel (Acts 5:17-25)

Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, 18 and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. 19 But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, 20 "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life." 21 And when they heard that, they entered the temple early in the morning and taught. But the high priest and those with him came and called the council together, with all the elders of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. 22 But when the officers came and did not find them in the prison, they returned and reported, 23 saying, "Indeed we found the prison shut securely, and the guards standing outside before the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside!" 24 Now when the high priest, the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these things, they wondered what the outcome would be. 25 So one came and told them, saying, "Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!"

This new found success sparked the envy of the religious leaders (Acts 5:17). They couldn't sit by any longer; they had to try to stamp this movement out. In addition the apostles had defied their order not to preach or teach in the name of Jesus.

A. The apostles were arrested and put into prison.

1. This arrest seems to have included more than just Peter and John as before, but included all or most of the Twelve.

2. Peter was getting his chance to fulfill his statement of commitment (Luke 22:33).

But he said to Him, "Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death."

3. Jesus had predicted that this would happen (Luke 21:12-13).

But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony.

B. The Lord sent an angel to bring them out of prison.

1. It is interesting that in the face of a Sanhedrin filled with Sadducees that God would use an angel to set them free (the Sadducees did not believe that angels exist).

2. It is interesting that the guards stayed in place all night and they did not discover the absence of the disciples until they came to bring them out the next morning.

C. The apostles followed the instructions of the angel and continued their ministry of teaching and preaching in the temple area.

D. Their unusual escape from prison left the religious leaders in a state of wonderment (Acts 5:24b).

Other translations:

…they doubted of them whereunto this would grow. –KJV

…they were perplexed, wondering where it would all end. –NLT

…the chief priests were puzzled, wondering what would come of this. –NIV

The word that is used here denotes a state of anxiety which arises when someone has lost their way or when someone does not know what to do to escape from a difficulty. Herod had experienced these same feelings when he heard about Jesus (Luke 9:7).

Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was going on. And he was perplexed, because some were saying that John had been raised from the dead…

They were in this state for several reasons.

1. The apostles had disregarded their authority.
2. God seems to have overruled them with a miracle.
3. The doctrines of the apostles were gaining ground.
4. Their efforts to oppose them up to this point had been in vain.

V. The Apostles were Rearrested and Charged (Acts 5:26-33)

A. The apostles were rearrested without violence (Acts 5:26).

Then the captain went with the officers and brought them without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned.

This can be seen from two sides.

1. The apostles were in violation of the commands of the Sanhedrin and did not resist the arrest from the officials. All they would have had to do was create a little stir and the multitudes would have rioted and stoned the soldiers.

2. The soldiers were going to be careful with these men who had demonstrated unusual powers and the support of angelic beings. They had not been so careful with Jesus.

B. The apostles were charged with fulfilling the first part of Jesus' commission (Acts 5:27-28).

And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them, saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"

The apostles were charged with three things including…

1. Ignoring the command not to teach.
2. Filling Jerusalem with their doctrine.

3. Trying to blame the death of an innocent man on them.

If these were the charges, the apostles were "guilty as charged."

C. Peter made a full confession (Acts 5:29-32).

But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

D. Peter's profession infuriated the religious leaders (Acts 5:33).

When they heard this, they were furious and plotted to kill them.

VI. Gamaliel Gave Valuable Advice (Acts 5:34-39)

When they heard this, they were furious and plotted to kill them. 34 Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people, and commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while. 35 And he said to them: "Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men. 36 For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing. 37 After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed. 38 And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing, 39 but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it--lest you even be found to fight against God."

Gamaliel's words saved the day. There are a couple of different opinions about his words.

A. They were words of wisdom that turned away the wrath of the counsel.

B. They were a demonstration of poor leadership from a man who did not want to take a personal stand. In other words, his wisdom was really a copout.

In either case, it tempered the punishment that would be meted out by the Council.

VII. The Apostles were Beaten and Released (Acts 5:40-42)

And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 So

they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. 42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

They didn't totally follow Gamaliel's advice to let them alone. They beat them with the hope that they would accomplish two things.

A. They wanted to discourage future acts of disobedience on their parts.

B. They wanted to humiliate them in front of the people hoping that they would lose some of their influence and following.

It didn't work in either case!

Lesson 12
Chapter 6-7

I. General Outline of Chapter 6-7

A. The Choosing of Appointed Servants (Acts 6:1-7)

B. The Ministry and Arrest of Stephen (Acts 6:8-15)

C. The Defense of Stephen (Acts 7:1-53)

D. The Death of Stephen (Acts 7:54-60)

II. The Choosing of Appointed Servants (Acts 6:1-7)

Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. 2 Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. 3 Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; 4 but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." 5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, 6 whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them. 7 Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

A. As the Early Church grew, it experienced common challenges associated with growth.

The more people that you have, the more challenges that you have. Unfortunately in most cases we do not take the challenges seriously until there is significant murmuring.

1. Many of the needs of the people were being neglected.

This passage says that the Hellenists (Jews from the dispersion) were complaining against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected. They felt the neglect was an ethnic thing. The truth of the matter is that all of the widows were being neglected.

a. God's heart has always been for His people to consider the poor (Deut. 15:7-11).

b. God has always encouraged His people to consider the widows and orphans (Jam. 1:27).

As a result the Early Church felt a sense of obligation to provide for these needs (I Tim. 5:3, 9, 10, 16).

2. The primary call of the leadership was being neglected.

   a. They were neglecting prayer.

   b. They were neglecting their preparation in the Word of God (I Tim. 4:15-16; II Tim. 4:2).

   Prayer and the Word are two of the four keys of the Kingdom and definitely not something that you want to neglect.

B. As the Early Church grew, it had to respond to the challenges of growth.

1. This involved delegation of responsibilities.

   The only way to meet the demands of a growing work is to bring more people into the work. Bringing others into the work is not "using" people; it is actually training people and releasing people.

2. This involved prioritizing responsibilities.

   Those in leadership need to understand what is to be their primary focus. The general rule is that if someone else can do it, someone else should be doing it.

   When the disciples indicated that, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables" they were not being proud. Because they were not proud but had a servant spirit, they were in fact trying to do the work up to that point.

3. This involved the development of clear job descriptions.

   It is important to point out that these individuals were not placed over the administration or the budget of the local church, but they were placed over the ministry of the local church to the poor and needy. The oversight of the church always remained with the apostles and elders.

C. As the Early Church grew, other servant leaders needed to be added to the team.

These leaders needed to be servant leaders who had the same qualities as the disciples of Jesus.

1. They needed to be people of a good reputation.

2. They needed to be people of wisdom in dealing with people.

3. They needed to be people of faith.

4. They needed to be people who were full of the Holy Spirit (not just good administrators).

"Even mundane duties must not be done by mundane men but by spiritual men." --Guthrie

On a side note it is interesting to note the names of the individuals whom the church leaders placed over this ministry. All of the seven names listed are Hellenist names. It was the Hellenists who were complaining that their widows were neglected implying that the Hebrews were more concerned over their own widows. This appointment would definitely diffuse any future concern over the same issue.

Two significant appointments who would become key players in the Book of Acts were Stephen and Philip.

D. As the Early Church responded to the challenges of growth, the results were evident.

1. The needs of the widows were met.

2. The congregation was in unity over the decision (that is, the murmuring ceased).

3. The word of God spread.

4. There was a new release of harvest.

God will not put more people in our hands unless we take care of the ones He was already entrusted to us.

5. There was a higher level of preaching.

Even the trained religious leaders of the day were taking notice and responding to the preaching of the "ignorant" fishermen. There is no short cut to revelation.

For more teaching on the actual installation of these ministries refer to the course *Local Church*, Lesson 17.

III. The Ministry and Arrest of Stephen (Acts 6:8-15)

And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. 9 Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen. 10 And they were

not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. 11 Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." 12 And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council. 13 They also set up false witnesses who said, "This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; 14 for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us." 15 And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel.

All of these charges against a man who looks like an angel.

A. Stephen is an example of someone who understood the principle of advancement (Luke 16:10-12).

He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own?

1. His first focus was on becoming an example believer (Refer to the qualifications that he met).

2. His second focus was to be a servant wherever needed (Eccl. 9:10).

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.

3. His final focus was the ministry to which he was called.

B. Stephen is an example of someone who functioned well at the place in which he found himself (I Tim. 3:13).

For those who have served well…obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

1. He was willing to go above and beyond his actual job description (excellence).

2. He was willing to be led by the Holy Spirit and wisdom in all that he did.

3. He was willing to step out in faith at the leading of the Lord (Acts 6:5, 8).

4. He was willing to trust his promotion to the Lord (Ps. 75:6).

C. Stephen is an example of someone who was willing to give all for the sake of the cause of Christ (Acts 7:59-60).

D. Stephen is an example of someone who fell to the ground and died but in doing so produced much fruit (John 12:24-26).

Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.

We will refer to this later.

IV. The Defense of Stephen (Acts 7:1-53)

A. Stephen had two main charges leveled against him (Acts 6:13).

1. Charges were made against him related to statements he had made concerning the Law of Moses.

   He had evidently made statements that were interpreted by some as taking a light view of the Law of Moses, indicating that it was a temporary thing which was to be absorbed into and superseded by a spiritual and enduring order.

   Whenever anyone made such implications against Moses, the Pharisees and the Sadducees got together to crush the movement (Acts 6:11, 13-14; John 9:28-29).

2. Charges were made against him concerning statements he had made concerning temple worship.

   He was evidently making statements about temple worship that seemed to others to take a light view of "this holy place." He must have been insisting on the spirituality of true worship, the temporary nature of the Jewish law and the non-essential aspect of locality in worship.

   The Pharisees and Sadducees were sensitive on this point also. Jesus had said, "One greater than the temple is here" (Mt. 12:5-6; John 2:18-21).

B. Stephen would use history to argue his case for him.

At first glance Stephen's speech seems to give no answer to the charges against him. A closer look indicates otherwise. Stephen was going to use history to do the work of arguing.

Stephen presented three main lines of argument from history.

1. There had been true worship before the temple was ever built.

a. Abraham had a visitation from the God of glory even before circumcision and before they had the land (Acts 7:2-8).

b. Moses had a visitation from God at the burning bush upon "holy" ground (Acts 7:31-36).

c. The Children of Israel met with God in the Tabernacle in the wilderness (Acts 7:44-46).

d. Solomon built a temple for God but acknowledged that it could not contain God (Acts 7:47-50).

From all of this Stephen implied that locality was not the essence of worship, and that he was not to be found guilty of blasphemy for what he had said regarding the temple.

2. There had been a progressive revelation of truth throughout history.

Stephen indicated that throughout their history God had moved progressively and that it should not seem strange that a better and greater thing was being introduced that would take the place of the old.

a. Abraham's call had progressed from Chaldee to Canaan (Acts 7:4-5).

b. Moses moved from Egypt to Sinai and the tabernacle (Acts 7:37-44).

c. The Israelites moved from the wilderness into the Promised Land under Joshua (Acts 7:44-46).

At the introduction of each of these things something greater was promised. With Abraham it was the promise of a permanent possession (Acts 7:5-6). With Moses it was the promise of a greater prophet (Acts 7:37).

3. Their history had been characterized by the fact that they always rejected God's true worship and God's true servants who had been sent to them.

They had despised, resisted and even murdered those whom God had chosen and appointed to be their leaders. They had done this with the following:

a. Joseph (Acts 7:9-13)
b. Moses (Acts 7:25-28, 35, 38-39)
c. True Worship (Acts 7:40-43)
d. The Prophets (Acts 7:51-52)
e. Christ (Acts 7:52-53)
f. And now, Stephen (implied)

Now they were fully exposed. They were cut to the heart. They responded as predicted.

V. The Death of Stephen (Acts 7:54-60)

When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth. 55 But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, 56 and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" 57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; 58 and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 60 Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

A. There are three important lessons that we can learn from the death of Stephen.

1. When we hold fast to the truth we will provoke the antagonism of others.

   Holiness repels sin. Love repels selfishness. Sooner or later the followers of one will come into collision with the followers of the other. In the proportion that we manifest Christ's Spirit we shall provoke the enmity of those who crucified Him.

2. The glorified Redeemer takes great interest in the suffering of His followers.

   In the hour of Stephen's deepest extremity, Christ was there to give grace and support. The disciples may have abandoned Jesus, but He would not abandon a disciple.

   Jesus was seen standing. Standing speaks of two things. It speaks of dignity and respect. It also speaks of judgment and vindication.

3. Words which seem to be in vain are not always fruitless.

   Stephen's argument seems to have been lost. It did not save his own life. But Stephen became the grain of wheat that fell to the ground and died producing much fruit.

B. The life of Stephen has great significance in the history of the Early Church.

   Stephen appears to have been off to a great ministry of signs and wonders. Did his ministry die when he died? No! His mantle was passed to Saul, the one holding the mantles or coats of those who stoned Stephen (Acts 7:58).

1. Stephen's ministry had been to the non-Jewish community (Acts 6:9).
2. Stephen had a ministry in signs and wonders (Acts 6:8).
3. Stephen gave in seed form the message that Paul would later develop.
4. Stephen's message became the foundation for ministry to the Gentiles and the entire book of Hebrews.
   a. Paul's doctrine came from those seeds.
   b. Paul used Stephen's quotation on God's dwelling (Acts 7:48; 17:24).
   c. Paul expanded Stephen's revelation on the circumcision of the heart (Acts 7:51; Rom. 2:29).
5. Paul seems to have begun where Stephen left off, with a revelation or vision of Jesus.
6. Paul must have been the source of the information contained in this account for Luke to be able to write it.

   It is doubtful that any other Christians were on the scene during the stoning of Stephen. The devout men that buried Stephen were most likely Jews who did not agree with such mob action. At this time Rome had suspended the right of the Jews to put anyone to death. This is why they had to go through the authorities to get rid of Jesus.

7. Paul's last words were similar to that of Stephen (II Tim. 4:16-18).

   At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!

Stephen came to a peaceful end even though violence was all around him.

And when he had said this, he fell asleep. Acts 7:60b

The death of saints is often presented as falling asleep (John 11:11-12; I Cor. 11:30; 15:51; I Th. 4:14; 5:10). This is not to suggest "soul-sleep" but rather the peaceful nature of the transition to the next world. The body, in a sense, sleeps while Stephen committed his spirit to the Lord (Acts 7:59). The body will be awakened at the last trump (Mt. 24:31; I Cor. 15:52; I Th. 4:16).

Lesson 13
Chapter 8

I. General Outline of Chapter 8

A. Saul Persecuted the Church (Acts 8:1-3)

B. Philip Preached in Samaria (Acts 8:4-8)

C. Simon the Sorcerer Believed (Acts 8:9-13)

D. Peter and John Ministered to the Converts (Acts 8:14-25)

E. Philip Preached to the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-40)

II. Saul Persecuted the Church (Acts 8:1-3)

Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. 3 As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.

A. Saul became an instrument in the hands of the Sanhedrin to eliminate Christianity (Gal. 1:13, 23; I Tim. 1:13).

For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. Galatians 1:13-14

Up to this time most of the opposition has come to church leaders. Now it is spreading to all believers. Saul may have even had a hit list from which he was working with Stephen's name at the top.

1. He may have been a ringleader at the death of Stephen (Acts 7:58; 22:19-20).

So I said, "Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You. And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him." Acts 22:19-20

2. He received letters of authorization from the Council (Acts 9:1-2; 22:5; 26:10).

I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus

to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished. Acts 22:4-6

B. Saul reacted to Stephen's death by renewing his vigor in the persecution of the church (I Cor. 15:9).

For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

He was not convinced by Stephen's arguments. He was upset that Stephan died as a hero instead of as a blasphemer.

Some of the descriptions of his actions against the church include the following:

1. He made havoc of the church (Acts 8:3).

   The word "havoc" that is used in this verse is a word that is commonly applied to wild beasts such as lions or wolves and the devastations that they commit. Saul was not acting as a human being, he was raging like an animal out of control.

2. He breathed threats and murder against the disciples (Acts 9:1).

   Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest…

3. He bound men and women and put them in prison (Acts 22:4-6).

4. He was responsible for the death of Christians (Acts 22:4).

C. Saul's persecution of the church teaches us a couple of things.

1. Persecution tends to promote the very thing that it seeks to destroy.

2. One of the best ways to make Christians active and zealous is to persecute them.

III. Philip Preached in Samaria (Acts 8:4-8)

Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. 5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. 6 And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. 7 For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. 8 And there was great joy in that city.

A. Philip was forced to leave Jerusalem under the persecution of Saul.

1. He went to Samaria.

   The Samaritans had a history stemming back to the dividing of Israel into two kingdoms. In order to keep people in the Northern Kingdom from having to go to Jerusalem for temple worship and the feasts, Ahab established a place of worship to Baal in the city of Samaria (I Kgs. 16:29-33; Hos. 8:5-6). It was not long before the entire Northern Kingdom was called "Samaria." After Samaria fell to the Assyrians, the Assyrians infiltrated the region and intermarried with the population creating a mixed race of people. The Jews who remained true to worship at Jerusalem despised the Samaritans because they viewed them as idolators and no longer fully Jewish.

   When Philip went to Samaria, it was really the next step in the progression of taking the Gospel to the Gentile world.

2. Others went to many other places (Acts 11:19).

   Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only.

B. Philip is a model evangelist (Acts 21:8; Eph. 4:11).

   On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. Acts 21:8

   He is actually the only one who was specifically called an evangelist in the New Testament.

   1. As an evangelist he ministered beyond the borders of the Jerusalem church. An evangelist is a ground breaking ministry.

   2. As an evangelist his primary function was to preach the gospel.

      The word that is used in verse 5 relative to Philip's preaching is the word that that comes from the Greek word *euanggelizo*. It means to evangelize or announce the good news of salvation.

   3. As an evangelist he ministered to multitudes or single individuals with equal passion.

   4. As an evangelist he often had to confront the powers of darkness.

   5. As an evangelist he functioned with the tools of evangelism.

a. This included preaching the word.
b. This included healing the sick.
c. This included casting out demonic spirits.

Recall how Jesus sent his disciples out (Mt. 10:7-8; Luke 9:1-2).

And as you go, preach, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Matthew 10:7-8

6. As an evangelist he witnessed the fruit of salvation—great joy (Is. 12:3; Ps. 51:12).

Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. Isaiah 12:3

An evangelist is a reaping ministry. In a sense he reaped a harvest that he did not sow. Jesus sowed the seeds for this harvest with the woman at the well.

7. As an evangelist he was concerned about the follow-up of new converts.

C. Philip recognized the limitations of his ministry.

It is not certain why Philip did not pray for these people to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. Perhaps he was unsure of whether or not it was appropriate for Samaritans to receive such an experience. In any case he must have sent word to the apostles at Jerusalem to come and finish what he had begun.

IV. Simon the Sorcerer Believed (Acts 8:9-13)

But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, 10 to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the great power of God." 11 And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time. 12 But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.13 Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done.

A. The city of Samaria had been under the spiritual influence of Simon, the sorcerer.

1. Simon operated in signs and wonders.

2. Simon was perceived to be someone great.

3. Simon was perceived to be operating with the power of God.

4. Simon's power was one of sorcery that was inspired by the kingdom of darkness.

   The sorcery referred to here undoubtedly had to do with the practice of magical arts and deception. He operated in "lying signs and wonders" (See II Th. 2:9-10).

   The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

   This evil man will come to do the work of Satan with counterfeit power and signs and miracles. He will use every kind of wicked deception to fool those who are on their way to destruction because they refuse to believe the truth that would save them. –NLT

   It should be noted that the tendency of people is to believe that any miracle must come from God. Signs and wonders are not something that should be used to authenticate a ministry. In the last days there will be many false apostles and prophets that will deceive people through the use of the supernatural. The word of God is always the measuring rod of a ministry.

B. The preaching of the Gospel broke Simon's hold on the people.

1. The people listened to Philip's message (Acts 8:6).
2. The people believed the word (Acts 8:12).
3. The demons came out of people (Acts 8:7).
4. The people were baptized in water (Acts 8:13).

   Water baptism was crucial at the very beginning of their spiritual walk. It should be entered into at the first available opportunity.

C. Simon the sorcerer responded to the Gospel as well.

1. There was a positive side to his response.

   On the positive side:

   a. He believed the Gospel.
   b. He was baptized in water.
   c. He may have even been baptized in the Holy Spirit.
   d. He was very impressed by the supernatural aspect of Philip's ministry. He wanted to do what he saw Philip do.

2. There was a negative side to his response.

   a. He wanted to purchase the ability to duplicate what he saw.

      This act of buying influence or church offices was later called simony after Simon Magnus.

   b. He needed a lot of sanctification before he was ready to be used of the Lord.

      His heart was not right in the matter. While his spirit may have been saved, he still had a lot of work to be done in the soul realm. Too often spectacular conversions like that of Simon are celebrated by standing the person up and giving them a platform for ministry well before they are ready for such an assignment.

V. Peter and John Ministered to the Converts (Acts 8:14-25)

Notice how often the disciples seem to function in multiples of two.

A. They laid hands on the new converts for the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17).

B. They adjusted Simon and called him to repentance (Acts 18-24).

C. They preached the Gospel in many other cities of Samaria (Acts 8:25).

So when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

VI. Philip Preached to the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-40)

Notice several things about this ministry.

A. Philip reflected God's heart by caring for the individual as well as the crowds.

B. Philip had great success because he ministered to prepared people.

You cannot be much more prepared than reading Isaiah 53.

C. We should never be intimidated by the wealthy and the influential in our witness. They are human beings with the same needs and everyone and need to be saved.

D. God will arrange divine encounters with people who will be able to open big doors.

E. The attitude of the Ethiopian should form the basis for all of our responses to the work of the Lord in our lives.

"What hinders me from being baptized?"
Or
"Do I have to be baptized to be saved?"

Lesson 14
Chapter 9

I. General Outline of Chapter 9

A. Saul's Encounter on the Damascus Road (Acts 9:1-9)

B. Ananias' Ministry to Saul (Acts 9:10-19)

C. Saul Preaches Christ in Damascus (Acts 9:20-25)

D. Saul's Experience at Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-30)

E. The Church Prospers (Acts 9:31)

F. Aeneas Healed (Acts 9:32-35)

G. Dorcas Restored to Life (Acts 9:36-43)

II. Saul's Encounter on the Damascus Road (Acts 9:1-9)

Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2 and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. 3 As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. 4 Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" 5 And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads." 6 So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." 7 And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one. 8 Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. 9 And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

There are three main chapters in the Book of Acts that give us insight into Paul's early life from his own testimony—Acts 9, Acts 22 and Acts 26.

A. Saul's early life was one of religious zeal (Acts 22:3; 26:5; Phil. 3:4b-6; Gal. 1:14).

I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today. Acts 22:3

If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. Philippians 3:4b-6

And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. Galatians 1:14

B. Saul's zeal led him to persecute the People of the Way (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4, 22; 24:14; 26:9-11).

I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women… Acts 22:4

Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities. Acts 26:9-11

But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets. Acts 24:14

C. While doing so, Saul had a personal encounter from the Lord (Acts 22:6; 26:12-13).

Saul was on his way to apprehend the followers of Christ and he was apprehended by Christ (Phil. 3:12). God did outwardly in Saul what He has done inwardly in all of us.

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. –KJV

1. He saw a bright light (Acts 9:3; 22:6; 26:12-13).

2. He and his companions fell to the ground (Acts 9:4; 22:7; 26:14). Notice that there is no mention of a "horse" in this account.

   And when we all had fallen to the ground… Acts 26:14a

3. He heard a voice (Acts 9:4; 22:7; 26:14).

   It should be noted that the men who were with him did not have the same experience. They heard a voice but did not see the vision that Saul did.

4. He saw the Lord (I Cor. 15:8; Acts 9:7, implied).

   Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

5. He asked the Lord who He was.

   Jesus' answer had to startle him… "I am Jesus who you are persecuting!" In Acts 22:8 it says, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting."

D. Jesus indicated that Paul had been resisting the work of the Holy Spirit in his life (Acts 9:5b).

   It is hard for you to kick against the goads.

   The expression to kick against the goad is derived from the action of a stubborn and unyielding ox that would kick at the sharp stick or goad that was being used to motivate it. The ox would only injure itself and gain nothing in the end. It often speaks of rebellion against rightful authority by attempting to oppose the clear commands of duty. Jesus was implying that Saul's efforts were irrational, self-destructive and fruitless.

   Jesus' use of this expression also indicates that the Holy Spirit, as the goad of God, had been working on him internally for some time. Up to this time he had been resisting the work of the Holy Spirit not wanting to submit to something that would change the direction of his life forever.

E. Saul responded with the right question (Acts 9:5-6; 22:8-10; 26:15).

   Note the three significant questions from the unsaved to this point…

   1. What must I do to be saved?
   2. What hinders me from being baptized?
   3. What would you have me to do?

F. Saul's natural eyesight was lost while his spiritual eyesight was being restored (Acts 9:8; 22:11).

   While Saul dwelt three days in darkness he had something profound upon which to meditate. He was able to meditate on Jesus statement, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

   Saul learned that when you persecute the church you persecute Jesus. He learned that Jesus and His church are inseparably linked. Perhaps this is when Paul received the seeds of his unique revelation of the church as the body of Christ.

G. Instead of answering Saul's question, Jesus directed him to a member of the same body of Christ that he was trying to destroy (Acts 9:6).

   Saul the persecutor became a helpless, blind man who had to be led by the hand to be prayed for by the very people that he was attempting to exterminate. What a

transformation!

H. Saul dwelt in darkness for three days before Ananias came to him (Acts 9:9).

Perhaps this is how long it took God to talk Ananias into praying for a man who had done so much harm to the church.

In these three days Saul identified with Jesus' three days in the grave. Think of what his mind saw in those three days. The last thing he saw with his physical eyes was Jesus. He had three days to think about all of those he had abused in the name of God. He thought about Stephen calling upon God for mercy. He thought about all of the others that he had hauled off to prison and to their death.

III. Ananias' Ministry to Saul (Acts 9:10-19)

Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." 11 So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. 12 And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight." 13 Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. 14 And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name." 15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. 16 For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake." 17 And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18 Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized. 19 So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus.

A. Ananias came to pray for Saul—reluctantly (Acts 9:17).

Ananias was as reluctant to stand before Saul as Moses was to stand before Pharaoh (Ex. 3:11). God persuaded him to go to Saul based on what He revealed to him about Saul's future.

1. He was a chosen vessel to minister to Gentiles and Israelites (Acts 9:15).

2. He would suffer many things for the sake of Christ (Act 9:15).

Perhaps it was this reference to "suffering" that convinced Ananias to go to Saul. He might have thought, "Well, if you are sure that he is going to suffer many things, then I will go and pray for him."

B. Ananias administered prophecy and the laying on of hands (Acts 9:17).

C. Saul's eyesight was restored (Acts 9:18).

D. Saul was baptized in water (Acts 9:18).

E. Saul was filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17).

F. Saul was cared for by some believers for several days (Acts 9:18).

IV. Saul Preaches Christ in Damascus (Acts 9:20-25)

Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. 21 Then all who heard were amazed, and said, "Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?" 22 But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ. 23 Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him. 24 But their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night, to kill him. 25 Then the disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall in a large basket.

A. Saul seemed to have had an immediate desire to preach or share his testimony in the synagogues (Acts 9:20).

This is not the best thing for new converts to do. In our day we treat celebrity conversions much like this. We put them up to speak before they have really had a chance to be discipled and grounded in their faith.

B. The Christians in Damascus were very suspicious of Saul's motivation (Acts 9:21).

C. After a short time Saul went to Arabia to begin his Holy Spirit training (Acts 9:23; Gal. 1:17).

Now after many days were past… Acts 9:23a

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Galatians 1:15-17

This seems to be the only place where Saul's trip to Arabia can fit in the timeline of Saul's life. The phrase "after many days" is used in the Septuagint to describe a considerable length of time, even years (Ex. 2:11). The Jewish writers observe that

the phrase, "many days", signifies at least three days; for by "days", in the plural number, two must be designed, and many signifies a third, or that one at least is added to them; but here it signifies three years, as it also does in reference to Elijah where it is said, "and it came to pass after many days, that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year" (I Kgs. 18:1). It appears that this phrase could mean the same thing here (*John Gill's Exposition of the Bible*).

D. The Jews were not happy with his conversion and his return to Damascus and plotted to kill him (Acts 9:23).

Saul had been the "Poster Boy" for the persecution of Christianity. Now he had gone over to the "other side." As a result the Jewish emotion toward Saul had gone from love and admiration to extreme hatred. This animosity would end up being something that would follow him throughout his life. He had been a high profile person prior to his conversion. That fame would set him up for great opposition from the Jews particularly those from Jerusalem. This opposition would undoubtedly be a major reason for Saul eventually changing his name to Paul.

E. Upon discovering the plot, Saul escaped from Damascus with the help of the local disciples (Acts 9:24-25; II Cor. 11:32-33).

In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.

This was Saul's first such escape, it would not be his last. This would be part of the story of his life, trying to say ahead of his persecutors. The persecutor would become the persecuted.

V. Saul's Experience at Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-30)

And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. 28 So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out. 29 And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him. 30 When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus.

A. Saul made his first trip to Jerusalem about three years after his conversion (Acts 9:26).

1. The Christians were still afraid of him (Acts 9:26).

2. The Christian did not believe he was a true disciple (Acts 9:26).

3. However, Barnabas believed Saul, he befriended him and put in a good word for him (Acts 9:27).

B. Saul preached among the same crowd that Stephen had—the Hellenists (Acts 6:9; 9:29).

C. Saul aroused the venom of the Hellenists and again had to flee for his life (Acts 9:30).

Stephen was slain, but Saul escaped. He was ushered out to Caesarea and sent on to Tarsus, the place of his birth. This was his first sending out. However, he wasn't really sent out as much as he was sent away.

Paul's Early Life Journey (1-10)

Note: The numbers on the above map indicate the order of Paul's journey.

VI. The Church Prospers (Acts 9:31)

Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.

With Saul removed from the scene, there was a period of rest in the church. The Romans at this time were trying to erect statues of the emperor in the temple in Jerusalem. This took the Jews' focus off of the Christians and onto their battle against Rome and the pollution of their temple.

Saul was to spend another ten years or so in Tarsus before his prophetic word would come forth.

VII. Aeneas Healed (Acts 9:32-35)

Now it came to pass, as Peter went through all parts of the country, that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda. 33 There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years and was paralyzed. 34 And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed." Then he arose immediately. 35 So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

During this period of calm, Peter gets the chance to get away in ministry. Some believe that he was retracing the steps of Philip who had gone to these regions earlier. This whole trip was one of preparing the heart of Peter for one of the most significant acts of his life—the opening of the door of faith to the Gentiles.

Aeneas was most likely a Hellenist. He was the second lame man that Peter was used to heal.

Peter's Journeys in Acts 1-12

Note: The numbers on the above map indicate the order of Peter's journey.

VIII. Dorcus Restored to Life (Acts 9:36-43)

At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did. 37 But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in an

upper room. 38 And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring him not to delay in coming to them. 39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had come, they brought him to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. 40 But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. 41 Then he gave her his hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive. 42 And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord. 43 So it was that he stayed many days in Joppa with Simon, a tanner.

A. Peter was summoned to Joppa.

   It appears that it was already his plan to go there, but the sudden death of a well-respected woman cause some to summon Peter to come in haste.

B. Peter ministered to a woman in Joppa by the name of Dorcas. Her Aramaic or Syrian name was Tabitha.

   The most interesting thing about this miracle is how closely it resembles one of the miracles of Jesus. Peter learned by watching his master.

The Ministry of Jesus	The Ministry of Peter
Mark 5:24, 35-42	**Acts 9:36-42**
He put the unbelievers out of the room.	He put the unbelievers out of the room
He said, "Talitha cumi!" or "Little girl arise!"	He said, "Tabitha cumi!" or "Tabitha arise!"
He took the woman by the hand.	He took the woman by the hand.

C. Peter was positioned by God in the house of Simon the tanner.

   Simon is a Jewish name. This man was a tanner by trade. As far as most Jews were concerned this was an unclean trade because a tanner handled unclean animals and dealt with dead and defiled carcasses. Were he not a Christian, Peter never would have stayed with him. Peter was too much a Jew to do that. But that is precisely why Jesus wanted Peter at this house. He was preparing Peter for an unusual dream involving unclean animals. This whole journey was getting Peter ready for the next exciting event in the development of the Church.

Lesson 15
Chapter 10-11

These chapters are sometimes referred to as the opening of the door of faith to the Gentiles. The incidents that occur in these chapters reflect the Gospel being preached to the first completely Gentile household.

Its primary value in the entire Book of Acts is that it further helps us to understand the spread of the Gospel in the First Century and it also lays the groundwork for the ministry of the Apostle Paul—The Apostle to the Gentiles.

I. General Outline of Chapter 10-11

A. Cornelius Received a Vision and Sent a Delegation for Peter (Acts 10:1-8)

B. Peter Received a Vision (Acts 10:9-16)

C. Peter is Summoned to Caesarea (Acts 10:17-23)

D. Peter and Cornelius Meet (Acts 10:24-33)

E. Peter Preached to Cornelius' Household (Acts 10:34-43)

F. Cornelius and His Household are Saved (Acts 10:44-48)

G. Peter Reported the Event to the Jerusalem Leaders (Acts 11:1-18)

H. Barnabas and Saul Ministered in Antioch (Acts 11:19-26)

I. Relief Sent to Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-30)

II. Cornelius Received a Vision and Sent a Delegation for Peter (Acts 10:1-6)

There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, 2 a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. 3 About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!" 4 And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, "What is it, lord?" So he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God. 5 Now send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter. 6 He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do." And when the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier from among those who waited on him continually. 8 So when he had explained all these things to them, he sent them to Joppa.

A. Cornelius was a man who positioned himself for blessing.

1. He feared God (vs. 2).

Most expositors believe that Cornelius was not a total unbeliever but a "proselyte of the gate." A proselyte of the gate was a person who had renounced idolatry and had showed great interest in the Jewish faith. He may have observed some of the Jewish rites but he would not have been circumcised nor would he have been fully accepted as a member of the Jewish community.

2. He was a devout man (vs. 2).

   This means that he lived a godly lifestyle to the measure of his personal revelation of God.

3. He had led his household in the same experience of God.

   The fact that he was a faithful priest in his own household would pay off in a major way when the Gospel was preached in his house. His whole family would come to the Lord (vs. 44, 48).

4. He gave alms generously to those in need.

   Giving to those in need is something that always gets God's attention.

5. He was faithful in prayer and communion with God.

6. He was a just man (vs. 22).

   His men described him as follows:

   Cornelius the centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you.

7. He had a good reputation among all men including the Jews (vs.22).

8. He had led some of his men in an experience of God (vs. 7).

9. He was a man of authority yet a man of humility (vs. 25).

   As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him.

   This man was a powerful, Roman, military man who humbled himself before a fisherman from Galilee.

B. Cornelius' military training enabled him to obey swiftly (vs. 7-8).

III. Peter Received a Vision (Acts 10:9-16)

The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. 10 Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance 11 and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. 12 In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. 13 And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." 14 But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean." 15 And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common." 16 This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.

God works on both ends preparing the hearts of people for His divine appointments.

A. God used the natural circumstances to impart a spiritual vision to Peter.

1. Peter was hungry.

2. Peter was dwelling in the house of Simon the Tanner.

   I am sure that there were animal skins of all kinds around. It is possible that some of the skins came from clean and unclean animals alike.

3. It was just about time to eat.

4. Peter went up on the roof top to pray while supper was cooking (I wonder what will be in that stew).

5. Peter ended up in a deep sleep or trance.

6. Peter had a vision about food—clean and unclean food.

B. God spoke to Peter three times.

   This seems to have been the magic number for Peter (John 21:15ff.). Perhaps Peter's mother had taught him how to respond on the third command.

IV. Peter is Summoned to Caesarea (Acts 10:17-23)

Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant, behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate. 18 And they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there. 19 While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are seeking you. 20 Arise therefore, go down and go with them,

doubting nothing; for I have sent them." 21 Then Peter went down to the men who had been sent to him from Cornelius, and said, "Yes, I am he whom you seek. For what reason have you come?" 22 And they said, "Cornelius the centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you." 23 Then he invited them in and lodged them. On the next day Peter went away with them, and some brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

While Peter is having this vision, the men from the house of Cornelius arrive to Joppa from Caesarea to inquire for Peter (a journey of about 30 miles).

A. Peter tried to understand his vision.

He was most likely trying to discern if this was a spiritual dream or a dream that was inspired by his natural circumstance.

B. The arrival of the Cornelius's men helped Peter to respond to the vision.

Notice the various things that confirmed to Peter that he was hearing from God.

1. He had a personal dream or vision.
2. The Holy Spirit spoke to him about the men.
3. The testimony of the soldiers confirmed what God was saying.
4. The testimony of Cornelius confirmed what God was saying.

Peter no doubt had a restless night thinking about the animal skins, a soldier, a couple of other Gentile men, the vision he had seen and the trip he was going to be taking in the morning to the home of a Gentile centurion. Peter was a product of his times and was not very comfortable in eating with Gentiles (Acts 11:3; Gal. 2:11-13).

V. Peter and Cornelius Meet (Acts 10:24-33)

A. Cornelius tried to pay homage to Peter and bow down (vs. 25).

B. Peter refused to be worshipped by Cornelius (vs. 26).

C. Peter shared his apprehension with Cornelius and the meaning of his vision (vs.28).

But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

1. God showed him that his dream was not about animals but about men.

2. God indicated that the Gospel was for all men (Acts 10:34-35).

D. Cornelius shared his vision with Peter.

VI. Peter Preached to Cornelius' Household (Acts 10:34-43)

When Peter preached much of his new revelation came out in his preaching.

A. God shows no partiality (vs. 34-35).

Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him."

B. People from all nations are accepted by God on the same terms (vs. 35).

C. Christ is not just the Prince of Peace for the Jews; He is Lord of all (vs. 36).

D. The Gospel message of remission of sins is for "whoever believes in Him" (vs. 42-43).

And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead. To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.

VII. Cornelius and His Household are Saved (Acts 10:44-48)

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. 45 And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. 46 For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, 47 "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.

A. Notice how God interrupted Peter's preaching with an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Because this was new territory for Peter, he may or may not have been prepared to finish his message with an appropriate altar call. God did not give him a chance to decide what to do. God took the matter out of his hands and interrupted the message with a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

B. Notice how Peter and the other Jews that were with him knew that the Gentiles had received the gift of the Holy Spirit (vs. 46).

C. Notice how Peter went immediately to the subject of water baptism for these new converts.

This experience of water baptism would be the New Testament circumcision of the heart (Col. 2:11-14).

VIII. Peter Reported the Event to the Jerusalem Leaders (Acts 11:1-18)

When Peter got back to Jerusalem he had some explaining to do. Notice several things about this account.

A. Peter's does not seem to have been treated as preeminent. He had to give an account for his actions (vs. 1-3).

B. The other apostles and elders were not sure about what Peter had done. It was an issue of contention (vs. 2-4).

And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him, saying, "You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!" But Peter explained it to them in order from the beginning, saying…

C. Peter was accurate in his testimony of what had happened without embellishing it or taking anything away from it (vs. 4-14).

D. Peter indicated that God gave the Gentiles the same gift that they had received (vs. 15-17). It was all God and very little of him.

And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, "John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit." If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?

E. The church leaders accepted and rejoiced in Peter's testimony (vs.18).

When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.

Some of this acceptance may have been the fact that God had used Peter as the one to open this door. Peter may have been one of the least likely apostles to naturally be inclined to do this and had someone else done what Peter did, he may have been the least likely to believe or accept it.

IX. Barnabas and Saul Ministered in Antioch (Acts 11:19-26)

Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. 20 But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. 22 Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. 23 When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. 24 For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. 25 Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. 26 And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

Verse 19 takes us back to where the narrative left off in chapter 8 (before Saul's conversion, before Philip's preaching and before Cornelius' conversion).

A. The Spirit of God was moving in Antioch. As a result Antioch was ripe for the Gospel.

B. God was moving but there was a need for leadership, guidance and direction to channel the movement of the Spirit into the establishment of a local church.

   Those who were coming to the Lord needed leadership and they needed teaching or grounding in the Word.

C. The Jerusalem church sent leaders to where God was moving. They responded to the initiative of the Holy Spirit.

D. Barnabas was a good choice of someone to be sent out (Acts 4:36-37).

   And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

   1. He had proven character.
   2. He had a spirit of faith.
   3. He was a Spirit-led person.
   4. He was in leadership in the home church.
   5. He was a hard worker (I Cor. 9:6).
   6. He was an encourager of the brethren and young leaders (Acts 4:36; 9:36-28).
   7. He was a man of Cyprus—a good natural choice (Acts 4:36).

8. He was sold out to the kingdom of God (Acts 4:37).
9. He had proven his submission to the apostles (Acts 4:37).
10. He was a man with a mission and a clear purpose of heart.

E. The focus of Barnabas and Saul would be teaching and discipleship.

After Barnabas assessed the situation, he realized that the work was great and he would need some help. Tarsus was not that far away and he remembered a man by the name of Saul. He sent for him and together they grounded the believers in Antioch with intense teaching and discipleship.

They worked to lay a foundation for what would become a pattern church. The foundation included five things.

1. Genuine faith and repentance that was reflected in a turning to the Lord (vs. 21).

2. Cleaving to the Lord with purpose of heart which resulted in a high level of personal commitment (vs. 23, KJV).

   Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. –KJV

3. Willingness to set quality time aside to be taught the Word of the Lord (vs. 26).

4. Responsiveness to the Lord that acted quickly on the prophetic word (vs. 29).

5. Genuine Christianity that consisted of a sanctified walk not merely sanctified talk (vs. 26).

The result of their efforts was a Christianity that would become a model to the rest of the world.

And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. Acts 11:26

Notice that these believers did not call themselves Christians; they were called Christians by others. The word "Christian" means Christ-like. When people saw these believers they were reminded of Christ. What do people see in you?

X. Relief Sent to Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-30)

And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. 29 Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren

dwelling in Judea. 30 This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

This is the first time that we see a New Testament prophet in action. It appears that the prophets coming down from Jerusalem may have been part of a team sent to confirm the new work in Antioch.

In the context of the ministry of the prophets to the Antioch church a prophecy came forth about a coming famine.

A. There was a famine in Palestine some years later.

Many believe that the phrase "throughout all the world" should be rendered in "all the land." There is no record of a worldwide famine in this time period. According to Josephus, there was such a famine in Palestine between 44 and 48 A.D. The response of the people of Antioch to the prophecy seems to indicate that they were not the ones that would be affected by the famine but that it would primarily affect those in Jerusalem.

B. The Christians in Antioch responded to the prophecy in practical ways.

When God gives prophecy about future events such as this it is for the purpose of preparing us and motivating us to do something as a result of the information that we are given.

All of this is rather interesting because this prophecy most likely occurred around 41 A.D., which means that the famine would not arrive for another three to five years. In spite of that, notice how the believers responded.

1. They believed the prophet (II Chr. 20:20).

   Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the LORD your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper."

2. They acted immediately on the prophecy.

   Even though the famine would not occur for a few more years, they acted on the prophecy when it came.

3. They demonstrated a liberal spirit to those who were in need.

   Think of the effect it would have if you received money from a church for a famine that had not yet occurred. It would no doubt inspire you to make some preparations of your own and thus spare your family.

4. They sent Barnabas and Saul to Jerusalem with their financial gift for famine relief (vs. 30).

We will look a little more closely at the church at Antioch in our discussion of Acts 13.

Lesson 16
Chapter 12

I. General Outline of Chapter 12

A. Herod's Violence against the Church (Acts 12:1-4)

B. Peter Miraculously Freed from Prison (Acts 12:5-19)

C. Herod's Violent Death (Acts 12:20-24)

D. Barnabas and Saul Return to Antioch (Acts 12:25)

II. Herod's Violence against the Church (Acts 12:1-4)

Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. 2 Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword. 3 And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. Now it was during the Days of Unleavened Bread. 4 So when he had arrested him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover.

A. Herod set out to harass the church at Jerusalem.

> "This was Herod Agrippa, the son of Aristobulus, and grandson of Herod the Great; he was nephew to Herod Antipas, who beheaded John they Baptist, and brother to Herodias. He was made king by the Emperor Caligula, and was put in possession of all the territories formerly held by his uncle Philip and by Lysanias; viz. Iturea, Trachonitis, Abilene, with Gaulonitis, Batanaea, and Penias. To these the Emperor Claudius afterwards added Judea and Samaria; which were nearly all the dominions possessed by his grandfather, Herod the Great." –Clark's Commentary
>
> The word that is used here for "harass" can also be translated "hurt, harm, vex or injure."
>
> This is the first evidence of this type of persecution since the conversion of Saul.

B. Herod attacked the church by attacking its leadership.

1. He began by taking James the son of Zebedee captive and killing him.

   This James was the brother of John and a significant member of the apostolic company. He was part of Jesus' inner circle of disciples along with Peter and John. He would be the first of the Twelve to die as a martyr, but he would not be the last. Most of the apostles would die similar deaths. It is a bit ironical that perhaps the only one of the Twelve who would not die in this manner was his brother John.

Jesus had intimated to James earlier that he would drink the cup of suffering (Mt. 20:23).

So He said to them, "You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father."

2. He continued further by arresting Peter with the same goal in mind.

C. Herod was greatly influenced by a desire to please the Jews.

This had been the common practice of all of the Roman officials who had been placed over the Jewish territories. They tried to placate the Jews whenever they could to keep the peace and maintain a favorable posture before them.

"This was the principle on which he acted. It was not from a sense of right; it was not to do justice, and to protect the innocent; it was not to discharge the appropriate duties of a magistrate and a king, but it was to promote his own popularity. It is probable that Agrippa would have acted in this way in any circumstances. He was ambitious, vain, and fawning; he sought, as his great principle, popularity, and he was willing to sacrifice, like many others, truth and justice to obtain this end. But there was also a particular reason for this in his case. He held his appointment under the Roman emperor. This foreign rule was always unpopular among the Jews. In order, therefore, to secure a peaceful reign, and to prevent insurrection and tumult, it was necessary for him to court their favor; to indulge their wishes, and to fall in with their prejudices." –Barnes Notes

We will talk more about the vanity of this man toward the end of the chapter.

III. Peter Miraculously Freed from Prison (Acts 12:5-19)

A. Peter was held with maximum security (Acts 12:6).

And when Herod was about to bring him out, that night Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers; and the guards before the door were keeping the prison.

Peter had been known for escaping from prison (Acts 5:19-21). He was guarded with 16 soldiers who worked in shifts around the clock. He was apparently chained to two soldiers on either side of him with two soldiers outside the prison cell door as added security.

B. Many of the believers held an all-night prayer meeting in Peter's behalf (Acts 12:5; See: Jam. 5:16b).

Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church.

The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. James 5:16b

The prayer held here does not imply that the believers did not pray in the same manner for James as some have contended.

C. God sent an angel to deliver Peter from prison (Acts 12:7-11).

Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, "Arise quickly!" And his chains fell off his hands. 8 Then the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and tie on your sandals"; and so he did. And he said to him, "Put on your garment and follow me." 9 So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. 10 When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. 11 And when Peter had come to himself, he said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people."

Notice several things in this context:

1. Peter was sleeping soundly. This is a perfect picture of peace in the midst of the storm. It reminds one of when Jesus slept in the boat and the disciples were in turmoil (Mt. 8:24-26).

   And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep. Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.

2. An angel of the Lord accomplished a many-faceted deliverance.

   a. There was a bright light.
   b. The guards were put in some sort of trance to miss what was happening.
   c. The chains fell off from Peters wrists.
   d. The angel walked out with Peter through locked doors.
   e. The iron gates opened automatically when they left the prison enclosure.

   Notice that the angel did what Peter could not do, but Peter had to so what he could do (get dressed, put on his sandals and follow the angel).

3. Peter had to pinch himself to be sure that he was not dreaming (vs. 9-11).

D. Peter came to where the believers were praying (Acts 12:12-17).

So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying. 13 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a girl named Rhoda came to answer. 14 When she recognized Peter's voice, because of her gladness she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter stood before the gate. 15 But they said to her, "You are beside yourself!" Yet she kept insisting that it was so. So they said, "It is his angel." 16 Now Peter continued knocking; and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. 17 But motioning to them with his hand to keep silent, he declared to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, "Go, tell these things to James and to the brethren." And he departed and went to another place.

Notice how the believers were astonished at their own answer to prayer. Perhaps this was because their prayers for James had not been so effectual.

1. Peter reported what God had done.

2. Peter demonstrated his accountability to the senior pastor and elders of the local church.

   This prayer meeting was at the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark. Some have suggested that perhaps there were other such meetings on Peter's behalf including one at the house of James that may have included much of the leadership team.

E. Peter got out of town (Acts 12:17).

Peter did what any of us would do if we had just escaped from prison and a sure death sentence. He got out of town until the heat was off. He did not tell anyone where he was going. He simply went to "another place." (The Udder Place)

F. The prison guards were killed (Acts 12:18-19).

Then, as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers about what had become of Peter. 19 But when Herod had searched for him and not found him, he examined the guards and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and stayed there.

Peter's absence was only discovered in the morning. Think of the shock of the soldiers who looked to their right and left only to discover empty chains. And what

kind of horror was experienced by the guards outside of the cell when the soldiers on the inside told of Peter's escape.

Herod most likely believed the story of the soldiers who were guarding Peter, but in order to save face he ordered them killed. This was the usual penalty for a Roman soldier who fell asleep on the job.

G. Herod left the city bewildered (Acts 12:19).

The only explanation for why Herod did not conduct an extensive manhunt and for why he got out of town himself was because he knew that something supernatural had just happened and, as a superstitious man, he was most likely scared.

IV. Herod's Violent Death (Acts 12:20-24)

Now Herod had been very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; but they came to him with one accord, and having made Blastus the king's personal aide their friend, they asked for peace, because their country was supplied with food by the king's country. 21 So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. 22 And the people kept shouting, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" 23 Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died. 24 But the word of God grew and multiplied.

A. Herod met a violent end.

There is more here than meets the eye. History records that this Herod was a very vain and ambitious man who loved the praise of men. This scene was actually set up by him so that people would worship him as a god and no longer relate to him as a man.

Josephus gives insight into his death in Book 19, Chapter 8 of his epic work as a third century historian (page 412).

Now, when Agrippa had reigned three years over all of Judea, he came to the city of Cesarea, which ws formerly called Strato's Tower; and there he exhibited shows in honour of Caesar, upon his being informed that there was a certain festival celebrated to make vows for his safety. At which festival, a great multitude was gotten together of the principal persons, and such as were of dignity though his province. On the second day of which shows he put on a garment made wholly of silver , and of a contexture truly wonderful, and came into the theatre early in the morning; at which time the silver of his garment being illuminated by the sun's rays upon it, shone out after a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread a horror over those that looked intently upon him: and presently his flatterers cried out, one from one place, and another from another, (thought not for his good,) that he was a god: and they added,--"Be thou merciful to us; for although we have hitherto

reverenced thee only as a man, yet shall we henceforth own thee as superior to mortal nature." Upon this the king did neither rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery. But, as he presently afterwards looked up, he saw an owl sitting on a certain rope over his head, and immediately understood that this bird was the messenger of ill tidings, as it had once been the messenger of good tidings to him; and fell into the deepest sorrow. A severe pain also arose in his belly, and began in a most violent manner. He therefore looked at his friends, and said, "I, whom you call a god, am commanded presently to depart this life; while Providence thus reproves the lying words you just now said to me; and I, who was by you called immortal, am immediately to be hurried away by death. But I am bound to accept of what Providence allots, as it please god; for we have by no means lived ill, but in a splendid and happy manner." When he had said this, his pain was become violent. Accordingly he was carried into the palace; and the rumour went abroad everywhere, that he would certainly die in a little time. But the multitude presently sat in sackcloth, with their wives and children, after the law of their country, and besought God for the king's recovery. All places were also full of mourning and lamentation. Now the king rested in a high changer, and as he saw them below lying prostrate on the ground, the could not himself forbear weeping. And when he had been quite worn out by the pain in his belly for five days, he departed this life, being in the fifty-fourth year of his age, and the seventh year of his reign…

Herod is not the only persecutor of the church to suffer a violent end. Pontius Pilate is believed to have been expelled from office only to commit suicide. Nero who killed thousands of Christians was assisted in suicide by his men because of his lack of courage to do so himself. Domitian was murdered by his own people as was other emperors including Caius, Severus and Heliogabalus. Emperor Claudius was eaten by worms. Decius, Gallus, Aurelian, Maximin, all persecutors of the church, died violent deaths. Maximinus put out the eyes of thousands of Christians soon after which a terrible disease of the eyes broke out among his people. He himself died in great agony. Valens, who caused 80 church leaders to be put on a ship and sent to sea and burned with the ship, was defeated by the Goths and fled to a cottage where he was burned alive.

B. Herod's violent death is a study in contrasts.

1. On the one hand you have a man of the world who was characterized by seeking the approval of men and had a desire to be reverenced as God.

2. On the other hand you have the apostles of God who were characterized by humility and a desire to please and glorify God.

   We will look at this more closely in just a minute.

C. The end result of all of this persecution was positive (vs. 24).

But the word of God grew and multiplied.

V. Barnabas and Saul Return to Antioch (Acts 12:25)

And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their ministry, and they also took with them John whose surname was Mark.

This verse ties back in with Acts 11:30 and takes us back to the church in Antioch which we will look at more closely in our discussion of Acts 13 in the next lesson.

VI. The apostles in the Book of Acts were men of humility who sought to glorify God and not themselves.

It is amazing how in the life and ministry of the apostles whether they were preaching, testifying, working miracles or healing people always glorified God for what was done (Acts 2:47; 3:8, 21; 10:46; 19:17).

A. They could have been tempted in specific situations to take glory to themselves.

1. In times of overcoming persecution (Acts 4:21).

   So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done.

2. In times of special quickening in the word (Acts 13:48).

   Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

3. In times of reporting a great meeting with great results (Acts 11:16-18).

   When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life." Acts 11:18

4. In times of being used in the miraculous (Acts 4:24ff.).

5. In times of experiencing a great deliverance (Acts 12:7, 17).

6. In times of success in outreach on the field (Acts 14:27; 21:19-20).

   Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. Acts 14:27

When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. Acts 21:19-20a

B. In every situation they resisted the temptation and refused to allow people to worship them (Acts 3:12; 10:25-26; 14:11-15).

As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I myself am also a man." Acts 10:25-26

Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!" 12 And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. 13 Then the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, intending to sacrifice with the multitudes. 14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out 15 and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them…" Acts 14:11-15

They resisted the temptation to publish a magazine with 200 photos with them in the center of each of them.

C. We face many areas where we could also seek our own glory.

1. We can glory in our good heritage (Rom. 2:17-26).

2. We can boast in the men that we follow (I Cor. 1:12-13; 3:21).

Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things are yours: whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come--all are yours. And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.
I Corinthians 3:21-23

3. We can boast in our talents and abilities (I Cor. 4:7; Phil. 3:3; I Cor. 9:16).

For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? I Corinthians 4:7

4. We can boast in our visions and revelations (II Cor. 12:1).

5. We can boast in our works and accomplishments (Eph. 2:8-9).

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

All of this boasting is evil in the eyes of God (Jam. 4:16; I Cor. 5:6).

D. When we see things clearly from an eternal perspective, we can only glory or boast in God.

God has designed salvation and His choosing in such a way that it leaves no room for boasting. It is not of works (Rom. 4:2) and it is contrary to the normal human wisdom (I Cor. 1:26-29; Rom. 3:27).

We can glory in…

1. The hope of the glory of God (Rom. 5:2).
2. The Lord (Rom. 5:11; 15:17; I Cor. 1:31; II Cor. 10:17; Phil. 3:3).
3. The cross of Christ (Gal. 6:4).
4. Tribulation (Rom. 5:3).
5. Infirmities (II Cor. 11:30; 12:9).

No one should stop us of this boasting (II Cor. 11:10).

Lesson 17
Chapter 13

I. General Outline of Chapter 13

A. Barnabas and Saul Sent Out on First Missionary Journey (Acts 13:1-3)

B. Ministry on the Island of Cyprus (Acts 13:4-12)

C. Ministry at Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:13-41)

D. Blessing and Conflict at Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:42-52)

II. Barnabas and Saul Sent Out on First Missionary Journey (Acts 13:1-3)

Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

A. The Antioch Church had come to a place of maturity.

1. Local ministries had now been raised up and placed into position.

   a. There were prophets.
   b. There were teachers.
   c. There were other elders (by implication).

   Where did these ministries come from? We know Saul was a teacher and Barnabas was a prophet. It appears that like begets like.

2. The church plant was ready to become a church planter.

3. They were willing to send out their best to the nations.

B. Notice several things about this commissioning of Saul and Barnabas

1. It seems to have taken place in a prophetic assembly.

   a. There were prophets on hand (Compare Acts 11:27).
   b. It was a special season of fasting and prayer.
   c. It was in the context of worship and ministry to the Lord.

2. It was a commissioning and not a calling to ministry.

a. They already knew what their calling was (Acts 9:15-16).
b. They now receive the official laying on of hands and sending.
c. This appears to have been part of the plan all along.

3. It was a commissioning by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:4).

So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

To be authorized by the local leaders through the laying on of hands is to be authorized by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit backs up the official actions of church leadership (Mt. 18:18).

III. Ministry on the Island of Cyprus (Acts 13:4-12)

A. Their ministry on Cyprus was to the Jew first (vs. 5).

And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John as their assistant.

We will come back and talk about John Mark later.

1. Barnabas and Saul follow the game plan "to the Jew first and also to the Greek (Rom. 1:16; See also Acts 13:46).

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.
Romans 1:16

2. Barnabas and Saul would search out for a synagogue whenever they came into a new region (Acts 13:5, 14, 42).

The synagogue was a perfect place to establish a beachhead for future expansion.

a. Synagogues were established in most cities throughout the Roman Empire.

The exception to this would be Rome itself and other Roman colonies or model cities such as Philippi (Acts 16:12).

b. The synagogue was structured very much like the New Testament local churches would be structured—elders with a senior or chief elder (Acts 18:8).

c. The synagogue used the same Scriptures that the New Testament local churches would use (Acts 13:27).

d. The synagogue was filled with people who were anticipating the coming of the Christ, the Messiah (Acts 18:5).

B. Their ministry on Cyprus involved a confrontation with the kingdom of darkness (vs. 6-11).

Now when they had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus, 7 who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. 8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. 9 Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him 10 and said, "O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? 11 And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time." And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand.

In many regions where the apostles went preaching the Gospel they had to deal with the "strong man" of the region. The strong man was an instrument of Satan who had been used to keep the people in bondage to the spirits of darkness. For Philip in Samaria it had been Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:9-13). For Barnabas and Saul on the island of Cyprus it was Elymas (or Bar-Jesus) a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet.

1. Barnabas and Saul had an opportunity on Cyprus to speak to an influential and intelligent proconsul named Sergius Paulus.

   The apostles understood that if you want to unlock a region to the Gospel the best way to do it is start from the top and work down. Often those who preach the Gospel start with a ministry to the "down and outer." Actually for the best result we should never neglect the "up and outer" or those people who carry natural authority. Sometimes we can be intimidated by their position and, yet, they are people with real needs as well. They can open the door to those under their charge.

   a. The Philippian jailer had the power to open the door to his entire household (Acts 16:31-34).

   b. Sergius Paulus had the power to open the door to an entire island.

   c. Those of Caesar's household could unlock the door to Caesar's realm (Phil. 4:22).

   Statistics have shown that if a child is the first member of a family to become a Christian the likelihood of the whole family coming to Christ is less than ten percent. If the mother is the first member of a family to become a Christian the

likelihood of the whole family coming to Christ is about twenty percent. But if the father is the first member of the family to become a Christian the likelihood of the whole family coming to Christ is over ninety percent.

This same principle works in any realm including governments, businesses or families.

2. Barnabas and Saul were resisted by Elymas who sought to keep people from believing the Gospel.

Once again the power of the kingdom of God overruled the power of the kingdom of darkness. Saul being filled with the Holy Spirit pronounced natural blindness upon Elymas on top of his already spiritually blind condition.

C. Their ministry on Cyprus had a great result (vs. 12).

Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

I don't really know if it was the teaching that astonished the proconsul or the display of the power of God that accompanied the teaching.

IV. Ministry at Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:13-41)

The ministry team of Barnabas and Saul moved quickly from Cyprus through Perga to Antioch of Pisidia. Several significant things took place here.

A. John Mark returned home to Jerusalem. We will discuss this in a later lesson.

B. Saul became Paul from this point on (Compare Acts 13:9 and 13:13).

Saul was well-known in Jewish circles (not by sight but by name). He may have changed his name to minimize any negative effect that it might have as they ministered in the synagogues of the Jews.

C. The team became Paul and Barnabas rather than Barnabas and Saul from this point on (Acts 13:7 with 13:46).

Saul's obvious gifts and abilities had made room for him. Barnabas was a great encourager who had the grace to allow this to happen smoothly.

D. They went to the synagogue on the Sabbath where they were invited to speak (vs. 14-15).

Paul was a well educated man and most likely had certain robes that distinguished

him as a rabbi. It was common for the ruler of the synagogue to invite visiting rabbis to speak or address the congregation. Such visitors were usually welcomed as a breath of fresh air and as those who could report on what was transpiring in other places of the world.

E. Paul preached a message that recounted Israel's history from Moses to Christ (vs.16-41).

V. Blessing and Conflict at Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:42-52)

The team experienced both positive and negative things in relation to their ministry at Antioch of Pisidia.

A. There were positive things that happened.

1. The Gentiles who heard about the message preached begged to hear it as well (vs. 42).

2. Many of the Jewish people responded favorably to Paul's message (vs. 43).

3. The following Sabbath nearly the whole city came out to hear them (vs. 44).

B. There were some negative things that happened.

1. The Jews who did not believe were envious of the crowds (vs. 45).

2. The Jews who were envious contradicted, blasphemed and opposed the work that Paul and Barnabas were doing (vs. 45).

3. Paul responded by taking his focus off of the Jews and turning it to the Gentiles (vs. 46).

Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles."

It should be noted that we judge ourselves when we reject the word of the Lord to us.

C. The results ended up both positive and negative.

1. Many of the Gentiles believed and the word of the Lord spread throughout the whole region (vs. 48-49).

2. The apostles were expelled from the region by the persecution of the Jews (vs.

50).

But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region.

Paul's greatest opposition came from those who should have been the most ready to receive.

D. The apostles reacted in two ways.

1. They shook the dust off of their feet and moved on to Iconium (vs. 51).

But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium.

a. They did not take the rejection personally.

b. They did not let it slacken their pace.

c. They determined to preach where the door was open.

Jesus Himself had given His disciples this instruction (Mt. 10:11-15).

Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out. And when you go into a household, greet it. If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!

2. They were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit (vs. 52).

And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

VI. The First Missionary Journey Mapped Out

The above map covers the period from Acts 13:4 through to Acts 15:35 inclusive of the first missionary journey and the trip to Jerusalem for the council meeting (follow numbers 1-19 for order of journey).

VII. The Pattern of the Antioch Church

Key verses relating to the Antioch Church:

Acts 8:1 – In one sense we could say that this was the first church that Paul started.

Acts 11:19-30 – The official beginning of the Antioch Church

Acts 13:1-3 – The first missionary thrust from the Antioch Church

A. History and Background of the Antioch Church

These are the beginnings of a church that became very influential for well over 500 years. Some of the giants among the early church fathers led this great church, including Ignatius.

There was no city, apart from Jerusalem, that was so intimately connected with the history of the Apostolic Church. After the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the church at Antioch became even more dominant.

It was a church that at its height grew to a place of over 100,000 in membership with over 3000 people on staff.

Because of the Jewish nature of the Jerusalem Church, and because of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., it is fair to say that Antioch became the first church to really model true New Testament Christianity and it became the pattern church for the world.

B. Twelve Characteristics of an Antioch Church

The Antioch Church was:

1. An Evangelistic Church (Acts 11:19-20)

   It was started by believers who were fleeing for their lives, but who could not cease to share the good news wherever they went. It was birthed in a spirit of evangelism.

2. A Teaching Church (Acts 11:26; 13:1)

   It was a church committed to the intense training of its membership. Barnabas and Saul taught intensely. Teachers were raised up. Leaders from Antioch were used to keep doctrinal purity in the emerging church and history records that it established a theological seminary for the training of church leaders.

3. A Multi-Cultural Church (Acts 11:20; 13:1)

   It was a church that was a blending of races and cultures, much more than Jerusalem. They extended the Gospel beyond the Jewish community including men of Cyprus and Cyrene (Northern Africa). Their leadership included Lucius of Cyrene.

4. A Team Ministry Church (Acts 13:1)

   They believed in the five-fold ministry and practiced Team Ministry.

5. A Spirit-Anointed Church

   They believed in the gifts of the Spirit and had a special touch of the grace of God on all that they did. There was healing, deliverance and prophetic gifts in operation.

6. A Prophetic Church

   They made a strong place for prophecy in the church. Jesus was the head of this church and His voice through prophecy was important in guiding and directing the mission of the church. As a result, it became a place where prophets were raised up and a place where the prophets' ministry was respected.

7. A Generous Church

   They were willing to respond to a prophetic word about famine affecting Judea by sending relief money to "the mother church" years before the famine came (up to four to five years before).

8. A Worshipping Church

   They were a church that understood their function as priests unto God. They knew how to "minister unto the Lord".

9. A Praying Church

   They made it a priority to set aside seasons of prayer and fasting to hear the voice of the Lord to the church.

10. An Equipping Church

    They believed in the raising up of leaders. They believed in the laying on of hands for commissioning. They believed in prophetic assembly and body ministry where every member has a place of function.

11. A World Church

    I am sure they had a vision for their city, but they also had a vision for the world. Antioch became the center for world missions and church planting teams. The Book of Acts only gives us the record of one of these teams, but we know that there were other teams doing the same thing.

12. A Respected Church

    Antioch became respected as a model for New Testament Christianity. It became a pattern for other churches to follow.

It became a place where church disputes were settled. Several church councils were held in Antioch and it was considered one of the top five churches in the world for many centuries to follow.

Lesson 18
Chapter 14

I. General Outline of Chapter 14

A. Paul and Barnabas at Iconium (Acts 14:1-7)

B. Paul and Barnabas Confront Idolatry in Lystra (Acts 14:8-20).

C. Paul and Barnabas Head Home to Antioch (Acts 14:21-28)

II. Paul and Barnabas at Iconium (Acts 14:1-7)

Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed. 2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren. 3 Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. 4 But the multitude of the city was divided: part sided with the Jews, and part with the apostles. 5 And when a violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abuse and stone them, 6 they became aware of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding region. 7 And they were preaching the gospel there.

Notice several things that happened in Iconium that was becoming a pattern for cities that had a synagogue.

A. They went and preached in the synagogue where many Jews believed.

B. The unbelieving Jews stirred up the multitudes against them.

C. They continued ministering boldly until the door closed.

D. They left the city to either take the heat off of the new believers or to escape for their lives.

III. Paul and Barnabas Confront Idolatry in Lystra (Acts 14:8-20)

And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked. 9 This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, 10 said with a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" And he leaped and walked. 11 Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!" 12 And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. 13 Then the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, intending to sacrifice with the multitudes. 14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out 15 and saying, "Men,

why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, 16 who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. 17 Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." 18 And with these sayings they could scarcely restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them. 19 Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. 20 However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

Notice several things that happened in Lystra that were becoming a pattern for cities that did not have a synagogue. Lystra was a Roman colony. In Roman colonies, synagogues were not allowed. The Romans wanted their colonies to only reflect the worship of the state and Roman gods.

A. God used signs and wonders to open the door for the preaching of the Gospel.

B. The people readily believed what was preached.

C. The tendency was to blend their traditional religions with Christianity.

D. Jews from other places followed Paul and stirred up opposition.

E. The apostles became the object of persecution.

F. The apostles had to flee for their very lives.

Note: It is very likely that Timothy witnessed the stoning of Paul. Lystra was his home. This stoning very likely resulted in the death and resurrection of Paul (II Cor. 12:1-7).

It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities.

IV. Paul and Barnabas Head Home to Antioch (Acts 14:21-28)

And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, 22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God." 23 So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. 24 And after they had passed through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. 25 Now when they

had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. 26 From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed. 27 Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. 28 So they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

A. They went back home by the same route they had come (bypassing Cyprus) so that they could follow-up on the works that they had started.

B. They arrived at home with the good report, "Mission Accomplished!"

V. Paul and Barnabas' Basic Method in Church Planting

A. They had four main considerations in choosing an area of focus.

1. Natural wisdom and sound judgment

   Paul began his second journey while in a conversation with Barnabas about the wisdom of visiting the churches that they had started on their first journey to "see how they were doing" (Acts 15:36).

   When Paul finished visiting those works he thought the next logical step to take was to go into Bithynia (Acts 16:7).

2. The leading of the Holy Spirit

   On Paul's second journey when he was thinking about going into Bithynia he had a supernatural encounter by way of a vision where the Holy Spirit interrupted Paul's plan and directed him to Macedonia (Acts 16:9). It should be noted that this direction was general and not specific. Macedonia was a region and not a specific city.

3. Keying in on chief cities

   On Paul's second missionary journey when the Holy Spirit directed Paul to Macedonia he responded by passing through several small towns to go to Philippi which was the foremost city of the region and a Roman colony (Acts 16:12).

   This plan would harmonize with the natural demographic. They would go where the people were. They would follow the natural lines of commerce. They would establish a beachhead in the central city and from that city the Gospel would go to the peripheral areas (I Th. 1:8).

4. Following the open doors and the moving of the Spirit in a locality

There is no point in preaching the Gospel where the doors are closed. When you are an apostle you must follow the anointing. You must go into fields that are ripe for harvest. This is how Philip ended up in Samaria (Acts 8:14). This is how Barnabas ended up in Antioch (Acts 11:19-26, 4:36).

B. They had a basic method to follow in establishing churches.

Paul is the best New Testament ministry example of a church planter. We know that he traveled through hundreds of cities. We know that he preached in at least 30 cities. We know that he established at least 10 strong, reproducing churches all in only 20 years of ministry, four of which he was held prisoner. Paul followed a general pattern that can serve as a guide to us today.

This method is seen by taking a close look at the verbs or action words in chapter 14 of the Book of Acts.

1. They were recommended (vs. 26: Acts 15:50).

   This word literally means "to give over into the hands of another." There comes a point in the ministry of an apostle where the church must release him and turn him over to the direct oversight of the grace of God or the Holy Spirit. He is then ready to go out.

2. They went both together (vs. 1).

   The apostles in the New Testament were dedicated to the principle of team ministry (Acts 3:1; 5:29; 8:14; 11:25-27; 12:25; 13:5, 13, 21; 15:39-40; 19:29; 20:4, 13; 21:16). They followed the pattern that Jesus had given them to go two by two. In this case they had a third person who represented a minister in training (Acts 13:5; 16:1). They believed that two are better than one (Eccl. 4:9-10).

3. They spoke boldly (vs. 3).

   The apostles were always ready to speak, share and testify in a bold way. They were ever ready to use any platform that was available to them (Refer to Lesson 10 on Boldness).

4. They showed signs and wonders (vs. 5).

   The apostles used both the word and demonstration of the Holy Spirit in signs and wonders to open new areas of witness (I Cor. 2:1-5).

5. They preached the gospel (vs. 7, 21).

   Their preaching did not contain a lot of theorizing, they stuck to the basics. When people are grounded in the basics, they will be able to go on themselves.

Therefore all of the preaching of the apostles in the Book of Acts focused on Christ, repentance, faith, water baptism, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, forgiveness and the cross of Christ. They preached the proper Christian birth and all of its implication.

6. They taught disciples (vs. 21).

   As they gathered the first group of disciples who would make up the core of this new work, they placed a high priority on teaching and laying a solid foundation in the hearts and minds of the people (Acts 11:26; 17:11; 18:11; 20:20; 28:31).

7. They departed (vs. 20).

   At this point they put in a temporary structure and left the work giving it a chance to walk on its own. Sometimes they were forced to move on (Acts 14:5-6, 19). At other times they knew it was time to move on (Acts 14:21). When they had a choice, they stayed in one place long enough to organize believers into a local church.

8. They returned to follow up (vs. 21).

   After some time past they came back to these churches to see how they had done and to follow-up on them. They never abandon new works but they wanted to see them firmly established.

9. They confirmed the disciples (vs. 22).

   The word here means to "strengthen, prop up or support." Their goal was to come in and address areas that had revealed themselves in their absence and minister to those areas which would have the result of rendering the church "more firm." They keyed in on weaknesses that had been exposed while they were away.

10. They exhorted the believers (vs. 22).

    They never failed to exhort the people and encourage them in the ways of the Lord reminding them that the Christian life of one of a certain amount of tribulation and problem solving (Acts 11:23; 15:32; 20:2).

11. They ordained elders (vs. 23).

    The proving time for the temporary structure was over now and official elders could be set into the church.

12. They prayed (vs.23).

All of this was done in the context of fasting and prayer. They realized that Jesus was the head of the church and His direction during these important times was of utmost importance (Acts 13:1-3; I Cor. 7:5).

13. They fasted (vs. 23).

14. They commended the church and its leadership to the Lord (vs. 23).

    There came a time when even as they had been commended to the Lord for their ministry that the church and its newly established leadership team would be commended and delivered as ripe fruit into the hands of the Lord who would now lead them and guide them as an autonomous local church (Acts 20:32).

    So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

15. They returned home (vs. 27).

    They had now officially completed their first missionary journey. They came back to the local church from which they had been sent a few years earlier. The apostles had covered more than 1400 miles and were gone for between two and three years.

16. They gathered the church (vs. 27).

    It was time for the sending church to rejoice in the fruit that had come through their obedience to the Holy Spirit to send out the two principle figures from the church. This was the church's reward.

17. They reported all that God had done (vs. 27).

    There is a certain amount of accountability reflected in these verses. They had been gone for over two years, now it was time for the report. Notice how they focused on God and on the victories, not the personal sacrifice and suffering that they went through.

18. They stayed a long time (vs. 28).

    This kind of a trip had to be very grueling. It was now time for a rest. It was time to get back involved in the sending church. It was a time to renew relationships. It was a time to get inspired for the next leg of their journey.

    If the transactions in Acts 14 occurred, as is supposed, about 45-47 A.D. and the council at Jerusalem assembled about 50-52 A.D., then there is an interval of between 3-5 years in which we have no record of Paul and Barnabas. It is

probable that they took other trips during this time for which we have no record (See Romans 15:18-19).

For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient—in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

We have no record of this trip to Illyricum. It may have happened in conjunction with his second or third missionary journeys or some other trip.

Lesson 19
Chapter 15

I. General Outline of Chapter 15

A. The Conflict over Circumcision (Acts 15:1-5)

B. The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:6-21)

C. The Circulation of the Jerusalem Letter (Acts 15:22-35)

D. The Conflict over John Mark (Acts 15:36-41)

II. The Conflict over Circumcision (Acts 15:1-5)

And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." 2 Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question. 3 So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren. 4 And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them. 5 But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses."

Satan had not been able to destroy or deter the growth of the church by means of external violence and persecution, so now he attempts to destroy it from within with internal strife.

A. What was the source of the strife?

Evidently there were those in the church in Judea (most likely Jerusalem itself) who believed that the message Paul was preaching among the Gentiles was an incomplete message. Paul was not preaching the doctrine of circumcision as it had been taught under Abraham and Moses.

As a result they had taken it upon themselves to travel to many of the churches that Paul and Barnabas had established to set these new believers straight. Their message could be summarized as follows:

1. They evidently made negative statements about Paul's incomplete message.

2. They insisted that those who received Christ needed to be circumcised according to the Mosaic order.

3. The also insisted that the new believers keep other ceremonial aspects of the Law of Moses.

As one can imagine, these self-appointed custodians of truth caused great confusion among these newly formed churches. Because they came from Jerusalem the origin of Christianity, their words carried a certain amount of weight. In addition, they seemed to reflect the fact that this is what the apostles in Jerusalem were teaching.

Paul was extremely upset by what was going on and personally confronted many of these teachers. The book of Galatians reflects how he felt about this whole issue. He viewed this issue as a confusion of covenants and their preaching as "another gospel" and a perversion of the truth (Gal. 1:6-8).

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

He encouraged these converts to stand fast in their liberty in Christ (Gal. 5:1).

Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

B. What was the recommended plan of action?

Paul knew that if he was to quench the fires that had been started by these false teachers, he would need an official statement from the apostolic leaders at the Jerusalem church.

C. What was the atmosphere in Jerusalem?

The atmosphere in Jerusalem was divided on the issue. While many rejoiced at the conversion of the Gentiles others were troubled. The ones who were particularly troubled were those believers who had been Pharisees before coming to Christ. Pharisees had been known for being sticklers regarding the "letter of the law."

The truth of the matter is that up to this time the Jerusalem church had not really needed to deal with the issue of the Gentiles, because it was a city filled with Jews. The Jewish believers had a difficult time understanding the relationship of the old order to the new order. Most of them practiced both or a blending of the old and the new.

It was obvious that a formal meeting was needed to address this issue.

III. The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:6-21)

A. It is important to understand just exactly what this gathering was and what it was not.

1. It is important to understand what this gathering was not.

a. It was not a general church council.

Some have suggested that this was a worldwide church council that was a forerunner of subsequent church councils convened in later church history.

b. It was not an example of central church government.

Some have suggested that this is an example of the church at Jerusalem exercising its authority as the mother church over all other churches. This would be their justification for denominationalism and external control.

c. It was not an example of one church dictating to other churches how they must function.

Some have suggested that his proves that the local churches were not autonomous and were required to line up behind the dictates or policy rulings of another church.

2. It is important to understand what this gathering was.

a. It was a case of a conflict between two great churches and the messages that were coming from each of them—Antioch and Jerusalem.

b. It was a local church problem that was taken to the source of the problem.

c. It was a local church (Jerusalem) trying to rectify a mess that had been caused by it own membership and their erroneous teaching (Acts 15:24).

Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "You must be circumcised and keep the law" –to whom we gave no such commandment…

B. It is important to understand who participated in this meeting and who did not (Acts 15:6, 12).

Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter.

1. This meeting was convened by the Jerusalem church leadership to consider this matter.

a. It included the resident apostles (who served as elders in the local church).

b. It included the other elders of the Jerusalem church.

c. It included those who were bringing the complaint—Paul and Barnabas.

2. This meeting was not an open meeting and it did not include the false teachers and any others who might have been upset by the controversy.

C. It is important to understand how this meeting was conducted.

This is one of the few cases where an actual elders meeting is described in the New Testament. In Acts chapter 1 the apostles met to discuss the replacement of Judas, but this chapter describes an eldership in action.

1. Proposal (Acts 1:15; 15:6)

This involved the presentation of the issue at hand or placing the agenda item on the table.

2. Discussion (Acts 1:23; 15:7, 12, 13)

Once the issue was on the table the meeting was opened up to those in attendance for debating, testimony, the gathering and sharing of data, sharing appropriate scripture verses and the like.

a. In this context there was some open disputing (vs. 7).

Notice how that even though there were strong opinions, the discussion took place in an orderly way (vs. 12, 13).

b. In this context Peter gave a testimony of his experience at the house of Cornelius (vs. 7-11). He concluded that God had already made His will known.

Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? Acts 15:10

c. In this context Paul and Barnabas gave testimony of their ministry among the Gentiles (vs. 12).

3. Prayer (Acts 1:24)

While no prayer is specifically mentioned in this gathering it was a vital part of the gathering in Acts chapter 1.

4. Agreement (Acts 1:26; 15:22, 25)

   As the discussion continued there was a growing consensus that was confirmed by the Scripture and the senior leader of the Jerusalem church.

   Notice the unique role that James the brother of the Lord played especially at the conclusion of the discussion (vs. 13-21).

   Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath. Acts 15:19-21

   a. He summarized the discussion.

   b. He quoted from the Scripture.

   c. He made a statement of judgment on the matter.

   d. He proposed a plan of action.

5. Action (Acts 1:26; 15:30)

   The early church was committed to the principle of unity. Until that unity was felt by those present, no action was taken. The unity itself became a testimony of God's grace upon the meeting and the direction of the Holy Spirit.

D. It is important to understand what this meeting accomplished and what it did not accomplish.

   1. It did not settle the issue for many of those who were not part of the decision process particularly the Judaizers (Acts 21:18-21).

      On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs."

   2. It did not settle what was to be the relationship of the Jewish converts to Christianity and the Law of Moses.

      Even though the Gentiles that were coming to Christ were not to be bound by the law, the Jewish converts still seemed to maintain a close connection. Many feel

that this is one of the reasons why Jerusalem was destroyed, to help these believers make a break with Judaism once and for all.

IV. The Circulation of the Jerusalem Letter (Acts 15:22-35)

It was proposed that a letter be written to reflect this decision and that the letter be circulated among the Gentile churches.

A. It would be carried by chosen or respected leaders (Judas and Silas) from the Jerusalem church to give weight to it (Acts 15:22, 27, 32).

B. It would be read at the Antioch church first (Acts 15:30-31).

C. It would be circulated by Paul and Silas on the second missionary journey (Acts 16:4).

D. It would accomplish several things.

1. It would denounce the false teachers who had claimed authority from Jerusalem.

2. It would clarify the position of the apostles and elders of the Jerusalem church.

3. It would assure people that Paul and Barnabas were God's chosen instruments and well respected in Jerusalem.

V. The Conflict over John Mark (Acts 15:36-41)

Undoubtedly this conflict over circumcision and the issuance of a formal letter triggered a desire in Paul and Barnabas to go back to the churches that they had founded (vs. 36).

Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing." 37 Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. 38 But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. 39 Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; 40 but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God. 41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Unfortunately they had a conflict of their own relating to whether or not John Mark should go with them as their assistant.

A. What do we know about John Mark?

So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying. Acts 12:12

1. His mother was a prominent figure in the Christian community in Jerusalem.
2. His father was probably dead.
3. His father figure was now his uncle Barnabas (Col. 4:10).
4. His home was large indicating wealth.
5. His home was a center of Christian gatherings.
6. He was used to being around those in ministry.
7. He had a good understanding of the Christian life.
8. He was most likely a Roman citizen (Mark, a Roman name).

B. What happened to John Mark on the first missionary journey?

1. John Mark was selected by Paul and Barnabas to assist them on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:5).

   And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John as their assistant.

   This assistant role was one of a servant or helper. It was not a preaching role but one of taking care of some of the natural things that any such journey would entail.

   They had John along to help out as needed. –Msg

2. John Mark cut his mission short and went home early (Acts 13:13).

   Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem.

   The actual reason for his departure is not given here, but it could not have been for what Paul considered a good reason. Paul was not interested in taking him on the second journey even though quite a few years had transpired.

   Some have suggested many possible reasons for John Marks departure.

   a. Homesickness
   b. Anxiety for mother's safety
   c. Home duties
   d. Struggled with the Gentile message (He left after Sergius Paulus got saved.)
   e. Fear of perilous travel (Pamphylia had a bad reputation for danger).

f. Did not like his designated role as servant or helper (wanted more preaching).

C. Who was right between Paul and Barnabas?

1. Paul had a good argument.

   There work was too important to take a chance on someone who had let them down to dramatically.

2. Barnabas had a good argument.

   As the "son of consolation" Barnabas had always rooted for the underdog. He had done it for Saul and now he was doing it for John Mark. Barnabas was a man of mercy who knew that people sometimes need a second chance. If we are going to raise up ministries we have to be able to go the second mile.

3. Good came out of a potential negative situation.

   a. There were two teams now instead of one.

      - Barnabas and John Mark

        Note that Barnabas and Mark went to Cyprus. That is the leg of the first journey that Mark was present.

      - Paul and Silas

        Note that Paul and Silas bypassed Cyprus and went the land route through Syria.

   b. There was another opportunity for another young apprentice—Timothy (Acts 16:1).

   c. John Mark proved himself to be a worthy minister of the Gospel.

      - He ended up valuable to Paul (Phm. 24; II Tim. 4:11)

        Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.
        II Timothy 4:11

      - He ended up writing one of the Gospels.

      The two main things that most likely contributed to his maturity was the consolation of Barnabas and the consternation or seriousness of Paul.

Lesson 20
Chapter 16-17

Because we will have to cover multiple chapters in each session from here on in the course, we will only be able to summarize the journeys of Paul and highlight the most interesting features of them as we go forward.

I. General Outline of Chapter 16-17

A. Timothy Joins Paul and Silas (Acts 16:1-5)

B. Paul and the Macedonian Call (Acts 16:6-10)

C. Paul Ministers at Philippi (Acts 16:11-34)

D. Paul Departs from Philippi (Acts 16:35-40)

E. Paul Ministers in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9)

F. Paul Ministers in Berea (Acts 17:10-15)

G. Paul Ministers in Athens (Acts 17:16-34)

II. Timothy Joins Paul and Silas (Acts 16:1-5)

Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek. 2 He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. 3 Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek. 4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. 5 So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.

A. Paul filled out his traveling team.

1. Silas was a good choice for a couple of reasons.

   a. He was a respected leader in the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:22). This would lend authority to the letter that they were carrying.

   b. He was a prophetic ministry which would add balance to Paul's apostolic ministry (Acts 15:32).

2. Timothy was a good choice for a couple of reasons.

   a. He had a strong Christian heritage through his mother (II Tim. 1:5).

   b. He understood the suffering associated with ministry (Acts 14:19).

c. He had proven his ministry at home (Acts 16:2).

d. He had a Gentile father.

B. Paul had Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:3).

This seems a little strange after the big stir in the previous chapter. But Paul knew that they would be entering into many synagogues of the Jews and he did not want circumcision to be the issue, he wanted Jesus to be the issue (I Cor. 9:19-23; II Cor. 6:3).

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you. I Corinthians 9:19-23

We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed.
II Corinthians 6:3

C. Paul began retracing his steps to follow-up on previous work he had done.

III. Paul and the Macedonian Call (Acts 16:6-10)

Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. 7 After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. 8 So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." 10 Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.

A. Paul functioned in his sanctified wisdom and sound judgment.

1. He decided to visit the churches he had founded because it was wise to do so.

2. He set his course for Bithynia because it seemed like the next logical move.

Paul believed that it is easier to guide a moving ship than one that is docked in the harbor.

B. Paul was not stubborn but sensitive to the Holy Spirit at all times.

Paul's sensitivity to the Spirit caused him to lay his own plans aside.

1. He was guided by the inner voice of the Holy Spirit and the peace of God (Acts 16:6-7; Col. 3:15).

2. He was guided by a vision from the Lord (Acts 16:9).

3. He was guided by natural wisdom (Acts 16:11-12). The vision gave him Macedonia which is a region. His natural wisdom gave him Philippi which was the foremost city of that region.

   Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day came to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days.

C. Paul's response was immediate (Acts 16:10). Once he knew the direction of the Lord he wasted no time getting on with it.

IV. Paul Ministers at Philippi (Acts 16:11-34)

It should be noted that Luke seems to have joined the team at this point. Some have conjectured that he was the man of Macedonia that Paul saw in his vision. In any case all of the pronouns are now "we" instead of "they" in the narrative.

A. Paul entered this city the same way he would enter many cities (Acts 16:13-15).

1. He followed the leading of the Lord.

2. He went to the chief cities.

3. He looked for spiritual activity.

   If the city had no synagogue he looked for other things. In this case it was a woman by the name of Lydia who met with other worshippers of God. She received his message and her whole household was saved (Acts 16:14-15).

4. He responded to every situation as if God was in it.

   God had a key to every city. The key was not always obvious. In Philippi it would be their imprisonment. In Athens it would be Mars Hill. In Corinth is would be his money running out and starting a tent-making business with Aquilla.

5. He relied on the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit would give him discernment just as He did with the slave girl. Often it was a miracle that would set things in motion.

6. He utilized his Roman citizenship to his advantage.

   Paul knew that this was one of the tools that God had given him in his tool kit for church planting. He would call upon this on a few occasions when necessary (Acts 16:37; 25:11, 16).

B. Paul cast out a spirit of divination from a slave girl (Acts 16:16-18).

Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. 17 This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation." 18 And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour.

1. Paul functioned in the gift of the Spirit called "discerning of spirits."

   There was no way that Paul could tell from the natural signs that there was a problem. The woman seemed normal. She was not out of control or frothing at the mouth. Her message was right, but her spirit was wrong. Paul did not need the endorsement of a notorious fortune-teller.

2. Paul understood that all free advertising is not good advertising.

C. Paul and Barnabas were beaten and put into jail (Acts 16:19-24).

1. Paul's deliverance ministry to this woman ruined her for her masters who gained monetarily from her demonic possession.

2. Paul would have to get used to upsetting the economy of Satan with the power of the Gospel (Acts 19:24-29).

3. Paul and Barnabas were identified as Jews and accused of sedition against the Romans (Acts 16:20-21).

4. Paul and Barnabas were hastily arrested, beaten with rods and put in stocks without a trial (Acts 16:22-24; II Cor. 11:25).

D. Paul and Barnabas ministered freedom from their prison cell (Acts 16:25-34).

1. They responded to their circumstances with prayer, singing and worship (Acts 16:25).

2. The other prisoners heard their singing (Acts 16:25).

3. God sent a supernatural earthquake that caused their chains to fall off and all of the doors to swing opened (Acts 16:26).

   A normal earthquake would not do these things.

4. The keeper of the prison assumed everyone had escaped and was about to kill himself (Acts 16:27).

   He knew his superiors would have had him killed when it was discovered that all of the prisoners were gone.

5. Paul called out to him and told the jailor that no one had escaped (Acts 16:28).

   Under normal circumstance every prisoner would have been gone.

6. The jailor was so touched he gave his life to the Lord and brought Paul and Barnabas to his home to bring the Gospel to his whole family (Acts 16:34).

7. The jailor took them back to prison to wait until the morning (Acts 16:35, implied).

   Paul was concerned that if they did not go back to jail the jailer would lose his life. Paul had another plan for getting out. It was called the Roman "trump card."

V. Paul Departs from Philippi (Acts 16:35-40)

And when it was day, the magistrates sent the officers, saying, "Let those men go." 36 So the keeper of the prison reported these words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now therefore depart, and go in peace." 37 But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, and have thrown us into prison. And now do they put us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out." 38 And the officers told these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans. 39 Then they came and pleaded with them and brought them out, and asked them to depart from the city. 40 So they went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.

Evidently Paul felt that his presence in Philippi would hinder the work. Most of the time the persecution that the team experienced was aimed more directly at Paul. He was evidently a man that people loved to hate.

A. Before he left he needed to be cleared by the Romans for the sake of the Gospel.

Paul could have demanded the heads of the magistrates who had beaten a Roman citizen without a trial. He knew it and they knew it. Paul used this knowledge to his advantage.

B. Before he left he needed to organize the new converts (Acts 16:40).

These two households would become the foundation for the great Philippian church. Many believe this jailor was Stephanus who is later referenced in Paul's letter to Corinth (I Cor. 16:15).

Paul evidently left the work because he felt that his presence might hinder the work.

C. Before he left it appears that he left the work in the hands of Luke.

From this point all of the "we" references go back to "they" references. Any time Paul gets near Philippi in the future Luke appears to link up with him and his team.

VI. Paul Ministers in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9)

Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2 Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3 explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ." 4 And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas. 5 But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. 6 But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. 7 Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king--Jesus." 8 And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things. 9 So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

Paul continued his journey in a logical order. He left Philippi traveling through Amphipolis and Appolonia until he came to another chief city, Thessalonica.

A. Paul and Silas ministered in the synagogue.

1. They followed their usual method of going to the Jew first.

They always went to the synagogue first when the city had one. There had been no synagogue in Philippi.

2. They had an opportunity to preach in the synagogue for three weeks.

   It was common for the leader of the synagogue to invite visiting rabbis to share went they were traveling through. Obviously, Paul's reputation had not preceded him. The focus of their teaching was on the Messiah, what he would be like and that Jesus was the awaited Messiah.

3. They had some good fruit from their ministry in the synagogue (vs. 4).

   a. Some of the Jews of the synagogue were persuaded.

   b. Many more devout Greeks responded.

   c. A few of the leading ladies joined their ranks.

B. Paul and Silas faced opposition.

Unfortunately the favor did not last long. Soon many of the Jewish leaders came against them. Notice the pattern that is becoming all too common. .

1. The unbelieving Jews were motivated by envy.

2. The unbelieving Jews opposed Paul and Silas.

3. The unbelieving Jews formed alliances with their enemies to oppose Paul and Silas.

   The King James Version of verse 5 describes the men they that entered into league with as "certain lewd fellows of the baser sort." Not the kind of people with whom you want to associate.

4. The unbelieving Jews stirred up the city against Paul and Silas with false charges.

5. The unbelieving Jews gave testimony to the success of Paul and Silas (vs. 6b).

   These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.

6. The unbelieving Jews took out their venom on the first likely suspect—the house of Jason.

7. The violence of the unbelieving Jews forced Paul and Silas to leave for the sake of the fledgling work.

VII. Paul Ministers in Berea (Acts 17:10-15)

Paul, Silas and Timothy left Thessalonica and proceeded to Berea (See Map). At Berea they had both positive and negative results.

A. Many of the Jews of the synagogue believed.

The thing that characterized these Jews is that they were "more fair-minded" than the Jews in Thessalonica (Acts 17:11-12)

These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.

Other translations say:

Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.—NIV

A teacher never has to be afraid of students who search the scripture to see if the things that they are teaching are truly scriptural. They are not "rebels", they are "of more noble character."

There are different reactions that we can have to new truth.

1. We can reject immediately without even giving it a fair hearing. This is folly (Pro. 18:13). This is skepticism.

2. We can accept it immediately without any examination of testing of the truth. This is dangerous. We are to prove all things (I Th. 5:21). This is gullibility.

3. We can be like the Bereans. We can receive it with a good spirit and search it out to discover if it is true. This is wisdom.

B. The Jews from Thessalonica came behind them and stirred up the synagogue against them.

As a result of this Paul had to leave Berea leaving Silas and Timothy to help ground the new converts in both Berea and Thessalonica (I Th. 3:1-2).

Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith…

VIII. Paul Ministers in Athens (Acts 17:16-34)

A. Paul went to Athens and left word for Silas and Timothy to join back up with him as

soon as possible (Acts 17:15).

B. Meanwhile Paul did a tour of Athens to see the sights.

1. He was not able to see the city through the eyes of a tourist who might admire the architecture, the sculpture and the art.

2. All that he saw was a city steeped in idolatry and philosophy.

a. The streets were lined with statutes of Greek and Roman gods. They even had a statue to "the unknown god."

Paul's heart was stirred by this idolatry. Ancient writers have said that there were more idols in Athens than in all of the rest of Greece. The city contained over 3000 public statues in addition to the many that people had in their homes. Entire streets were lined with them in places. One ancient writer said, "It is easier to find a god than a man in Athens."

b. Athens was the philosophy capital of the world where their favorite pastime was debating the latest theories.

Listening to strange philosophies had become the favorite sport of the Athenians (vs. 21).

For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.

The true golden age of Greek philosophy was past now that the Greek were under the Romans who cared very little about philosophy. The philosophy of Paul's world had come down to two main streams of thought characterized by two representative groups.

i. The Epicureans

The Epicureans were really the atheists of the day who believed that the world was an accident and that all we had was what we could enjoy in this life. To them seeking pleasure was the main purpose in life. While they accepted the gods of the Greek pantheon, they did not feel that these gods had anything to do with the affairs of men. As a movement the Epicureans became a group given over to gross sensuality.

ii. The Stoics

The Stoics were opposite in many ways. They were the pantheists of the day who claimed that God was in everything and everyone. They did not believe in the immortality of the soul but that if one would live a life of

moral excellence they would be swallowed up into deity when they died. The lives that they lived tended to be virtuous as opposed to that of the Epicureans.

C. Paul accepted the challenge of the Athenian philosophers (Acts 17:18).

Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, "What does this babbler want to say?"

1. Paul may have used brilliant tactics.

   a. He used their own "unknown god" as a springboard to preach about the true God (Acts 17:23).

   b. He quoted their philosophers more than the scriptures to lead them to Christ (Acts 17:28).

      For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, for we are also his offspring.

      This was a statement made by Plautus referring to Jupiter.

2. Paul may have made an error in judgment.

   Paul had been trained in philosophy and was a well-educated man. For him to speak at the Aeropagus would be the height of his worldly dream. When they called him "a babbler" or, literally, "a seed-picker" he may have been challenged to prove himself.

   The term "seed-picker" was a small bird or crow that picked up seed for its food. It came to refer to an ill-educated person who picked up scraps of knowledge and retailed them to others with a pretention of learning. When these people challenged Paul they were suggesting that he was such a person.

   a. He allowed the spirit of the age to challenge him to authenticate himself.
   b. He tried to win the world on its own ground.
   c. He may have trusted in the arm of the flesh.
   d. His hearers only seemed to make sport of his reference to the resurrection (Acts 17:32).

   He may have been vulnerable at this point because he was alone, violating the team principle.

   Notice what he determined when he came to Corinth (I Cor. 2:1-5).

And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. 3 I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. 4 And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

He blasted worldly wisdom (I Cor. 1:18-31).

C. Paul preached on Mars' Hill or the Areopagus (Acts 17:22-32).

D. Paul had minimal results in Athens and moved on to Corinth (Acts 17:34).

IX. Paul's Second Missionary Journey Mapped Out

The above map covers the second missionary journey from Acts 15:40 to Acts 18:22

Lesson 21
Chapter 18-19

I. General Outline of Chapter 18-19

A. Paul Ministers at Corinth (Acts 18:1-17)

B. Paul Returns to Antioch (Acts 18:18-23a)

C. Paul Begins Third Missionary Journey (Acts 18:23)

D. The Ministry of Apollos (Acts 18:24-28)

E. Paul Ministers at Ephesus (Acts 19:1-10)

F. The Miracle Power of God at Ephesus (Acts 19:11-20)

G. The Riot at Ephesus (Acts 19:21-41)

II. Paul ministers at Corinth (Acts 18:1-17)

After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. 2 And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them. 3 So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers. 4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks. 5 When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ. 6 But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." 7 And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named Justus, one who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue. 8 Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.

A. Paul came into Corinth determined to preach the foolishness of the cross and to function in the power of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 1:18-25; 2:1-5).

   We read these verses in the last lesson, but suffice it to say that Paul came from Athens with a renewed determination.

   1. He determined that the sinner was not going to be won over by intellectual arguments.

   2. He determined the Gospel was powerful enough in and of itself and did not need his powers of persuasion to succeed.

   3. He determined that the power of God trumps the natural reasoning of man.

B. Paul teamed up with Aquila to start a business (Acts 18:2-3).

1. At this point in time Paul is still alone (Silas and Timothy still in Thessalonica).

2. Paul may have been running low on funds and needed to get his business going.

   Paul often mentioned the fact that he worked with his hands to support his work and the work of those who accompanied him (Acts 20:34; I Cor. 4:12; I Th. 2:9; II Th. 3:8).

   Later on he reminded the Ephesian elders how he had functioned when he was with them.

   I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. 35 I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Acts 20:33-35

   For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us. For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. II Thessalonians 3:7-10

   Paul's ability to make tents meant that he did not have to rely on the sending church for the funding of his ministry. Actually, there is no evidence that he ever expected the sending church to fund his ministry. Tent making was a very portable business that required very little overhead or set up costs. This made it a perfect trade for Paul. Paul did not see the fact that he worked with his hands as an evidence of an inferior ministry.

3. Paul met Aquila and Priscilla through this new business venture (Acts 18:2).

   a. Aquila was of the same trade as Paul.

   b. Paul most likely stayed with them.

   c. They most likely met in the synagogue.

   d. They were most likely converted to Christianity under the ministry of Paul.

   e. They would be end up being lifelong friends even traveling with him at times (Acts 18:18; Rom. 6:3; I Cor. 16:19; II Tim. 4:19).

f. After their conversion Aquila and Priscilla would become pillars in the church and traveling ministries (Acts 18:26). They were a true team ministry couple who were never mentioned independent of each other.

C. Paul ministered in the synagogue (Acts 18:4).

1. He seems to have only laid a foundation for what he would say when the rest of the team joined him.

2. When the rest of the team came he declared that Jesus was the Christ or Messiah.

3. The message split the synagogue right down the middle.

a. Some of the people opposed.

b. Some of the people believed and were baptized including the chief ruler of the synagogue—Crispus and his household.

Paul had a great foundation for a new church. He had Aquila, Pricilla, Crispus, his household and a small group of other believers. He also had Silas and Timothy.

4. Paul moved his teaching center to the house of Justus next door to the synagogue.

5. Paul continued his ministry in Corinth for an additional 18 months (Acts 18:11).

a. During this time he wrote his two letters to the Thessalonians.

b. During this time his life would be threatened (Acts 18:9-10; I Cor. 2:3).

I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.

I Corinthians 2:3

c. During this time the Jews would try to press charges against him with bad result (Acts 18:12-17).

The Roman proconsul Gallio viewed the dispute as a religious matter and had little patience for it. Roman officials were not sympathetic to the Jewish cause. The end result was that the Jews were driven from the judgment seat and the new chief ruler of the synagogue, Sosthenes was beaten by an angry Greek mob. Gallio could not be troubled with any of it.

Who knows? They may have knocked some sense into Sosthenes if he is the man whom Paul later mentioned in his first letter to the Corinthians (I Cor. 1:1-2).

Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth…

III. Paul Returns to Antioch (Acts 18:18-23a)

So Paul still remained a good while. Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila were with him. He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow. 19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there; but he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. 20 When they asked him to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent, 21 but took leave of them, saying, "I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing." And he sailed from Ephesus. 22 And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up and greeted the church, he went down to Antioch.

A. Paul left Corinth and began his journey toward home (Acts 18:18).

B. Aquila and Priscilla went with him as far as Ephesus (Acts 18:18-19).

C. Paul ministered in the synagogue and found an open door (Acts 18:19-20).

D. Paul left quickly because he wanted to get to Jerusalem in time for the feast (Acts 18:20-21).

E. Paul promised to return to Ephesus in the will of God (Acts 18:21).

F. Paul went home to Antioch (Acts 18:22). This completed his second missionary journey.

G. Paul most likely went to Jerusalem for the feast (implied).

IV. Paul Begins Third Missionary Journey (Acts 18:23)

23 After he had spent some time there, he departed and went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

Very little is recorded about how long Paul stayed in Antioch. Most people feel that it was a short time.

A. The purpose for this trip would be threefold.

1. To follow up on his church plants.

2. To pick up where he left off in Ephesus.

3. To collect an offering for the saints in Jerusalem (I Cor. 16:1-4).

   This offering would most likely have been discussed on his first visit and then collected on his way back to Jerusalem.

   Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me.

   Paul makes reference to this offering on a number of occasions (II Cor. 8-9).

   Yes, you will be enriched so that you can give even more generously. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will break out in thanksgiving to God. So two good things will happen--the needs of the Christians in Jerusalem will be met, and they will joyfully express their thanksgiving to God. You will be glorifying God through your generous gifts. For your generosity to them will prove that you are obedient to the Good News of Christ. And they will pray for you with deep affection because of the wonderful grace of God shown through you. Thank God for his Son--a gift too wonderful for words!

   II Corinthians 9:11-15, NLT

B. He was accompanied by Timothy at the first and others as time went on.

   1. This included Erastus, the treasurer of the city of Corinth (Acts 19:22; Romans 16:23).

   2. This included many others who seem to have been representatives of congregations from whom he had received funds (Acts 20:4).

      And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia--also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.

V. The Ministry of Apollos (Acts 18:24-28)

Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. 25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. 27 And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote,

exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; 28 for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.

Apollos is covered in this section because of his connection to Ephesus.

A. He was a man who had an incomplete message.

1. He had sat under the ministry of John the Baptist.
2. He had repented and prepared his heart for the coming Messiah.
3. He had gone out to spread what he knew to others.
4. He evidently did not know about Christ death, burial and resurrection.

B. He was a man who serves as a model for the true spirit of a leader.

1. He was humble and wanted all that God had to give him (Acts 18:26).

   Even though he had been preaching his message for twenty years or more he was still open to receive from others, including a woman and a tentmaker.

2. He was fervent in spirit (Acts 18:25).

   The word "fervent" here means "to be zealous, hot or boiling."

3. He was mighty in the scriptures (Acts 18:24).

   You do not become mighty in the scriptures without giving yourself to the scriptures.

4. He was eloquent in speech (Acts 18:24)

   He was someone who understood the importance of his message and was willing to hone his skills to make himself more effective at what he was called to do.

5. He was accurate in ministry (Acts 18:25).

   He understood how important accuracy and diligence was in the ministry of the word (II Tim. 2:15). It is the truth that sets free not our interpretation of the truth.

6. He was bold in speaking (Acts 18:26).

   He was carrying words of life. There is no reason to be timid or apologetic when it comes to the message of the Gospel.

7. He was a great help (Acts 18:27).

Some people are a help when they are around. Others are a great help. You cannot be a great help unless you place a high value on others and have the true spirit of a servant.

8. He was vigorous in all that he did (Acts 18:28).

   The word "vigorously" in this passage literally means "at full stretch." The only other place this word is used in the New Testament refers to the way in which the Jewish leaders opposed Jesus (Luke 23:10). You cannot defeat an enemy that is raging with half measures. We must run at full stretch.

There was no keeping this man down. As vigorous as he was in ministry before he met Aquila and Priscilla, he was just as vigorous after he met them with this refined message.

VI. Paul Ministers at Ephesus (Acts 19:1-10)

And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples 2 he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." 3 And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism." 4 Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." 5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. 7 Now the men were about twelve in all. 8 And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. 9 But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. 10 And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

A. Paul arrived in Ephesus and encountered twelve disciples of Apollos (Acts 19:1, 7).

   They seem to have had the same experience of Apollos in that they only knew the baptism of John (Acts 19:3).

B. Paul examined the foundation of these disciples before he began to build the church (Acts. 19:1-7).

   He asked them direct questions relating to their foundation experiences including:

   1. Water baptism

2. Baptism of the Holy Spirit

C. Paul ministered in the synagogue where he had left off (Acts 18:19-21).

He seems to have had an open door in the synagogue for three months.

D. When the door closed in the synagogue he started the church (Acts 19:9-10).

1. He used a school facility as a base of operations in Ephesus.
2. He taught daily for a period of two years.
3. He raised up a strong eldership in this church (Acts 20:17-21, 27).

From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. 18 And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you,19 serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; 20 how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, 21 testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.

It is not difficult to see why the church at Ephesus became the strongest, purest and most doctrinally sound church in all of Paul's ministry (Rev. 2:1-7).

VII. The Miracle Power of God at Ephesus (Acts 19:11-22)

Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, 12 so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them. 13 Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." 14 Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. 15 And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" 16 Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. 17 This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. 18 And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. 19 Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. 20 So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

A. God did unusual miracles in Paul's ministry in Ephesus (Acts 19:11-12).

Handkerchiefs were carried from Paul and placed on the bodies of the sick and they were healed. This is presented as an illustration of "unusual miracles." This reference implies a couple of things:

1. It implies that this was an unusual miracle and not meant to be a pattern for regular church practice (as anointing with oil and the laying on of hands for healing).

2. It implies that miracles were such a big part of the ministry of the apostles that miracles had to be categorized as special or unusual.

B. Some counterfeit ministries were exposed in Ephesus (Acts 19:13-17).

The seven sons of Sceva believed that you could do the works of God without a personal relationship to God. They saw ministry as a formula instead of a relationship. They would have embarrassing results.

C. God accomplished a great work of repentance among the people (Acts 19:18-19).

Genuine repentance will always involve specific fruits of repentance. Those fruits were evident here in the fear of the Lord, the confession of sins and the willingness to burn their bridges to the past without consideration for the cost involved.

D. There were powerful results from the ministry in Ephesus.

1. The fear of the Lord fell on the people.
2. The name of Jesus was magnified.
3. The word of the Lord grew mighty and prevailed.

E. Paul made his first declaration of his desire to go to Rome (Acts 19:21-22).

VIII. The Riot at Ephesus (Acts 19:23-41)

While all of these wonderful things were happening in the spiritual realm, conflict was arising in the natural realm.

The Gospel has conflicted with religious tradition, political institutions, philosophical thinkers and now the world of business. The business community of the city of Ephesus was in an uproar.

A. The goldsmiths and the silversmiths were concerned about their business in souvenirs (Acts 19:23-28).

1. The temple to the goddess Diana was the main tourist attraction in the city.

The temple to the goddess Diana was one of the wonders of the world at that time. Josephus describes it as a very magnificent structure. The gold and silver smiths would make small shrines of the temple to be sold in the marketplace.

2. They accused the apostles of teaching that such gods were not gods at all.

   The Ephesians believed that Diana was the mother of all gods, yet she consisted of nothing more than a meteorite that had fallen from the sky. The black stone resembled a many-breasted woman. She became a symbol of the bounty of nature and fertility.

3. They testified of the great impact that the Gospel was having (Acts 19:26-27).

   For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen. 25 He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: "Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. 26 Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands. 27 So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship." Acts 19:24-27

B. The whole city assembled together in a rally for Diana.

C. The Jewish leaders in Ephesus tried to capitalize on the uproar against Paul.

   It backfired on the Jewish leaders. As soon as the Ephesians saw that the Jews were involved they increased their chanting and eventually beat up a key Jewish leader by the name of Alexander.

D. A wise assemblyman dismissed the meeting and restored order.

   In doing so he affirmed a couple of things…

   1. That it is a blessing where good government exists (Rom. 13:4).

   2. That the apostles never preached against false gods, they preached Jesus and the other gods fell to the ground (Acts 19:37).

      For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess.

The above map covers the third missionary journey and trip to Jerusalem from Acts 18:23 to Acts 21.

Lesson 22
Chapter 20-22

I. General Outline of Chapter 20-21

A. Paul Journeys through Greece (Acts 20:1-6).

B. Paul Ministers in Troas (Acts 20:7-12)

C. Paul Travels to Miletus (Acts 20:13-16)

D. Paul Meets with the Ephesian Elders (Acts 20:17-38)

E. Paul Heads for Jerusalem (Acts 21:1-14)

F. Paul Meets with the Jerusalem Eldership (Acts 21:15-25)

G. Paul Arrested in the Temple (Acts 21:26-36)

H. Paul Addressed the Mob in Jerusalem (Acts 21:37-22:21)

I. Paul Declared His Roman Citizenship (Acts 22:22-29)

II. Paul Journeys through Greece (Act 20:1-6)

A. Paul decided to leave Ephesus for the sake of the local church (Acts 20:1).

Paul always did what was most expedient for the Gospel.

B. Paul ministered to the believers in Macedonia (Acts 20:1-3).

Paul was in the region for three months. Many feel that it was here that he most likely went to Philippi and met with Titus who briefed him on the situation at Corinth regarding the man who had sinned and now repented. As a result of this report Paul wrote the book of II Corinthians.

C. Paul became aware of a plot of the Jews to attempt to kill him (Acts 20:3).

Paul foiled their plans by sending the main group one way while he traveled another way. The Jews would have naturally followed the larger group thinking that Paul was among them. The two groups would meet up again in Troas.

D. Paul was joined by Luke who travelled with him the rest of the way to Jerusalem (Acts 20:6).

III. Paul Ministers in Troas (Acts 20:7-12)

Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight. 8

There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together. 9 And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep. He was overcome by sleep; and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. 10 But Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing him said, "Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him." 11 Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed.12 And they brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little comforted.

Paul and his traveling companions spent a week in Troas. During that time several things happened.

A. They met with the believers on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7-12).

The Early Church seems to have been consistent in their meeting on Sunday for worship (I Cor. 16:1-2). This was most likely done for a couple of reasons.

1. This is the day that Jesus rose from the dead (John 20:19, 26).

2. This would help to distinguish it from Judaism (Acts 13:27, 42; 15:21).

B. Eutychus fell to his death during Paul's preaching (Acts 20:8-9).

The notation here is that there were many lights in that place. This is to explain why Eutychus passed out. It was not Paul's dry preaching. They used kerosene lights which would create fumes when they burned. Since Eutychus was in the upper loft, he was asphyxiated and fell to his death.

C. Paul prayed for Eutychus and he was restored to life (Acts 20:10, 12).

Paul seemed to have followed the method of Elijah (I Kgs. 17:21) and Elisha (II Kgs. 4:33-35) in spreading himself out over the victim's body.

D. Paul preached until daybreak (Acts 20:11).

Paul was extremely calm through this whole ordeal. He didn't want his message to be interrupted. He still had some things to say since he had the feeling that this would be his last chance to see this group of people.

IV. Paul Travels to Miletus where he Met with the Ephesian Elders (Acts 20:13-38)

Paul again was trying to evade those who wanted to kill him. He sent his companions on by ship and he proceeded on foot. They would meet in Assos where Paul would join them on the ship (Acts 20:13-14).

The full group sailed from Assos to Mitylene, to Chios, to Samos and on to Miletus. Paul

was in a hurry to get to Jerusalem by Pentecost. Paul still had a high regard for the Jewish feasts including Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. He loved the excitement associated with them and usually planned his trips to Jerusalem around one of the feasts (Acts 18:21).

In order to save time he decided not to stop in Ephesus but instead he sent for the leadership team from the Ephesian church to meet with him in Miletus.

This meeting that Paul had with the Ephesian elders is an important passage because it is one of the few places where we have record of an exhortation directed at an eldership team. It also reflects what Paul was sure would be his last words to them.

We cover much of this chapter in the course Pastoral Ministry so we will only summarize some thoughts here that relate to Paul's trip to Jerusalem.

A. Paul had a negative feeling about this trip (Acts 20:22-23).

And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.

B. Paul knew that this was the last time he would see most of these men (Acts 20:25, 38).

And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. Acts 20:25

C. Paul warned them of wolves from without and from within who would try to destroy the work of God (Acts 20:29-31).

D. Paul commended the leaders and the local church to God and the word of His grace (Acts 20:32).

E. Paul prayed and wept with the leaders as they separated company (Acts 20:36-38).

V. Paul Heads for Jerusalem (Acts 21:1-14)

In this section Paul and his companions sailed by ship from Miletus to Cos, to Rhodes, to Patara until they landed at Tyre (See map). They spent a week there after which they got back on a ship and sailed to Ptolemais. They spent one day in Ptolemais and then carried on to Caesarea where they stayed with Phillip the evangelist. It was there that Agabus the prophet met up with them and gave his dramatic prophecy.

A. As Paul travelled to Jerusalem he had some warnings about what would happen to him there.

1. He had a feeling in his own spirit (Acts 20:22-23).

   And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.

2. He was warned by the disciples at Tyre (Acts 21:4).

   And finding disciples, we stayed there seven days. They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem.

3. He was warned by Agabus the prophet (Acts 21:10-14).

   And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, "The will of the Lord be done."

B. Paul's had an answer to these warnings.

1. What's new? This is my lot in every city (Acts 20:23).

2. I will not be detracted from what I feel God wants me to do.

C. Paul was not discouraged by the warnings but pressed on (Acts 21:14).

   Question for discussion: What Paul in the will of God or out of the will of God to go to Jerusalem? Was the Holy Spirit trying to stop him? Or was this part of the original plan of God and God's method of getting him to Rome?

D. Paul demonstrated a higher level of motivation than that of physical security.

   The apostles in the Book of Acts were not motivated by money or a need for physical security; they were motivated by the love of God.

1. The apostles were not motivate by money or temporal gain (Acts 20:33-34).

   I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. Acts 20:33-34

2. The apostles were not motivated by a desire for physical safety or security (Acts 20:24; 21:13).

   Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." Acts 21:13

3. The apostles were motivated by the love of God (II Cor. 5:14; Phil. 1:12-18; 2:17-18).

   The apostles knew that God had acted in history. They knew their message was true. They knew that man's eternal destiny was dependent on the their knowledge of God through Jesus Christ. They wanted to share the words of life with as many as possible (Acts 20:24).

   But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

VI. Paul Meets with the Jerusalem Eldership (Acts 21:15-25)

A. The purpose of the meeting was to present the monetary gift that had been raised among the Gentile churches.

   1. They were received with gladness (Acts 21:17).
   2. They met with James and the elders to present the gift (Acts 21:18).
   3. They gave a report of the work among the Gentiles (Acts 21:19).
   4. The leaders of the Jerusalem church glorified the Lord for what had been done.

B. The leadership of the Jerusalem church had some concerns about Paul's presence in Jerusalem.

   1. They were concerned that some of the Jewish believers might not be so excited about their presence in Jerusalem (Acts 21:20-21).

      This again highlights the fact that there was still not a clean separation of Judaism and Christianity in the Jerusalem church.

      a. The believing Jews were still practicing much of the Old Testament ritual.

      b. The believing Jews were still very zealous for the Law of Moses.

      c. The believing Jews were still not happy with what they perceived Paul to be

preaching among the Gentiles.

Evidently they still believed that Paul taught that people ought not to circumcise their children and that they should not walk according to the customs established under Moses. He did not teach any of these things.

2. They were concerned that Paul's presence might arouse the animosity of the Jewish leaders (Acts 21:22).

   They were afraid that the Sanhedrin might be assembled to come against Paul and his friends. Things had been pretty quiet by now in relation to the Sanhedrin and the Jerusalem believers. The church leaders were afraid that Paul's presence would get the Sanhedrin riled up again.

C. The leadership of the Jerusalem church convinced Paul to participate in a vow to appease the zealous Jewish converts (Acts 21:23-24).

   1. They wanted Paul to prove himself to the zealous Jewish believers that he still has a high regard for the law.

      a. They wanted Paul to participate in the vow with four local brethren.

      b. They wanted Paul to pay for all of their expenses to let everyone know how much he believed in what he was doing.

      Question for Discussion: What this something that Paul should have done? Was he compromising his belief system to do so?

      In agreeing with this scheme, some have felt that Paul compromised himself. At the very least it seems that his wisdom was doubtful. There is no evidence that it accomplished what he intended for it to accomplish.

      This incident gives us a picture into the heart of Paul. He loved the Jewish people. He loved the city of Jerusalem. He was willing to do anything to see the nation saved to the point of him being accursed (Rom. 9:1-5; 10:1). He was constantly trying to build a bridge between Jewish believers and Gentile believers. The offering that he brought with him to Jerusalem was just another attempt to do so.

   2. They affirmed their belief that the Gentiles who had come to Christ need not practice the ceremonial aspects of the law (Acts 21:25).

VII. Paul Arrested in the Temple (Acts 21:26-36)

A. The plan seemed to go well for the seven days of purification (Acts 21:26).

B. Paul was eventually recognized by some of the Jews from out of town (Acts 21:27).

Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him…

Paul had been in many of the synagogues of Asia. Many Jews knew him from those encounters. Now they saw Paul in the temple at the feast and their rage was once again ignited against him.

C. Those who recognized him stirred up the multitudes against him (Acts 21:27-31).

The Jews had seen what they perceived to be Gentiles in the temple and assumed that Paul had brought them in. Their holy place had been defiled by the presence of Gentiles. Therefore…

1. They seized him.
2. They dragged him out of the temple.
3. They started beating him.

They dragged him out of the temple before they started beating him because they didn't want to defile their temple with his blood.

D. Paul was rescued from the mob by the Roman commander by being arrested (Acts 21:31-36).

As a rule the Romans were very much against mob justice regardless of the one who was being targeted. The people were so violent that the soldiers had to carry Paul on their shoulders to escape their wrath.

VIII. Paul Addressed the Mob in Jerusalem (Acts 21:37-22:21)

A. Paul asked the commander in Greek if he could speak to the crowd (Acts 21:37-40).

1. The commander was surprised that he could speak Greek.

2. The commander had assumed he was an Egyptian insurrectionist for whom they had been looking.

"That Egyptian was probably a Jew who resided in Egypt. Josephus has given an account of this Egyptian which strikingly accords with the statement here recorded by Luke. See Josephus, *Antiq.*, book 20, chapter 8, section 6, and *Jewish Wars*, book 2, chapter 13, section 5. The account which he gives is, that this Egyptian, whose name he does not mention, came from Egypt to Jerusalem, and

said that he was a prophet, and advised the multitude of the common people to go with him to the Mount of Olives. He said further that he would show them from thence how the walls of Jerusalem would fall down: and he promised them that he would procure for them an entrance through those walls when they were fallen down. Josephus adds (*Jewish Wars*) that he got together 30,000 men that were deluded by him; "these he led round about from the wilderness to the mount which was called the Mount of Olives, and was ready to break into Jerusalem by force from that place. But Felix, who was apprised of his movements, marched against him with the Roman soldiers, and defeated him, and killed 400 of them, and took 200 alive. But the Egyptian escaped himself out of the fight, but did not appear anymore." It was natural that the Roman tribune should suppose that Paul was this Egyptian, and that his return had produced this commotion and excitement among the people." –Barnes' Notes

3. The commander gave him permission to speak.

B. Paul addressed the mob in the Hebrew language (Acts 22:40-22:2).

And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent.

1. He began by giving his personal testimony (Acts 22:3-

   a. He included his strong Jewish heritage (Acts 22:3).
   b. He included his persecution of the people of the Way (Acts 22:4-5).
   c. He included his miraculous conversion on the Damascus road (Acts 22:6-11).
   d. He included his commissioning by Ananias, a devout Jew (Acts 22:12-15).
   e. He included his water baptism (Acts 22:16).
   f. He included his return to Jerusalem (Acts 22:17).

2. He went on to share the instructions that he had received from the Lord while he was in Jerusalem in a time of prayer (Acts 22:17-21).

   Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance 18 and saw Him saying to me, "Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me." 19 So I said, "Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You. 20 And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him." 21 Then He said to me, "Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles."

3. The crowd listened attentively until he mentioned the word "Gentiles" (Acts 22:21).

IX. Paul Declared His Roman Citizenship (Acts 22:22-29)

A. The crowd reacted to Paul in a dramatic way (Acts 22:22-23).

1. They cried out against him (Acts 22:22).

Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!

2. They tore their garments (Acts 22:23).

3. They threw dust in the air (Acts 22:23).

This was a common way of expressing indignation. In the Old Testament, Shimei expressed indignation at David by cursing him, throwing stones at him and casting dust into the air (II Sam. 16:13).

B. The commander wanted to find out why the crowd had reacted so violently.

C. The commander ordered Paul to be brought to the barracks and examined under scourging (Acts 22:24).

When we think of someone being examined, we usually think of them being questioned. The word that is used here is most commonly applied to the testing of metals by fire. When it comes to examining people, it usually meant subjecting them to torture in order to get a confession of criminal behavior out of them.

D. Paul questioned such an order on the basis of his Roman citizenship (Acts 22:25).

Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?

E. The centurion immediately adjusted the order for scourging and investigated Paul's claim to citizenship (Acts 22:26-29).

Then the commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman?" He said, "Yes." The commander answered, "With a large sum I obtained this citizenship." And Paul said, "But I was born a citizen." Then immediately those who were about to examine him withdrew from him; and the commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him. Acts 22:27-29

Lesson 23
Chapter 23-26

I. General Outline of Chapter 23-26

A. Paul Appears before the Sanhedrin (Acts 22:30-23:10)

B. Paul Experiences a Plot to Kill Him (Acts 23:11-22)

C. Paul is Sent to Caesarea for Trial (Acts 23:23-35)

D. Paul Appears before Felix (Acts 24:1-21)

E. Felix Postpones a Decision (Acts 24:22-27)

F. Paul Appeals to Rome (Acts 25:1-12)

G. Paul Appears before Agrippa (Acts 25:13-26:32)

II. Paul Appears before the Sanhedrin (Acts 22:30-23:10)

The next day, because he wanted to know for certain why he was accused by the Jews, he released him from his bonds, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down and set him before them. Acts 22:30

A. The meeting of the Sanhedrin was filled with confusion (Acts 23:1-10).

Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." 2 And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. 3 Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?" 4 And those who stood by said, "Do you revile God's high priest?" 5 Then Paul said, "I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.'" 6 But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!" 7 And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. 8 For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection--and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both. 9 Then there arose a loud outcry. And the scribes of the Pharisees' party arose and protested, saying, "We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God." 10 Now when there arose a great dissension, the commander, fearing lest Paul might be pulled to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and bring him into the barracks.

B. The various occurrences in this chapter of Paul's life highlight the corruption in both

religion and politics.

1. There was corruption in the Sanhedrin (religious leaders).

   a. Paul was struck when he was answering questions (Acts 23:2).

      It was customary to treat an impudent witness this way. They actually had a shoe fitted with an iron heal that was used for this purpose. When a witness made an outburst he was struck across the mouth with the heel of the shoe. This was meant to be a humbling experience since the shoe was held in low esteem. Ananias was known to be a real difficult man. There is even some question as to whether he was the high priest or just filling in for the high priest during a vacancy of office.

      Paul was not an impudent witness. He was only answering a question.

   b. Witnesses were bribed to give false testimony (Acts 24:5-6).

   c. Party rivalry was more important than justice (Acts 23:9).

   d. There was a lack of concern for the actual truth.

   e. They were willing to conspire with thugs to kill Paul (Acts 23:12-16).

2. There was corruption in the Roman officials (political leaders).

   a. They were open to bribes (Acts 22:28).

   b. They used power for personal gain (Acts 24:26).

   c. They preferred political favors over justice (Acts 24:27).

C. Paul used the corruption to his advantage.

1. With the Sanhedrin he played to their rivalry to accomplish his purpose (Acts 23 6-10).

   Paul knew that there was absolutely no chance for a fair trial. He was looking for a way of escape. God opened his eyes to a particular fact. He operated in the word of wisdom to throw the meeting into confusion and get the principal players to go after each other.

2. With the Romans he used his citizenship to accomplish his purpose (Acts 25:11).

III. Paul Experiences a Plot to Kill Him (Acts 23:11-22)

A. Forty religious zealots hatched a plot to kill Paul.

1. They swore themselves to an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul (Acts 23:12-13).

2. They entered into league with the religious leaders to participate in the plot against Paul (Acts 23:14-15).

   They would get the Sanhedrin to ask the Romans to send Paul down for another hearing and the zealots would ambush him along the way.

B. God encouraged and protected Paul through difficult times.

1. God encouraged Paul that his ministry would go forward to Rome (Acts 23:11). The Lord stood by Paul just as he had stood by Stephen.

   But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome."

2. God moved upon Paul's nephew to reveal the plot to Paul and then to the Roman commander (Acts 23:16-22).

   Paul's nephew may have been one of the zealots or had an inside relationship with one of the zealots. Somehow he became aware of the plot against Paul and could not allow the plan to go forward.

IV. Paul is Sent to Caesarea for Trial (Acts 23:23-35)

A. The Roman commander (Claudius Lysias) decided to smuggle Paul out to Caesarea to receive a fair trial.

B. The Roman commander wrote a letter to Felix the governor of Caesarea explaining the situation (Acts 23:25-30).

   The commander made himself out to be a bit of a hero in this letter rushing to the rescue of a Roman citizen. He says nothing of the fact that he almost beat him without a trial.

C. Paul received a major military escort to Caesarea for a better hearing (Acts 23:23, 31-32).

1. The escort consisted of a total of 470 soldiers including 200 foot soldiers, 200 spearmen and 70 cavalry (Acts 23:23).

   The foot soldiers and spearmen went as far as Antipatris, only the cavalry

continued to Caesarea (Acts 23:32).

2. The escort took place under the cover of darkness (Acts 23:23, 31).

D. The letter was delivered to Felix (Acts 23:33).

E. Felix agreed to take the case and hold Paul until his accusers arrive (Acts 23:34-35).

V. Paul Appears before Felix (Acts 24:1-21)

A. After five days the Jewish accusers arrived in Caesarea with their lawyer (Acts 24:1).

1. They used a hired lawyer or orator because they did not have much of a case.

2. They used a lawyer because they knew that Jews were not favored in Romans courts. Tertullus is not a Jewish but a Roman name. Perhaps he would get a better hearing because of his name.

B. Tertullus presented the case against Paul before Felix (Acts 24:1-9)

1. He definitely tried to persuade the court with flattery (Acts 24:2-4).

When Paul was called before the court, Tertullus spoke for the prosecution: "Most Honorable Felix, we are most grateful in all times and places for your wise and gentle rule. 3 We are much aware that it is because of you and you alone that we enjoy all this peace and gain daily profit from your reforms. 4 I'm not going to tire you out with a long speech. I beg your kind indulgence in listening to me. I'll be quite brief." –Msg

Actually history records that Felix was a very incapable governor. The Jews certainly did not like him. Tacitus describes him as one who "exercised the powers of a king with the mind of a slave."

2. He placed Paul in a very bad light (Acts 24:5).

a. He referred to him as a plague.

b. He referred to him as a creator of dissension.

c. He referred to him as a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.

3. He presented twisted and false charges against Paul (Acts 24:6-9).

The only real charge that was given before Felix is that Paul tried to profane the temple.

C. Paul was given an opportunity to give a defense to the charges (Acts 24:10-21).

Paul denied the charges by describing why he was in Jerusalem, what he was doing and what he was not doing.

1. Paul said he was not…

   - Disputing with anyone in the temple.
   - Inciting the crowd.
   - Profaning the temple.
   - With a multitude or a tumult.

2. Paul said he was in Jerusalem…

   - To worship.
   - To bring alms.
   - To bring an offering for the nation.
   - To be purified in the temple.

3. Paul indicated that they may have been offended because…

   - He belonged to a sect called "the Way."
   - He had said something about the resurrection of the dead.

4. Paul challenged anyone who had actually witnessed bad behavior on his part to come and testify against him (Acts 24:19-20).

VI. Felix Postpones a Decision (Acts 24:22-27)

But when Felix heard these things, having more accurate knowledge of the Way, he adjourned the proceedings and said, "When Lysias the commander comes down, I will make a decision on your case." 23 So he commanded the centurion to keep Paul and to let him have liberty, and told him not to forbid any of his friends to provide for or visit him. 24 And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. 25 Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you." 26 Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him. 27 But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound.

A. Felix decided not to decide (Acts 24:22).

Indecision in itself is a decision. There is no question that he was not excited about this case and most likely knew that there was nothing to it. The excuse he gave for his delay what that he would wait for the Roman commander to come and verify the charges. However, it does not appear that this ever happened or was ever pursued.

B. He kept Paul in a minimum security situation with liberties (Acts 24:23).

This indicates that he did not view Paul as any kind of a threat or a conspirator. He was most likely in military custody chained to a Roman soldier (We will define this custody more fully in the last lesson of this course).

C. Felix wanted to hear what Paul believed.

Evidently Felix and his wife Drusilla knew something of the sect called the Way and were curious to hear more. Even though Felix seemed to be touched by Paul's discussion, he did not respond in repentance. He procrastinated once again.

Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you." Acts 24:25

D. Felix knew Paul was innocent but wanted a bribe (Acts 24:26).

Paul had said something about bringing an offering of money to the nation. No doubt Felix presumed that Paul had more money available to him. He was hoping that Paul would try to buy his way out of prison. Paul did not make any attempt to do so.

E. Felix was succeeded by Festus after two years (Acts. 24:27).

Festus left Paul bound because he knew that it would please the Jews. He wanted to get his tenure as governor off to a good start.

VII. Paul Appeals to Rome (Acts 25:1-12)

A. With the change in leadership to Festus, the Jews seized the opportunity to come against Paul once again.

1. They made an appeal through a petition to have Paul returned to Jerusalem for trial (Acts 25:2-3).

2. They planned another ambush to kill Paul in route to Jerusalem (Acts 25:3).

B. Festus convened a court to listen to the Jews' charges (Acts 23:4-7).

C. Festus was inclined to do the Jews a favor and return Paul to Jerusalem for trial (Acts 25:9).

D. Paul appealed to Rome to escape being exported back to Jerusalem (Acts 25:10-12).

So Paul said, "I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well know. 11 For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar." 12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, "You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!"

Paul's appeal to Caesar got Festus off of the hook but it also ensured that Paul would not be a free man for a long time.

VIII. Paul Appears before Agrippa (Acts 25:13-26:32)

A. King Agrippa and his wife Bernice came to Caesarea and ended up getting involved in Paul's case at the request of Festus (Acts 25:13-14).

B. Festus briefed Agrippa on the case (Acts 25:15-21).

C. Festus indicated that the only charges that the Jews brought against Paul had to do with some religious questions (Acts 25:18-19).

When the accusers stood up, they brought no accusation against him of such things as I supposed, but had some questions against him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who had died, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

D. Agrippa decided that he wanted to hear Paul for himself (Acts 25:22).

E. Festus also wanted Agrippa to hear Paul because if he was going to send Paul to Rome he needed to know what to charge him with (Acts 25:24-27).

And Festus said: "King Agrippa and all the men who are here present with us, you see this man about whom the whole assembly of the Jews petitioned me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying out that he was not fit to live any longer. 25 But when I found that he had committed nothing deserving of death, and that he himself had appealed to Augustus, I decided to send him. 26 I have nothing certain to write to my lord concerning him. Therefore I have brought him out before you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the examination has taken place I may have something to write. 27 For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him."

F. Paul testified before Agrippa (Acts 26:1-23).

1. He summarized his early life (Acts 26:1-11).

2. He recounted his conversion experience (Acts 26:12-18).

3. He described his ministry of preaching Christ to both Jews and Gentiles (Acts 26:19-23).

G. Paul experienced a two-fold result.

1. Festus thought that he had gone mad (Acts 26:24).

2. Agrippa was almost persuaded to be a Christian (Acts 26:28).

H. Agrippa rendered a verdict (Acts 26:29-32).

1. Paul had done nothing worthy of chains.

2. Had Paul not appealed to Caesar he might have been set free.

Paul appeared before four different Roman officials up to this point. The following is a summary of their opinions.

Claudias Lysias the arresting officer could not even put a specific charge to Paul's apparent offense when writing to Felix.

Felix the governor of Caesarea could find no fault with him but kept him in prison hoping for a bribe.

Festus the next governor of Caesarea could find no fault with him and asked Agrippa to help him formulate a charge that would make sense to Rome.

Herod Agrippa the king of the Jews could find no fault in him and would have let him go but for the fact that Paul had already appealed to Rome.

Lesson 24
Chapter 27-28

I. General Outline of Chapter 27-28

A. Paul's Voyage to Rome Begins (Acts 27:1-8)

B. Paul Warns of Impending Danger (Acts 27:9-12)

C. Paul Goes through the Storm (Acts 27:13-38)

D. Paul Shipwrecked on Malta (Acts 27:39-44)

E. Paul Ministers on Malta (Acts 28:1-10)

F. Paul Arrives in Rome (Acts 28:11-16)

G. Paul Ministers in Rome (Acts 28:17-31)

II. Paul's Voyage to Rome Begins (Acts 27:1-8)

A. Paul was placed on a ship with other prisoners under the charge of a centurion named Julius (Acts 27:1).

B. Paul was given a certain amount of liberty on the ship (Acts 27:2-3).

1. Both Luke and Aristarchus were able to travel on the ship with him.

2. Paul was able to take shore leave to visit with friends in Sidon. At this time he was most likely chained to a soldier or the centurion himself.

C. The ship sailed through some rough seas and eventually came to Myra in Lycia (See map).

D. In Myra Paul was placed on an Alexandrian ship for the next leg of the journey (Acts 27:6).

E. After many days of difficult sailing they arrived at a port called Fair Havens on the island of Crete (Acts 27:7-8).

III. Paul Warns of Impending Danger (Acts 27:9-12)

Now when much time had been spent, and sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over, Paul advised them, 10 saying, "Men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives." 11 Nevertheless the centurion was more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship than by the things spoken by Paul. 12 And because the harbor was not suitable to

winter in, the majority advised to set sail from there also, if by any means they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete opening toward the southwest and northwest, and winter there.

A. Paul advised those who operated the ship that it would be unwise to try to proceed to Rome at this time of the year.

B. The ship owner and captain of the ship persuaded the centurion to press on hoping to winter in Phoenix.

IV. Paul Goes through the Storm (Acts 27:13-38)

A. Soon after they left Fair Havens a violent storm arose and blew them off course (Acts 27:13-18).

B. After three days in the storm they decided to take drastic measures to lighten the load and secure the ship (Acts 27:19-21).

1. During this time they threw both cargo and much of the ship's tackle overboard.

2. During this time they undergirded the ship with cables. Cables were put around the ships hull to keep it from breaking up.

3. During this time they could not see the sun by day or the stars at night.

4. During this time the men were too worried to eat (Acts 27:21). As it turned out they would not eat for fourteen days (Acts 27:33).

C. Paul comforted the crew by sharing his vision with them (Acts 27:22-26).

But after long abstinence from food, then Paul stood in the midst of them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss. 22 And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. 23 For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, 24 saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.' 25 Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me. 26 However, we must run aground on a certain island."

D. After the fourteenth day the ship entered into shallow waters with the potential of running aground (Acts 27:27-30).

1. In order to save the ship from hitting the rocks the crew dropped four anchors.

2. In order to save themselves they lowered the skiff and were planning on

abandoning the ship and the prisoners.

E. At this point, the prisoner Paul stepped into the situation and took charge (Acts 27:31-36).

There were 276 people on board who were not ready to meet their Maker. The crew had already made a number of bad decisions, Paul was not going to sit by and let them make another one.

1. He told the men not to leave the ship or they would be lost (Acts 27:31-32).

Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved." Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the skiff and let it fall off.

2. He urged them to eat so that they would be strong for survival.

3. He blessed and broke bread with them to see to it that they did eat.

F. After eating, the crew further lightened the load by throwing the rest of the food overboard (Acts 27:38).

V. Paul Shipwrecked on Malta (Acts 27:39-44)

When it was day, they did not recognize the land; but they observed a bay with a beach, onto which they planned to run the ship if possible. 40 And they let go the anchors and left them in the sea, meanwhile loosing the rudder ropes; and they hoisted the mainsail to the wind and made for shore. 41 But striking a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern was being broken up by the violence of the waves. 42 And the soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim away and escape. 43 But the centurion, wanting to save Paul, kept them from their purpose, and commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land, 44 and the rest, some on boards and some on parts of the ship. And so it was that they all escaped safely to land.

A. When it was day, the crew saw a bay with a beach that would be well suited for grounding the ship (Acts 27:39).

B. They lifted the anchors, loosed the rudder, hoisted the sail and made way for the shore (Acts 27:40).

C. When they ran the ship aground on a sand bar in the bay, the soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners so that none would escape (Acts 27:41-42).

D. By this time the centurion was so attached to Paul that he did not allow the soldiers to

kill the prisoners so that Paul would be spared (Acts 27:43).

E. Eventually the entire 276 men made it safely to the shore (Acts 27:44).

VI. Paul Ministers on Malta (Acts 28:1-10)

A. After reaching land they realized that the island they had come to was Malta (Acts 28:1).

B. The refugees from the ship were well received by the native population of Malta (Acts 28:2).

C. As they were building a fire to keep warm, Paul was bitten by a viper (Acts 28:3-6).

But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand. 4 So when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet justice does not allow to live." 5 But he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. 6 However, they were expecting that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had looked for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.

This scene demonstrates the fickleness of people…

1. One minute Paul was a desperate criminal.

2. The next minute Paul was perceived to be "a god."

D. Paul seized the opportunity to preach the Gospel (Acts 28:7-10).

In that region there was an estate of the leading citizen of the island, whose name was Publius, who received us and entertained us courteously for three days. 8 And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him. 9 So when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed. 10 They also honored us in many ways; and when we departed, they provided such things as were necessary.

In a sense, Paul was now beginning his fourth missionary journey. He had his faithful companion Luke. He had a boat load of soldiers and prisoners. He had a ministry team of 276 people. As they continue forward, Paul took the place of the centurion and the ship's helmsman as the man in charge.

VII. Paul Arrives in Rome (Acts 28:11-16)

Paul continued on to Rome as more of a celebrity and a conqueror than a prisoner.

After three months we sailed in an Alexandrian ship whose figurehead was the Twin Brothers, which had wintered at the island. 12 And landing at Syracuse, we stayed three days. 13 From there we circled round and reached Rhegium. And after one day the south wind blew; and the next day we came to Puteoli, 14 where we found brethren, and were invited to stay with them seven days. And so we went toward Rome. 15 And from there, when the brethren heard about us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and Three Inns. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage. 16 Now when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him.

A. They travelled according to Paul's desired schedule visiting his friends along the way (Acts 28:14).

B. Believers who were aware of Paul's coming came out to greet him (Acts 28:15).

1. Paul had already written his letter to the Romans about five years earlier.

2. Paul had some close friends in Rome (Rom. 16:3-16).

   His friends included Aquila and Priscilla, Andronicus, Junia and a long list of others.

3. The believers met Paul about 45 miles outside of Rome.

The above map covers Paul's journey to Rome or Fourth Missionary Journey covered in Acts 23-28.

C. Paul was put into a minimum security situation in Rome.

1. Rome had three main types of custody.

a. They put criminals into the common prison.

This was the most severe kind of detention. Most of the jail houses in the empire were dungeons of the worst kind. Prisoners were often kept in chains or even bound in positions of torture. They were usually very damp, very dark and very unclean. Paul experienced this kind of imprisonment at Philippi and during his final imprisonment some years later (II Tim. 4:13).

b. They put low risk criminals into military custody.

This was a detention that was extended to non-violent prisoners who were deemed low risk. Here the accused was placed in the custody of a soldier who was responsible with his own life for the safe keeping of his prisoner. The normal procedure was to chain the prisoner's right had to the left hand of the soldier. Soldiers would relieve one another on this duty. Their prisoners were usually kept in their barracks but sometimes were allowed to reside in a private house under their charge. Paul was kept in this kind of custody in Caesarea and in this first Roman imprisonment (Acts 24:23).

c. They allowed certain criminals what was termed “free custody.”

This detention was more like a prisoner out on bail and was usually reserved for high ranking officials and political prisoners. Here the accused party was committed to the charge of a magistrate or senator who was responsible for his appearance on the day of trial.

2. Paul was in military custody.

a. He was chained to a soldier (Acts 28:16; Eph. 6:20; Phil. 1:7, 13-14; Col. 4:3, 18; Phm.1:10, 13).

Even though this was better than being in a dungeon, for a man who was used to being on the move, it was not a pleasant experience.

The man he was chained to was no doubt a rough, tough and even crude man. He was most likely very much opposed to Jews in general and Paul in particular. Paul must have had many different such guards over a span of two years.

He had a solder chained to him day and night no matter what he was doing (praying, writing, counseling, studying, etc.).

b. He lived in his own hired house (Acts 28:30).

c. He was able to entertain in this house (Acts 28:30).

d. He was not able to work and needed support from his friends.

VIII. Paul Ministers in Rome (Acts 28:17-31)

Paul did not dwell on what he could not do; he focused on what he could do.

A. He saw himself as an “ambassador in chains” (Eph. 6:20).

For Paul, only one thing had changed and that was his imprisonment. He was still an apostle; He was still called by God; He was still a preacher and a teacher; He was still responsible for the churches he had birthed and he was still going to fulfill the original word over his life (Acts 9:15-16).

But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake.”

Paul was able to do this because he was a man of determination who did not let negative circumstances keep him from fulfilling his assignment from the Lord.

Too often we take negative circumstances as a sign that God does not want us to do something. If the apostles had had this attitude, they never would have accomplished anything worthwhile.

Paul had a way of seeing the opportunity in everything. He was able to do this because he received everything in his life as coming from the Lord. He could do this because he believed in God and he believed that God was in control of his life. Because of this he was able to see God in everything.

Paul knew how to turn obstacles into opportunities.

1. In the Philippian jail he ministered in the prison.
2. After his arrest in Jerusalem he preached to the mob.
3. When he was under arrest in Caesarea he witnessed to governors.
4. When he was on the slave ship he ministered to the crew.
5. When he was on Malta he ministered to the islanders.
6. Now that he was in Rome he continued his ministry from his hired house.

Paul never once referred to himself as a prisoner of Rome; he was a prisoner of the Lord or a prisoner of Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:1).

B. He went to the Jew first even in Rome (Acts 28:17-29).

He had the same results that he always had.

1. Some believed what he said (Acts 28:24).
2. Some did not believe (Acts 28:25, 29).
3. When rejected by the Jews, Paul changed his focus to the Gentiles (Acts 28:28).

C. He received people and ministered to them (Acts 28:30).

Paul had many visitors while he was in Rome. The clues to these visits are found in the Prison Epistles. Some of his visitors included:

1. Timothy (Phil. 1:1; 2:19-23; Col. 1:1; Phm. 1:1)

   Timothy was not only Paul's son in the faith and disciple, he was a personal assistant and agent to function in Paul's behalf in relation to the churches. He also helped Paul in the writing of most of his letters from prison.

2. Epaphras (Col. 1:3-8; 4:12-13; Phm. 1:23)

   Epaphras was an apostolic ministry in relation to the church at Colossae. He had come to Paul both to encourage him and to get his advice and help in sorting out some of the problems in the Colossian church. He spent enough time with Paul for Paul to have referred to him as a "fellow prisoner."

3. Onesimus

   Onesimus was a runaway slave that Paul led to the Lord and then discipled. In the process he assisted him in the process of restitution with his master Philemon. The book of Philemon is the letter that Paul wrote when he sent Onesimus back to his master.

4. Tychicus (Acts 20:2; Eph. 6:21; II Tim. 4:12; Tit. 3:12)

   Tychicus was one of Paul's disciples who delivered Paul's prison epistles to the various churches (Eph. 6:21). He may have even read them to the congregations in behalf of Paul. He had accompanied Paul on his last trip to Jerusalem.

5. Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, Justus (Col. 4:10-11, 14; Phm. 1:24)

   The Marcus in this list is most likely John Mark. Many of these individuals were life-long friends. Some of them stayed with him for extended periods of time during his imprisonment.

6. Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25-30; 4:18-22)

   Epaphroditus brought the offering from the Philippians church that had been raised in Paul's behalf (Phil. 2:25-30; 4:18-22). He also served Paul tirelessly for a season in practical ways.

D. He led Onesimus to the Lord and discipled him (Philemon).

E. He witnessed to the soldiers (Phil. 1:13).

   But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Philippians 1:12-14

F. He made inroads into Caesar's household (Phil. 1:13; 4:22).

   All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household.
   Philippians 4:22

G. He wrote letters to churches including Ephesus, Philippi and Colossae.

IX. What do we know about Paul after the Book of Acts closes?

A. Paul was eventually released without ever going to trial.

Nero was the emperor at this time and was known to be a very unorganized man. Under him such delays were common. Nero conducted much official business purely on the basis of his whims.

B. Paul may have gone to Spain or other regions (Rom. 15:24).

But now I have finished my work in these regions, and after all these long years of waiting, I am eager to visit you. 24 I am planning to go to Spain, and when I do, I will stop off in Rome. And after I have enjoyed your fellowship for a little while, you can send me on my way again. 25 But before I come, I must go down to Jerusalem to take a gift to the Christians there. 26 For you see, the believers in Greece have eagerly taken up an offering for the Christians in Jerusalem, who are going through such hard times. 27 They were very glad to do this because they feel they owe a real debt to them. Since the Gentiles received the wonderful spiritual blessings of the Good News from the Jewish Christians, they feel the least they can do in return is help them financially. 28 As soon as I have delivered this money and completed this good deed of theirs, I will come to see you on my way to Spain. 29 And I am sure that when I come, Christ will give me a great blessing for you. Romans 15:23-29, NLT

C. Paul wrote I Timothy, Titus and possibly Hebrews during his release period.

D. Paul returned to Rome where he was arrested along with Peter under the reign of Nero.

Nero had blamed the great fire of Rome on Christians even though history attributes the fire to Nero himself. In any case he moved against two great Christian leaders to serve as scapegoats to this incident.

E. Paul was placed in a common prison.

F. Paul wrote II Timothy from prison knowing that he was about to die (II Tim. 4:6-8). He was at peace with this season of his life because he knew that he had done what God had asked him to do.

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the

righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

G. Paul was beheaded by the Romans.

Peter being a Jew was crucified. Paul because he was a Roman citizen could not be crucified.