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ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

An Introduction

The Book of Acts is the second volume of a two-volume set written by Luke, the physician. The “former treatise” of Acts 1:1 refers to the Gospel of Luke. Both books were written to Theophilus (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1). Acts of the Apostles tells how the early followers of Jesus, led by the Holy Spirit, did spread the Good News far beyond the confines of Jewish life to the whole world. Jesus said: “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all of Judea, in Samaria, and to the farthest parts of the world.” (Acts 1:8). This is the three-part outline for the Book of Acts.

Acts reveals the sometimes painful implications of the gospel to the Gentiles (= non-Jews). The Lord had never intended for the message of Jesus to remain “bottled up” in one little culture. New wine requires new wine-bags which can stretch (Luke 5:36-39). Everything before Acts was focused upon God’s untiring love for Israel, His chosen people. But, from Acts onward, the second part of God’s promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3), “And, through you, all the nations on earth will be blessed.” is being fulfilled.

From within the Book of Acts itself, one can learn that the writer was with the Apostle Paul on several occasions. Compare the “we” passages in Acts 16:10-17; 20:5–21:18; 27:1–28:16. Many scholars believe that Luke was “the brother” who was praised by all the congregations (2 Cor. 8:18). Luke was especially careful to reassure Theophilus that Christians were not a subversive political threat to the Roman Empire. The Book of Acts ends with Paul imprisoned in Rome. Apparently, the author could write nothing further.

Introduction

1¹Dear Theophilus,
The first book which I wrote was about everything that Jesus did and taught, ²from the beginning until the day when he was carried up into heaven. He talked to the apostles whom he had chosen. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus told them what they must do. ³After his death, he showed that he was alive. Jesus proved this by doing many convincing things. The apostles saw him several times during 40 days. Jesus was talking about the kingdom of God. ⁴Once, when he was together with them, he ordered

them not to leave Jerusalem. He said, “Wait here for the Father’s promise that you heard me talk about.”^a ⁵John immersed people in water, but in a few days, **you** will be immersed in the Holy Spirit.”

The Holy Spirit will Come

**Matthew 28:16-20; Luke 24:36-49;
John 20:19-23**

⁶The apostles were all together. They asked Jesus, “Lord, is this the time for you to rebuild the kingdom for Israel?”

⁷Jesus said to them, “The Father is the only One who has the authority

a 1:4 the Holy Spirit. See John 14:26; 16:13.

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to decide such dates and times. It is not for you to know these things.⁸ However, when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will receive power. You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all of Judea, in Samaria, and to the farthest parts of the world.”

Jesus Goes Back to Heaven

Luke 24:50-53

⁹After Jesus said these things, he was lifted up into the sky. While the apostles were watching, Jesus went into a cloud; they couldn’t see him anymore. ¹⁰As Jesus was going away, the apostles were staring into the sky. Suddenly, two angels^a stood beside them. They were dressed in white clothes. ¹¹The two angels said, “Men from Galilee, why are you standing here looking into the sky? This Jesus who was carried away from you into heaven will return in the same way that you saw him go.”

They Were All Together

¹²Then the apostles went back to Jerusalem from Olive Mountain. (This mountain is about three-quarters of a mile^b from Jerusalem.) ¹³The apostles entered the city. They went to the place where they were staying; this was in an upstairs room. The apostles were: Peter, John,

a 1:10 literally, “men”

b 1:12 literally, “a sabbath day’s journey”. (See Exo. 16:29; Num. 35:5; Josh. 3:4.)

James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James (the son of Halphaeus), Simon (known as the Revolutionary),^c and Judas (the son of James).

¹⁴They were all together. They were constantly praying with the same purpose. Jesus’ brothers, some women, and Mary (the mother of Jesus) were also there.

Someone was Needed to Replace Judas Iscariot

¹⁵During those days there was a meeting. (There were about 120 people present.) Peter stood up among them and said, ¹⁶⁻¹⁷“Brothers and sisters, the Scriptures must come true which the Holy Spirit spoke ahead of time through the lips of David. He was talking about Judas Iscariot who was one of our group; he had a part in this work. The Spirit said that Judas would guide men to arrest Jesus. ¹⁸Judas was paid money for doing this. (However, Judas fell on his head, and his body broke open in the middle. All of his intestines poured out.) His dishonest money was used to buy a field. ¹⁹All of the people who lived in Jerusalem learned about this. That is why they named that field Akeldama. (In their

c 1:13 literally, “Zealot”. The Zealots were a group of Jewish men—political fanatics—who claimed to uphold the law of Moses, even if it meant violence. They favored revolt against Rome.

language Akeldama means ‘Blood Land.’)²⁰In the Book of Psalms, this is written about Judas:

‘People should not go near his property; No one should live there!’ (*Psalms 69:25*)

and,

‘Let another man take his work of overseeing.’ (*Psalms 109:8*)

21-22So now, another man must join us and be a witness that Jesus arose from death. This man must be one of those men who was part of our group during the whole time that the Lord Jesus was among us. It is necessary that this man has been with us from the time when John started to immerse people, until the day when Jesus was carried away from us to heaven.”

²³They found two men. One was Joseph Barsabbas. (He was also called Justus.) The other man was Matthias.

24-25The apostles prayed, “Lord, You know the hearts of all people. Show us which one of these two men You choose to be an apostle and to do this work. Judas turned away from it and went where he belongs.”²⁶Then the apostles gave the two men lots^a to pick. God’s choice showed that

Matthias was the one. So, he became an apostle like the other eleven apostles.

They Spoke Different Languages

2¹When the day of Pentecost^b came, they were all together in one place. ²Suddenly, a noise came from the sky. It sounded like a strong wind blowing. This noise filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³They saw something which looked like flames of fire separating and staying over each one of them. ⁴They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they began to speak different inspired languages; the Spirit was giving them the power to do this.

⁵There were some devout Jewish men staying in Jerusalem at this time. These men were from every country in the world. ⁶A large group of them came together because they heard that sound. They were confused. The apostles were speaking, and every man heard in his own language!

⁷The Jewish people were all amazed at this. They didn’t understand how the apostles could do this. They said, “Look! These men whom we hear speaking are all from Galilee!^c

⁸But each of us is hearing them in our own native language. We are:

b 2:1 Pentecost (a Sunday), a yearly Jewish feast of the wheat harvest, held 50 days after Passover.

c 2:7 These were natives of Palestine who would not be expected to know many languages.

a 1:26 a reverent way of seeking God’s help in this decision See Prov. 16:33.

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⁹Parthians, Medes, Elamites, those living in Mesopotamia, from Judea, from Cappadocia, from Pontus, from Asia,^a ¹⁰⁻¹¹from Phrygia, from Pamphylia, from Egypt, from parts of Libya around Cyrene, visitors from Rome, Cretans, and Arabians. Some of us were born Jews. Others are converts to Judaism. We can hear these men in our own languages! We can all understand the wonderful things they are saying about God.”¹²The people were all amazed but puzzled. They asked each other, “What does this mean?”¹³Other people were laughing at the apostles. They were claiming that the apostles were drunk.

Peter Preaches

¹⁴Then Peter stood up with the other eleven apostles. He spoke loudly:^b “My Jewish brothers and all of you who are staying in Jerusalem, listen to me. I will tell you something you need to know. Listen carefully.¹⁵These men are not drunk, as **you** think; it is only nine o’clock in the morning!”¹⁶This is the same thing which God spoke through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷God says: ‘In the last days,
I will pour out My Spirit upon

a 2:9 This is not the modern continent of Asia. It is the country of Turkey.

b 2:14 literally, “raised his voice”

all people. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions. Your old men will have special dreams.¹⁸At that time, I will pour out My Spirit upon My servants, both men and women, and they will prophesy.¹⁹I will show amazing things in the sky above. I will do miracles on the earth below. There will be blood, fire, and thick smoke.²⁰The sun will be changed into darkness, and the moon will become red like blood. Then the great and glorious day of the Lord will come.²¹And every person who trusts in the Name of the Lord will be saved.’ (*Joel 2:28-32*)

²²Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus from Nazareth was a very special man. God clearly showed this to you. God proved this by the powerful and amazing things which He did through Jesus among you. You yourselves **know** this is true.²³You killed this man Jesus by handing him over to lawless men. They nailed him to a cross. But God knew ahead of time that all this would occur; it was part of His plan which He made long ago.²⁴Jesus suffered the pains of death, but God set him free. God raised Jesus up from death. It was impossible for death to hold him.

25 This is what David said about Jesus: His right side. The Father has now given the promise of the Holy Spirit to Jesus. So now, Jesus poured out this which you see and hear. 34 David did not go up to heaven. It was Jesus. David himself said:

‘I always saw the Lord before me, because He is at my right side to keep me secure. 26 So, my heart was glad and my mouth spoke with joy. Yes, even my body will live with hope, 27 because You won’t abandon my soul in death.^a You will not allow the body of Your holy one to decay in the grave. 28 You taught me how to live. You came near me, and I felt great joy.’ (*Psalms 16:8-11*)

“The Lord God said to my Lord.^b
“Sit at My right side³⁵ until I put your enemies under your feet.”
^c (*Psalms 110:1*)

36 Therefore, all the people of Israel can be sure of this one thing: God has made Jesus both Lord and Messiah, this man whom **you** nailed to the cross!”

29 My Jewish brothers, I can tell you plainly about David, our ancestor. He died and was buried. His grave is still here with us today. 30 David was a prophet. God vowed to David that one of his descendants would sit upon David’s throne. 31 David knew this before it took place. That is why David said this:

37 When the people heard this, they felt a sharp, cutting pain in their conscience. They asked Peter and the other apostles, “What should we do, brothers?”

‘He will not be left in death. His body will not decay in the grave.’
(*Psalms 16:10*)

38 Then Peter answered them, “Change your hearts and each one of you must be immersed by the authority of Jesus the Messiah,^d so that your sins may be forgiven. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 This promise is for **you** and for your children. It is also for people who are far away,^e for everyone whom the Lord our God may call.”

David was talking about the Messiah rising from death. 32 So, Jesus, not David, is the one whom God raised from death! We are all eye-witnesses of this! 33 Jesus was lifted up to heaven. Now Jesus is with God—at

b 2:34 In the Hebrew text of Psalms, the first “Lord” is *Yahweh*; the second “Lord” is *Adonay*, referring to Christ.

c 2:35 in your control

d 2:38 or, “Jesus Christ”

e 2:39 See Eph 2:13.

a 2:27 literally, “Hades”, the Greek word for the unseen world of the dead

⁴⁰Peter was warning them with many other words; he was encouraging them, saying, “Be saved from this twisted generation of people!” ⁴¹Then those people who accepted what Peter said were immersed. On that day, about 3,000 people were added to the group of believers. ⁴²After this, the believers dedicated themselves to learning the teaching of the apostles, to sharing with each other, to eating the supper of the Lord,^a and to prayer.

The Group Grows

⁴³God was using the apostles to do many powerful and amazing things; every person felt great respect for God. ⁴⁴All of the believers stayed together. They shared everything. ⁴⁵They sold their property and the other things they owned. And, they were dividing the money, giving it to anyone who needed it. ⁴⁶Every day the believers met together with the same purpose in the temple courtyard. They ate together in their homes, eating their food with joyful hearts. They were very happy. ⁴⁷The believers were praising God. All of the people liked them. More and more people were being saved every day; the Lord was adding them to His family of believers.

^a 2:42 literally, “to the breaking of bread,” an idiom usually referring to the Lord’s Supper (communion)

The Healing of the Lame Man

3¹One day Peter and John went up to the temple courtyard. It was three o’clock in the afternoon. (This was the time for prayer.) ²A man was there who had been crippled all his life. He couldn’t walk, so some friends carried him to the temple every day. They put him beside one of the gates outside the temple. It was called Beautiful Gate. There the man begged for money from the people who were going into the temple area. ³When he saw Peter and John about to go in, he began to ask them for money. ⁴They looked straight at the crippled man and answered, “Look at us!” ⁵He looked at them, thinking that they might give him some money. ⁶But Peter said, “I don’t have any silver or gold, but I do have something else I can give you. By the authority of Jesus the Messiah from Nazareth—walk!” ⁷Then Peter took hold of the man’s right hand and lifted him up. Immediately, the man’s feet and legs became strong. ⁸He jumped up and stood on his feet and he began to walk around. He went into the temple courtyard with them. He was walking and jumping and praising God. ⁹⁻¹⁰All of the people recognized him. The people knew he was the beggar who always sat beside the temple’s Beautiful Gate. Now they

saw him walking and praising God. They were shocked and amazed. They couldn't understand how this could have happened.

Peter Speaks to the People!

¹¹The man was holding onto Peter and John. All of the people were stunned. They ran to Peter and John at Solomon's Porch.^a ¹²When Peter saw this, he said to the people, "Men of Israel, why are you surprised at this? You are staring at us as though **our** power made this man walk. Do you think this was done because we are good? ¹³No! God did it! He is the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob—the same God of all our ancestors. He gave glory to Jesus, His special servant, but **you** handed Jesus over to evil men. You rejected him in front of Pilate after Pilate had already decided to let him go free. ¹⁴Jesus was holy and innocent, but **you** said you didn't want him. You told Pilate to give you a murderer^b instead of Jesus. ¹⁵And so, you killed the one who gives life, but God raised him from death. **We** saw this with our own eyes. ¹⁶It was the authority of Jesus which made this crippled man well. This happened because we trusted in the power of Jesus. You can see this man and you know him. He

a 3:11 a covered court on the east side of the temple complex. The Beautiful Gate opened to it.

b 3:14 Barabbas

was made completely well because of trusting in Jesus. You all saw it happen!

¹⁷"My Jewish brothers, I know you did those things to Jesus, because you didn't know what you were doing. Your leaders did not understand, either. ¹⁸God said that these things would happen. All of the prophets who spoke for God long ago said that His Messiah would suffer and die. I have told you how God made this come true. ¹⁹So, change your hearts! Come back to God, so that He may wipe out your sins. ²⁰Then the Lord will give you times of spiritual rest. He will send you the predicted Messiah—Jesus. ²¹But Jesus must stay in heaven until the time when all things will be made whole again. God told about these things long ago when He spoke through His holy prophets. ²²Moses said,

"The Lord your God will raise up a prophet for you who is like **me**. He will come from among your own people. You must obey everything he tells you. ²³If any person does not obey that Prophet, he will die, cut off from God's people.' (Deuteronomy 18:15,16,19)

²⁴Samuel and all of the other prophets after Samuel who spoke for

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God talked about **these** days. ²⁵**You** are the sons of the prophets. You have received the covenant which God made with your ancestors. God said to Abraham:

‘I will bless all nations of the earth. I will use one of your descendants to do this.’
(*Genesis 22:18*)

²⁶God has raised up His special servant.^a God sent him to you first, to bless you by turning each one of you away from doing evil things.”

Peter and John Speak to the Jewish Leaders

4¹While Peter and John were speaking to the people, some men came to them. There were some Jewish priests, the officer of the temple police, and some Sadducees. ²They were upset, because the two apostles were teaching the people. Peter and John were proclaiming that people can rise from death through the power of Jesus. ³They arrested Peter and John and put them in jail. It was already evening, so they kept Peter and John in jail until the next day. ⁴But, many of the people who had heard Peter and John proclaim believed the things that they said.

There were now about 5,000 men in the group of believers.

⁵The next day the Jewish leaders, the elders, and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. ⁶Annas (who was the high priest), Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and everyone from the high priest’s family were there. ⁷They made Peter and John stand in the center. The Jewish leaders asked them again and again, “How did **you** make this crippled man well? What name did you use? By whose authority did you do this?”

⁸Then Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit. He said to them, “You elders and leaders of the people: ⁹Are you questioning us today about the good thing which was done to this crippled man? Are you asking us who made him well? ¹⁰We want all of you and all the people of Israel to know that this man was made well by the authority of Jesus from Nazareth, the Messiah! Although **you** nailed him to the cross, God raised him from death. This man who was crippled is now well and able to stand here before you because of **Jesus!** ¹¹Jesus,

‘the Stone^b which you builders thought was worthless, has become the Cornerstone.’
(*Psalms 118:22*)

^a 3:26 Jesus. See Isa. 53:11; 42:1; Matt. 12:15-21.

^b 4:11 This refers to Jesus.

¹²Jesus is the only one who can save people. His authority is the only power given to the world by which we can be saved.”

¹³The Jewish leaders saw that Peter and John were not afraid to speak. They were amazed because they understood that the two men had no education or training. Then they realized that Peter and John had been with Jesus. ¹⁴When they saw the man who had been crippled standing there beside the two apostles—that he was healed—they could find nothing to say against the apostles. ¹⁵So, the Jewish leaders ordered them to go outside. The Jewish Council wanted to talk among themselves. ¹⁶They asked, “What should we do with them? Everyone who lives in Jerusalem knows that these men have performed a great miracle! That is clear. We cannot deny it. ¹⁷However, we must make them afraid to talk to anyone about this man Jesus. Then this problem will not spread among the people.”

¹⁸So, the Jewish leaders called in Peter and John again. They warned the apostles not to say anything or to teach anything by the authority of Jesus. ¹⁹But Peter and John answered them, “What do you think is right? What would God want? Should we obey you or God? ²⁰We are not

able to be silent. We must tell people about the things we saw and heard.” ²¹⁻²²The Jewish leaders could not find a way to punish the apostles, because all of the people were praising God for what had been done. (This miracle was a proof from God. The man who was healed was more than 40 years old!) So, the Jewish leaders threatened them again and then let them go free.

A Time for Prayer

²³Peter and John left the meeting of the Jewish leaders and went to their own group. They told the group everything which the most important priests and the Jewish elders had said to them. ²⁴When they heard this, they prayed to God with one purpose, “Master, You are the One who made the land, the sea, the sky, and everything in the world. ²⁵Our ancestor, David, was Your servant. With the help of the Holy Spirit he wrote these words:

‘Why were the nations so mad? Why did the people of the world plan things against God? That is hopeless! ²⁶Why did the kings and the rulers of the earth come together against the Lord God and against His Messiah?’ (*Psalms 2:1-2*)

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²⁷These words came true when Herod Antipas, Pontius Pilate, the nations of the world, and the Jewish people all ‘came together’ against Jesus here in Jerusalem. Jesus is Your holy servant, the one You made Messiah. ²⁸These people who ‘came together’ against Jesus made Your plan come true; it happened because of Your power and Your will. ²⁹And now, Lord, listen to what they are saying. They are trying to make us afraid! Lord, we are Your servants. Help us to speak the things You want us to say without fear. ³⁰Show your power: make sick people well, give proofs, and cause miracles to take place by the power of Jesus, Your holy servant.”

³¹After the believers prayed, the place where they were meeting shook. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they began to speak God’s message without fear.

The Believers Share

³²The group of believers were joined in their hearts and they were united in spirit. No one in the group said that the things he had were his own. Instead, they shared everything. ³³The apostles used great power to give evidence that the Lord Jesus has been raised from death. All of the believers felt very thankful for God’s great blessings. ³⁴They all received

the things they needed. Everyone who owned fields or houses sold them. Then they brought the money ³⁵and gave it to the apostles. Each person was given the things he needed.

³⁶One of the believers was named Joseph. The apostles called him Barnabas. (This name means “a person who encourages others.”) He was a Levite,^a born in Cyprus. ³⁷Joseph owned a field. He sold it and brought the money and gave it to the apostles.

5¹There was a man named Ananias. His wife’s name was Sapphira. Ananias sold some land which he had ²and, from the sale, he gave some of the money to the apostles. But, secretly, he kept back part of the money for himself. His wife knew this.^b ³Peter asked him, “Ananias, why did you let Satan fill your heart? You lied to the Holy Spirit. You misused the sale price of the land. ⁴Before you sold the field, it belonged to you. Even after you sold it, you could have used the money any way you wanted. Why did you think of doing this evil thing? You lied to God, not to men!” ⁵⁻⁶When Ananias heard these words, he fell

a 4:36 a member of the tribe of Levi. It included the priests and their helpers.

b 5:2 She conspired with her husband. Ananias wanted everyone to think that he and his wife had given *all* the money.

down and died. Some young men came and wrapped up his body. Then they carried it out and buried it. Everyone who heard about this was filled with fear.

⁷About three hours later, the wife of Ananias came in, but she did not know what had happened to her husband. ⁸Peter said to her, “Tell me, how much money did you receive for your field? Was it this much?”^a

Sapphira answered, “Yes, that was all we got for the field.”

⁹Peter asked her, “Why did you and your husband agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! Do you hear those footsteps? The men who buried your husband are at the door! They will carry you out in the same way.” ¹⁰At that moment, Sapphira fell down at Peter’s feet and died. The young men came in and saw that she was dead. The men carried her out and buried her next to her husband.

¹¹The entire congregation and all of the other people who heard about these things were filled with fear.

Power from God

¹²The apostles did many miracles and powerful things among the people. The apostles were together in Solomon’s Porch;^b they all had the same purpose. ¹³None of the other

believers dared to join the apostles, but all of the people were saying good things about them. ¹⁴And more and more people—men and women—were added to the group of those who believed in the Lord Jesus. ¹⁵People began to bring their sick people into the streets. They put their sick people on little beds and mattresses for Peter’s shadow to touch them when he came by.^c ¹⁶They were coming from all the towns around Jerusalem. They brought their sick people and those who were bothered by evil spirits. All of these people were healed.

The Apostles are Arrested

¹⁷The high priest and all of his friends (a sect called the Sadducees) became very jealous. ¹⁸They grabbed the apostles and put them in the public jail, ¹⁹but, during the night, an angel of the Lord opened the gates of the jail. The angel led the apostles outside and said, ²⁰“Go and stand in the temple courtyard. Tell the people everything about this new life in Jesus.” ²¹When the apostles heard this, they went into the temple courtyard. It was early in the morning. The apostles began to teach the people.

The high priest and his friends came

a 5:8 giving the amount Ananias had said. Then Peter would know if Sapphira was lying.

b 5:12 the temple of Herod the Great

c 5:15 They thought that if the sick could be close enough to Peter’s shadow, this would be enough to heal them.

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together. They called a meeting of the Jewish leaders and all the important older men of the sons of Israel. They sent some men to the jail to bring the apostles to them. ²²When the guards came to the jail, they couldn't find the apostles there. So, they went back and told this to the Jewish leaders. ²³They said, "The jail was shut and locked. The guards were standing at the gates, but when we opened the doors, no one was in there!" ²⁴The captain of the temple guards and the most important priests heard this. They were confused. They wondered, "What will happen because of this?" ²⁵Then another man came and told them, "Listen! The men you had put in jail are standing in the temple courtyard. They are teaching the people!" ²⁶Then the captain and his men went out and brought the apostles back. However, the soldiers did not use force, because they were afraid of the people. The people might become angry and kill the soldiers with stones.

²⁷The soldiers brought the apostles to the Jewish Council and made them stand before their leaders. The high priest questioned the apostles. ²⁸He said, "We warned you never to teach with this man Jesus' authority, but look what you've done! You have filled Jerusalem with your teaching.

You are trying to put the blame on us for the death of this man Jesus."

²⁹Peter and the other apostles answered, "We must obey God, not men!" ³⁰The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus from death. He is the one you killed, having hung him upon a cross of wood. ³¹Jesus is the one whom God raised to His right side to be our Leader and Savior. God did this, so that Israel could have the opportunity to change their hearts. Then God could forgive their sins. ³²We saw all of these things happen. The Holy Spirit has shown you that we are telling you the truth! God has given the Spirit to those who obeyed Him."

³³When the Jewish leaders heard these words, they became very angry. They started to make plans to kill the apostles. ³⁴One of the Pharisees in the Jewish Council stood up. His name was Gamaliel. He was a teacher of the law, and all of the people respected him. He ordered the men to take the apostles outside for a few minutes. ³⁵Then he said to the Jewish leaders, "Men of Israel, be careful of what you are about to do to these men!" ³⁶Remember when Theudas appeared? He claimed that he was an important man. About 400 men joined him, but he was killed. And all of the men who followed him were

scattered. They were never able to do anything. ³⁷Later, a man named Judas came from Galilee. It was at the time of the registration.^a He also led a group of followers away but he was destroyed and all his followers were scattered. ³⁸So now I tell you: Stay away from these men! Leave them alone. If this plan or this effort comes from human beings, it will fail. ³⁹But if this is from God, then you will not be able to stop them. You might even be fighting against God Himself!”

⁴⁰The Jewish leaders then agreed with what Gamaliel said. They called in the apostles again. They whipped the apostles and commanded them not to talk to the people ever again about the name of Jesus. After that, they let them go free. ⁴¹The apostles left the Jewish Council, but they were happy, because they were given the honor of suffering dishonor for the name of Jesus. ⁴²The apostles didn't stop teaching people. They kept on telling the people the Good News that Jesus is the Messiah. Every day they did this in the temple courtyard and in each home.

Seven Men Are Chosen

6¹More and more people were becoming followers of Jesus. But during this same time, the Greek-speaking Jewish followers

had an argument with the Aramaic-speaking followers. They claimed that their widows were not getting their share of the things which the widows received each day. ²The twelve apostles called the whole group of followers together. They said to them, “It is wrong for us to quit teaching God's message to serve tables instead. ³So, brothers, pick out seven of your own men. They must be known to be full of wisdom and full of the Spirit. We will confirm them to be over this work. ⁴Then we will use all of our time to pray and to teach the message of God.”

⁵The whole group liked this idea. So, they chose these men: Stephen (a man of great faith and full of the Holy Spirit), Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, Nicolas (a man from Antioch who had become a Jew).

⁶Then they put these men before the apostles, who prayed and placed their hands on them.^b

⁷God's message was influencing more and more people. The group of followers in Jerusalem became larger and larger. Even many of the Jewish priests were obedient to the faith.

Stephen Taken Prisoner

⁸Since Stephen was full of

a 5:37 See Luke 2:2.

b 6:6 a common practice when appointing people to special duties (Num. 27:22-23)

God's favor and power, he was working miracles among the people to show great proofs from God.⁹ But, some Jews stood up and argued with Stephen. They were from a synagogue called "A Synagogue for Freed Men."^a (This synagogue was also for Jews from the cities of Cyrene and Alexandria.) Jews from Cilicia and Asia were with them. They all came and argued with Stephen,¹⁰ but the Spirit was helping Stephen speak with wisdom. His words were so powerful that the Jews could not argue with him.¹¹ So they secretly paid some men to say, "We heard Stephen say some evil things against Moses and against God!"¹² In this way, they stirred up the people, the Jewish elders, and the teachers of the law. They became so angry that they came and grabbed Stephen. Then they took him to the Jewish Council.¹³ They brought some men into the meeting. These men were told to tell lies about Stephen. The men said, "This man always says things against this holy place^b and against the law of Moses.¹⁴ We heard him say that Jesus from Nazareth will destroy this place! He also said that Jesus will change the customs which Moses passed down to us!"¹⁵ Everyone sitting in the Jewish Council stared at Stephen. They saw

that his face looked like the face of an angel.

Stephen's Speech

7¹ Then the high priest asked Stephen, "Are these things true?"² Stephen answered, "My Jewish brothers and fathers, listen to me. Our glorious God appeared to Abraham, our ancestor, while he was in Mesopotamia. This was before he lived in Haran.³ God said to Abraham,

'Leave your country and your relatives! Go to another country. I will show you where to go.'
(*Genesis 12:1*)

⁴ "So Abraham left the country of Chaldea and went to live in Haran. After Abraham's father died, God sent him to this same land where you live now.⁵ But God did not give Abraham any of this land—not even a foot of it! God promised that in the future He would give this land to Abraham and his descendants; it would belong to them. (This was before Abraham had any children.)⁶ This is what God said to him: 'Your descendants will live as strangers in another country. The people there will make them slaves and do evil things to them for 400 years.'^c ⁷ I will judge that nation

a 6:9 freedmen or sons of men freed from slavery
b 6:13 the temple

c 7:6 Stephen was using round numbers here. The total time was actually 430 years. (See Exo. 12:40-41; Gal. 3:17.)

which will make them slaves.’ And God also said,

‘After those things happen, your children will come out of that country to worship Me in **this** place.’ (*Exodus 3:12*)

⁸“God made a covenant with Abraham; the sign was circumcision.^a And so, when Abraham had a son, Abraham circumcised him when the boy was eight days old. His son’s name was Isaac. Isaac also circumcised his son Jacob, and Jacob did the same for his sons. These sons later became the twelve fathers.^b

⁹“These fathers, Joseph’s brothers, became jealous of him. They sold Joseph to be a slave in Egypt. But God was with him. ¹⁰Joseph had many troubles there, but God rescued him from them all. Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, liked Joseph and respected him, because of the wisdom which God gave Joseph. Pharaoh gave Joseph the job of being governor of Egypt. He even allowed Joseph to rule over all the people in Pharaoh’s house. ¹¹But the whole land of Egypt and the land of Canaan became dry. It became so dry that crops couldn’t grow there. This made the people

suffer terribly. Our ancestors could find nothing to eat. ¹²But Jacob heard that there was wheat stored in Egypt. So he sent our ancestors^c there. (This was their first trip to Egypt.) ¹³Then they went there a second time. On this visit, Joseph told his brothers who he was. And, Pharaoh learned about Joseph’s family. ¹⁴Then Joseph sent some men to invite Jacob, his father, to come to Egypt. He also invited all of his relatives (75 persons altogether). ¹⁵So Jacob went down to Egypt. He and our ancestors died there. ¹⁶Later, their bodies were moved to Shechem. They were placed in a grave there. (It was the same grave in Shechem that Abraham had bought from the sons of Hamor. He paid them with silver.)

¹⁷“In Egypt our nation grew larger in number. (The promise which God made to Abraham was soon to come true.) There were more and more of our people in Egypt. ¹⁸Then a different king began to rule over Egypt. He knew nothing about Joseph. ¹⁹This king cheated our people. He persecuted our ancestors; he forced them to put their babies outdoors to die. ²⁰During this time, Moses was born. He was no ordinary baby. For three months they took care of Moses in his father’s house. ²¹When they put Moses outside, Pharaoh’s daughter took him in.

^a 7:8 cutting off the foreskin of the male sex organ, as a sign of God’s agreement with Israel. (See Gen. 17:9-14.)

^b 7:8 literally, “patriarchs” (Gen. 35:22-26)

^c 7:12 See Gen. 42:1-3.

ACTS 7

She raised him as if he were her own son. ²²The Egyptians taught Moses everything they knew. He was powerful in the things he said and did.

²³“When Moses was about 40 years old, he thought it would be good to visit his brothers, the sons of Israel. ²⁴One day Moses saw an Egyptian man doing wrong to a Hebrew brother. So, he defended him. Moses punished the Egyptian for hurting that brother. Moses hit the Egyptian so hard that the man died. ²⁵Moses was thinking his brothers would understand that God was using him to save them, but they did **not** understand. ²⁶The next day, Moses saw two of the sons of Israel fighting. He tried to make peace between them. He said, ‘Men, you are brothers! Why are you doing wrong to one another?’ ²⁷The man who was doing wrong to the other man pushed Moses away. He said to Moses, ‘Who made you our ruler and judge!’ ²⁸Do you want to kill me, as you killed the Egyptian man yesterday!’ ²⁹When Moses heard him say this, he ran away from Egypt. He went to live in the land of Midian where he was a stranger. While he lived there he had two sons.

³⁰“After 40 years, Moses was in the desert on Mount Sinai. An angel appeared to him in the flame of

a burning bush. ³¹When Moses saw this, he was amazed. He went nearer to look at it more closely. He heard a Voice; it was the Lord’s. ³²The Lord God said, ‘I am the same God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob.’ Moses began to shake with fear. He was afraid to look at the bush. ³³The Lord said to him, ‘Take off your shoes, because the place where you are now standing is holy ground. ³⁴I have seen My people suffer much in Egypt. I have heard My people moaning. I have come down to rescue them. And now, Moses, come on, I am sending you back to Egypt!’

³⁵“This Moses was the same man the people of Israel had rejected. They had asked him, ‘Who made you a ruler and judge over us?’ Moses is the same man whom God sent to be a ruler and deliverer. God sent Moses with the help of an angel. This was the angel that Moses saw in the burning bush. ³⁶So, Moses led the people out. He did powerful things and miracles in the land of Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the desert for 40 years. ³⁷This is the same Moses who said these words to the sons of Israel: ‘God will raise up for you a Prophet who is like me. He will come from among your own brothers.’ ³⁸This is the same Moses who was with God’s people

in the desert at Mount Sinai. He was with the angel that spoke to him and with our ancestors. There at Mount Sinai, Moses received commands from God which still live. Moses gave us these commands.

³⁹“But our ancestors didn’t want to obey Moses. They rejected him. In their hearts, they wanted to go back to Egypt. ⁴⁰Our ancestors said to Aaron, ‘Make us some gods to lead us! Moses brought us out of the land of Egypt, but we don’t know what has happened to him.’ ⁴¹So, the people made an idol which looked like a calf. Then they brought sacrifices to it. The people were very happy with what they had made with their own hands! ⁴²But God turned against them. He stopped trying to change their hearts. They were worshipping the sun, the moon, and the stars. This is what is written in the writings of the prophets; God says:

‘People of Israel, you killed animals and offered sacrifices in the desert for 40 years, but these sacrifices were not for Me. ⁴³You carried with you the tent for Moloch and the image of the star of your god, Rephan—statues which you made to worship. So, I will send you away beyond Babylon.’ (*Amos 5:25-27*)

⁴⁴“God spoke to our ancestors in a special tent; it was with the people in the desert. God commanded Moses how to make this tent. He made it like the pattern which God showed him. ⁴⁵Later, Joshua led our forefathers to capture the lands of the other nations. Our people went in and God drove those people out. When our people went into this new land, they took this same tent with them. They had received it from their ancestors. They kept it until the time of David. ⁴⁶God was very pleased with David. David asked God to allow him to build a house for Him, the God^a of Jacob, ⁴⁷but Solomon was the one who actually built it.

⁴⁸“However, the Highest One does not live in houses which men build with their hands. This is what the prophet Isaiah wrote:

⁴⁹“The Lord God says, “Heaven is My throne. The earth is a place to rest My feet. What kind of house could you build for Me? There is no place where I need to rest! ⁵⁰Remember, I made all these things!” ’ (*Isaiah 66:1-2*)

⁵¹Stephen continued speaking: “You stubborn leaders! Your hearts are not circumcised! You won’t listen to God! You are always against what

^a 7:46 Many manuscripts have “house” instead of “God.”

the Holy Spirit is trying to tell you. Your ancestors did this, and you are just like them! ⁵²Your ancestors persecuted every prophet who ever lived. Those prophets said long ago that the righteous one ^a would come, but your ancestors killed the prophets. And now, you have turned against this righteous one and murdered him. ⁵³You are the people who received the law of Moses, the commands which God gave through the angels—but you don't obey the law!"

They Kill Stephen

⁵⁴When the Jewish leaders heard Stephen say these things, they became very angry. They were so mad that they were grinding their teeth at Stephen. ⁵⁵Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit. He looked up into the sky and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at God's right side. ⁵⁶He said, "Look! I see heaven open. And, I see the Son of Man ^b standing at God's right side!"

⁵⁷Then they all shouted with a loud voice. They covered their ears with their hands. Together they all ran at Stephen. ⁵⁸They took him out of the city to stone him to death. The men, who told lies against Stephen, left their robes with a young man named

^a 7:52 Jesus
^b 7:56 Jesus

Saul. ^c ⁵⁹Then they began to throw stones at Stephen, but Stephen was praying. He said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" ⁶⁰He fell on his knees and shouted this: "Lord, don't blame them for this sin!" After Stephen said that, he died.

Saul approved of the killing of Stephen.

The Congregation Is Persecuted

8 ¹⁻³Some good men buried Stephen. They cried very loudly for him. ^d On that day there was a fierce attack on the congregation in Jerusalem. Saul was also trying to destroy them. He even went into their homes. He dragged out men and women and put them in jail. All of the believers had to leave Jerusalem; only the apostles stayed there. The believers went to different places in Judea and Samaria. ⁴They were scattered everywhere. And everywhere the believers went, they told people ^e the Good News about Jesus.

Simon the Magician

⁵Philip ^f went down to the city of Samaria. He was proclaiming about

^c 7:58 Paul

^d 8:1-3 It was a custom in Palestine to cry long and loud when someone died. (See Jer. 9:17-20.)

^e 8:4 In the beginning, they thought that the message was given only to Jewish believers (including Samaritans and converts to Judaism).

^f 8:5 not the Apostle Philip, but rather, one of the seven men mentioned in Acts 6

the Messiah. ⁶The crowds there heard Philip and they saw the miracles that he was doing. With a single purpose, they all listened very carefully to the things Philip said. ⁷Many of these people had evil spirits. The spirits came out of them; they made a loud noise. There were also many paralyzed and crippled people. Philip healed them. ⁸This made the people in that city very happy.

⁹However, there was in that city a man named Simon who did magic tricks before Philip came. Simon amazed all the people of Samaria with his black magic. Simon boasted and called himself a great man. ¹⁰All of the people—the least important and the most important—had listened closely to Simon. The people said, “This man is the power of God which is called ‘The Great Power!’” ¹¹Simon had amazed the people with his magic tricks for so long that the people became his followers. ¹²But, Philip told the people the Good News about the kingdom of God and the authority of Jesus the Messiah. Men and women believed Philip and were immersed. ¹³Simon himself also believed and was immersed. Simon stayed near Philip. He saw the miracles and the very powerful things which Philip did. Simon was amazed.

¹⁴The apostles were still in

Jerusalem. They heard that the people of Samaria had accepted God’s message. So, the apostles sent Peter and John to the people in Samaria. ¹⁵When Peter and John arrived down there, they prayed for the Samaritan believers to receive the Holy Spirit. ¹⁶(These people had been immersed by the authority of the Lord Jesus, but the Holy Spirit had not yet come down on any of them.) ¹⁷The two apostles put their hands on the people. Then the people received the Holy Spirit.

¹⁸Simon saw that the gifts of the Spirit were given to people when the apostles put their hands on them. So, Simon offered the apostles some money. ¹⁹Simon said, “Give **me** this power so that when I put my hands on a person, he will receive the Holy Spirit.”

²⁰Peter said to Simon, “You and your money should both be destroyed! You thought you could **buy** God’s gift with money. ²¹Your heart is not right before God. You cannot have a part with us or a share in this work. ²²Change your heart! Turn away from this evil thing which you have done. Pray to the Lord God. Perhaps He will forgive you for thinking this in your heart. ²³I can see that you are full of bitter jealousy and bound by sin!”

ACTS 8

²⁴Simon answered, “Both of you pray to the Lord God for me! Pray that the things you have said will not happen to me!”

²⁵Then the two apostles told the people the things which they had seen Jesus do. The apostles proclaimed the message of the Lord. Then they went back to Jerusalem. On the way, they went through many Samaritan villages and proclaimed the Good News to the people.

Philip and the Ethiopian

²⁶An angel of the Lord spoke to Philip. The angel said, “Get ready and go south. Go to the road which leads down to the town of Gaza from Jerusalem—the road that isn’t used much now.” ²⁷So Philip got ready and went. On the road he saw a man from the country of Ethiopia. This man was an important officer^a in the service of Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians. He was responsible for taking care of all her money. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship. ²⁸Now he was on his way home. He was sitting in his chariot and reading from the Book of Isaiah, the prophet. ²⁹The Spirit said to Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.” ³⁰So Philip ran toward it, and he heard the man reading aloud. He was reading from the prophet Isaiah. Philip asked

^a 8:27 literally, “a eunuch”

him, “So, do you understand what you are reading?”

³¹The man answered, “How can I understand? I have no one to explain it to me!” Then he invited Philip to climb in and sit with him. ³²He was reading this part of Scripture:

“He was like a sheep when it is taken away to be killed. He was like a lamb which makes no sound when someone cuts off its wool. ³³He was shamed; all his rights were taken away. His life on earth was ended. There will be no story about his descendants.” (*Isaiah 53:7-8*)

³⁴The officer asked Philip, “Please, tell me, who is the prophet talking about? Is he talking about himself or about someone else?” ³⁵Philip began to speak. He started with this same Scripture and told the man the Good News about Jesus.

³⁶While they were traveling down the road, they came to some water. The officer said, “Look! Here is water! What is stopping me from being immersed?” ³⁷^b ³⁸Then the officer gave a command for the chariot to stop. Both Philip and the officer went down into the water, and Philip

^b 8:37 Some late manuscripts have verse 37: “And Philip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’ And he answered, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’”

immersed him. ³⁹When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord took Philip away; the officer did not see him anymore. The officer continued on his way home. He was very happy. ⁴⁰Philip appeared in a town called Azotus.^a He was proclaiming the Good News about Jesus in all the towns along the way from Azotus to Caesarea.

Paul Meets Jesus

Acts 22:6-16; 26:12-18

9¹In Jerusalem Saul was still trying to scare the followers of the Lord Jesus, threatening to kill them. So, he went to the high priest. ²Saul asked him to write letters to the Jews of the synagogues in the city of Damascus. Saul wanted the authority to find people in Damascus who were followers of The Way. If he found any believers there, men or women, he would tie them up and bring them back to Jerusalem.

³So, Saul went to Damascus. When he came near the city, a bright light from the sky suddenly shined all around him. ⁴Saul fell to the ground. He heard a voice saying to him: "Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?"

⁵Saul asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The voice answered, "I am Jesus. I am the one you are persecuting!" ⁶Get

up now and go into the city. Someone there will tell you what you must do."

⁷The men traveling with Saul stood there. They said nothing. The men heard the voice, but they saw no one.

⁸Saul got up from the ground. He opened his eyes, but he couldn't see anything. So, the men with Saul held his hand and led him into Damascus.

⁹For three days, Saul could not see; he didn't eat or drink.

¹⁰There was a follower of Jesus in Damascus. His name was Ananias.^b

The Lord Jesus spoke to Ananias in a vision, saying: "Ananias!"

Ananias answered, "Here I am, Lord."

¹¹The Lord said to Ananias, "Get up and go to Straight Street. Find the house of Judas. Ask for a man named Saul, from the city of Tarsus. He is there now, praying." ¹²In a vision, a man named Ananias came to him and put his hands on him, so that he could see again."

¹³But Ananias answered, "Lord, many people have told me about this man Saul. They told me about how many terrible things he did to your holy people in Jerusalem." ¹⁴Now he has come to Damascus. The ruling priests have given him the authority to arrest all people who trust in your name."

¹⁵But the Lord Jesus said to

a 8:40 ancient Ashdod. It is next to the Mediterranean Sea, west of Jerusalem.

b 9:10 There are three different men named Ananias in Acts (Acts 5:1; 9:10; 23:2).

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Ananias, “Go! I have chosen Saul for an important work. He will carry my name to kings, to the Jewish people, and to other nations. ¹⁶I will show Saul the things he must suffer for my name.”

¹⁷So Ananias left and went to the house of Judas. He put his hands on Saul and said, “Saul, my brother, the Lord Jesus sent me. He is the one you saw on the road when you came here. He sent me, so that you may see again and so that you may be filled with the Holy Spirit.” ¹⁸Immediately, something which looked like fish scales fell off Saul’s eyes. Saul could see again! He got up and was immersed. ¹⁹Then he ate some food and began to feel strong again.

Paul Proclaims Jesus

Saul stayed with the followers of Jesus in Damascus for a few days.

²⁰Very soon he began to proclaim about Jesus in the synagogues: “Jesus is the Son of God!”

²¹Everyone who heard Saul was surprised. They were saying, “This is the same man who was in Jerusalem. He was trying to destroy the people who trust in this name! He had come here to do the same thing, to arrest the followers of Jesus and take them back to Jerusalem to the ruling priests.”

²²But Saul became more and more

powerful. He proved that Jesus is the Messiah. His proofs were so strong that the Jewish leaders who lived in Damascus didn’t know how to answer him.

Paul Escapes from Damascus

²³After many days, the Jewish leaders made plans to kill Saul. ²⁴The Jews were watching the city gates day and night. They wanted to kill him, but Saul learned about their plan. ²⁵One night, some followers whom Saul had taught, helped him leave the city. The followers put him in a basket. Then they lowered him down through a hole in the city walls.^a

Paul Goes to Jerusalem

²⁶Then Saul went to Jerusalem. He was trying to join the group of followers, but they were all afraid of him; they didn’t believe that Saul truly was a follower of Jesus, ²⁷but Barnabas accepted him and brought him to the apostles. Barnabas told them that Saul had seen the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus. He explained to the apostles how the Lord had spoken to Saul. Then he told them how in Damascus Saul had proclaimed to the people in the name of Jesus without fear.

²⁸And so, Saul stayed with the

a 9:25 Before Saul went to Jerusalem, he spent some time in Arabia where he received the gospel directly from Jesus (Gal. 1:17-18).

followers. He went everywhere in Jerusalem, proclaiming with the authority of the Lord Jesus without fear. ²⁹Saul often talked with the Jewish people who spoke Greek. He had arguments with them. So, they were trying to kill him. ³⁰When the brothers learned about this, they took Saul to the city of Caesarea. From Caesarea, they sent Saul to the city of Tarsus.

³¹Everywhere in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, the people who answered God's call^a had a time of peace. With the help of the Holy Spirit, the group became stronger and stronger. The believers showed that they respected the Lord by the way they lived. Because of this, the group of believers grew larger and larger.

Aeneas

³²Peter was traveling through all of the towns around Jerusalem. He visited the holy people who lived in the town of Lydda. ³³In Lydda he met a paralyzed man named Aeneas. Aeneas had not been able to leave his bed for the past eight years. ³⁴Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ^b heals you. Get up and make your bed! You can do this for yourself now!" Aeneas got up immediately. ³⁵All of the people living in Lydda and on the

plain of Sharon saw Aeneas. These people turned to the Lord Jesus.

Dorcas

³⁶In the town of Joppa, there was a follower of Jesus named Tabitha. (Her Greek name, Dorcas, means "a deer.") She always did good things for people. She always gave to people in need. ³⁷While Peter was in Lydda, Tabitha became sick and died. They washed her body and put it in an upstairs room. ³⁸The followers in Joppa heard that Peter was in Lydda. (Lydda is near Joppa.)^c So, they sent two men to Peter. They begged him, "Hurry, please come quickly!"

³⁹Peter got ready and went with them.

When he arrived, they took him to the upstairs room. All of the widows stood around Peter. They were crying. They showed him the shirts and robes which Dorcas had made while she was still alive. ⁴⁰Peter sent everyone out of the room. He kneeled down and prayed. Then he turned to Tabitha's body and said, "Tabitha, get up!" She opened her eyes. When she saw Peter, she sat up. ⁴¹He gave her his hand and helped her stand up. Then he called the holy people and the widows into the room. He showed them Tabitha; she was alive!

a 9:31 The Greek word is *ekklesia*, which is often mistranslated as "church."

b 9:34 or, "Jesus the Messiah"

c 9:38 It is about a two and a half hour walk from Lydda to Joppa

⁴²People everywhere in Joppa learned about this. Many of these people believed in the Lord Jesus. ⁴³Peter stayed in Joppa for many days. He stayed with a man named Simon who was a leather-worker.^a

Cornelius

10¹In the city of Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius. He was an officer in the Italian regiment of the Roman army. ²Cornelius was a good man. He and everyone who lived in his home worshipped the one true God. He gave much of his money to the poor people. Cornelius always prayed to God. ³One afternoon about three o'clock, Cornelius clearly saw a vision. In the vision, an angel of God came to him and said to him, "Cornelius!"

⁴Cornelius stared at the angel. He became afraid and asked, "What do you want, sir?"

The angel said to Cornelius, "God has heard your prayers. He has seen your gifts to the poor people. God has not forgotten the things you have done. ⁵Send some men now to the town of Joppa. Send for a man named Simon. He is also called Peter. ⁶Simon is staying with another man named Simon, who is a leather-worker. He has a house beside the

ocean." ⁷The angel who spoke to Cornelius left.

Then Cornelius called two of his servants and a soldier. This soldier was a good man. They always stayed close to Cornelius. ⁸Cornelius explained everything to these three men. Then he sent them to Joppa.

⁹The next day, these men came near Joppa. At that time, Peter was going up to the roof to pray. It was about noon. ¹⁰Peter was hungry and wanted to eat. But while they were preparing the food for Peter to eat, a vision came to him. ¹¹He saw something coming down through the open sky. It looked like a big sheet coming down to the ground. It was being lowered to the ground by its four corners. ¹²Every kind of animal was in it—animals which walk on four feet, animals which crawl on the ground, and birds which fly in the air. ¹³Then a Voice said to Peter, "Get up, Peter; kill any one of these animals and eat it."

¹⁴But Peter said, "I would never do that, Lord! I have never eaten any food which is unholy or not pure."

¹⁵But the Voice said to him the second time, "God has made these things pure. Don't call them 'unholy'!" ¹⁶This happened a third time. Then the whole thing was taken back up into the sky immediately.

^a 9:43 This was an unclean occupation to very strict Jews, but this did not seem to bother Peter.

¹⁷Peter was wondering what this vision meant. Then, suddenly, the men whom Cornelius had sent found Simon's house. They were standing at the gate. ¹⁸They asked, "Is Simon Peter staying here?"

¹⁹While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Listen, three men are looking for you. ²⁰Get up and go downstairs. Go with these men and don't have any doubts. I have sent them to you." ²¹So, Peter went downstairs to the men. He said, "I am the man you are looking for. Why did you come here?"

²²The men answered, "A holy angel told Cornelius to invite you to his house. Cornelius is a Roman army officer. He is a good man; he worships the one true God. All of the Jewish people respect him. The angel told Cornelius to invite you to his house, so that he may listen to the things you have to say."

²³So, Peter asked the men to come in and stay for the night.

The next day, Peter got ready and went away with the three men. Some of the Jewish brothers from Joppa went along with Peter. ²⁴The next day, they came into the city of Caesarea. Cornelius was waiting for them. He had already called in his relatives and close friends. ²⁵When

Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him. Cornelius fell down at Peter's feet and worshiped him. ²⁶But Peter made him get up. Peter said, "Stand up! I am only a man, like you." ^a

²⁷Peter continued talking with Cornelius. Then Peter went inside and saw a large group of people there. ²⁸Peter said to them, "You people understand that it is forbidden for a Jewish man to associate with or visit any non-Jewish person. But God has shown me that I should not call any person 'unholy' or 'unclean.' ²⁹That is why I didn't argue when the men invited me to come here. Now, please tell me why you sent for me."

³⁰Cornelius said, "Four days ago, I was praying in my house. It was at this same time—three o'clock in the afternoon. Suddenly, there was an angel standing before me. He was dressed in shining clothes. ³¹The man said, 'Cornelius! God has heard your prayer. He has seen your gifts to the poor people. God has not forgotten the things you have done. ³²So, send someone to the city of Joppa. Ask Simon Peter to come. Peter is staying in the house of another man named Simon, who is a leather-worker. His house is beside the ocean.' ³³So, I sent for you immediately. It was very good of you to come here. Now we are all here in the presence of God.

^a 10:26 Compare Rev. 22:8-9.

We want to hear everything that the Lord has commanded you to tell us.”

The Good News Is for Everyone!

³⁴Peter began to speak, “Now I understand! God treats everyone the same. ³⁵God accepts any person who worships Him and does what is right. It doesn’t matter what race a person comes from. ³⁶God has spoken to the sons of Israel. He sent them the Good News, that peace has come through Jesus the Messiah, who is the Lord of all people! ³⁷You know what occurred all over Judea. It began in Galilee after John proclaimed to the people about immersion. ³⁸You know about Jesus from Nazareth. God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and power. Jesus went everywhere doing good things for people. He healed everyone who was ruled by the Devil. God was with Jesus. ³⁹We saw all of the things that he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. But Jesus was killed; they put him on a cross made of wood. ⁴⁰However, on the third day after his death, God raised Jesus to life! God allowed a few people to see him clearly. ⁴¹Jesus was not seen by all of the people; only the witnesses whom God had already chosen—they saw him. We are those witnesses! We ate and drank with Jesus after he was raised from death. ⁴²Jesus commanded us to proclaim

to the people. He told us to tell them that he is the one whom God chose to be the judge of all people, living or dead. ⁴³Every person who commits himself to Jesus will be forgiven through the authority of Jesus. All of the prophets say that this is true . . .”

The Holy Spirit Comes upon Them

⁴⁴While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came upon all those people who were listening to his speech. ⁴⁵The Jewish believers who came with Peter were amazed. They were shocked because the gift of the Holy Spirit was being poured out on people who were **not** Jewish. ⁴⁶These Jewish believers heard them speaking different inspired languages and praising God. Then Peter said, ⁴⁷“Can we refuse to allow these people to be immersed in water? They have received the Holy Spirit the same as we did!” ⁴⁸So, Peter commanded that Cornelius and his relatives and close friends be immersed by the authority of Jesus the Messiah. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

Peter Tells the Whole Story

1 1 ¹The apostles and the brothers in Judea heard that non-Jewish people had also accepted God’s message. ²However, there were

some Jewish believers who argued with Peter when he came back up to Jerusalem. ³They said, “You went into the homes of men who are not Jewish!^a You even ate with them!”

⁴Then Peter began to explain the whole story to them. He said, ⁵“I was in the town of Joppa. While I was praying, a vision came to me. In the vision, I saw something coming down from the sky. It looked like a big sheet. It was being lowered to the ground by its four corners. It came down and stopped very near to me. ⁶After staring, I looked inside it and I saw animals, both tame and wild. I saw animals which crawl on the ground and birds which fly in the air. ⁷I heard a Voice say to me, ‘Get up, Peter. Kill any of these animals and eat it!’ ⁸But I said, ‘I would never do that, Lord! I have never eaten anything that is unholy or not pure.’ ⁹But the Voice from the sky answered a second time, ‘God has made these things pure. Don’t call them “unholy”!’ ¹⁰This happened a third time. Then the whole thing was pulled back up into the sky. ¹¹Suddenly, three men came to the house where I was staying. These three men were sent to me from the city of Caesarea. ¹²The Spirit told me to go along with them without having any doubts. These six brothers

here also went with me. We went into the house of Cornelius. ¹³Cornelius told us about the angel that he had seen standing in his house. The angel said to him, ‘Send someone to Joppa. Invite Simon Peter to come. ¹⁴He will tell you words by which you and everyone in your household will be saved.’ ¹⁵After I began my speech, the Holy Spirit came upon them, the same as He did upon us in the beginning.^b ¹⁶Then I remembered the words of the Lord Jesus when he used to say: ‘John immersed people in water, but **you** will be immersed in the Holy Spirit!’ ¹⁷So, God gave the same gift to these people that He gave to us who believed in the Lord Jesus, the Messiah. So, could I stop God!?”

¹⁸When the group heard these things, they stopped arguing. They gave glory to God and said, “Then God is allowing non-Jewish people to change their hearts and have life, too!”

The New Believers in Antioch

¹⁹So, the believers were scattered by the persecution which occurred after Stephen was killed.^c Some of the believers went to places far away, like Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch in Syria. The believers told the message in these places, but they told it only to Jews. ²⁰However, some of these

^a 11:3 It was forbidden for Jews to go into non-Jewish homes.

^b 11:15 See Acts 2:1-13.

^c 11:19 See Acts 7:59-8:3.

believers came to the city of Antioch. They were men from Cyprus and Cyrene. These men were also talking to non-Jews,^a telling them the Good News, that Jesus is Lord.²¹ The Lord was helping the believers. A large group of people believed and turned to the Lord.

²²The congregation which was in Jerusalem heard about these new believers in Antioch in Syria. So, the believers in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch.²³⁻²⁴ Barnabas was a good man. He was full of the Holy Spirit and full of faith. When Barnabas got to Antioch, he saw how much God had blessed them. This made him very happy. He began to encourage all the believers in Antioch. He told them, "Never lose your faith. Always obey the Lord with all your hearts." A large number of people became followers of the Lord Jesus.

²⁵Then Barnabas left for the city of Tarsus. He was looking for Saul.²⁶ When he found Saul, Barnabas brought him to Antioch. Saul and Barnabas taught a large crowd. For a whole year, they met with the people who answered God's call. In Antioch, God called the followers of Jesus "Christians" for the first time.

²⁷About that same time, some prophets went down from Jerusalem to Antioch.²⁸ One of them was

a 11:20 This was the first time this ever happened.

named Hagabus. Hagabus stood up and spoke. With the help of the Holy Spirit, he predicted: "A very bad time is coming to the whole world. There will be very little food for people to eat." (This famine occurred during the time when Claudius was Caesar.)^b ²⁹The followers of Jesus decided that they would all try to help their brothers and sisters who lived in Judea. Each believer planned to send them as much money as he could.³⁰ They gathered the money and gave it to Barnabas and Saul. Then Barnabas and Saul brought it to the elders in Jerusalem.

Peter Is Put in Jail

12¹During that same time, King Herod Agrippa I began to persecute some of the congregation.² He ordered that James be killed with a sword. (James was the brother of John.)³ Herod saw that the Jewish leaders liked this. So he decided to arrest Peter, too. (This happened during the time of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.)^c ⁴Herod had Peter arrested and put in jail. He turned Peter over to a group of 16 soldiers to guard him. Herod

b 11:28 the title of the supreme Roman rulers. "Caesar" became the title of each emperor. This must have happened about 43-44 A.D. Claudius became emperor in 41 A.D. and ruled until 54 A.D.

c 12:3 a yearly feast when unleavened bread (no yeast to make the bread rise) was eaten. It lasted seven days. See Lev. 23:4-8.

wanted to wait until after the Passover Festival. Then he planned to bring Peter before the people. ⁵So, Peter was kept in jail, but the congregation was constantly praying to God for Peter.

God Rescues Peter

⁶Peter was sleeping between two of the soldiers. He was bound with two chains. More soldiers were guarding the jail entrance. It was at night, and Herod planned to bring Peter out to the people the next day. ⁷Suddenly, an angel of the Lord stood there. A light shined in the cell. The angel touched Peter on the side and woke him up. The angel said, "Hurry, get up!" Then the chains fell off of Peter's hands. ⁸The angel said to Peter, "Get dressed and put your shoes on." So Peter did this. Then the angel said to him, "Put on your robe and follow me." ⁹Then the angel went out and Peter followed. Peter didn't know if the angel was really doing this. He kept thinking that he might be seeing a vision. ¹⁰Peter and the angel went past the first guard and the second guard. Then they came to the iron gate which separated them from the city. The gate opened for them by itself. Peter and the angel went through it and walked about a block. Then the angel suddenly left him.

¹¹Then Peter realized what had

happened. He thought, "Now I know that the Lord really did send his angel to me. He rescued me from Herod's control and everything which the Jewish people were expecting."

¹²When Peter realized this, he went to Mary's house. She was the mother of John. (John was also called Mark.) Many people were gathered there; they were all praying. ¹³Peter knocked on the outside door. A servant girl named Rhoda came to answer it. ¹⁴Rhoda recognized Peter's voice. She was so happy she even forgot to open the door. Instead, she ran inside and told the group, "Peter is at the door!"

¹⁵The believers said to Rhoda, "You are crazy!" But she kept insisting that it was true. So they said, "It must be Peter's angel."

¹⁶Peter continued to knock. When the believers opened the door, they saw Peter. They were amazed. ¹⁷Peter made a sign with his hand to tell them to be quiet. He explained to them how the Lord led him out of jail. He said, "Tell James and the other brothers what happened." Then Peter left to go to another place.

¹⁸The next day, the soldiers were very upset. They wondered what had happened to Peter. ¹⁹Herod looked everywhere for Peter, but couldn't find him. Herod asked the guards

many questions and tortured them. Then he gave the order that the guards be killed.

Herod Agrippa I Dies

Later, Herod left Judea. He went down to the city of Caesarea^a and stayed there for a while.²⁰ Herod was very angry with the people from the cities of Tyre and Sidon. However, they were able to get Blastus on their side. (Blastus was the king's personal servant.) They came to Herod with one purpose in mind: They wanted peace, because their country needed food from Herod's country.

²¹Herod decided on a day to meet with them. On that day, Herod was wearing a beautiful royal robe. He sat on his throne and made a speech to the people.²² The people shouted, "This is not the voice of a man; it is the voice of a god!"²³ But Herod didn't give the glory to God. So, an angel of the Lord caused him to become sick. He was soon eaten by worms inside him, and he died.

²⁴The message of God was spreading and influencing more and more people. The group of believers became larger and larger.

²⁵After Barnabas and Saul finished their work in Jerusalem, they

returned to Antioch. John Mark went along with them.

Paul and Barnabas are Chosen

13¹In the congregation at Antioch in Syria, there were some prophets and teachers. They were: Barnabas, Simeon (also called Black), Lucius (from the city of Cyrene), Manaen (who had grown up with Herod Antipas, the ruler), and Saul.

²They were all serving the Lord and fasting.^b The Holy Spirit said to them, "Appoint Barnabas and Saul for My service; I have chosen them to do a special work."

³Then the congregation fasted and prayed. They put their hands on Barnabas and Saul,^c and they sent them out.

On Cyprus

⁴Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the Holy Spirit. They went down to the city of Seleucia. Then they sailed from Seleucia to the island of Cyprus.⁵ When Barnabas and Saul came to the city of Salamis, they were proclaiming God's message in the Jewish synagogues. (John Mark went along to help them.)

⁶They went across the whole island to the town of Paphos. In Paphos, they met a Jewish man who did tricks of

a 12:19 After Tiberius Caesar's time, the Herods no longer headquartered in Jerusalem, but in Caesarea.

b 13:2 going without food for a period of time, usually for spiritual reasons

c 13:3 Paul

black magic. His name was Bar-jesus. He said he was a prophet, but he was not.⁷ Bar-jesus always stayed close to Sergius Paulus, the governor. Sergius Paulus was a wise man. He asked Barnabas and Saul to come to him; he wanted to hear God's message.⁸ But Elymas, the magician, opposed Saul and Barnabas. (Elymas is the name for Bar-jesus in the Greek language.) Elymas tried to turn the governor away from the faith.⁹ However, Saul was filled with the Holy Spirit. (Saul's other name was Paul.) Paul looked straight at Elymas¹⁰ and said, "You son of the Devil! You are an enemy of everything which is right! You are full of all kinds of evil tricks and lies. You always try to turn the Lord's truths into lies!"¹¹ Now, look, the Lord will touch you and you will be blind. For a time, you won't be able to see the light which comes from the sun."

Then everything quickly became dark for Elymas. He walked around lost, trying to find someone to lead him by the hand.¹² When the governor saw this, he believed. He was amazed at the teaching of the Lord.

In Antioch of Pisidia

¹³Paul and those who were with him sailed away from Paphos. They came to Perga, a town in Pamphylia. But John Mark left them; he went back home to Jerusalem.¹⁴ They

continued their trip from Perga and went to Antioch, a city in Pisidia. In Antioch, on the sabbath day, they went into the Jewish synagogue and sat down.¹⁵ Sections of the law of Moses and the writings of the prophets were read aloud. Then the leaders of the synagogue sent a message to Paul and Barnabas: "My brothers, if you have something to say which will help the people here, please speak."

¹⁶Paul stood up. He raised his hand^a and said, "Men of Israel, and you other people who also worship the one true God, please listen to me!"

¹⁷The God of our people Israel chose our ancestors. God made His people great during the time that they lived in Egypt as strangers. God brought them out of that country with great power.¹⁸ For about 40 years in the desert, God was patient with them.

¹⁹He destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, giving their land to His people.²⁰ All of this happened in about 450 years.

"After this, God gave judges to our people, until the time of Samuel, the prophet.²¹ Then the people asked for a king. God gave them Saul, the son of Kish. Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin. He was king for 40 years.²² After God removed Saul, He made David

^a 13:16 a common gesture calling for attention

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their king. God vouched for David:

‘David, the son of Jesse, is the man I like. He will do all the things I want him to do.’

(1 Samuel 13:14)

²³“God has brought one of David’s descendants to Israel to be their Savior; he is Jesus. God had promised to do this. ²⁴Before Jesus came, John proclaimed to all the people of Israel. John told the people to change their hearts and to be immersed. ²⁵As John was finishing his work, he always used to say, ‘Who do you think I am? I am not the Messiah. But, listen, he is coming later. I’m not worthy to untie his shoes!’

²⁶“My brothers, sons in the family of Abraham, and you non-Jews who also worship the true God, listen! The news about this salvation has been sent to us! ²⁷The Jews living in Jerusalem and the Jewish leaders did not realize it. The words that the prophets wrote about the Messiah were read to the Jews every sabbath day, but they did not understand. The Jewish leaders condemned the Messiah. When they did this, they made the words of the prophets come true! ²⁸They couldn’t find any real reason why he should die, yet they asked Pilate to kill him. ²⁹These Jews did all the things that

the Scriptures said about him. Then they took him down from the cross of wood and put him in a tomb. ³⁰But

God raised him up from death! ³¹After this, for many days, Jesus was seen by those who had gone with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to the people. ³²⁻³³We are telling you the Good News: God made a promise to our fathers. We are their descendants and God has made this promise come true for us. God did this by raising Jesus from death. We also read about this in the second psalm:

‘You are My Son. Today I have become your Father.’

(Psalms 2:7)

³⁴God raised Jesus from death. Jesus will never go back to the grave and decay. So God said:

‘I will give you the sure and holy promises which I made to David.’ (Isaiah 55:3)

³⁵But in another place, God says:

‘You will not let the body of Your holy one decay in the grave.’ (Psalms 16:10)

³⁶“But David did God’s will during his own generation. Then he died. David was buried with his fathers and

his body **did** decay! ³⁷However, the one whom God raised from death did **not** decay!

³⁸⁻³⁹“Brothers, you must understand what we are telling you: You can have forgiveness of your sins through this man. The law of Moses could not make you right with God, but everyone who believes the Good News is made right. ⁴⁰The prophets said something would take place. Be careful! Don’t let this happen to you:

⁴¹‘Look, you people who doubt! Wonder and die! During your time, I^a will do something which you won’t believe. You wouldn’t believe it, even if someone were to explain it to you!’ ”
(*Habakkuk 1:5*)

⁴²While Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people were begging them to come back on the next sabbath day and tell them more about these things. ⁴³After the meeting, many converts to the Jewish faith (who worshiped the one true God) and many of the Jews followed Paul and Barnabas. Paul and Barnabas were persuading them to continue living in the gracious love of God.

⁴⁴On the next sabbath day, almost all the people in the city came together to hear the message of the

Lord. ⁴⁵The Jewish leaders saw the crowds there. So, they became very jealous. They said some terrible things and argued against the words which Paul said. ⁴⁶But Paul and Barnabas were very bold. They said, “It was necessary that we speak God’s message to you Jews first, but you won’t listen. You are deciding that you are unworthy of having eternal life! Therefore, look, we will now go to the people of other nations! ⁴⁷This is what the Lord God commanded us to do:

‘I have made you a light for other nations, so that you may show the way of salvation to people all over the world.’ ” (*Isaiah 49:6*)

⁴⁸When the non-Jewish people heard Paul say this, they were happy. They gave honor to the Lord’s message, and many of the people believed the message. These were the people appointed to have eternal life.

⁴⁹And so, the message of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole country. ⁵⁰But the Jewish leaders stirred up some of the important religious women and the leaders of the city to oppose Paul and Barnabas. They were angry. These people persecuted them and threw them out of town. ⁵¹So, Paul and Barnabas

a 13:41 God

shook the dust off their feet.^a Then they went to the town of Iconium. 52 The followers of Jesus in Antioch were happy and full of the Holy Spirit.

In Iconium

14¹ Then Paul and Barnabas went to the town of Iconium. They entered the Jewish synagogue. (This is what they did in every town.) They spoke to the people there in such a way that many Jews and non-Jews believed what they said.² However, some of the Jews did not believe. These Jews stirred up the non-Jewish people and made them persecute the brothers.³ The Lord helped Paul and Barnabas to be bold, and they stayed in Iconium a long time. Paul and Barnabas proclaimed about how God forgives sins. The Lord proved what they said was true; He helped them do miracles and wonders.⁴ But, some of the people in the town agreed with the Jews. Other people in the town believed Paul and Barnabas. So, the town was divided.

⁵ Some non-Jewish people, some Jews, and their Jewish leaders tried to hurt Paul and Barnabas. These people wanted to stone them to death.⁶ When Paul and Barnabas learned about this, they fled that town. They

a 13:51 a gesture meaning that one will have no more to do with those people

went to Lystra and Derbe, towns in Lycaonia, and to the surrounding area.⁷ They told the Good News there, too.

In Lystra

⁸ In Lystra there was a man whose feet were paralyzed. He had been born crippled; he had never walked. This man was sitting there⁹ and listening to Paul speak. Paul looked straight at him. Paul saw that the man believed that God could heal him.¹⁰ So, Paul shouted, “Stand up on your feet!” The man jumped up and began walking around.¹¹ When the crowd saw what Paul did, they shouted in their own Lycaonian language. They said, “The gods have become like men! They have come down to us!”¹² The people began to call Barnabas “Zeus.”^b They called Paul “Hermes,”^c because he was the main speaker.¹³ The temple of Zeus was near the town. The priest of this temple brought some bulls and flowers to the town gates. The priest and the crowds wanted to give an offering, to worship Paul and Barnabas.

¹⁴ But when the apostles,^d Barnabas and Paul, understood what the

b 14:12 the chief god of the Greeks. Barnabas may have appeared to be the leader.

c 14:12 the son of Zeus, the messenger of the gods
d 14:14 The word means “special messengers” (from Antioch in Syria). Here it does not refer to the original twelve apostles.

people were doing, they ripped their own clothes.^a Then they ran in among the crowd and shouted to them, ¹⁵“Men, why are you doing these things? We are not gods! We have the same feelings you have! We came to tell you the Good News. We are telling you to turn away from these worthless things. Turn to the true living God. He is the One who made the land, the sea, the sky, and everything which is in them. ¹⁶In the past, God let all the nations do what they wanted. ¹⁷But God did things to prove that He is real: He does good things for you. He gives you rain from the sky and good harvests at the right times. He gives you plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.” ¹⁸Paul and Barnabas told the crowds these things. The people still wanted to offer sacrifices to worship them, but Paul and Barnabas barely stopped them.

¹⁹Then some Jews came from Antioch in Pisidia and Iconium. They persuaded the people to oppose Paul. And so, the people stoned Paul and dragged him out of the town. The people thought that they had killed him. ²⁰The followers of Jesus gathered around Paul, and he got up and went back into town. The next day, he and Barnabas left and went to the town of Derbe.

Paul and Barnabas

Encourage Believers

²¹Paul and Barnabas told the Good News in the town of Derbe, too. Many people became followers of Jesus. Paul and Barnabas went back to the towns of Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch in Pisidia. ²²In those cities they made the followers of Jesus stronger. They helped them to stay in the faith. They said, “We must suffer many things on our way into God’s kingdom.” ²³They appointed elders for each group who had answered God’s call. The believers fasted and prayed for these men. These men had put their trust in the Lord Jesus. So, Paul and Barnabas put them in the Lord’s care.

²⁴Paul and Barnabas went through the country of Pisidia. Then they came to the country of Pamphylia. ²⁵They proclaimed the story of Jesus in the town of Perga and then they went down to the town of Attalia. ²⁶And, from there, Paul and Barnabas sailed away to Antioch in Syria. This is the city where they had begun this work. The believers here had sent them out with God’s gracious love. Now their trip was over.

²⁷When Paul and Barnabas arrived, they gathered the congregation together. Paul and Barnabas told them all about the things which God

a 14:14 a sign of grief or outrage

had done with them. They said, “God opened a door so that non-Jewish people could believe too!”²⁸ They stayed there a long time with the followers of Jesus.

Become Jewish First?

15¹ Then some men came down to Antioch in Syria from Judea. They began teaching to non-Jewish brothers: “You cannot be saved if you are not circumcised.^a Moses told us to do it.”² Paul and Barnabas were very much opposed to this teaching. They argued with these men about it. So, the group decided to send Paul, Barnabas, and some other men up to Jerusalem. These men were going there to talk more about this issue with the apostles and elders.

³ The congregation helped the men with what they needed for the trip. These men went through the provinces of Phoenicia and Samaria. In these countries, they told all about how non-Jewish people had turned to the one true God. This made all the brothers very happy.⁴ Paul, Barnabas, and the others arrived in Jerusalem. The apostles, the elders, and the whole congregation welcomed them. Paul, Barnabas, and the others told about all the things which God had done with them.⁵ Some of the

a 15:1 to cut off the foreskin of the male sex organ as a sign of God’s agreement with Israel

believers in Jerusalem had belonged to the Pharisee sect. They stood up and claimed, “The non-Jewish believers **must** be circumcised.^b We must command them to obey the law of Moses!”

⁶ Then the apostles and the elders gathered to study this problem.
⁷ There was a long debate. Then Peter stood up and said to them, “My brothers, I know **you** remember what happened in the early days. At that time God chose me from among you to proclaim the Good News to non-Jewish people, and they believed it.⁸ God knows the hearts of all people, and He accepted these non-Jewish people. He showed this to us by giving them the Holy Spirit, too.⁹ God did the same thing for them that He did for us. When they made a commitment, God made their hearts pure.¹⁰ So now, why are you testing God? You are putting a heavy load^c around the necks of the non-Jewish followers. Neither **we** nor our ancestors were strong enough to carry it!¹¹ No, we believe that both **we and** these people will be saved by the gracious love of the Lord Jesus!”

¹² Then the whole group became quiet. They were listening to Paul and Barnabas tell all the miracles and

b 15:5 receive the physical mark which sealed the agreement that God made with Abraham. See Gen. 17:9-14.

c 15:10 literally, “yoke”

wonders that God did through them among non-Jewish people. ¹³After a time of silence, James spoke. He said, “My brothers, listen to me. ¹⁴Simon Peter has told us how God showed His love for non-Jewish people. For the first time, God accepted non-Jewish people and made them His own people. ¹⁵The written words of the prophets agree with this, too:

¹⁶‘I^a will return later. I will build David’s house again. It has fallen down, but I will build it up again. I will restore it. ¹⁷Then all people can look for the Lord God. All the other nations will search for Him. They can be My people, too. The Lord God said this.’ (*Amos 9:11-12*)

“And He is the One who does all these things. ¹⁸These things have been known from the beginning of time. ¹⁹So, I think we shouldn’t bother non-Jewish brothers who have turned to God. ²⁰Instead, we should write them a letter to tell them these things:

Do not eat food
which has been given to idols.
Do not commit any kind of sexual sin.
Do not eat animals
which have been strangled.
Do not taste blood.

²¹“There are those^b in every town who proclaim the law of Moses. The words of Moses have been read in the synagogues every sabbath day for generations long past.”

The Letter Is Sent

²²The apostles, the elders, and the whole congregation wanted to send some men with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch in Syria. The group decided to choose some of their own men. They chose Judas Barsabbas and Silas. These men were respected by the brothers in Jerusalem. ²³The group sent the letter with these men. The letter said:

From the apostles and elders, your brothers.

To all non-Jewish brothers in the city of Antioch and in the countries of Syria and Cilicia:

Dear brothers,

²⁴We have heard that some men have come to you from our group. The things they said have troubled and upset you, but we didn’t tell them to do this! ²⁵We have all agreed to choose some men and send them to you. They are with our dear friends, Barnabas and Paul. ²⁶Paul and Barnabas have given their lives to serve the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷So, we have sent Judas and Silas with them. They will tell you the same things. ²⁸The Holy Spirit thinks you should have no more burdens. We agree. You only need to do these things:

²⁹Do not eat any food
which has been given to idols.

^a 15:16 God

^b 15:21 the Jewish people

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Do not taste blood.
Do not eat any animals
which have been strangled.
Do not commit any kind of sexual sin.

If you stay away from these things, you will do well.

Now we say good-bye.

³⁰So Paul, Barnabas, Judas, and Silas left Jerusalem. They went down to Antioch in Syria. They gathered the group of believers and gave them the letter. ³¹When the believers read it, they were happy. It encouraged them.

³²Judas and Silas were prophets, too. They said many things to help the brothers and to make them stronger.

³³After Judas and Silas stayed there for a while, they left with a blessing of peace from the brothers. Judas and Silas went back to the brothers in Jerusalem who had sent them. ^{34 a}

³⁵But Paul and Barnabas were staying on in Antioch. They and many others were telling the Good News and teaching the people the message of the Lord.

Paul and Barnabas Disagree

³⁶A few days later, Paul said to Barnabas, “We spoke the Lord’s message in many towns. We should go back to all of those towns to visit the brothers and see how they are doing.”

³⁷Barnabas wanted to bring John Mark along with them, too. ³⁸But,

on their first trip, John Mark had left them at Pamphylia; he did not continue with them in the work. So, Paul didn’t think it was such a good idea to take him along. ³⁹Paul and Barnabas had a sharp disagreement about this. They separated and went different ways. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed to the island of Cyprus. ⁴⁰Paul chose Silas to go with him. The brothers in Antioch put Paul into the Lord’s care and sent him out. ⁴¹Paul and Silas went through the countries of Syria and Cilicia, helping the individual groups of God’s people grow stronger.

Timothy Joins Paul

16¹Paul went to the towns of Derbe and Lystra. Look, a follower of Jesus named Timothy was there. Timothy’s mother was a Jewish believer. His father was not a Jew.^b ²The brothers in the towns of Lystra and Iconium respected Timothy. They said good things about him. ³Paul wanted Timothy to travel with him, but all of the Jewish people living in that area knew that Timothy’s father was not Jewish. Therefore, Paul took Timothy and circumcised^c him to please the Jews. ⁴Then Paul and Timothy were traveling through

b 16:1 literally, “His father was a Greek”.

c 16:3 to cut off the foreskin of the male sex organ as a sign of God’s agreement with Israel

a 15:34 Some manuscripts have verse 34: “But Silas decided to stay there.”

other towns.^a They gave the believers the rules and decisions from the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. Paul and Timothy told the believers to obey these rules.⁵ So, these individual groups of God's people were becoming stronger in the faith, and they were growing every day.

Paul Sees a Vision

⁶Paul and Timothy went through the countries of Phrygia and Galatia. The Holy Spirit did not allow them to proclaim the Good News in the country of Asia.^b ⁷They went near the land of Mysia. They wanted to go into the country of Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus didn't let them go in.⁸ So they passed by Mysia and went down to the city of Troas.⁹ That night, Paul saw a vision. In this vision, a man from the country of Macedonia appeared to Paul. The man stood there begging him, "Come across to Macedonia. Help us!"¹⁰ After Paul had seen the vision, immediately we prepared to leave for Macedonia. We^c understood that God had called us to tell the Good News to those people.

In Philippi

¹¹We left Troas by ship and sailed to the island of Samothrace. The next day, we sailed to the town of

Neapolis.^d ¹²Then we went to Philippi. Philippi is an important city in that part of Macedonia. It is a colony for Romans. We stayed there for a few days.¹³ On the sabbath day, we went through the city gate to the river. At the river, we thought we might find a special place for prayer. Some women had gathered there. So, we sat down and talked with them.¹⁴ There was a woman named Lydia from the city of Thyatira. Her job was selling purple cloth. She worshiped the one true God. Lydia listened to Paul. The Lord opened her heart and she believed the things which Paul said.¹⁵ She and all of the people living in her household were immersed. Then Lydia invited us into her home. She said, "If you think I am truly a believer in the Lord Jesus, then come stay in my house." She persuaded us.

A Slave-Girl

¹⁶Once we were going to the place for prayer. A slave-girl met us. She had an evil spirit^e in her. This spirit gave her the power to tell what would happen in the future. By doing this, she earned a lot of money for the men who owned her.¹⁷ This girl followed Paul and us everywhere. She

d 16:11 They went from Samothrace, an island, to the port of Neapolis on the coast.

e 16:16 a demon. The people believed that she could predict the future by the power of Apollo, a Greek god.

a 16:4 where Paul had been on his first journey

b 16:6 modern Turkey

c 16:10 Luke, Paul, and perhaps others

said loudly, “These men are servants of the Highest God! They are telling you how you can be saved!”¹⁸ She continued doing this for many days. This bothered Paul, so he turned and said to the spirit, “By the authority of Jesus Christ, I order you to come out of her!” At that moment, the spirit came out.¹⁹ The men who owned the slave-girl saw this. These men knew that they could no longer use her to make money. So they grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them into the meeting place of the city. The city officials were there.²⁰ The men brought Paul and Silas to the leaders and said, “These men are Jews who are making trouble in our city.²¹ They are telling the people to do things which are not right for us. We are Roman citizens and cannot do these things.”²² The crowd was against Paul and Silas. Then the leaders tore off the clothes of Paul and Silas and ordered some men to beat them with rods.²³ The men beat them many times. Then the leaders threw Paul and Silas into jail. The leaders commanded the jailor, “Guard them very carefully!”²⁴ The jailor heard this special order. So he put Paul and Silas into the inner prison, far inside the jail. He locked their feet in wooden stocks.

Paul and Silas in Jail

²⁵About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing songs to God. The other prisoners were listening to them.²⁶ Suddenly, there was a great earthquake. It was so strong that it shook the foundations of the jail. Then all the doors of the jail quickly opened. All prisoners were freed from their chains.²⁷ The jailor woke up. He saw that the jail doors were open. He thought that the prisoners had escaped. So the jailor took his sword and was ready to kill himself.^a ²⁸But Paul shouted, “Don’t hurt yourself! We are all here!”

²⁹The jailor told someone to bring a light. Then he ran inside. He was shaking. He fell down in front of Paul and Silas.³⁰ Then he brought them outside and asked, “Men, what must I do to be saved?”

³¹They said to him, “Commit yourself to the Lord Jesus and you will be saved—you and all the people living in your house.”³² So, Paul and Silas told the story of the Lord Jesus to the jailor and to all the people in his house.³³ It was late at night, but the jailor took Paul and Silas and washed their wounds. The jailor and all of his people were immersed right away.³⁴ After this, the jailor took

^a 16:27 The keeper of the jail would be killed if he let even one prisoner escape.

Paul and Silas home and gave them some food. All of the people were very happy because they now trusted in God.

³⁵The next morning, the leaders sent some soldiers to tell the jailor this: “Let these men go free!”

³⁶The jailor said to Paul, “The leaders have sent these soldiers to set you free. You may leave now. Go in peace.”

³⁷But Paul said to the soldiers, “Your leaders did not prove that we did anything wrong, yet they beat us in public and put us in jail. We are Roman citizens!^a Now the leaders want to make us go away quietly. No! The leaders themselves must come and bring us out!”

³⁸The soldiers told the leaders what Paul had said. When the leaders heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were afraid. ³⁹So, the leaders came and told Paul and Silas how sorry they were. The leaders led them out of jail and kept asking them to leave the city. ⁴⁰But when they came out of the jail, they went to Lydia’s house. They saw some of the brothers there and encouraged them. Then Paul and Silas left.

In Thessalonica

17¹Paul and Silas traveled through the towns of Amphipolis and Apollonia. Then they came

to the city of Thessalonica. In that city there was a Jewish synagogue.

²According to Paul’s custom, he went to them in this synagogue, and on three sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures. ³Paul explained and clearly showed that the

Messiah must die and then rise from death. Paul said, “This Jesus, whom I announce to you, is the Messiah!”

⁴Some of the Jews believed Paul and Silas and joined them. In the synagogue there were many Greeks.^b They worshiped the one true God. There were also many important women. They joined Paul and Silas, too.

⁵But the Jews who didn’t believe became jealous. They hired some evil men from the marketplace to form a mob and make trouble in the city. They went to Jason’s house, looking for Paul and Silas. The men wanted to bring them out to the crowd. ⁶But the crowd didn’t find them. So, the mob dragged Jason and some of the other brothers to the leaders of the city. The people all cried out, “These men have made trouble everywhere in the world. And now they have come here, too! ⁷Jason is keeping them in his house. All of them do things against the laws of Caesar.”^c

b 17:4 non-Jewish people who wanted to worship with the Jews

c 17:7 The title of the supreme Roman rulers. “Caesar” became the title of each emperor.

a 16:37 Roman citizens could not be tortured or beaten until they had a fair trial.

They say that there is a different king named Jesus.”⁸ The leaders of the city and the crowd heard these things. They became very upset.⁹ They made Jason and the other brothers post bond. Then they let them go free.

In Berea

¹⁰That same night—right away—the brothers sent Paul and Silas to another town named Berea. In Berea, Paul and Silas went to the Jewish synagogue.¹¹ These Jews were better people than the ones in Thessalonica. These Jews were very happy to listen to the things which Paul and Silas said. They wanted to know whether these things were true or not. They studied the Old Testament Scriptures every day.¹² Many of these Jews believed. Many important Greek men and women also believed.¹³ But when the Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was also telling God’s message in Berea, they went to Berea, too. The Jews from Thessalonica made the people in Berea upset and they caused trouble.¹⁴ Then the brothers quickly sent Paul away to the sea,^a while Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea.¹⁵ The believers who went with Paul took him to the city of Athens. These brothers carried back a message from Paul to Silas and Timothy. It said:

^a 17:14 the Aegean Sea

“Come to me as soon as you can!”

In Athens

¹⁶Paul was waiting for Silas and Timothy in Athens. Paul felt deeply troubled, because he saw that the city was full of idols.¹⁷ So, in the synagogue, Paul debated with the Jews and the Greeks who worshiped the one true God. Every day, he also debated with some people in the business district of the city, with people who just happened to be there.¹⁸ Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also argued with him.

Some of them said, “This man doesn’t really know what he is talking about. What is he trying to say?” (Paul was telling them the Good News about Jesus rising from death.) So, they said, “He seems to be telling us about some other gods.”¹⁹ They got Paul and took him to a meeting of the Areopagus Council. They said, “Please explain to us this new idea which you have been teaching.²⁰ The things that you are saying are so strange to us. We have never heard these things before. We want to know what this teaching means.”²¹ (All the people of Athens and the people from other countries who lived there always used their time to talk about or listen to any new idea.)

²²Then Paul stood before the

meeting of the Areopagus Council. Paul said, “Men of Athens, I can see that you are very religious in all things. ²³I was going through your city and I saw the things you worship. I found an altar which had these words written on it:

‘TO THE GOD
WHO IS NOT KNOWN.’

You worship a God you don’t know. Therefore, **this** is the God I am telling you about! ²⁴He is the one true God who made the whole world and everything in it. He is the Lord of the heavens and the earth. He does not live in temples which men build! ²⁵This God is the One who gives all people life, breath, and everything else. He doesn’t need any help from human beings; God has everything He needs. ²⁶God started with one man.^a He made all the different people in the world to live everywhere. God decided exactly when and where they must live. ²⁷He wanted the people to look for Him—the one true God. Perhaps they could search all around for Him and find Him—He is not far from any of us:

²⁸‘In Him, we live, we walk, we are.’

Some of your own poets have said:

‘For we are God’s children.’^b

^a 17:26 Adam

^b 17:28 written by Aratus in *Phaenomena* 5

²⁹“Therefore, we are God’s children. So, we must not think that deity is something like what man imagines or makes out of gold, silver, or stone. ³⁰In the past, although man didn’t understand God, the one true God ignored this, but **now**, God commands every person in the world to change his heart. ³¹God has set a day when He will judge the whole world. He will be fair, using a man to do this. He chose this man a long time ago. God proved it to everyone by raising that man from death!”

³²When the people heard about Jesus rising from death, some of them began to laugh at Paul. Others said, “We will hear more about this from you later.” ³³Paul left the meeting. ³⁴However, some of the men did believe Paul and joined him. One of them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus Council. Another was a woman named Damaris. There were some others, too.

In Corinth

18¹Later, Paul left Athens and went to the city of Corinth. ²In Corinth, he met a Jewish man named Aquila. Aquila was born in the country of Pontus. Aquila and his wife, Priscilla, had recently moved to Corinth from Italy. They left Italy, because Claudius the Emperor had commanded all Jews to get out of

Rome. Paul went to visit Aquila and Priscilla.³ They were tentmakers, the same job as Paul. Paul was staying there and working with them.⁴ Every sabbath day, Paul debated with the Jews and Greeks in the synagogue. He tried to persuade them to believe.

⁵Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia to Paul in Corinth. After this, Paul used all his time to tell people the Good News. He showed the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah.⁶ But the Jews would not accept Paul's teaching. They said some terrible things. So, Paul shook off the dust from his clothes. He said to the Jews, "If you are not saved, it will be your own fault! I have done all that I can do! After this, I will go to non-Jewish people!"⁷ Paul left the synagogue and moved into the home of Titius Justus. This man worshiped the one true God. His house was next door to the synagogue.⁸ Crispus was the leader of that synagogue. Crispus and all of the people who were living in his household trusted in the Lord Jesus. Many other people in Corinth also listened to Paul. They too believed and were immersed.⁹ Paul had a vision during the night. The Lord said to him, "Don't be afraid! Keep on talking to people; don't be quiet!"¹⁰ Why? Because I am with you. No one will be able to hurt you.

I have many people in this city."

¹¹Paul stayed there for a year and a half, teaching God's message among the people.

Gallio

¹²Some of the Jews came together with only one thing in mind—to stop Paul. They took him to court. Gallio had become the governor of the country of Achaia.¹³ The Jews said to Gallio, "This man is influencing people to worship God in a way that is illegal!"

¹⁴Paul was ready to say something, but Gallio spoke to the Jews. Gallio said, "I would listen to you Jews if you were complaining about a terrible crime or some offense."¹⁵ But the things you are claiming are only questions about words and names—arguments about your own law. You must solve this problem yourselves. I don't want to be a judge over these matters."¹⁶ Then Gallio made them leave the courtroom.

¹⁷So, they all grabbed Sosthenes. (Sosthenes was now leader of the synagogue.) They were beating him in front of the courthouse, but this didn't bother Gallio at all.

Paul Sails for Syria

¹⁸⁻¹⁹Paul stayed with the brothers for many days. Then he left and sailed for Syria. Priscilla and Aquila were

also with him. At Cenchrea, Paul cut off his hair.^a This showed that he had made a vow to God. Then he left Priscilla and Aquila. While Paul was in Ephesus, he went into the synagogue and debated with the Jews.²⁰ The Jews asked Paul to stay longer, but he said no.²¹ As Paul was leaving them, he said, "I will come to you again, if God wants me to." And so, Paul sailed away from Ephesus.

²²Paul went down to the city of Caesarea. Then he went up and greeted the congregation in Jerusalem. After that, he went down to the city of Antioch in Syria.²³ Paul stayed in Antioch for a while. Then he left Antioch and went through the countries of Galatia and Phrygia. He traveled from town to town in these areas. He made all of the followers of Jesus stronger.

Apollos

²⁴A Jewish man named Apollos came to Ephesus. Apollos was born in the city of Alexandria. He was an educated man. His knowledge of the Scriptures was very powerful.²⁵ He had been taught the way of the Lord. Apollos was always very enthusiastic when he talked to people about Jesus. The things he taught about Jesus were correct, but the only immersion that

he knew was the immersion which John taught.^b ²⁶Apollos began to speak very boldly in the synagogue. Priscilla and Aquila heard him speak. They took him home and helped him to understand the way of God better.²⁷ Apollos wanted to go to the country of Achaia. So, the brothers in Ephesus helped pay his expenses. They wrote a letter to the followers of Jesus in Achaia. In the letter, they asked them to accept Apollos. The followers of Jesus in Achaia had believed in Jesus through God's gracious love. When Apollos went there, he helped them very much.²⁸ He argued very convincingly in public against the Jews. Apollos clearly proved that they were wrong. He used the Scriptures to show that Jesus is the Messiah.

In Ephesus

19¹While Apollos was in the city of Corinth, Paul was visiting some places along the northern route to the city of Ephesus. In Ephesus, Paul found some followers of John.² Paul asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

These followers answered him, "We have never even heard of a Holy Spirit!"

a 18:18 This was similar to a Nazirite vow (Num. 6:13-21).

b 18:25 See Matt. 3:1-17; Mark 1:1-11; Luke 3:1-22; John 1:6-8,15,19-34; John 3:22-30.

³So Paul asked them, “What kind of immersion did you receive?”

They said, “It was the immersion which John taught.”

⁴Paul said, “John immersed people after they changed their hearts. John told people to trust in the one who would come after him. That person is Jesus.”

⁵When these followers of John heard this, they were immersed by the authority of the Lord Jesus. ⁶Then Paul put his hands on them^a and the Holy Spirit came upon them. They began speaking different inspired languages and prophesying. ⁷In this group there were about twelve men.

⁸Paul went into the synagogue and began to speak very boldly. Paul did this for three months. He debated with the Jews and he tried to persuade them to believe in the kingdom of God. ⁹However, some of the Jews became stubborn. They refused to believe. They said some terrible things about The Way. The people heard these things. So, Paul left and took the followers of Jesus with him. He went to a place where a man named Tyrannus had a school. There he reasoned with people every day. ¹⁰He did this for two years. Because of this work, every Jew and Greek in the country of Asia^b

a 19:6 a common practice when appointing people to special duties (Num. 27:22-23)

b 19:10 modern Turkey

heard the message of the Lord.

An Evil Spirit Attacks

¹¹God was using Paul to perform some very unusual miracles. ¹²Some people carried handkerchiefs and clothes which Paul had worn. The people put these things on sick people. When they did this, the sick people were healed and evil spirits left them.

¹³⁻¹⁴Some wandering Jews were also trying to make evil spirits go out of people. The seven sons of Sceva were doing this. (Sceva was an important Jewish priest.) These Jews were using the name of the Lord Jesus to do this. They all said, “By the same Jesus whom Paul proclaims, I order you demons to come out!”

¹⁵One time, an evil spirit said to these Jews, “I have heard about Jesus, and I know Paul, but who are you?”

¹⁶Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on these Jews. He was much stronger than they were. He beat them up and tore off their clothes. They ran away from that house. ¹⁷All of the people who lived in Ephesus—Jews and Greeks^c—learned about this. They all began to have great respect for God. The people were giving more and more honor to the name of the Lord Jesus.

¹⁸Many of the believers began to

c 19:17 non-Jews

admit all of the evil things they had done. ¹⁹Some of the believers had used black magic. These believers brought their occult books and burned them up in front of everyone. Those books were worth about two million dollars!^a ²⁰This is how the message of the Lord was influencing more and more people in a powerful way.

Paul Plans to Travel

²¹After these things, Paul made plans to go to Jerusalem. Paul planned to go through the countries of Macedonia and Achaia, and then go to Jerusalem. Paul thought, "After I visit Jerusalem, I must also visit Rome." ²²Timothy and Erastus were two of Paul's helpers. Paul sent them ahead to the country of Macedonia, but he stayed in Asia^b for a while.

Trouble

²³However, during that time, there was some bad trouble in Ephesus. It was about The Way. This is how it all happened:

²⁴There was a man named Demetrius, a silver-worker. He made little silver models which looked like the temple of the goddess Artemis.^c The

a 19:19 literally, "50,000 drachmas". A drachma was worth about one day's pay.

b 19:22 not the continent of Asia, but rather, a Roman state in Western Turkey

c 19:24 the Greek name given to one believed to be the mother of gods and men; her Roman name

was Diana. men who did work like this made lots of money from it. ²⁵Demetrius had a meeting with some other men who did the same kind of work. Demetrius told them, "Men, you know that we make a lot of money from our business. ²⁶But, Paul has influenced many people. He has done this in Ephesus and all over the whole country of Asia! Look at what this man Paul is doing! Listen to what he is saying! He says that the gods which men make are fake! ²⁷This might turn the people against our work. But there is also another danger: People will begin to think that the temple of the great goddess Artemis is not important! Her greatness will be destroyed! Artemis is the goddess that everyone in Asia and the whole world worships!"

²⁸When the men heard this, they became very angry. The men shouted, "Artemis, the goddess of the city of Ephesus, is great!" ²⁹All the people in the city became very upset. The people grabbed Gaius and Aristarchus, men from Macedonia. (These men always traveled with Paul.) Then all the people ran together to the stadium with a single purpose. ³⁰Paul wanted to go in and talk to the mob, but the followers of Jesus wouldn't let him go. ³¹Also, some leaders of Asia were friends

was Diana.

of Paul. These leaders sent him a message, begging him not to come into the stadium. ³²Some people were yelling one thing and others were yelling something else. The meeting was very confused. Most of the people didn't even know why they had come there. ³³The Jews had a man stand before the people. His name was Alexander. The Jews told him what to do. Alexander waved his hand, because he wanted to explain things to the mob. ³⁴But when the crowd realized that Alexander was a Jew, they all continued shouting together for two hours. They shouted, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians! Great is Artemis of the Ephesians . . . !"

³⁵Then the main city official made the crowd be quiet. He said, "Men of Ephesus, everyone knows that Ephesus is the city which keeps the temple of the great goddess Artemis and her holy rock." ^a ³⁶No one can say that this is not true. So, you should be quiet. You must stop and think before you do anything wrong. ³⁷You have brought these men, Gaius and Aristarchus, here, even though they have not stolen anything from the temple of our goddess or said anything bad about her. ³⁸We have courts of law, and there are judges. Do Demetrius and those men who

work with him have a charge against anyone? They should go to the courts! That is where they can accuse each other. ³⁹Is there anything else you want to talk about? Then come to the regular town meeting of the people. It can be decided there. ⁴⁰I say this because someone might see this trouble today and claim that we were rioting. We could not explain all of this trouble, because there is no real reason for this mob." ⁴¹After the city official said these things, he told the people to go home. Then all of the people left.

Paul Leaves

20 ¹When the trouble stopped, Paul invited the followers of Jesus to come visit him. He wanted to encourage them. Then Paul said good-bye and left. He went to the country of Macedonia. ²He encouraged the followers in the different places on his way through Macedonia. He told the followers many things. Then Paul went to Achaia. ^b ³He stayed there three months. He was ready to sail for Syria, but some Jews were planning something evil against him. So, Paul decided to go back to Syria through Macedonia. ⁴Some men were with him. They were: Sopater (the son of Pyrrhus, from the town of Berea),

a 19:35 literally, "from the sky". It was probably a meteorite.

b 20:2 the southern part of Greece

Aristarchus and Secundus (from the city of Thessalonica), Gaius (from the town of Derbe), Timothy, Tychicus, and Trophimus (from Asia).

⁵These men went first, ahead of Paul. They were waiting for us in the city of Troas. ⁶We sailed from the city of Philippi after the Jewish Festival of Unleavened Bread.^a We met these men in Troas five days later. We stayed there for seven days.

Paul Talks All Night

⁷On Sunday,^b we all met together to eat the supper of the Lord.^c Paul was chatting with the group. He was ready to leave the next day. Paul continued his speech until midnight. ⁸There were many torches in the room where we were gathered. The room was upstairs. ⁹There was a young man named Eutychus sitting in the window. As Paul talked on and on, Eutychus became sleepier and sleepier. Finally, Eutychus went to sleep and fell out of the window. He fell to the ground from the third floor. When they got to him, he was dead. ¹⁰Paul went down to Eutychus. He knelt down and hugged him. Paul

said to the other believers, “Don’t worry. He is alive now.” ¹¹⁻¹²They brought the young man inside. He was alive, and they were very much comforted. Paul went upstairs again. After he broke off some of the bread and ate it, Paul spoke to them a long time. When he finished speaking, it was early morning. Paul left.

Traveling

¹³We sailed for the town of Assos. We went first, ahead of Paul. He planned to meet us in Assos and join us on the ship there. Paul told us to do this, because he wanted to walk to Assos. ¹⁴Later, we met Paul at Assos and there he came on board the ship with us. Then we all went to the town of Mitylene. ¹⁵The next day, we sailed away from Mitylene and came to a place near the island of Chios. The following day, we sailed to the island of Samos. A day later, we came to the town of Miletus. ¹⁶Paul had already decided not to stop at Ephesus. He didn’t want to stay in Asia too long. He was hurrying, because he wanted to be in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost,^d if that were possible.

Paul Meets with the Elders

¹⁷Paul sent a message back to

a 20:6 a yearly feast when bread without yeast was eaten for seven days (Lev. 23:4-8)

b 20:7 literally, “the first day of the week”. According to Jewish custom, the first day of the week began at sundown (when the Sabbath ended) and lasted until the next sundown.

c 20:7 literally, “to break bread”, a Greek idiom usually referring to the Lord’s supper

d 20:16 a Jewish feast of the wheat harvest which was held around early June. It came in the springtime 50 days after the Passover feast. Many people would gather in Jerusalem. It would be a good opportunity to tell the Good News about Jesus.

Ephesus from Miletus. He invited the elders of God's people in Ephesus to come to him. ¹⁸When the elders came to him, Paul said to them, "Do **you** remember when I came to you on my first day in Asia? I stayed with you the whole time. ¹⁹The Jewish leaders planned evil things against me. Although this troubled me very much (sometimes I even cried), I always served the Lord. I never thought about myself first. ²⁰I always did what was best for you, telling you the Good News about Jesus in public and also teaching you in your homes. ²¹I told both Jewish and non-Jewish people^a to change their hearts and turn to God. I told them all to trust in our Lord Jesus. ²²But now, listen, I must obey the Holy Spirit and go to Jerusalem. I don't know what will happen to me there. ²³I only know that, in every town, the Holy Spirit warns me that troubles and even jail wait for me. ²⁴My life doesn't matter. The most important thing is that I finish my race—the work which the Lord Jesus gave me to do, telling people the Good News about God's gracious love.

²⁵"And now, listen, I know that none of you will ever see my face again! During the whole time I was with you, I was proclaiming to you about the kingdom of God. ²⁶So,

a 20:21 literally, "Greeks"

today I can tell you one thing that I am sure of: I'm not to blame, if any of you won't be saved!^b ²⁷I can say this, because I **know** I told you everything that God wants you to know. ²⁸Watch out for yourselves and for all the people God has given you. The Holy Spirit chose you to guard this little flock. You must shepherd God's^c congregation, whom He bought with His own blood.^d ²⁹I know that after I leave, some men will come into your group. They will be like vicious wolves, trying to destroy the little flock. ³⁰Also, men from your own group will begin to teach things which are wrong, pulling off some followers after themselves. ³¹So, be alert! Always remember: I was with you for three years. During this time, I never stopped warning each one of you. I taught you night and day. I often cried over you.

³²"Now I am turning you over to God. I am depending on the message of God's gracious love to make you strong. That story is able to give you the blessings which God gives to all His holy people. ³³When I was with you, I never wanted anybody's silver, gold, or fine clothes. ³⁴You yourselves

b 20:26 literally, "I am clean (innocent) from the blood of all."

c 20:28 Some manuscripts have "the Lord's congregation" instead.

d 20:28 Some manuscripts have: "the blood of His own."

know I always worked to take care of my own needs and the needs of the people who were with me. ³⁵I always showed you that you should work as hard as I did, helping people who are weak. I taught you to remember the words of the Lord Jesus. He himself once said, ‘You will be happier when you give than when you receive.’”

³⁶When Paul finished saying these things, he knelt down, and they all prayed together. ³⁷⁻³⁸They all cried and cried and cried. They were especially sad, because Paul had said that they would never see his face again. They hugged Paul and kept on kissing him. They went with him to the ship to say good-bye.

Headed for Jerusalem

21 ¹After we all said good-bye to the elders, we sailed away, straight for Cos Island. The next day, we went to the island of Rhodes. From Rhodes, we went to Patara. ²At Patara, we found a ship which was crossing to Phoenicia. We went aboard the ship and sailed away. ³We sailed near the island of Cyprus. We could see it on the north side, but we did not stop. We sailed to the country of Syria. We stopped at the city of Tyre, because the ship needed to unload its cargo there. ⁴In Tyre, we found some followers of Jesus, and we stayed with them for seven days. They

warned Paul not to go to Jerusalem because of what the Holy Spirit had told them. ⁵But when we finished our visit, we left and continued our trip. All the followers of Jesus, including the women and children, came outside the city with us to say good-bye. We all knelt down on the beach and prayed. ⁶Then we said good-bye to one another. We went aboard the ship, and they went back home.

⁷We continued our trip from Tyre and went to the city of Ptolemais. We greeted the brothers there and stayed with them one day. ⁸The next day, we left Ptolemais and went to the city of Caesarea. We went into the home of Philip and stayed with him. Philip was a preacher of the Good News. He was one of the seven servants. ⁹He had four virgin daughters. These daughters had the gift of prophesying. ¹⁰After we had stayed there for many days, a prophet named Hagabus came down from Judea. ¹¹He came to us and borrowed Paul’s belt. Then Hagabus used the belt to bind his own hands and feet. Hagabus said, “The Holy Spirit tells me: ‘This is how the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will bind the man who wears this belt.’” ^b Then they will hand him over to non-Jewish people.”

^a 21:8 See Acts 6:3.

^b 21:11 referring to Paul

¹²We all heard these words. So, we and the local followers of Jesus kept begging Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. ¹³Then Paul asked, “Why are you crying? Why are you making me so sad? I am ready to be bound in Jerusalem. I am even ready to **die** for the name of the Lord Jesus!”

¹⁴We could not persuade him to stay away from Jerusalem. So, we stopped trying and said, “We pray that what the Lord wants will be done.”

¹⁵After this, we got ready and started on our way up to Jerusalem.

¹⁶Some of the followers of Jesus from Caesarea went with us. These followers took us to the home of Mnason, a man from Cyprus. Mnason was one of the first people to become a follower of Jesus. They took us to his home, so that we could stay with him.

Arriving in Jerusalem

¹⁷Later, we arrived in Jerusalem, the brothers there were very happy to see us. ¹⁸The next day, Paul went with us to visit James. All of the elders were there, too. ¹⁹Paul greeted all of them. Then he told them exactly how God had used him to do many things among non-Jewish people.

²⁰When the leaders heard these things, they gave glory to God. Then they said to Paul, “Brother, you can see that thousands of Jews have become believers, and they all think

it is very important to obey the law of Moses. ²¹These Jews have heard that you are teaching all Jews who live in other countries among non-Jews to abandon the law of Moses. They have heard that you are telling those Jews **not** to circumcise their children and **not** to obey Jewish customs.

²²Therefore, what should we do? The Jewish believers here will learn that you have come. ²³We advise you to do this: Four of our men have made a vow to God. ²⁴Take these men with you and share in their washing ceremony.^a Pay their expenses, so that they may shave their heads.^b Do this and it will prove to everyone that the things they have heard about you are not true. They will see that you yourself respect the law of Moses in your own life. ²⁵But, as for non-

Jewish believers, we have already sent a letter. The letter said: “Do not eat food which has been given to idols. Do not taste blood. Do not eat animals which have been strangled. Do not commit any kind of sexual sin.”

²⁶Then Paul took the four men with him. The next day, Paul shared in the washing ceremony. Then he went to the temple. He announced the time when the days of the cleansing ceremony would be ended. On the

^a 21:24 See Num. 6:2-21.

^b 21:24 A Nazirite who contacted a dead body would do this (Num. 6:4; 19:11-19).

last day, an offering would be given for each of the men.

The Riot

²⁷The seven days were almost over, but some Jews from Asia saw Paul at the temple. They stirred up the whole crowd. They grabbed Paul ²⁸and shouted, “Men of Israel, help us! This is the man who is teaching things which are against the law of Moses, against our people, and against this place. This man is teaching these things to all people everywhere. And now he has even brought some non-Jewish men^a into the temple! He has made this holy place unclean!” ²⁹(These Jews said this, because they had seen Trophimus with Paul in Jerusalem. Trophimus was a non-Jewish man from the city of Ephesus. They thought that Paul had taken him into the temple area.)

³⁰All of the people in Jerusalem became very upset. They all ran together and grabbed Paul. They dragged him out of the temple courtyard. Immediately, the temple gates were closed. ³¹The people were trying to kill Paul. Then the commander of the Roman army in Jerusalem learned that there was much confusion in the whole city of Jerusalem. ³²Right away, the commander ran down to the place

where the people were. He brought some officers and soldiers with him. The people saw the commander and his soldiers. Then they stopped beating Paul. ³³The commander went to Paul and arrested him. He ordered his soldiers to bind Paul with two chains. Then the commander asked, “Who is this man? What has he done wrong?” ³⁴Some people there were yelling one thing and other people were yelling something else. Because of all this confusion and shouting, the commander could not learn the truth about what had happened. So, the commander ordered the soldiers to take Paul to the fortress.^b ³⁵⁻³⁶All of the people were following them. When the soldiers came to the steps, they had to carry Paul. They did this to protect him, because the people were so wild. The people shouted, “Kill him!”

³⁷The soldiers were ready to take Paul into the fortress, but Paul spoke to the commander. Paul asked, “Do I have the right to say something to you?”

The commander said, “Oh! Do you speak Greek!?” ³⁸Then, you are not the man I thought you were. I thought you were the Egyptian man who started some trouble against

b 21:34 the tower of Antonio at the northwest corner of the temple courtyard. Part of the Roman army was stationed there.

a 21:28 literally, “Greeks”

the government not long ago. He led 4,000 terrorists out to the desert.”

³⁹Paul said, “No, I am a Jew from Tarsus, in the country of Cilicia. I am a citizen of that important city. Please, let me speak to the people.”

⁴⁰The commander allowed Paul to do so. So, Paul stood on the steps. He made signs with his hands, so that the people would be quiet. The people became even quieter when Paul used the Aramaic language^a to speak to them.

Paul’s Speech

22¹Paul said, “My Jewish brothers and fathers, listen to me! I will make my defense to you now.”²The Jews heard Paul speaking in Aramaic,^b so they became very quiet. Paul said, ³“I am a Jew. I was born in Tarsus in the country of Cilicia. I grew up in this city of Jerusalem. I was a student of Gamaliel.^c He carefully taught me everything about the law of our ancestors. I was very serious about serving God, the same as all of **you** here today. ⁴I persecuted the people who believed in The Way of Jesus. Some of them were killed because of me. I arrested men and women, and I put them in jail. ⁵The high priest

a 21:40 a language much more dear to them than Greek, because it was their own language

b 22:2 the native language of the Jews

c 22:3 See Acts 5:34.

and the whole council of the Jewish elders can tell you that this is true! One time, these leaders gave me some letters. The letters were to the Jewish brothers in the city of Damascus. I was going there to arrest the followers of Jesus and bring them back to Jerusalem for punishment.”

How Paul Met Jesus

Acts 9:1-19; 26:12-18

⁶“However, something happened to me on my way to Damascus. It was about noon when I came close to the city. Suddenly, a bright light from the sky shined all around **me**. ⁷I fell to the ground. I heard a Voice saying to me: ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’ ⁸I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ The Voice answered me, ‘I am Jesus from Nazareth, the one you are persecuting.’⁹⁻¹⁰I said, ‘What should I do, Lord?’ The Lord Jesus answered me, ‘Get up and go into Damascus. There you will be told about all of the things I have planned for you to do.’ The men who were with me did not understand the Voice, but they saw the light. ¹¹I couldn’t see, because the intense light had blinded me. So, the men led me into Damascus by the hand.

¹²“In Damascus, a man named Ananias^d came to me. He was a devout

d 22:12 There are three different men named Ananias in Acts (Acts 5:1; 9:10; 23:2).

man; he obeyed the law of Moses. All of the Jews who lived there respected him. ¹³Ananias came to me, stood over me, and said to me, ‘Brother Saul, you can see again!’ At that moment, I was able to see him. ¹⁴Ananias told me, ‘The God of our ancestors chose you a long time ago to know His plan. God wanted you to see the righteous one^a and to hear words from his mouth. ¹⁵You will be his witness to all persons. You will tell them about the things you have seen and heard. ¹⁶Now, don’t wait any longer. Rise up, get yourself immersed and get your sins washed away, trusting in his name.’

¹⁷‘Later, I came back to Jerusalem. I was praying in the temple courtyard, and I saw a vision. ¹⁸I saw Jesus, and he said to me: ‘Hurry! Leave Jerusalem now! The people here won’t accept the truth you tell about me.’ ¹⁹I said, ‘But Lord, the people know that I was the one who put the believers in jail and beat them. I went through all the synagogues to find and arrest those who believe in you. ²⁰The people also know that I was there when Stephen, your witness, was killed. I stood there and agreed that they should kill him. I even held the robes of the men who were killing him!’ ²¹But Jesus said to me, ‘Leave

now. I will send you far away to non-Jewish people.’”

²²The people stopped listening when Paul spoke this last sentence. They all shouted, “Kill him! Get him out of the world! A man like this should not be allowed to live!”

²³They yelled and threw off their robes. They threw dust into the air.^b

²⁴Then the commander ordered the soldiers to take Paul into the fortress. He told the soldiers to beat Paul. The commander wanted to force Paul to tell him why the people were shouting against him like this. ²⁵As the soldiers were tying up Paul, preparing to beat him, Paul asked an officer who was standing there, “Do you have the right to beat a Roman citizen^c who has not been proven guilty?”

²⁶When the officer heard this, he went to the commander and told him about it. The officer asked, “Do you know what you are doing!?! This man is a Roman citizen!”

²⁷The commander came to Paul and asked, “Tell me, are you really a Roman citizen?”

Paul answered, “Yes.”

²⁸The commander said, “I paid a lot of money to become a Roman citizen.”

b 22:23 a way of showing extreme anger

c 22:25 Roman citizens could not be tortured or beaten until they had a fair trial.

a 22:14 Jesus

But Paul said, “I was born a Roman citizen.”

²⁹The men who were preparing to torture Paul moved away from him immediately. The commander was afraid, because he had already bound Paul and then realized that Paul was a Roman citizen!

Paul Speaks to the Sanhedrin

³⁰The next day, the commander decided to learn why the Jews were accusing Paul. So, he commanded the most important priests and the entire Jewish Council to meet together. Then he brought Paul out and took his chains off. Then he made Paul stand before their meeting.

23¹Paul looked straight at the Jewish Council and said, “My Jewish brothers, I have always lived my life before God in all good conscience, and that includes today!”

²Ananias,^a the high priest, was there. Ananias heard Paul and told the men who were standing near Paul to hit him on the mouth. ³Paul said to Ananias, “God will hit you, too! You are like a dirty wall which has been painted white! **You** sit there and judge me, using the law of Moses, yet you are telling them to hit me. That is against the law!”

⁴The men standing near Paul said to
a 23:2 There are three different men named Ananias in Acts (Acts 5:1; 9:10; 23:2).

him, “You must not talk like that to God’s high priest!”

⁵Paul said, “Brothers, I didn’t know this man was the high priest. It is written in the Scriptures,

‘You must not say evil things about a ruler of your people.’ ”
(Exodus 22:28)

⁶Some of the men in the meeting were Sadducees and some others were Pharisees. Paul knew this. Therefore, he said to them, so that everyone could hear, “My brothers, I am a Pharisee, and my father was a Pharisee! I am on trial here, because I believe that people will rise from death!”

⁷When Paul said this, it caused a big argument between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The group was divided. ⁸(The Sadducees believe after people die, they cannot live again. The Sadducees also teach that there are no angels or spirits, but the Pharisees believe in all these things.)

⁹All these Jews began shouting louder and louder. Some of the teachers of the law, who were Pharisees, stood up and argued: “We find nothing wrong with this man! Perhaps an angel or a spirit **did** speak to him on the road to Damascus!”

¹⁰The argument turned into a fight. The commander was afraid that the

Jews would tear Paul to pieces. So, the commander ordered the soldiers to go down, to take Paul away from them, and to put him in the fortress.

¹¹The next night, the Lord Jesus came and stood by Paul. He said, “Be strong! You have told the people in Jerusalem the truth about me. You must also go to Rome to do the same thing there!”

A Plot to Kill Paul

¹²The next morning, some of the Jews made a plot. They wanted to kill Paul. These Jews vowed to themselves that they would not eat or drink anything until they had killed Paul!

¹³There were more than 40 Jews who plotted this. ¹⁴They went and talked to the most important priests and the older Jewish leaders. These Jews said, “We have vowed to ourselves that we won’t eat or drink until we have killed Paul! ¹⁵So, this is what we want you to do now: Send a message to the commander from you and the Jewish Council. Tell the commander that you want him to bring Paul out to you, as if you want to ask Paul more questions. While he is on the way here, we will be waiting to kill him!”

¹⁶But Paul’s nephew heard about this ambush. He went to the fortress and told Paul. ¹⁷Then Paul called one of the officers and said to him, “Take this young man to the commander.

He has a message for him.” ¹⁸So, the officer brought Paul’s nephew to the commander. The officer said, “The prisoner Paul asked me to bring this young man to you. He wants to tell you something important.”

¹⁹The commander led the young man to a place where they could be alone. The commander asked, “What do you want to tell me?”

²⁰The young man said, “The Jewish leaders have decided to ask you to bring Paul down to their Supreme Council tomorrow. They want you to think that they plan to ask Paul more questions. ²¹But don’t believe them! There are more than 40 Jewish men who are hiding and waiting to kill Paul. They have all vowed not to eat or drink anything until they have killed him! They are now waiting for you to say yes.”

²²The commander ordered him, “Don’t tell anyone that you have told me this!” Then the commander sent the young man away.

²³After this, the commander called two officers. He said to them, “I need some men to go to Caesarea. Get 200 soldiers ready. Also, get 70 horsemen and 200 men to carry spears. Be ready to leave at nine o’clock tonight. ²⁴Get some horses for Paul to ride. He must be safely taken to Governor Felix.”

²⁵The commander wrote a letter.

This is what it said:

²⁶From Claudius Lysias.

To the Most Excellent Governor Felix:
Greetings.

²⁷The Jews had taken this man, and they were about to kill him, but I learned that he is a Roman citizen.^a I went with my soldiers and saved him.²⁸I wanted to know why they were accusing him, so I brought him before their Supreme Council.²⁹This is what I learned: The Jews said that Paul did some things which were wrong, but these charges were about their own Jewish laws. None of these things were worthy of jail or death.³⁰I was told that some of the Jews were plotting to kill Paul. Therefore, I sent him immediately to you. I also ordered those Jews to tell you the things they have against him.

³¹The soldiers did exactly as they were told. They got Paul and took him to the town of Antipatris that night.³²The next day, the horsemen went with Paul to Caesarea, but the soldiers and the spearmen went back to the fortress in Jerusalem.³³The horsemen entered Caesarea and gave the letter to the governor.^b Then they gave Paul to him.³⁴The governor read the letter. He asked Paul, “What country are you from?” He learned that Paul was from Cilicia.³⁵The governor said, “I will hear your case when the Jews who are accusing you come here, too.” Then the governor

a 23:27 Roman citizens could not be tortured or beaten until they had a fair trial.

b 23:33 Felix

gave orders for Paul to be kept in the palace. (This building had been built by Herod the Great.)

In Caesarea

24¹Five days later, Ananias went down to the city of Caesarea. Ananias was the high priest. He also brought some of the older Jewish leaders and a lawyer named Tertullus. They went to Caesarea to make charges against Paul before the governor.²Paul was called into the meeting, and Tertullus began to make his charges.

Tertullus said, “Our people have enjoyed much peace, because you are a wise reformer.^c ³Most Excellent Felix, we are very thankful to accept these things from you, always and in every place.⁴But, I don’t want to use any more of your time. So I will say only a few words. Please be patient.⁵This man Paul is a troublemaker. He stirs up trouble among the Jews everywhere in the world. He is a ringleader of the Nazarene^d sect.⁶He was also trying to make the temple unclean when we stopped him.⁷^e 8You yourself can decide

c 24:2 a good leader who brings improvement to government

d 24:5 Jesus grew up in Nazareth (Luke 2:39-52).

e 24:7 Some manuscripts have part of the last of verse 6, all of verse 7, and the beginning of verse 8: “We planned to judge him according to our own law, but the commander Lysias came and, with great violence, took him from us. Then Lysias gave orders that his accusers should come before you.”

whether all of our charges are true or not. Ask him some questions!”

⁹The other Jews agreed. They said, “These things are really true!”

¹⁰The governor signaled for Paul to speak. So Paul answered, “Governor Felix, I know that you have been a judge over this nation^a for many years. Therefore, I am happy to defend myself before you. ¹¹I went up to worship in Jerusalem only twelve days ago. You can learn for yourself that this is true. ¹²These Jews who are accusing me didn’t find me arguing with anyone in the temple. I was not stirring up a crowd. And, I was not causing trouble or arguing in the synagogues or any place else in the city. ¹³They cannot prove the things they are claiming against me now. ¹⁴However, I will admit this to you: I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of The Way of Jesus. The Jewish leaders claim that The Way is a ‘sect,’ but I too believe everything which is taught in the law of Moses and everything which is written in the books of the prophets. ¹⁵I have the same belief in God that these Jews have—the hope that all people, good and bad, will be raised from death. ¹⁶This is why I always try to do what I believe is right before God and man.

¹⁷“I was away from Jerusalem for

^a 24:10 Israel

many years. I went back there to bring some money to my people and to give some offerings. ¹⁸I was doing this when some Jews found me in the temple courtyard. I had just finished the cleansing ceremony. No crowd was gathered around me. I had not caused any trouble. ¹⁹However, some Jews from Asia were there. They should be here, standing before you. If I have really done anything wrong, those Jews from Asia are the ones who should accuse me. ²⁰Ask these Jews here if they found any wrong in me when I stood before the Supreme Jewish Council in Jerusalem. ²¹I did say one thing when I stood before them: I said, loud enough for all to hear: ‘You are judging me today because I believe that people will rise from death!’”

²²Felix already understood much about The Way of Jesus. He stopped the hearing^b and said, “When Commander Lysias comes down here, I will decide on these things later.” ²³Felix ordered the officer to keep Paul guarded, but he told the officer to give him some freedom and to let Paul’s friends bring the things that he needed.

Felix and Drusilla

²⁴After a few days, Felix came with

^b 24:22 a session in which testimony is heard by a judge before a formal trial

his wife, Drusilla.^a She was a Jewish woman. Felix asked for Paul to be brought to him. He listened to Paul talk about believing in Christ Jesus.²⁵ However, Felix became afraid when Paul spoke about such things as righteousness, self-control, and the Judgment Day, which will come in the future. Felix said, “Go away now! When I have time later, I will call for you.”²⁶ Felix hoped that Paul would pay him a bribe. So, Felix sent for Paul often and talked with him.

²⁷After two years, Portius Festus became governor. So, Felix was no longer governor, but Felix left Paul in prison, because he wanted to do something to please the Jewish leaders.

Festus

25¹So, Festus became governor, and three days later he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem.² The most important priests and the important Jewish leaders made charges against Paul before Festus.³ They asked Festus to do something for them; they wanted Festus to send Paul back to Jerusalem. (They had a plan to kill Paul along the way.)⁴ But Festus answered, “No! Paul will be kept in Caesarea. I myself will go to Caesarea soon.”⁵ Some of

your leaders should go down with me. They can accuse the man there in Caesarea, if he really has done something wrong.”

⁶Festus stayed in Jerusalem another eight or ten days. Then he went back down to Caesarea. The next day, Festus ordered the soldiers to bring Paul before him. Festus was seated on the judgment seat.⁷ Paul came into the room. The Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him. They said that Paul had done many serious crimes, but they couldn’t prove any of them.⁸ This is what Paul said to defend himself: “I have done nothing wrong against the Jewish law, against the temple, or against Caesar!”^b

⁹However, Festus wanted to please the Jewish leaders. So, he asked Paul, “Do you want to go up to Jerusalem? Do you want me to judge you there on these charges?”

¹⁰Paul said, “I am standing at Caesar’s judgment seat **now**. This is where I **must** be judged! I have done nothing wrong to the Jews; you know this is true.¹¹ If I have done anything wrong, and the law says I must die, then I agree that I should die. I don’t ask to be spared from death. But if these charges are not true, then no one can give me to these Jews. No!

a 24:24 She was the younger sister of Herod Agrippa II. See Acts 25:13.

b 25:8 The title of the supreme Roman rulers. “Caesar” became the title of each emperor.

I want Caesar to hear my case!”^a

¹²Then Festus talked about this with his advisors. Then he said, “You have asked to see Caesar, so to Caesar you will go!”

Agrippa and Bernice

¹³A few days later, King Herod Agrippa II and Bernice^b came to Caesarea to visit Festus. ¹⁴They stayed there many days. Festus told the king about Paul’s case. Festus said, “There is a man whom Felix left in prison. ¹⁵When I went to Jerusalem, the most important priests and the Jewish elders made charges against Paul. These Jews wanted me to order his death. ¹⁶But I answered, ‘When a man is accused of doing something wrong, Romans do not give the man to other people to judge. First, the man must face the people who are accusing him. Then he must be allowed to defend himself against their charges.’ ¹⁷Some Jews came here to Caesarea for the hearing. I didn’t waste any time. The next day, I sat on the judgment seat and ordered that the man^c be brought in. ¹⁸The Jewish leaders stood up and accused him. They didn’t accuse him of any of the crimes I thought

they would. ¹⁹They wanted to argue about their own religion and about a man named Jesus. Jesus died, but Paul said that Jesus is still alive. ²⁰I didn’t know much about these things, so I didn’t say much. Instead, I asked Paul: ‘Do you want to go to Jerusalem and be judged about these things there?’ ²¹But Paul asked to be kept in Caesarea. He wants a decision from the Emperor. So I commanded that Paul be held until I could send him to Caesar in Rome.”

²²Agrippa said to Festus, “I myself would like to hear this man, too.” Festus said, “You can hear him tomorrow!”

²³The next day, Agrippa and Bernice appeared. They dressed and acted like very important people. Agrippa and Bernice, the army leaders, and the important men of Caesarea went into the courtroom. Festus ordered the soldiers to bring Paul in. ²⁴Festus said, “King Agrippa, and all of you men gathered here with us, you see this man. All the Jewish people, here and in Jerusalem, have complained to me about him. They cry out that he should not be allowed to live anymore. ²⁵When I judged him, I could find nothing wrong. I found no reason to order his death, but he asked to be judged by the Emperor.”^d So, I have decided

^d 25:25 The Greek title for “Caesar” is used here.

^a 25:11 Every Roman citizen had the right to appeal his case to the emperor in Rome.

^b 25:13 She was another sister of Herod Agrippa II. See Acts 24:24.

^c 25:17 Paul

to send him to Rome. ²⁶But, I really don't know what to tell ^a Caesar that this man has done. Therefore, I have brought him before all of you—especially you, King Agrippa. I hope that you will question him, and give me something to write to Caesar. ²⁷I think it is foolish to send a prisoner to Caesar without making some charges against him.”

Paul Defends Himself

26 ¹Agrippa said to Paul, “You are now permitted to defend yourself.” Then Paul raised his hand ^b and began to speak. ²He said, “King Agrippa, I will answer all of the charges that the Jews make against me. I think it is a privilege that I can stand here before you today and do this. ³I am very happy to talk to you, because you know much about all of the Jewish customs and issues. Please listen to me patiently.

⁴“All the Jewish people know about my whole life. They’ve known me since I was young, from the very beginning among my own people and later in Jerusalem. ⁵These Jews have known me for a long time. If they want to, they can tell you that I was a Pharisee. And the Pharisees obey the laws of the Jewish faith more carefully than any other group

of Jewish people. ⁶⁻⁷Now I am on trial because I believe in God’s promise which all the twelve tribes of our people hope to receive. For this hope, the Jews earnestly serve God day and night. O King, the Jews have accused me because I hope for this same promise!

⁸“Why do you think it is impossible for God to raise people from death? ⁹Even I thought that I must do many things against the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰And in Jerusalem I did persecute the holy people. The most important priests gave me authority to put many of these people in jail. When they were being killed, I voted for it. ¹¹In every synagogue, I punished them often. I tried to force them to say evil things against Jesus. I was so crazed against these people that I hunted them down to other towns.”

Paul Speaks to King Herod Agrippa II

Acts 9:1-19; 22:6-16

¹²“Once, the most important priests gave me permission and authority to go to the city of Damascus. ¹³It was noon, O King. I was on my way to Damascus. I saw a light from the sky. It was brighter than the sun. The light shined all around me and the men who were traveling with me. ¹⁴We

^a 25:26 literally, “write”

^b 26:1 a common gesture calling for attention

all fell to the ground. Then I heard a Voice talking to me in the Aramaic language.^a The Voice said, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? By fighting me you are only hurting yourself.’^b ¹⁵I said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ The Lord said, ‘I am Jesus. I am the one you are persecuting.’¹⁶Get up. Stand on your feet! I have chosen you to be my servant. You will be my witness telling people the things that you have seen and the things I will show you. This is why I have appeared to you today. ¹⁷I will rescue you from your own people and from non-Jewish people to whom I am sending you. ¹⁸You will show the non-Jewish people the truth. They will turn away from darkness to light,^c turning from the power of Satan back to the one true God. Then they can receive forgiveness of their sins. They will have a share with those people who have been made holy by trusting in me.’”

What Happened Later

¹⁹Paul continued speaking: “King Agrippa, after I had this vision from heaven, I obeyed it. ²⁰First, in Damascus, I began to tell Jews that they should change their hearts.

I told them to turn back to God. I also went to Jerusalem and to all the area around Judea, and I said: ‘Change your lives and do good things. This will show that you have truly changed your hearts.’ ²¹This is why some Jews took hold of me and tried to kill me in the temple courtyard. ²²But God helped me, and He is still helping me today. With God’s help, I am standing here today and telling all people, whether ‘important’ or ‘unimportant,’ the things I have seen. I am saying nothing new; I am only saying the same things which Moses and the prophets said would take place: ²³They said that the Messiah would die and be the first to rise from death; and that the Messiah would bring light to Jewish people and non-Jewish people.”

Festus Interrupts

²⁴While Paul was saying these things to defend himself, Festus shouted, “Paul, are you crazy? Too much education has made you crazy!”

²⁵Paul said, “Most Excellent Festus, I’m not crazy. The things I say are true. My words are not the words of a foolish man; I am serious. ²⁶King Agrippa knows about these matters. I can speak freely to him. I know that he has heard about all of these things, because these things happened

a 26:14 The Jews had a special reverence for their native language.

b 26:14 literally, “It is hard for you to kick against the pricks”.

c 26:18 or, “from sin to righteousness”

where everyone could see.^a ²⁷King Agrippa, do you believe what the prophets wrote? I **know** you believe!”

²⁸King Agrippa asked Paul, “Do you think you can persuade me to become a Christian so easily?”

²⁹Paul said, “It doesn’t matter whether it is easy or hard; I pray to God that not only you, but everyone who is listening to me today, could also be like me—except for these chains!”

³⁰King Agrippa, Governor Festus, Bernice, and all of the people sitting with them got up³¹ and left the room. They began to talk to each other. They said, “This man should not be killed or put in prison; he has done nothing **that** bad!” ³²And Agrippa said to Festus, “We could have let this man go free, but he has already asked to be judged by Caesar.”^b

They Sail for Italy

27¹It was decided that we would sail for Italy. A Roman army officer named Julius guarded Paul and some other prisoners. Julius served in the Emperor’s regiment. ²We went aboard a ship which was from the city of Adramyttium. It was ready to sail for ports along the coast of Asia.^c Then we set sail. Aristarchus

a 26:26 literally, “have not been done in a corner.”

b 26:32 The title of supreme Roman rulers. “Caesar” became the title of each emperor.

c 27:2 modern Turkey

went with us. He was a man from the city of Thessalonica in Macedonia.

³The next day, we came to the city of Sidon. Julius was very kind to Paul.

He gave Paul freedom to go visit Paul’s friends who took care of his needs.

⁴We left the city of Sidon. We sailed south of the island of Cyprus, because the wind was blowing against us. ⁵We

sailed across the sea next to Cilicia and Pamphylia. Then we came to the town of Myra in Lycia. ⁶In Myra the Roman army officer found a ship from the city of Alexandria. This ship was going to Italy. So he put us on it.

⁷We sailed slowly for many days. It was hard for us to reach the town of Cnidus, because the wind was blowing against us. We could not go any further that way. So, we sailed past the south side of the island of Crete, near the town of Salmone. ⁸We sailed along the coast, but sailing was hard. Then we came to a place called Safe Harbors. The town of Lasea was near there.

⁹However, we had lost much time.

It was now dangerous to sail, because it was after mid-September.^d So, Paul warned them, ¹⁰“Men, I can see that there will be much destruction on this trip. The ship and the things on this ship will be lost. Even our lives may be lost!” ¹¹But the captain of

the ship and its owner didn’t agree

d 27:9 literally, “the Fast” (*Yom Kippur*)

with Paul. The Roman army officer believed what they said, rather than what Paul said. ¹²That harbor was not a good place for the ship to stay for the winter. Therefore, most of the men decided that the ship should leave there. The men hoped that we could go to Phoenix. The ship could stay there for the winter. (Phoenix was a city on the island of Crete. It had a harbor which faced southwest and northwest.)

The Storm

¹³Then a good wind began to blow from the south. The men on the ship thought: “This is the wind we wanted, and now we have it!” So they pulled up anchor. They sailed very close to the island of Crete, ¹⁴but then a very strong wind named “the Northeaster”^a came down from the island. ¹⁵This wind took the ship and carried it away. The ship couldn’t hold against the wind. So, we stopped trying to resist and let the wind blow us. ¹⁶We went below a small island named Cauda. Then^b we were able to bring in the lifeboat. (It was very hard to do this.) ¹⁷After the men took the lifeboat in, they tied ropes around the ship to hold the ship together. The men were afraid that the ship would

hit the sandbanks of Syrtis.^c So, they lowered the sail and let the wind carry the ship along. ¹⁸The next day, the storm was blowing us so hard that the men threw some things out of the ship^d to make the ship lighter. ¹⁹A day later, with their own hands, they threw out the ship’s equipment. ²⁰For many days we couldn’t see the sun or the stars to guide us. The storm was very bad. We lost all hope of staying alive—we thought we would die.

²¹For a long time the men didn’t eat. Then one day Paul stood up before them and said, “Men, I told you not to leave Crete. You should have listened to me. Then you would not have had all of this trouble and loss. ²²But now, I am telling you to cheer up. None of you will die! However, the ship will be lost. ²³Last night, an angel came to me from the one true God. This is the God I worship. I am His. ²⁴God’s angel said, ‘Paul, don’t be afraid! You must stand before Caesar. Listen, God has promised to give you something good—He will save the lives of all those sailing with you.’ ²⁵So, men, cheer up! I trust in God. Everything will happen just as His angel told me. ²⁶But, we will run aground on an island.”

²⁷On the 14th night, we were

a 27:14 literally, “Euraquilo”

b 27:16 while the island protected them from the strong wind

c 27:17 an area off the African coast where many ships sank

d 27:18 They threw the cargo overboard.

floating around in the Adriatic Sea.^a About midnight, the sailors sensed that we were close to land.²⁸ They threw a rope into the water with a weight on the end of it. They found that the water was 120 feet deep. They went a little further and threw the rope in again. It was 90 feet deep.²⁹ The sailors were afraid that we would hit the rocks. So, they threw four anchors into the water from the back of the ship. Then they prayed for daylight to come.³⁰ Some of the sailors wanted to leave the ship. They lowered the lifeboat to the water, trying to make the other men think that they were throwing out more anchors from the front of the ship.³¹ But Paul told the Roman army officer and the other soldiers, “If these men don’t stay in the ship, then your lives cannot be saved!”³² Then the soldiers cut the ropes and let the lifeboat fall into the water.

³³Just before dawn, Paul started persuading everyone to eat something. He said, “For the past two weeks you have been waiting and watching. You have not eaten anything for 14 days.”³⁴ Now, I beg you, eat something! You need it to stay alive. Not one of you will lose even one hair of your head.”³⁵ After he said this, Paul took some bread

and, in front of them all, thanked God for it. He broke off a piece and began to eat.³⁶ All of the men felt better. They all started to eat, too.³⁷ (There were 276 people on the ship.)³⁸ We ate all we wanted. Then they began to make the ship lighter by throwing the wheat into the sea.

The Shipwreck

³⁹When daylight came, the sailors saw land, but they did not know where we were. They noticed a bay with a beach. The sailors wanted to sail the ship to the beach, if they could.⁴⁰ So, the men cut the ropes to the anchors and left the anchors in the sea. At the same time, the men untied the ropes which were holding the rudders. Then the men raised the front sail into the wind and sailed toward the beach.⁴¹ But the ship hit a sandbank and the front of the ship stuck there; the ship could not move. Then the big waves began to break up the back of the ship.

⁴²The soldiers decided to kill the prisoners, so that none of the prisoners could swim away and escape,⁴³ but the Roman army officer wanted to let Paul live. Therefore, he didn’t allow the soldiers to kill the prisoners. Julius ordered the people who could swim to jump into the water and swim toward land.

⁴⁴Others used wooden boards or

^a 27:27 literally, “Adria”, the central part of the Mediterranean Sea

pieces from the ship. This is how all of the people got to land. No one died.

On Malta

28¹When we were safe on land, we realized that the island was called Malta. ²It was very cold and raining. The people who lived there were very kind to us. They made a fire for us and welcomed us all. ³Paul picked up a pile of sticks for the fire. He was putting the sticks on the fire. Then, because of the heat, a poisonous snake came out and bit him on the hand. ⁴The people living on the island saw the snake hanging from Paul's hand. They said to each other, "Surely this man is a murderer! He didn't die in the ocean, but Justice^a will not permit him to live." ⁵However, Paul shook off the snake into the fire. He was not hurt. ⁶The people expected him to swell up or to fall down dead suddenly. For a long time, the people waited and watched him, but nothing bad happened to him. So the people changed their minds and they began to say, "He is a god!"

⁷There were some fields around that same area. A very important man on the island owned these fields. His name was Publius. He welcomed us into his home. Publius was very kind to us. We stayed in his house for three

days. ⁸Publius' father was very sick in bed. He had a fever and dysentery, but Paul went to him and prayed for him. Paul put his hands on the man and healed him. ⁹After this occurred, all the other sick people on the island began to come to Paul. God healed them, too. ¹⁰⁻¹¹The people on the island gave us many honors. We stayed there for three months. When we were ready to leave, the people gave us the things we needed.

Heading for Rome

We got on a ship from the city of Alexandria. The ship had stayed on the island of Malta during the winter. On the front of the ship was the sign for the twin gods.^b ¹²We stopped at the town of Syracuse and stayed there for three days. ¹³Then we came to the town of Rhegium. The next day, a wind began to blow from the southwest, so we were able to leave. A day later, we came to the town of Puteoli. ¹⁴We found some Christian brothers there. They asked us to stay with them for seven days. Finally, we came near to Rome. ¹⁵The brothers in Rome heard that we were there. They came out to meet us at the Market of Appius and at the Three Inns. When Paul saw these believers, he felt much better. He thanked God.

b 28:11 literally, "Dioscuri", sons of Jupiter (Castor and Pollux) who were believed to protect sailors

a 28:4 blind fate. Here it is personified.

Paul's Arrival in Rome

¹⁶Then we went to Rome. In Rome, though Paul was allowed to live alone, a soldier stayed with Paul to guard him.

¹⁷Three days later, Paul sent for some of the most important Jewish leaders. When they came together, Paul said to them, "My Jewish brothers, I have done nothing against our people or against the customs of our ancestors, yet I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. ¹⁸The Romans asked me many questions, but they couldn't find any reason why I should be put to death. They wanted to let me go free. ¹⁹However, the Jewish leaders there didn't want me to go free. So, I was forced to ask to have my trial before Caesar in Rome.^a I am not accusing my people of anything wrong. ²⁰This is the reason I wanted to see you and talk with you. I am bound with this chain, because I believe in the hope of Israel."^b

²¹These Jews answered Paul, "We have received no letters from Judea about you. None of our Jewish brothers who have traveled from Judea brought any news about you or told us anything bad about you.

a 28:19 Any Roman citizen had the privilege of standing trial before Caesar himself in Rome. However, it was very expensive to claim this right.

b 28:20 the resurrection (Compare Acts 26:6-8; 13:32-37.)

²²We do want to hear your ideas. We know that people everywhere are speaking against this sect."

²³Paul and the Jewish leaders set a day for a meeting. On that day, many more of these Jews met with Paul at his house. Paul spoke to them all day long. He explained to them the truth about the kingdom of God. Using the law of Moses and the writings of the prophets, Paul tried to persuade them about Jesus. ²⁴Some of the Jews believed the things that Paul said, but others did not believe. ²⁵They disagreed among themselves. The Jewish leaders were ready to leave, but Paul said one more thing to them: "The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your ancestors through the prophet Isaiah. ²⁶He said:

'Go to this people and tell them: You will certainly hear, but you'll never understand! You will certainly see, but you'll never perceive! ²⁷The heart of this people has become hard. They have ears, but they don't listen. They have shut their eyes. Otherwise, they would see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their minds, and then turn. I would heal them.' (*Isaiah 6:9-10*)

²⁸"I want you Jewish leaders

to know that God has sent His salvation to non-Jewish people. **They will listen!**" 29^a

30 Paul stayed two full years in his own rented house. He welcomed everyone who came to visit him.

31 Paul was proclaiming about the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ. He was very bold. No one tried to stop him from speaking.

a 28:29 Some manuscripts have verse 29: "And when he had said these things, the Jews left, having a great argument among themselves."