

# THE ACTS

## OF THE APOSTLES

Dear Theophilus:

**I**n my first report to you about the amazing happenings here, I wrote about all that Jesus both did and taught from the very beginning of His ministry until the day He was taken up into Heaven.

<sup>2</sup>But before He was taken up, He gave strict instructions (thru the help of the Holy Spirit) to the men He had chosen as His apostles.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Yes, they saw Him alive again after He had suffered for our sins and died, because He revealed Himself to them several times over a period of 40 days. He spoke to them about the Kingdom of God, and proved to them beyond any doubt that He was indeed alive again.

### *The Promise of the Holy Spirit*

<sup>4</sup>The last time He was with them, He ordered them not to leave Jerusalem. “You must wait here now,”<sup>a</sup> He said, “until you receive the gift I told you about, the gift My Father promised you.

<sup>5</sup>“It’s true that John baptized<sup>a</sup> the people in water, but in a few days you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit!”

<sup>6</sup>And while they were together there, they asked Him, “Lord, is this the time when You will free us from Rome and give the Kingdom back to Israel?”

<sup>7</sup>“It is not for you to know the dates and periods of time that God has set. He alone has the right to decide such matters,” He replied.

<sup>8</sup>“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And you will then be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and thruout all Judea and Samaria, and even to the most remote parts of the earth.”

### *Jesus Taken up into Heaven*

<sup>9</sup>Immediately after He had spoken those words, while they were still standing there looking at

Him, He began to rise from the earth! And He continued rising into the sky until a cloud hid Him from their view.

<sup>10</sup>As they were staring into the sky to get another glimpse of Him going up, all of a sudden two men in white clothing were standing beside them.

<sup>11</sup>“Why are you men from Galilee standing here staring into the sky?” they questioned. “This Jesus, who has just been taken from you into Heaven, will return in the very same way that you’ve just seen Him go into Heaven.”<sup>a</sup>

<sup>12</sup>So they immediately left the hill where they were, called the Mount of Olives, which is about half a mile from Jerusalem, and returned to the city.

<sup>13</sup>When they arrived, they went upstairs into the room where they were staying. This included Peter, James, John and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Apphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son<sup>a</sup> of James.

<sup>14</sup>They were all of one mind, and devoted themselves to unwavering, continuous prayer and earnest pleading. Several women were with them, including Mary, Jesus’ mother. His brothers were also there.

### *Matthew Chosen to Replace Judas*

<sup>15</sup>One day, when about 120 of the Lord’s followers were gathered together, Peter stood up and said,

<sup>16</sup>“Brothers and sisters, the prophecy in Scripture about Judas, who guided the mob that arrested Jesus, was bound to come true. This was foretold by the Holy Spirit, speaking thru David.

<sup>17</sup>“Because he was one of us, and had a part in this ministry.”

<sup>18</sup>(This man actually bought a field with the money he got as the reward for his evil deed.<sup>a</sup> Then he committed suicide, falling headlong, so

**1:2a** Or *messengers*.

**1:4a** Since Christ’s crucifixion, they had been back home to Galilee, and had now returned to Jerusalem. Matthew 28:16-20; John 21:1-24.

**1:5a** Literally *immersed*. See Matthew 3:11.

**1:9-11a** When Christ returns, He will be seen coming in the clouds of Heaven. Do not be fooled by

any other announcement that He has come or will come in any other way. When He returns *every eye will see Him*. Revelation 1:7.

**1:13a** Literally *Judas of James*, so we don’t know whether he was a son or brother of James.

**1:18a** Matthew 27:3-10.

that his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out.

<sup>19</sup>Everyone in Jerusalem has heard about this. So they've named that field *Akel Dama* in their language, meaning, the *Field of Blood*.)

<sup>20</sup>“Now in the book of Psalms it is written,” Peter continued,

**Let his property be desolate. Let no one live there.<sup>a</sup> And let someone else take his place.<sup>b</sup>**

<sup>21</sup>“So it is necessary that from among those who have been with us all the time our Lord Jesus lived with us,

<sup>22</sup>from His baptism by John until the day He was taken from us up into Heaven, one of these needs to become a witness with us to testify about the truth of His resurrection.”

<sup>23</sup>Two men were nominated: Joseph (also called Barsabas) whose last name was Justus, and Matthias.

<sup>24</sup>Then they prayed, “Dear Lord, You know what's in the heart of everyone. Show us which of these two You have chosen

<sup>25</sup>to take over this apostolic ministry which Judas turned down to go where he belongs.”

<sup>26</sup>Then they drew lots, and Matthias was chosen. Following that he was counted as an apostle, with the other eleven.

### *The Coming of the Holy Spirit*

**2** When it became full daylight on the day of Pentecost,<sup>a</sup> the believers were all in peaceful harmony in one place.

<sup>2</sup>And suddenly, down from the sky came a thundering sound like the roaring of a powerful torna-

do, and it filled the whole building<sup>a</sup> where they were sitting.

<sup>3</sup>Then they saw what looked like tongues of fire that divided and came to rest upon each one of them!

<sup>4</sup>And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in languages they had never learned, as the Spirit gave them the words.

<sup>5</sup>Staying in Jerusalem at that time were godly Jews from every nation on earth.

<sup>6</sup>And when they heard the sound of what was happening, crowds of these Jews converged on the place. And they were stunned, because each of them heard these people speaking in his own language.

<sup>7</sup>Amazed and astonished, they said to each other, “Look, aren't all these who are speaking from Galilee?

<sup>8</sup>“How is it, then, that each of us is hearing them speak in our own native language?

<sup>9</sup>“We're here from Parthia, Media, and Elam. Others are from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, the province of Asia,<sup>a</sup>

<sup>10</sup>and from both Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the district of Libya around Cyrene. There are also visitors here from Rome, Crete, and Arabia (both Jews and converts to Judaism).

<sup>11</sup>“And yet we are all hearing them tell of the great things God has done, in our various native languages!”

<sup>12</sup>And they all continued to be amazed and perplexed, asking one another, “What's the meaning of all this?”

<sup>13</sup>But others began to laugh and ridicule.

**1:20a** Psalm 69:25. The field he bought became a graveyard. Matthew 27:2-10.

**1:20b** Psalm 109:8. Or *his office as overseer*.

**2:1a** The Feast of Pentecost, the firstfruits harvest festival, one of the three great feasts of the Jews, takes place 50 days after Passover.

**2:2a** It was the *men* who stayed in the upper room (1:13), although the women met with them in their room the first day. 1:14. Luke 24:53 informs us that they continually worshiped in the Temple during the daytime. It was no doubt in some area of the Temple complex that this happening took place.

There were 3,000 converts as a result of Peter's preaching that day. That number of people could never have gotten into the upper room. The Greek *oikos* can be translated *house* or *building*.

**2:9a** Western Turkey.

**2:17-18a** This is from the prophecy of Joel 2:28-29. This was partially fulfilled on the day of Pente-

cost (Acts 2:1-41), following Christ's ascension into Heaven. And His *Spirit* has been *poured out* on His people in certain measure thruout the centuries ever since. However, if you will read all of Joel 2:28-32 you will see that there is good reason to believe that the greatest outpouring of God's Spirit upon the earth is yet to come.

The promise in Joel 2:23 (faithfully translated in King James and New King James versions) could be symbolic of this outpouring. The outpouring of God's Spirit on the day of Pentecost could have been the seedtime outpouring. Then notice the tremendous, double harvest-time outpouring promised just before God's judgments and harvest. Joel 2:30-31; 3:14-16. These are the same latter-day judgments mentioned in Matthew 24:29; Luke 21:25-26; Revelation 6:12-17.

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The latter-day outpouring of God's Spirit could result in the conversion of the 144,000 Jews of Rev-

“They’ve just had too much new wine,” they sneered.

### **Peter Speaks to the Crowd**

<sup>14</sup> Then Peter stood up with the eleven other apostles, and with a loud and clear voice he said, “My fellow Jews, those of you who live here in Jerusalem, and all others, listen to me. Let me explain what’s happened.

<sup>15</sup> “These people are not drunk, as some of you claim. After all, it’s only nine o’clock in the morning!

<sup>16</sup> “But this is what God had the prophet Joel speak of when he said:

<sup>17</sup> **This is what God says will happen in the last days. I will pour out My Spirit upon people in all nations. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, and your old men will have dreams.**

<sup>18</sup> **Yes, in those days I will pour out My Spirit on My bondservants, both men and women, and they will prophesy.<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>19</sup> **And I will cause wonders to appear in the sky above, and signs on the earth below. There will be blood and fire and billowing clouds of smoke.**

<sup>20</sup> **The sun will be semidarkened, and the moon will become blood-red. All this will happen before the coming of the great and glorious Day of the Lord.<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>21</sup> **And it will be that whoever will turn from his sinning and call out to the Lord for mercy and forgiveness<sup>a</sup> will be saved.<sup>b</sup>**

<sup>22</sup> “People of Israel,” Peter continued, “listen to me! Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, God proved that He was a Man sent from Him by the miracles, signs, and wonders which He did thru Him among

you. All of you know this.

<sup>23</sup> “This Man was handed over to you by the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. And using the hands of godless men, you took Him and put Him to death by nailing Him to a cross.

<sup>24</sup> “But God raised Him back to life again, delivering Him from the agony of death, because it was not possible for death to hold Him in its power.

<sup>25</sup> “And here’s what David revealed the Messiah would say and do when all this happened:

**I know the Lord is with Me all the time. And because He is right here beside Me, I have no reason to be shaken up with fear or concern.**

<sup>26</sup> **So My heart rejoices and My tongue overflows with praise. And even more than that, My body will rest in hope.**

<sup>27</sup> **Because You won’t leave My soul in Hades, nor leave the body of Your Holy One in the grave to putrefy.**

<sup>28</sup> **You have shown Me the paths that lead to life, and You will fill Me with joy with Your presence.<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>29</sup> “Fellow Israelites, let me point out some simple facts about the patriarch David who wrote this. He wasn’t speaking about himself, because he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is still with us today.

<sup>30</sup> “But because he was a prophet, and knowing that God had solemnly promised him under oath that from a descendant of his own physical body He would raise up the Messiah to sit on his throne,

<sup>31</sup> David was able to look ahead and speak about the resurrection of the Messiah. He knew that the soul of Messiah would not be left by God in Hades, nor would God allow His body to decay in the grave.

elation 7:1-8. It could also be the reason why Paul said that Christ will *present to Himself a glorious church, one having no stain or wrinkle or any other blemish*. Ephesians 5:27. It seems very possible that God plans to give this world the greatest chance it has ever had to become converted to Him, before judgment falls. Even at this writing there are many evidences of God’s moving greatly in the hearts of mankind. See Revelation 14:14-16.

We can praise God for the outpouring of His Spirit in wonderful ways today, but still, the greater outpouring seems yet to come. The great outpouring of God’s Spirit today could be very insignificant compared to what’s still ahead.

**2:19-20a** See Joel 2:30-31. Shortly following that great latter-day outpouring of God’s Spirit, the world can expect to see the fulfillment of these two verses. There will be terrifying judgments upon the earth (Revelation 8:6-13) because the greater por-

tion of mankind will still refuse the greatest witness the world has ever been given, when God’s Spirit is outpoured in such tremendous measure.

The *signs* and *wonders* mentioned in these verses will occur in the period immediately preceding the Battle of Armageddon and the return of our Lord to earth to judge the nations and to reign over the earth as King of kings and Lord of lords.

**2:21a** Literally *call upon the name of the Lord*. See 16:31 note as to what it means to call on *the name of the Lord*. See also 3:19.

**2:21b** Joel 2:32. Nowhere in Scripture is it stated that the day of God’s grace will end. Even during the time of the Great Tribulation, as long as people have life, they will have the opportunity to seek God’s forgiveness and eternal life thru Christ the Savior.

**2:28a** Psalm 16:8-11.

<sup>32</sup>“God has raised this Jesus back to life again! We are all witnesses of this fact.”<sup>a</sup>

<sup>33</sup>“So, having been exalted and seated at the right hand of God, and having been given the Holy Spirit, just as the Father had promised, He has now poured out this which you are both seeing and hearing.

<sup>34</sup>“Now David did not ascend into the heavens, but he was the one who also said:

**The Lord God said to my Lord, “Sit here at My right hand**

**<sup>35</sup>until I put Your enemies under Your feet as a footstool.”<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>36</sup>“So let everyone in Israel know, without a doubt, that God has made this Jesus, the One you crucified, to be both your sovereign Lord and the promised Messiah!”<sup>a</sup>

<sup>37</sup>When the crowd heard this, they were deeply remorseful, and they questioned Peter and the other apostles, “Men and brothers,” they said, “what should we do now?”

<sup>38</sup>“Each one of you must repent<sup>a</sup> and be baptized<sup>d</sup> in the name of Jesus the Messiah, so that your sins may be forgiven,” Peter replied. “Then you too will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>39</sup>“Because God’s promise is to you and to your children, and even to all those in distant lands and times, to all whom the Lord our God will call.”<sup>a</sup>

<sup>40</sup>He continued to earnestly advise and urgently warn them at great length, finally saying, “I plead with you: Save yourselves from this immoral generation!”<sup>a</sup>

<sup>41</sup>Then those who gladly received his message were baptized. About 3,000 people were added to the number of Christ’s followers that day.

### ***Life Among the Lord’s Followers***

<sup>42</sup>And they were unwavering in their constant attention to the teaching of the apostles. They also fellowshiped together, and shared their meals together in fellowship and in prayer.

**2:32a** ... *We saw Him several times, and talked to Him, touched Him, and ate and drank with him after his resurrection!*

**2:35a** Psalm 110:1.

**2:36a** Or *Christ*.

**2:38a** Both of these words are in the imperative mood. The word *repent* means to *turn from your sin and determine to live from now on in obedience to God*, with God’s help. 1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 2:13; Ephesians 3:20. Notice again the stated need to repent if one is to gain God’s forgiveness and everlasting life. Without a turning from sin there is no forgiveness.

<sup>43</sup>A profound sense of awe gripped everyone,<sup>a</sup> and many miraculous signs and wonders were being performed thru the apostles.

<sup>44</sup>There was also a deep sense of unity among the Lord’s followers, and they shared what they had with each other.

<sup>45</sup>From time to time,<sup>a</sup> they sold their possessions and goods, and gave to others according to their need.

<sup>46</sup>Every day they faithfully met in the Temple courts in great harmony. But they met in various homes for their meals, eating their food together joyfully with sincere thanksgiving.

<sup>47</sup>They were constantly praising God, and always enjoying the favor of all the people. Every day the Lord kept adding to their number those who were being saved.

### ***Peter Heals a Crippled Beggar***

**3** At 3 o’clock one afternoon, the hour of prayer, Peter and John went up together to the Temple.

<sup>2</sup>As they were approaching the entrance, a man who had been lame since birth was being carried there. Every day he was left at what was called the Beautiful Gate, to beg from those entering the Temple courts.

<sup>3</sup>Upon seeing Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money.

<sup>4</sup>They both looked straight at him. Then Peter said, “Look at us!”

<sup>5</sup>So he eagerly gave them his full attention, expecting a gift.

<sup>6</sup>“I don’t have any silver or gold,” Peter said. “But I’ll give you what I do have. In the name of Jesus the Messiah from Nazareth, get up and walk!”

<sup>7</sup>Then he took hold of the man’s right hand and lifted him up. Immediately his feet and ankles became strong.

<sup>8</sup>So he jumped to his feet, stood upright, and

And notice, each convert is to be baptized. This is first of all a command of the Lord Jesus. Matthew 28:19-20. A minister is to baptize all converts, and all converts are to submit to baptism as a powerful picture testimony of what has happened to them. **You dare not consider this or any command of the Lord as optional!** Mark 16:16.

**2:39a** See Romans 8:28-30.

**2:40a** ... *and from the awful judgment of God that will fall upon it.*

**2:43a** ... *even the unbelievers* ...

**2:45a** Implied from imperfect tense.

**3:15a** ... *because we saw Him alive several*

began to walk. Then leaping, walking, and praising God, he entered the Temple court with them.

<sup>9</sup>All the people stared at him as he walked about praising God.

<sup>10</sup>Then it dawned on them that this was the man who always sat begging at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple! And they were filled with amazement, and wondered what had happened to him.

### *Peter Speaks in Solomon's Porch*

<sup>11</sup>And as this lame man who had just been healed kept holding on to Peter and John, all the people in amazement came rushing to where they were, in what is called Solomon's Porch.

<sup>12</sup>When Peter saw their astonishment, he said, "People of Israel, why are you so amazed at this? And why do you keep staring at us so intently, as if by our own power or holiness we had enabled this man to walk?"

<sup>13</sup>"The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God of our fathers—has highly honored His Servant Jesus, the very One you handed over to the authorities. And when Pilate was determined to let Him go, you disowned Him.

<sup>14</sup>"You refused to accept the Holy and Righteous One. Instead, you asked that a murderer be released to you.

<sup>15</sup>"You killed the Giver of Life! But God raised Him from the dead! He lives! And we are witnesses of this fact.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>16</sup>"It was by means of our faith in the power of His name, that this man, whom you see and recognize, has been made well and strong. It was by faith inspired by what Jesus could do that has given this man perfect health. The proof of his perfect health is here for all of you to see.

<sup>17</sup>"And now, dear friends, I know that you rejected Jesus because you didn't recognize who He was, which is also true of your rulers.

<sup>18</sup>"But this is the way God has fulfilled what He

foretold thru all His prophets: that the Messiah would suffer.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>19</sup>"So now turn from your sinning and be converted.<sup>a</sup> This is absolutely necessary so that the record of your sins may be blotted out.<sup>b</sup> Then times of refreshing will come to you from the presence of the Lord.

<sup>20</sup>"And God will again send you Jesus, your Messiah, whom you were promised long ago.

<sup>21</sup>"But the truth is, He must remain now in Heaven until the time comes when the whole earth will be recreated and restored to its former glory,<sup>a</sup> as God has prophesied thru all His holy prophets from ancient times.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>22</sup>"It is also true, as Moses told our ancestors, **The Lord your God will raise up for you from among your own people a Prophet, just as He did me. When He comes, you must listen carefully to everything He tells you, and obey Him.**

<sup>23</sup>**Anyone who refuses to listen and obey Him will be separated from God's people and utterly destroyed.<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>24</sup>"In fact, Samuel and every prophet who has spoken since, have all spoken about what has now happened.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>25</sup>"You are the descendants of the prophets. It was to your ancestors that God made the promise when He said to Abraham, 'People of all nations on earth will be blessed thru your Offspring.'<sup>a</sup>

<sup>26</sup>"And when God sent His Servant Jesus with His message, He first of all sent Him to you, to bless you by seeking to turn every one of you from the sinful lives you are living."

### *Peter and John Arrested*

**4** But while they were still speaking to the people, some priests, the captain of the Temple guard, and several Sadducees broke into their meeting.

<sup>2</sup>They were thoroughly indignant that Peter and

*times after God raised Him from the dead.*

**3:18a** See Psalm 22:1-21; Isaiah 52:14; 53:1-12; Daniel 9:26; Zechariah 12:10.

**3:19a** Meaning to turn from your determination to live to please yourself, and determine instead to live to please and obey only God.

**3:19b** Again, the condition you must meet in order to be saved! God will not forgive your sins and blot out the record of your sinning and give you everlasting life thru Jesus unless you turn from your sinning and live to please Him. See 26:18 note.

**3:21a** This refers to *things*, not *people*. It speaks of the restoration of the earth and sky to their former state, not the regeneration of all people. Even

at the end of the Millennium under Christ's rule, there will be a great rebellion by those who are not regenerated. Revelation 20:7-10.

**3:21b** Isaiah 2:10-21; 65:17; 66:22; 2 Peter 3:5-13; Revelation 6:12-17; 16:17-21, and many more.

**3:23a** Deuteronomy 18:15,18-19. God still refuses to accept those who wish to obey Him with mere selective obedience. **It's all or nothing!** Matthew 7:13-14,21-27; Luke 13:23-30.

**3:24a** And the effects of Christ's coming are continuing to be felt thruout the whole earth.

**3:25a** Genesis 22:18; 26:4; 28:14. Literally *your seed*, which is singular in the Greek text, referring to Christ. See Galatians 3:16. The word *seed* can

John were teaching the people and telling them that Jesus will raise the dead.

<sup>3</sup> So they arrested them and put them in jail until the next day, because it was already late afternoon.

<sup>4</sup> But many who had heard the message believed, so that the total number of men alone who now followed the Lord grew to about five thousand.

<sup>5</sup> The next morning, the Jewish rulers, elders, and teachers of the Law met together in Jerusalem.

<sup>6</sup> Annas the High Priest was there, and Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and other members of the High Priest's family.

<sup>7</sup> And when Peter and John had been brought before them, they asked them, "By what power, or by whose authority, have you done this?"

<sup>8</sup> Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, answered, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel:

<sup>9</sup> "If we are being called to task here today for a good deed done for a poor crippled man, as to how he was healed,

<sup>10</sup> then it must be made known to all of you, and to everyone else in Israel, that this man stands here completely well today thru the name and power of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah! It was He whom you crucified! But God raised Him back to life!

<sup>11</sup> "He is the One of whom the psalmist said, **The stone which you builders threw out as worthless has become the all-important cornerstone.**<sup>a</sup>

<sup>12</sup> "No one else can save us! The name of no other person in all the world has been given to mankind by which we can be saved."

<sup>13</sup> The Council members were amazed at how bold Peter and John were. They knew they were just ordinary men, who had not been educated in their professional rabbinical schools. Then they realized what being with Jesus had done for them.

<sup>14</sup> And seeing the man who had been healed standing there with them, they couldn't say a word against what Peter had said.

<sup>15</sup> So after sending them out of the Council room, they conferred among themselves.

<sup>16</sup> "What are we going to do with these men?" they asked. "It's obvious that a remarkable miracle has been done thru them, and everyone living in Jerusalem knows about it. So we can't say it didn't happen.

<sup>17</sup> "But in order to make sure this thing doesn't spread any further among the people, we must

severely threaten them that they must never again speak about or use this name in ministering to anyone."

<sup>18</sup> Then they called them back in and demanded that they stop all speaking and teaching in the name of Jesus.

<sup>19</sup> But Peter and John replied, "Do you really believe that God would say we were doing right if we obeyed you instead of Him? What's your judgment?"

<sup>20</sup> "The truth is, we cannot stop talking about the amazing things that we ourselves have both seen and heard."

<sup>21</sup> But the Council threatened them further, and then let them go. They found it impossible to punish them without starting a riot, because all the people were glorifying God for what had happened,

<sup>22</sup> because the man who had been healed by this miracle was over 40 years old.

### *The Lord's Followers Pray for Courage*

<sup>23</sup> After they were released, Peter and John went back to their fellow believers and told them all that the leading priests and elders had said to them.

<sup>24</sup> When the others heard the report, they all joined their voices together in prayer to God. "O Lord," they said, "You are God! It is You who made Heaven and earth and the sea, and everything in them.

<sup>25</sup> "By the mouth of Your servant David You said: **Why are the people of the world so furious? Why do they vainly imagine they can defeat God's plans?**<sup>a</sup>

<sup>26</sup> **The rulers of the earth have taken their stand. They have actually joined forces against God Almighty and against His Messiah!**<sup>a</sup>

<sup>27</sup> "Because Herod and Pontius Pilate did indeed join together with the Gentiles<sup>a</sup> and the people of Israel in this city against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You have anointed as the Messiah.

<sup>28</sup> "They have done everything that, by Your power and will, You had already decided would be done.

<sup>29</sup> "Now, Lord, listen to how they are threatening, and enable us, Your servants, to continue to speak Your message with great boldness.

<sup>30</sup> "Stretch out Your hand to heal, and may miraculous signs and wonders be done thru the name of Your holy Servant Jesus."

refer to one or many seeds in English, but not so in Greek.

4:11a Psalm 118:22.

4:25a ... *against God Almighty.*

4:26a Psalm 2:1-2. Expect the same vicious opposition against God and His people as this age draws

<sup>31</sup>When they had finished praying, the building in which they were meeting shook! And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and continued to boldly give God's message to everyone.

### ***The Followers Share Their Possessions***

<sup>32</sup>All of the many believers were of one heart and mind. No one claimed that anything he owned was his own, but they all shared what they had with each other.

<sup>33</sup>And with great power the apostles continued to testify about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God richly blessed all of them.

<sup>34</sup>No one among them lacked anything, because those who owned houses or lands would *from time to time*<sup>a</sup> sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales to the apostles.

<sup>35</sup>They would then distribute the money to each one according to his need.

<sup>36</sup>For example, Joseph, a Levite born in Cyprus who was called Barnabas by the apostles (which means Son of Encouragement),

<sup>37</sup>sold some land he owned, and brought the money in and turned it over to the apostles.

### ***Ananias and Sapphira***

**5** Now a certain man named Ananias, together with his wife, Sapphira, sold some property they owned.

<sup>2</sup>But, with his wife in agreement, he kept back some of the proceeds, turning over only part of the money to the apostles, while claiming he was giving the whole amount.

<sup>3</sup>"Ananias!" Peter challenged him. "Why have you allowed Satan to fill your heart so that you would lie to the Holy Spirit, and keep back part of the money you received for the property?"

<sup>4</sup>"Before it was sold, didn't it belong to you? And after it was sold, wasn't the money yours? Why did you plot this thing in your heart? You haven't lied to men. You've lied to God!"

<sup>5</sup>As soon as Ananias heard this he fell down dead. As a result, all who heard about it were terrified.

<sup>6</sup>The young men then came in, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

<sup>7</sup>About three hours later, his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.

<sup>8</sup>"Tell me," Peter asked her, "was this the full amount you and your husband received for your

property?"

"Yes," she said, "that was the amount."

<sup>9</sup>"How could you dare to conspire together!" Peter challenged her, "and think you could fool the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the men who buried your husband are at the door, and now they will carry you out too!"

<sup>10</sup>Instantly she fell down at his feet and died! When the young men came in and found her dead, they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.

<sup>11</sup>So now great fear gripped the whole church and all others who heard what had happened.

### ***Miracles and Wonders***

<sup>12</sup>Many miracles and wonders were performed thru the hands of the apostles among the people. By common consent, the believers all met together in the part of the Temple known as Solomon's Porch.

<sup>13</sup>None of the others dared to join them, though they continued to hold them in high regard.

<sup>14</sup>But great numbers of new followers of the Lord, both men and women, continued to join them.

<sup>15</sup>As a result of the miracles, people even carried the sick out into the streets on beds and couches, hoping that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them.

<sup>16</sup>And crowds of people kept coming in from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those troubled by evil spirits, and they were all healed!

### ***The Apostles are Persecuted***

<sup>17</sup>Filled with extreme jealous anger, the High Priest and all his associates, who were members of the Sadducees sect, finally took action.

<sup>18</sup>They arrested the apostles and put them in the city jail.

<sup>19</sup>But during the night, an angel of the Lord opened the jail doors and brought them out, and said,

<sup>20</sup>"Go and stand in the Temple courts, and keep telling the people all about this new life."

<sup>21</sup>They obeyed, and entered the Temple area at dawn and began to teach.

When the High Priest and his associates arrived, they called together all the elders of Israel for a full meeting of the Council and then sent word to the jail to have the prisoners brought in.

to a close.

4:27a All who are not Jews.

4:34a Implied from imperfect tense.

<sup>22</sup>But when the officers arrived at the jail, they couldn't find the prisoners. So they returned and reported:

<sup>23</sup>"We found the jail securely locked, and the guards were standing outside in front of the doors, but when we opened the doors and went in there was no one inside!"

<sup>24</sup>On hearing the report, the High Priest, the captain of the Temple guard, and the chief priests were deeply perplexed as to what had happened to them, and wondered what was going on.

<sup>25</sup>Then someone came in and told them, "Look, the men you put in jail are standing right now in the Temple courts teaching the people."

<sup>26</sup>Immediately the captain went with his officers and arrested them. They didn't use force, however, because they were afraid the people might stone them.

<sup>27</sup>When they brought them in, they made them stand in front of the assembled Council. Then the High Priest brought accusation.

<sup>28</sup>"Didn't we give you strict orders that you are not to continue to teach in the name of this man?" he challenged them. "But look, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching! And you seem determined to make us responsible for his death!"

<sup>29</sup>Then Peter and the other apostles replied, "We must obey God, not men!"

<sup>30</sup>"You murdered Jesus by nailing Him to a cross! But the God of our ancestors raised Him back to life.

<sup>31</sup>"Now God has elevated Him to the place of highest honor, at His right hand, to be the Prince and Savior, to give Israel the chance to turn from their sinning and serve and obey God, and receive His forgiveness of their sins."<sup>a</sup>

<sup>32</sup>"And we are His witnesses concerning these things, and the Holy Spirit is too, whom God has given to those who practice obedience to Him."

<sup>33</sup>When the Council members heard this, they were furious, and began talking among themselves about having them put to death.

<sup>34</sup>Then one of them, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law whom everyone highly respected, stood up. He gave orders that the apostles be taken outside for a brief time.

<sup>35</sup>Then he said to the Council, "Men of Israel, think carefully about what you are intending to do to these men.

<sup>36</sup>"Some time ago Theudas appeared on the scene, claiming to be someone great. About four hundred men followed him. But when he was killed, all of his followers scattered, and that was the end of that.

<sup>37</sup>"Later, Judas from Galilee made his appearance, during the time the census was being taken. He also drew quite a following. But he was also killed, and all of his followers were scattered.

<sup>38</sup>"In this case, my advice is: Stay away from these men! Leave them alone! Because if this plan and action is of human origin, it will come to nothing.

<sup>39</sup>"But if it is from God, there is no way that you can overthrow it. In that case, you would find yourselves actually fighting against God."

<sup>40</sup>Convinced by his logic, they called the apostles back in and had them whipped. After again demanding that they no longer speak in the name of Jesus, they let them go.

<sup>41</sup>So the apostles left the Council rejoicing that God had counted them worthy to suffer disgrace for the sake of Jesus.

<sup>42</sup>Every day in the Temple courts and in people's homes, they never stopped teaching and preaching the Great News that Jesus is the Messiah.<sup>a</sup>

### *The Seven Chosen to Serve*

**6** During this time, when the number of followers of the Lord was multiplying, the Greek-speaking Jews complained against the native Jews, claiming that their widows were not given their fair share when the money for food was given out each day.

<sup>2</sup>So the twelve apostles called a meeting of all the followers, and said, "It doesn't seem right to us that we should neglect the study and ministry of the word of God in order to oversee the distribution of food.

<sup>3</sup>"So, dear friends, choose seven men from among you who are wise and highly respected, and full of the Holy Spirit. We will then turn this task over to them.

<sup>4</sup>"And we will continually devote ourselves to prayer and to the teaching of God's message."

<sup>5</sup>This arrangement pleased everyone. So they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a Gentile who

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**5:31a** Notice that Peter again states that a turning from our sins to obedience to God is a necessary condition for receiving God's forgiveness. This needs to be made very clear! See 3:19; 26:18. Mere-

ly believing and receiving Jesus as your Savior will never get you to Heaven. He must also be made the Lord of your life! Otherwise you are not converted, not born again, and are still lost.



had earlier been converted to Judaism.

<sup>6</sup>Then they brought these men to the apostles, who prayed and then placed their hands on them as they asked God to bless them.

<sup>7</sup>So God's message continued to go out in ever greater ways, and the number of followers in Jerusalem continued to grow rapidly. And continually there were also large numbers of Jewish priests surrendering in obedience to the faith.

### ***Stephen Is Arrested***

<sup>8</sup>Now Stephen was a man full of faith and power, and he was actively engaged in performing great miracles and signs among the people.

<sup>9</sup>But opposition sprang up from some members of what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen. These were men from Cyrene, Alexandria, and the provinces of Cilicia and Asia.<sup>a</sup> They confronted Stephen and began arguing with him.

<sup>10</sup>But the Holy Spirit gave Stephen such wisdom when he answered that they couldn't refute him.

<sup>11</sup>So they secretly convinced some men to lie about him and say, "We heard him curse and slander Moses and God."

<sup>12</sup>That really stirred the people up, including the elders and teachers of the Law. And, rushing at him, they grabbed hold of him and forced him to go with them and appear before the Council.

<sup>13</sup>There they also produced false witnesses, who said, "This fellow never stops making damaging remarks against this holy place and the Law of Moses!

<sup>14</sup>"We even heard him say that this Jesus, the Nazarene, will destroy this Temple and change the customs Moses gave us!"

<sup>15</sup>Everyone who sat in the Council looked intently at Stephen, and as they looked into his face, they realized he had the sincerity, fearlessness, and confidence in God of an angel.

### ***Stephen Speaks to the Council***

**7** "Are these accusations true?" the High Priest demanded of Stephen.

<sup>2</sup>"Men, both brothers and fathers," Stephen replied, "listen to me! Our God, who is glorious, appeared to our ancestor Abraham when he was still in Mesopotamia, before he went to live in Haran.

<sup>3</sup>"God told him, 'Leave your country and your

relatives, and come away to a land to which I will direct you.'<sup>a</sup>

<sup>4</sup>"So he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. After his father died, God moved him to this land where you now live.

<sup>5</sup>"But He didn't give him title to any of it, not even to one square foot of it. But He did promise to give it to him eventually as his possession, and to his descendants after him, even before Abraham had any children.

<sup>6</sup>"This is what God told him:

**Your descendants will live in a foreign country where the people will enslave and mistreat them for 400 years.**

<sup>7</sup> **Then I will judge the nation that enslaved them. Following that they will leave that country and serve Me in this land.<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>8</sup>"Then God gave him the circumcision agreement.<sup>a</sup> So when Abraham became the father of Isaac, he circumcised him on the eighth day after his birth. Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of the twelve patriarchs.

<sup>9</sup>"And the sons of Jacob became very jealous of their brother Joseph and sold him into slavery in Egypt. But God was with him and set him free from all his troubles.

<sup>10</sup>"He gave Joseph such wisdom that when he was brought before Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, he gained the king's favor. The king then put him in charge of all the affairs of Egypt and of all his personal business.

<sup>11</sup>"Then famine struck, causing a serious crisis thruout all of Egypt and Canaan. Our ancestors were also unable to find any food.

<sup>12</sup>"But when Jacob heard there was grain in Egypt, he sent his sons on their first visit there.

<sup>13</sup>"During their second visit, Joseph told his brothers who he was. That was when Pharaoh learned about Joseph's family.

<sup>14</sup>"Then Joseph sent a call for his father Jacob, and all his family, 75 people in all, to come to Egypt.

<sup>15</sup>"So Jacob moved down to Egypt, and later he and all of our ancestors died there.

<sup>16</sup>"Their bodies were carried back to Shechem, where they were placed in the tomb Abraham had bought from the sons of Hamor in Shechem for a sum of money.

<sup>17</sup>"But as the time drew near for God to do what

**5:42a** . . . the *Christ*.

**6:9a** The western coast of Asia Minor, which is now Turkey.

**7:3a** Genesis 12:1.

**7:7a** Genesis 15:13-14.

**7:8a** . . . as a constant reminder of the promise God had made to Abraham and his descendants. Genesis 17:1-14.

He had promised Abraham, our people grew more and more numerous in Egypt.

<sup>18</sup>“Then a king who knew nothing about Joseph came to power.

<sup>19</sup>“This man was treacherous. He mistreated our ancestors, even forcing them to abandon their babies to exposure outdoors so they would die.

<sup>20</sup>“It was during this time that Moses was born. In God’s eyes he was an exceptional child, and for three months, he was cared for in his father’s home.

<sup>21</sup>“When he was finally put outside, Pharaoh’s daughter rescued him and brought him up as her own son.

<sup>22</sup>“As a result, Moses was given an education that included all the knowledge of the Egyptians. He was a powerful speaker and a man of outstanding accomplishments.

<sup>23</sup>“When he was 40 years of age, he felt a strong urge to visit his own people, the Israelites.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>24</sup>“When he saw one of them being mistreated by an Egyptian, he went to his defense. He avenged the tormented man by killing the Egyptian.

<sup>25</sup>“He thought his own people would realize that God would use him to rescue them. But that’s not the way they looked at it.

<sup>26</sup>“The next day he intervened as two Israelites were fighting. He urged them to be kind toward each other, saying, ‘Men, you are brothers, why are you trying to hurt each other?’

<sup>27</sup>“But the man who was at fault pushed him away, saying, ‘Who made you our ruler and judge?’

<sup>28</sup>“Are you planning to kill me too, like you killed the Egyptian yesterday?’

<sup>29</sup>“On hearing this, Moses fled from Egypt and lived as a foreigner in the country of Midian. He had two sons while there.

<sup>30</sup>“After 40 long years, an angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>31</sup>“When Moses saw the burning bush that didn’t burn up, he was amazed at the sight. When he went over to have a closer look, he heard God speaking to him!

<sup>32</sup>‘I am the God of your ancestors,’ God said, ‘the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.’ Moses was so terrified that he didn’t dare to look at the bush any longer.

<sup>33</sup>‘Take off your sandals,’ the Lord said, ‘because the place where you are standing is holy ground.

<sup>34</sup>‘I have indeed seen the cruel treatment of My people in Egypt. I have heard their groaning and have come down to rescue them. So now I am sending you back to Egypt.’

<sup>35</sup>“This is the same Moses whom they had rejected, saying, ‘Who made you our ruler and judge?’ He was the very one God did send as their ruler and liberator, giving him the order thru the angel who spoke to him from the burning bush.

<sup>36</sup>“It was Moses who led them out after performing miracles and signs in Egypt, and also in the Red Sea. And he led them in the desert for 40 years.

<sup>37</sup>“It was he who later told the people of Israel, **The Lord your God will raise up for you from among your own people a Prophet, just as He did me. You must listen carefully to what He tells you, and obey Him.<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>38</sup>“He is also the one who was in the large crowd of our ancestors in the desert, and with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai. It was he who received the living words from God to pass on to us.

<sup>39</sup>“But our ancestors wouldn’t obey him. Instead they pushed him aside, and in their hearts they longed to be back in Egypt.

<sup>40</sup>“When Moses was on Mount Sinai they talked to Aaron and demanded, ‘Make us some gods who can give us some leadership! Because we don’t know what’s happened to this fellow Moses who brought us out of Egypt.’

<sup>41</sup>“That was the time they made an idol in the shape of a calf. Then they had a celebration in honor of what they had been able to make with their hands, and brought sacrifices to it.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>42</sup>“So God left them and let them worship the stars and planets. As it is written in the book of the prophets:

**O people of Israel, it wasn’t for Me that you killed and sacrificed animals for 40 years in the desert, was it?**

<sup>43</sup> **No, instead you carried with you the tent in which you worshiped the god Moloch and the star of your god Remphan. You made these idols yourselves and worshiped them. For this, I will send you into exile to Babylon and beyond!<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>44</sup>“Our ancestors had the tent in which God spoke to them in the desert. Moses made it exactly as God had told him to, according to the pattern that had been shown him.

**7:23a** There was great love in Moses’ heart for his people, and he longed to see them free from slavery.

**7:30a** Exodus 3:1-10.

**7:37a** Deuteronomy 18:15,18-19.

**7:41a** Exodus 32:1-6.

**7:42-43a** Amos 5:25-27.

<sup>45</sup>“Our forefathers, who later became custodians of this tent, brought it with them when Joshua led them in taking the land from the nations that God drove out as they advanced. It stayed here until the time of David.

<sup>46</sup>“David gained God’s favor, and then asked that he might build a place for the God of Jacob to live.

<sup>47</sup>“But it was Solomon who finally built the house for God.

<sup>48</sup>“But the Most High God does not live in houses made by human hands. As the Lord said thru His prophet:

<sup>49</sup> **Heaven is My throne, and earth is merely My footstool. What kind of a house could you build for Me? Where is the place that I would choose to rest?**

<sup>50</sup> **Am I not the maker of everything?<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>51</sup>“You unbending, stubborn people! Your hearts and ears are always unresponsive! You are always resisting what the Holy Spirit is telling you! That’s what your ancestors did, and now you’re doing the same!

<sup>52</sup>“Which of the prophets did your ancestors fail to persecute? They even killed those who foretold the coming of the One who is altogether righteous. And now you’ve become His betrayers and murderers!

<sup>53</sup>“You received God’s Law thru the ministry of angels, but you haven’t obeyed it!”

### ***Stephen Is Stoned to Death***

<sup>54</sup>As the Council members continued to listen to these accusations, they became more and more furious and began to gnash their teeth at him in rage.

<sup>55</sup>But Stephen, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked right into Heaven. There he saw our God in His glory, and Jesus standing at His right hand.

<sup>56</sup>“Look!” he cried out, “I see Heaven opened up, and Jesus, the Son of Man, standing at God’s right hand!”<sup>a</sup>

<sup>57</sup>At this the men yelled their loudest, and, covering their ears, they all rushed at him.

<sup>58</sup>After dragging him out of the city, the witnesses left their coats with a young man named Saul. Then they<sup>a</sup> threw a hail of stones at Stephen in a constant barrage.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>59</sup>As they continued stoning him, Stephen cried out, “Lord Jesus, take me home to be with You!”

<sup>60</sup>Then he fell to his knees and prayed with a loud voice, “Lord, do not charge these men with this sin!” After saying this, he died.

### ***Saul Persecutes the Church***

**S**Saul gave hearty approval to his being put to death. That day was the beginning of a great persecution that broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all of Jesus’ followers except the apostles scattered thruout Judea and Samaria.

<sup>2</sup>With great mourning, godly men buried Stephen.

<sup>3</sup>But Saul was determined to completely destroy the church. He went from house to house looking for followers of Jesus, dragging off both men and women, and jailing them.

### ***Philip Preaches in Samaria***

<sup>4</sup>But as a result, the scattered followers told people the Great News wherever they went.

<sup>5</sup>For example, Philip went down to a city in Samaria and preached about Christ to the people there.

<sup>6</sup>Large crowds paid close attention to what Philip said when they heard about what he was doing, and then saw for themselves the miracles he performed.

<sup>7</sup>Because many who had evil spirits would scream loudly as the demons left them; and many others, paralyzed and lame, were healed.

<sup>8</sup>So there was great joy in that city.

<sup>9</sup>A man named Simon lived there, who for some time had astounded the Samaritans by his witchcraft. He claimed to be someone great.

<sup>10</sup>Everybody, both high and low, were fascinated by him, saying, “This man must get his great power from God!”

<sup>11</sup>They kept following him because he had amazed them with his witchcraft for a long time.

<sup>12</sup>But now there were baptisms continually, of both men and women, as they came to believe Philip as he preached the Great News about the Kingdom of God and told them about Jesus Christ.

<sup>13</sup>Even Simon himself came to believe. After he was baptized, he continually followed Philip, and was constantly amazed at the great signs and miracles he saw being performed.

<sup>14</sup>When the apostles at Jerusalem heard that the people of Samaria had accepted God’s message,

**7:49-50a** Isaiah 66:1-2.

**7:56a** ... *evidently standing to honor and welcome His faithful servant to his home and rewards in Heaven.*

**7:58a** The false witnesses. Under Mosaic Law (Deuteronomy 17:7) all witnesses against the one pronounced guilty had to throw the first stones.

**7:58b** Indicated by imperfect active tense.

they sent Peter and John to them.

<sup>15</sup>When they arrived, they prayed for the followers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit,

<sup>16</sup>because up to this time, He hadn't yet come down upon any of them. They had only been baptized with reference to the name of the Lord Jesus.

<sup>17</sup>So Peter and John placed their hands on them one by one,<sup>a</sup> and they received the Holy Spirit.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>18</sup>When Simon saw that the Holy Spirit was given by the placing of the apostles' hands on the followers, he offered them money, saying:

<sup>19</sup>"Give me this power too, so that whenever I place my hands on people they may receive the Holy Spirit."<sup>a</sup>

<sup>20</sup>But Peter answered him, "Take your money to Hell with you! How dare you suggest that God's gifts can be bought with money!

<sup>21</sup>"You have no part or share in this ministry because, as God sees you, your heart is still not right with Him.

<sup>22</sup>"So repent of this evil plan of yours, and pray earnestly to God. It may be that He will indeed forgive you for what you had in mind.

<sup>23</sup>"Because I can see that you are still a captive of sin, and poisoned by bitter jealousy."

<sup>24</sup>"Oh please,<sup>a</sup> both of you pray to the Lord for me that none of the things you said will happen to me!" Simon pleaded.

<sup>25</sup>After Peter and John had earnestly testified and preached the message of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem. On the return trip, they preached the Great News in many other towns of Samaria.

### ***Philip and the Ethiopian***

<sup>26</sup>As for Philip, however, an angel of the Lord told him, "Get up now and go down the road going south thru the desert from Jerusalem to Gaza."

<sup>27</sup>So he got up and went. And on that road he came upon an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official who was in charge of all the treasury of Candace, Queen of Ethiopia. He had just been to Jerusalem to worship.

<sup>28</sup>He was on his way home now, sitting in his chariot, reading aloud from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

<sup>29</sup>The Holy Spirit told Philip, "Go over and join that man in his chariot."

<sup>30</sup>So Philip ran up alongside the chariot, and heard the man reading from the book of Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked him.

<sup>31</sup>"No," he replied. "How can I possibly understand this unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to climb up and sit with him.

<sup>32</sup>The verses of Scripture he was reading were these:

**He was led like a lamb to be slaughtered. And like a sheep that makes no sound when its wool is cut off, He didn't say a word.**

<sup>33</sup>**At the time He was humiliated, He wasn't even given a fair trial. And no one can speak about His descendants, because His life on earth was taken from Him.<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>34</sup>"Now tell me," the eunuch asked Philip, "just who is the prophet talking about here, about himself, or someone else?"

<sup>35</sup>So Philip told him the Great News about Jesus, beginning with the very Scripture he had been reading.

<sup>36</sup>As they continued down the road they came to a body of water, and the eunuch said, "Look, here's water! Why can't I be baptized<sup>a</sup> right now?"

<sup>37</sup>"If you believe with all your heart,<sup>a</sup> you may," Philip answered. And the eunuch replied, "I believe that Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of God!"

<sup>38</sup>He then gave orders for the chariot to be stopped. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.

<sup>39</sup>But when they came up out of the water the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch didn't see any more of him. But he was extremely happy and continued on his way, rejoicing.

<sup>40</sup>However, Philip found himself at Azotus. So he continued preaching the Great News in every town until he came to Caesarea.

### ***Saul Is Converted!***

**9**Now concerning Saul, he was still breathing out threats of murder against the followers of the Lord.

<sup>2</sup>Going to the High Priest, he asked him for letters of introduction to the presidents of the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who

**8:17a** Indicated by imperfect active (repeated action) of *received*.

**8:17b** A Samaritan Pentecost!

**8:19a** Simon saw something miraculous happen when Peter and John placed their hands on these people. It was likely similar to what happened on

the day of Pentecost. Acts 2:1-18. God is still giving His Holy Spirit to *those who persevere in asking Him*. Luke 11:13.

**8:24a** Implied because *pray* is imperative.

**8:32-33a** Isaiah 53:7-8.

**8:36a** Baptized, from Greek *báupto*—meaning,

were followers of the Way of Jesus there, either men or women, he might be allowed to bring them in chains to Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup>He was on his way there and approaching Damascus when suddenly a most brilliant bolt of light from the sky enveloped him in a blaze!

<sup>4</sup>He was so overpowered by it that he fell to the ground! Then he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you so cruel to Me?"

<sup>5</sup>"Who are you, Sir?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus whom you are persecuting," the Lord replied. "It's grievous and painful for you to continually kick against the prods<sup>a</sup>."

<sup>6</sup>Saul was astonished! Trembling, he asked, "Lord, what do You want me to do?"

"Get up now," the Lord replied, "and go into the city. There you will be told what you must do."

<sup>7</sup>The men traveling with Saul just stood there, speechless. They heard a voice, but they couldn't see anyone.

<sup>8</sup>So Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes, he couldn't see a thing. So the men with him had to take him by the hand and lead him into Damascus.

<sup>9</sup>For three days he couldn't see, and during that time he didn't eat or drink anything.

<sup>10</sup>Now in Damascus there was a follower of Jesus by the name of Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, saying, "Ananias."

"Yes, Lord," he answered, "I am here."

<sup>11</sup>"Get up and go to the home of Judas on Straight Street, and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul," the Lord said. "You'll find him praying there."

<sup>12</sup>"In a vision he has seen a man by the name of Ananias coming in and placing his hand on him, so that he might see again."

<sup>13</sup>"But Lord!" Ananias exclaimed, "many people have told me about this man, about all the harm he's done to the people who are devoted to You in Jerusalem!"

<sup>14</sup>"And here he has authority from the chief priests to arrest everyone who calls on Your name!"

<sup>15</sup>But the Lord told him, "Go! Because I have chosen this man to carry My name before the Gentiles, their kings, and the people of Israel.

<sup>16</sup>"Now I will show him how much he must suffer because of the stand he will take for Me."

<sup>17</sup>So Ananias went, and after entering the home of Judas, he placed his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were on your way here, has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

<sup>18</sup>Instantly, something like thin scales fell from Saul's eyes. And immediately he was able to see again. Then he got up and was baptized.

<sup>19</sup>And when he had eaten, he regained his strength. He then spent several days with the Lord's followers in Damascus.

### ***Saul Preaches in Damascus***

<sup>20</sup>Immediately he went to the synagogues and began preaching about Jesus, stating that He is indeed the Son of God.

<sup>21</sup>This amazed all who heard him, and they said, "Isn't this the man who destroyed the followers of Jesus in Jerusalem? And didn't he come down here for the very purpose of putting all such people in chains and bringing them to the chief priests?"

<sup>22</sup>But Saul's preaching became more and more powerful. He totally overwhelmed and silenced the Jews living in Damascus by his convincing proofs that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.

<sup>23</sup>After many days of this, the Jews made plans to kill him.

<sup>24</sup>Saul found out about their plot, but he couldn't leave because his enemies kept close watch at the gates of the city both day and night, looking for a chance to kill him.

<sup>25</sup>But one night the Lord's followers took him to an opening in the wall and lowered him down in a basket.<sup>a</sup>

### ***Saul in Jerusalem***

<sup>26</sup>When he arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to join in fellowship with the followers there, but they were all afraid of him. They didn't believe he was a true follower.

<sup>27</sup>But then Barnabas came to his aid and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul had seen the Lord on his way to Damascus, and that

to *dip, dip in, immerse.*

**8:37a** Total heart-belief is the only kind of belief acceptable by God. See Romans 10:9-10, and notes.

**9:5a** Actually, a goad, a stick with a pointed end for driving cattle.

**9:25a** According to Paul's own account in Galatians 1:11-24, it was at least three years after this event before Paul went back to Jerusalem. He went from Damascus to Arabia (evidently to be alone with the Lord, and confer with Him). He returned to Damascus, and then went to Jerusalem.

Jesus had spoken to him. He also told how courageously he had preached about Jesus in Damascus.

<sup>28</sup>On hearing this, they accepted him. He was then constantly with them, coming or going while in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in support of the Lord Jesus.

<sup>29</sup>He also talked and debated with the Greek-speaking Jews, but they made plans to kill him.

<sup>30</sup>When the followers discovered this, they brought him to Caesarea, and then sent him off to Tarsus.

<sup>31</sup>Finally the churches throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. As they were encouraged and built up by the Holy Spirit, and as they lived in reverence and awe of the Lord,<sup>a</sup> they continued to grow in numbers.

### ***Peter Heals Aeneas***

<sup>32</sup>During this time, Peter travelled everywhere. On one trip, he went to visit the Lord's followers living in Lydda.

<sup>33</sup>There he met a paralyzed man named Aeneas, who hadn't been able to get out of bed for eight long years.

<sup>34</sup>"Aeneas," Peter declared to him, "Jesus the Messiah now heals you. Get up and make your bed." And he promptly got up.

<sup>35</sup>Everyone living in Lydda and Sharon turned to the Lord when they saw this man walking around, healed.

### ***Dorcas Restored to Life!***

<sup>36</sup>Now in Joppa there was a follower named Tabitha. (Her name in Greek was Dorcas, meaning *a deer*.) She was always helping the poor and doing other good deeds.

<sup>37</sup>But she had become sick, and died. So they washed her body and laid it in a room upstairs.

<sup>38</sup>Since Lydda was near Joppa, the followers had heard that Peter was there. So they sent two men to beg him to come to them immediately.

<sup>39</sup>Peter got right up and went with them. And as soon as he arrived, they brought him to the upstairs room. All the widows stood around him weeping, and showing him the shirts and other clothing that Dorcas had made for them while she was still with them.

<sup>40</sup>But Peter sent them all out of the room, and then knelt down and prayed. Then, turning to the body, he said, "Tabitha, get up!" And she opened her eyes! Upon seeing Peter she sat up.

<sup>41</sup>Peter then gave her his hand and helped her to

her feet. Then he called the other followers, including the widows, and presented her to them alive.

<sup>42</sup>Everyone in Joppa heard about it, and as a result, many people came to believe on the Lord.

<sup>43</sup>So Peter stayed on in Joppa for quite some time at the home of Simon, a tanner of leather.

### ***Cornelius Has a Vision***

**10** There was a man living in Caesarea at this time named Cornelius. He was a captain in what was known as the Italian Regiment.

<sup>2</sup>He and all his family were very devout people, truly dedicated to God. He gave generously to those in need, and was constantly praying to God.

<sup>3</sup>About three o'clock one afternoon he had a vision in which he clearly saw an angel of God come into his room and say, "Cornelius!"

<sup>4</sup>He stared at the angel, terrified. "What is it you want, Sir?" he asked.

"Your prayers and your generosity to the needy have been an acceptable sacrifice to God," the angel answered.

<sup>5</sup>"You are to send some men to Joppa, who are to bring back to you a man by the name of Simon Peter.

<sup>6</sup>"He is staying with another Simon, a tanner of leather, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do."

<sup>7</sup>As soon as the angel was gone, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a godly soldier from among those who constantly cared for his needs.

<sup>8</sup>After telling them what had happened, he sent them to Joppa.

### ***Peter's Vision***

<sup>9</sup>About noon the next day, as they were on their way, and approaching Joppa, Peter went up on the roof deck to pray.

<sup>10</sup>While there he became very hungry and wished that lunch was ready. But while the meal was being prepared, he had a vision.

<sup>11</sup>He saw the sky open, and then an object like a very large sheet of canvas started coming down to him. It was suspended at the four corners as it was being lowered to the earth.

<sup>12</sup>On this sheet were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, including wild animals and crawling creatures, and wild birds.

<sup>13</sup>Then he heard a voice, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."

<sup>14</sup>“No! Absolutely not, Lord!” Peter replied. “I have never eaten anything common or unclean.”

<sup>15</sup>But the voice spoke again, saying, “You must never call anything unclean after God has offered it to you as something you may eat.”

<sup>16</sup>This happened three times. Then the sheet was taken back up into the sky.

<sup>17</sup>At the very moment that Peter was puzzling over what this vision was all about, the men sent by Cornelius, after asking directions to Simon’s house, now stood at the gate.

<sup>18</sup>They called out, asking if Simon, who was also called Peter, was staying there.

<sup>19</sup>As Peter was trying to figure out the meaning of this vision, the Holy Spirit said to him, “Listen, three men are looking for you.

<sup>20</sup>“So get up and go downstairs, and go with them. Don’t think twice about going, because I have sent them.”

<sup>21</sup>So Peter went down to the men and said, “Yes, I’m the one you’re looking for. Why have you come?”

<sup>22</sup>“We were sent by Captain Cornelius,” they replied. “He’s a man who lives right and is truly dedicated to God, a man respected by Jewish people everywhere. A holy angel from God told him to ask you to come to his house and listen to a message you would have for him.”

<sup>23</sup>Peter then invited them in, and arranged for them to stay overnight. The next day Peter went with them, and several of the Lord’s followers in Joppa went along.

### ***Peter in the Home of Cornelius***

<sup>24</sup>They arrived in Caesarea the following day. Cornelius was waiting for them, and had invited his relatives and close friends to the meeting.

<sup>25</sup>As Peter was entering the house, Cornelius came forward and fell to his knees in front of him, and worshiped him.

<sup>26</sup>But Peter grabbed hold of him and helped him to his feet, saying, “Stand up! I’m only a man like you.”

<sup>27</sup>As Peter continued talking with him, he went inside and found a large crowd gathered.

<sup>28</sup>“You people know very well,” he said to them, “that our religion forbids a Jew to visit or associate with anyone who is not a Jew. But God has shown me that I must not call any man common or unclean.

<sup>29</sup>“So I came without any objection as soon as I was sent for. But now I ask you, for what reason

have you sent for me?”

<sup>30</sup>“Four days ago I was fasting until this time of day,” Cornelius replied. “About three in the afternoon as I was praying here in my home, suddenly, a man in radiant clothing stood in front of me.

<sup>31</sup>‘Cornelius, God has heard your prayers,’ he said, ‘and He has noticed the help you have given those in need.

<sup>32</sup>‘So send for a man in Joppa named Simon Peter. He is staying in the home of Simon, a tanner of leather, who lives by the sea. When he arrives, he will have a message for you.’

<sup>33</sup>“So I sent for you right away, and we are so glad you have come. And now, we are all gathered here in the presence of God, waiting to hear all that God has told you to tell us.”

<sup>34</sup>Then Peter began speaking, “I can clearly see now,” he said, “that God does not practice favoritism.

<sup>35</sup>“But in every nation, He accepts those who are truly devoted to Him and do what is right.”<sup>a</sup>

<sup>36</sup>“This is the message He has sent to the people of Israel: The amazing Great News is that we can have peace with God thru Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

<sup>37</sup>“You’ve all heard about the events that took place after John preached his message about baptism. It’s been published all over Judea.

<sup>38</sup>“It all began in Galilee, where God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He then went everywhere, doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil. He could do all these things because God was with Him.

<sup>39</sup>“And we were there. We saw all the things He did thruout Israel and in Jerusalem. But they killed Him by nailing Him to a cross!

<sup>40</sup>“But three days later God raised Him back to life, and gave many of us the opportunity of seeing Him again.

<sup>41</sup>“He wasn’t seen by everyone, only by some of us whom God had previously chosen. Some of us even ate and drank with Him after He was raised from death.

<sup>42</sup>“And He commanded us to preach the Great News to people everywhere—and to tell them earnestly and clearly that He is the One who has been appointed by God to be our Judge, both while we are alive and after we are dead.

<sup>43</sup>“All the prophets spoke and wrote about Him. Everyone who now comes to God in His name<sup>a</sup> will receive forgiveness for their sins by believing in

Him.”

<sup>44</sup>Then an amazing thing happened. While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came down upon all the people there who were listening to his message.

<sup>45</sup>The Jewish followers of the Lord who had come with Peter were amazed that the Holy Spirit had also now been poured out upon the Gentiles,

<sup>46</sup>because they heard them praising God for His greatness and speaking in languages they hadn’t learned.

<sup>47</sup>Then Peter said, “These people have received the Holy Spirit in the same way we did!<sup>a</sup> Who then can stop them from being baptized in water?”

<sup>48</sup>So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of the Lord. The people then begged Peter to stay a few days.

### *Peter’s Report in Jerusalem*

**11** The news soon reached the apostles and other followers of the Lord in Judea, that the Gentiles had also accepted God’s message.

<sup>2</sup>So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the followers who had insisted that all followers be circumcised strongly criticized him.

<sup>3</sup>“You went into the home of people who are uncircumcised and ate with them!” they indignantly challenged him.

<sup>4</sup>So Peter told them the whole story.

<sup>5</sup>“One day while I was praying in the city of Joppa,” he said, “I had a vision. Something like a great sheet of canvas, suspended by its four corners, came down to me from the sky.

<sup>6</sup>“When I could examine it closely, I saw all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth on it, including wild animals and crawling creatures, and wild birds.

<sup>7</sup>“Then I heard a voice tell me, ‘Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.’

<sup>8</sup>“But I answered, ‘Never, Lord, because I have never eaten anything common or unclean!’

<sup>9</sup>“But then the voice from Heaven spoke to me again, saying, ‘You must never call anything unclean after God has purified it.’

<sup>10</sup>“This happened three times, and finally everything was drawn back up into Heaven.

<sup>11</sup>“At that very moment, three men, sent from Caesarea, arrived in front of the house where I was staying.

<sup>12</sup>“The Holy Spirit told me to go with them, and not to think twice about going. Also, these six brothers went with me, and we all went into the home of the man who had sent the messengers.

<sup>13</sup>“He told us how he had seen an angel standing in his home, who had said to him, ‘Send men to Joppa, and have Simon Peter brought here.

<sup>14</sup>“He will bring you a message by which you and everyone in your home will be saved.’

<sup>15</sup>“Well, I had barely started telling these people the Great News when the Holy Spirit came upon them in the very same way He had come upon us at the beginning.

<sup>16</sup>“Then I remembered the words of the Lord, how He used to say, ‘John baptized in water, but you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit.’

<sup>17</sup>“So if God gave them the same gift that He gave us after we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could go against what God had done?”

<sup>18</sup>After hearing this report they offered no further objections. Instead they glorified God, saying, “Then God has also given the Gentiles the opportunity to turn from their sinning to live to please God, so that they too may have eternal life!<sup>a</sup>

### *Barnabas is Sent to Antioch*

<sup>19</sup>Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that took place after Stephen was killed, traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, sharing the message with only the Jews—no one else.

<sup>20</sup>But some of the followers from Cyprus and Cyrene, who went to Antioch, began speaking to the Greeks<sup>a</sup> also, telling them the Great News about the Lord Jesus.

<sup>21</sup>The power of the Lord was certainly with them, because great numbers of people believed and were converted to the Lord.

<sup>22</sup>When news about this came to the attention of the people of the church in Jerusalem, they sent Barnabas to Antioch.

<sup>23</sup>When he arrived and saw the wonderful things God was doing there, he was extremely glad, and several times he encouraged everyone there to purpose in their hearts to remain faithful to the Lord, whatever the cost.

<sup>24</sup>Barnabas was truly a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and overflowing with faith in what God

**10:43a** His name, the Lord Jesus Christ, is explained in the Acts 16:30-31 note.

**10:47a** Acts 2:1-18; 8:14-19.

**11:18a** Notice again the truth that one must

repent (turn from his sinning and live to please God) if he is to be born again and gain Heaven. These people were already dedicated to God (10:2,22,35), but they also needed to hear about



would do. Many people were brought to the Lord thru his ministry.

<sup>25</sup> Then Barnabas left for Tarsus to look for Saul.

<sup>26</sup> When he found him, he brought him back to Antioch. Then for a whole year, Barnabas and Saul met with the people of that church, and they taught a large number of people there. In fact, the first place the Lord's followers were called Christians was in Antioch.

<sup>27</sup> During this time, some prophets came down to Antioch from Jerusalem.

<sup>28</sup> One of them, named Agabus, stood up and prophesied by the Holy Spirit speaking thru him that a great famine would afflict the entire Roman world. (And it came during the reign of Claudius Caesar.)

<sup>29</sup> So the followers decided to send whatever help they could to the followers in Judea.

<sup>30</sup> They did this by delegating Barnabas and Saul to take their gifts to the elders of the church in Jerusalem.

### *James Killed and Peter Imprisoned*

**12** About this time, King Herod began persecuting some of the leaders of the church.

<sup>2</sup> He had James, the brother of John, killed with a sword.

<sup>3</sup> When he saw how much this pleased the Jews, his next move was to have Peter arrested too. (This happened during the feast days of Unleavened Bread.)

<sup>4</sup> After arresting Peter, he had him put in jail, turning him over to four platoons of four soldiers each. He planned to put him on public trial after Passover.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>5</sup> But while Peter was being kept in jail, the people of the church were fervently praying to God for him.

### *Peter Escapes From Jail!*

<sup>6</sup> The night before Peter was to be put on trial by Herod, he was bound by chains and sleeping between two soldiers. Two other soldiers were standing outside in front of the jail, guarding the entrance.

<sup>7</sup> Suddenly a light shined in the cell and an angel of the Lord stood beside Peter! Nudging him in the ribs, the angel woke him up and said, "Quick! Get up!" Then the chains fell off his wrists.

<sup>8</sup> "Tighten your belt and put on your sandals," the angel then told him. And he did. "Now put your coat on and follow me," the angel ordered.

<sup>9</sup> So Peter followed him out of the jail, not realizing that this was really happening. He thought he was seeing a vision.

<sup>10</sup> They passed thru the first guard station, then the second, and when they came to the iron gate that led out into the city, it opened for them of its own accord! The angel walked along with Peter for one block, and then disappeared.

<sup>11</sup> When Peter finally came to himself, he said, "It really happened! Now I know for sure that the Lord sent His angel to rescue me from Herod and from everything the Jewish leaders were expecting to do to me."

<sup>12</sup> Upon realizing this, he went to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many were gathered together praying.

<sup>13</sup> When Peter knocked on the porch door, a girl named Rhoda came to investigate.

<sup>14</sup> When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed that she didn't think to open the door, but ran in and announced that Peter was standing outside in front on the porch.

<sup>15</sup> "You're out of your mind!" they exclaimed. But she kept insisting that it was true. "It must be his angel," they then said.

<sup>16</sup> But Peter kept knocking, and when they finally opened the door and saw him, they were astonished.

<sup>17</sup> But Peter motioned to them with his hand to be quiet. Then he went inside and told them how the Lord had brought him out of jail. After relating this he said, "Go and tell James<sup>a</sup> and the others what happened." Then he left and went to another place.

<sup>18</sup> When daylight came, there was a great commotion among the soldiers as to what had ever become of Peter.

<sup>19</sup> But after Herod had ordered that a thorough search be made for him, and he still couldn't be found, he questioned the guards and then had them put to death. Herod then left Judea and went down to Caesarea, and spent some time there.

### *Herod Killed by an Angel*

<sup>20</sup> Herod had been very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon. But because they depended on his

and accept the Savior who could forgive their sins. Romans 3:25-26.

**11:20a** These were Greeks, not Greek-speaking Jews.

**12:4a** After the eight days of the Passover Festival.

**12:17a** This James was a brother of Jesus.

**13:19a** Similar to drawing straws or throwing

territories for their food, they joined forces to gain an audience with him. They made friends with Blastus, the king's servant in charge of the palace, and had him act as their agent in requesting a peace agreement.

<sup>21</sup>So on the day chosen for the meeting, Herod, dressed in his royal robes, sat on his throne and made a speech.

<sup>22</sup>The people broke in and began shouting, "It's the voice of a god, not of a man!"

<sup>23</sup>Instantly, an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he accepted the honor that belonged to God. And he was eaten by worms and died.

<sup>24</sup>But the Lord's message continued to spread into many areas.

<sup>25</sup>After completing their mission, Barnabas and Paul returned to Antioch from Jerusalem. They also brought John Mark back with them.

### *Barnabas and Saul Sent Out*

**13** There were several prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch: Barnabas; Simeon, who was called Niger; Lucius from Cyrene; Manaen, who had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch; and Saul.

<sup>2</sup>One day while they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set Barnabas and Saul aside for me, to do the work which I have called them to do."

<sup>3</sup>So after further fasting and prayer, they placed their hands on them in blessing, and then sent them on their way.

### *On Cyprus*

<sup>4</sup>Actually, it was the Holy Spirit who sent them out. John Mark also went with them as their assistant.

<sup>5</sup>They first went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to the island of Cyprus. When they arrived in Salamis, they preached God's message in the synagogues of the Jews.

<sup>6</sup>After traveling thru the island they came to Paphos, where they came across a Jewish man named Bar-Jesus. He was a false prophet practicing witchcraft.

<sup>7</sup>He was with Sergius Paulus, the governor, who was an intelligent man. The governor had sent for Barnabas and Saul, wanting to hear what they

were teaching about God.

<sup>8</sup>But Elymas (as he was called), which means **the magician**, continually opposed them, doing his best to keep the governor from accepting the faith.

<sup>9</sup>So Saul, who is also called Paul, full of the Holy Spirit, looked him straight in the eye and said,

<sup>10</sup>"You son of the devil! All you do is deceive and fake, and oppose everything that's right. Will you never stop trying to twist the Lord's truths into lies?"

<sup>11</sup>"Now listen to me! The Lord's hand is upon you in judgment, and you will be blind! For a period of time you won't even be able to see the sun." Immediately he was enveloped in a mist, and then total darkness. Groping about, he began looking for someone to lead him by the hand.

<sup>12</sup>When the governor saw this happen, he then believed. He was amazed at the powerful teaching of the Lord.

### *In Antioch in Pisidia*

<sup>13</sup>When Paul and his party left Paphos, they sailed to Perga in the province of Pamphylia. At this point, John Mark left them and went back to Jerusalem.

<sup>14</sup>Paul and Barnabas merely passed thru Perga, and went on to Antioch in Pisidia. On the Sabbath day, they went into the synagogue and sat down.

<sup>15</sup>After the usual reading from the Law and the Prophets, the leaders of the synagogue sent someone over to tell them, "Men and brothers, if you have any words of encouragement or inspiration for the people, we would like to hear from you."

<sup>16</sup>So Paul stood up, and raising his hand for silence he said, "People of Israel, and all the rest of you here who are devoted to God, listen!

<sup>17</sup>"The God of Israel chose our ancestors, and made them into a great nation while they lived as strangers in Egypt. He also revealed His great power when He brought them out of it.

<sup>18</sup>"Then for a period of about 40 years, He put up with their faithless conduct in the desert.

<sup>19</sup>"After destroying seven nations in Canaan, He distributed the land to Israel by drawing lots.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>20</sup>"All of this took about 450 years. After that He gave them judges, until the time of Samuel the prophet.

<sup>21</sup>"Then the people demanded a king. So God gave them Saul, a son of Kish, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. He reigned for forty years.

dice.

**13:22a** 1 Samuel 13:14.

**13:25a** Or *the Christ*.

**13:27a** Psalm 22:1-21; Isaiah 52:14; 53:1-12;

Daniel 9:24-26; Zechariah 12:10; Luke 24:25-27, 45-47.

**13:32a** Genesis 3:15; 12:1-3; 22:18; 49:10; Deuteronomy 18:15,18-19; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7; Jere-

<sup>22</sup>“When God removed him, He put David on the throne as their king. Concerning him God said, ‘I have finally found a man after my own heart, who will do everything I tell him. He is David, the son of Jesse.’<sup>a</sup>

<sup>23</sup>“Thru the family tree of this man, God has raised up for Israel a Savior—Jesus—just as He promised.

<sup>24</sup>“Before Jesus came, John had preached to all the people of Israel that they should turn from their sinning and serve and obey God, and that they should testify that they had done so by being baptized.

<sup>25</sup>“As John was finishing his ministry he repeatedly said, ‘Who do you people think I am? I am not the Messiah.’<sup>a</sup> But look, He will come after me! And I am not worthy to even untie the sandals on His feet.’

<sup>26</sup>“My fellow Israelites, descendants of Abraham, and all the rest of you who are devoted to God, listen to me! The Great News about how we can now be saved is for all of you!

<sup>27</sup>“Neither the people in Jerusalem nor their rulers realized who Jesus was, nor did they understand the messages of the prophets (though they read them every Sabbath). But by condemning Him to death, they have fulfilled those very prophecies!<sup>a</sup>

<sup>28</sup>“Even though they couldn’t prove one single reason why He should be condemned, they still insisted that Pilate put Him to death.

<sup>29</sup>“After they had done everything to Him that the prophets said they would, they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb.

<sup>30</sup>“But God raised Him from among the dead and caused Him to live again!

<sup>31</sup>“For many days after this, He was seen by those who had come up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now His witnesses to the people that He did indeed rise from the dead.

<sup>32</sup>“And we are here to tell you the Great News! All of this concerns the many promises which God had made to our ancestors.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>33</sup>“God has now fulfilled those promises to us, their descendants, when He brought Jesus the promised Deliverer into the world. As it is written in the second Psalm:

**You are My Son. Today I have become Your Father.<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>34</sup>“And because God raised Him from the dead, never to putrefy in the grave, He said this:

**I will do for you what I faithfully promised David.<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>35</sup>“And for that reason David also said in another Psalm:

**You will not allow the body of Your Holy One to putrefy in the grave.<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>36</sup>“But David’s body did putrefy when he died and was buried with his ancestors, after he had served his own generation in accordance with God’s will.

<sup>37</sup>“But when God raised Jesus from the dead, His body had experienced no decay.

<sup>38</sup>“So know this for sure, my dear friends, that we are now able to announce to you that thru Jesus, your sins can be forgiven!

<sup>39</sup>“The Law of Moses couldn’t free you from all guilt and declare you pure in God’s eyes. But thru Jesus, all who believe in Him<sup>a</sup> are set free from the guilt of their sin.

<sup>40</sup>“So take warning, so that what has been stated by the prophets doesn’t happen to you, when they said:

**Look, you scoffers who refuse to believe and act upon what God has so plainly declared! Yes, look in amazement, and then die! Because I am doing something in your day—something you won’t believe at all, even though it is explained to you very clearly in detail.<sup>a</sup>**

<sup>42</sup>As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people begged them to tell them more about the Great News the next Sabbath.

<sup>43</sup>Also following the meeting, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who encouraged them to continue to take hold of the mercies that God was offering.

<sup>44</sup>The next Sabbath, almost everyone in town came to hear God’s message.

<sup>45</sup>But when the Jewish religious leaders saw the great crowds, they were filled with envy, and began to contradict what Paul was saying, and to attack him with abusive language.

<sup>46</sup>Paul and Barnabas then became bold and said, “It was necessary that God’s message should first of all be given to you, but since you so violently reject it, and evidently don’t consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we will now devote our time and energies to the Gentiles.

<sup>47</sup>“Because this is the Lord’s command to us:

**I have appointed you to be a light for the Gen-**

miah 23:5-6; Micah 5:2; Zechariah 9:9; etc.

13:33a Psalm 2:7.

13:34a Isaiah 55:3.

13:35a Psalm 16:10.

13:39a See 16:31 note regarding what it means to believe in Him.

13:41a Habakkuk 1:5.

13:47a This refers to Christ, but it also refers to

tiles,<sup>a</sup> with the result that you will bring salvation to the farthest corners of the earth.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>48</sup>When the Gentiles heard this, they were extremely glad, and spoke of how highly they regarded the message of the Lord. And all who were appointed<sup>a</sup> to gain eternal life believed.

<sup>49</sup>So the message of the Lord continued to be brought into every part of that region.

<sup>50</sup>But the Jewish religious leaders stirred up the religious women of prominence and the leading men of the city, causing Paul and Barnabas to be persecuted and expelled from their area.

<sup>51</sup>Shaking off the dust from their feet in protest, they went on to Iconium.

<sup>52</sup>But the Lord's followers left in Antioch were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

### *Paul and Barnabas in Iconium*

**14** Again, in Iconium, Paul and Barnabas went together to the synagogue, and spoke so effectively that a great number of both Jews and Gentiles believed.

<sup>2</sup>But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against those who now followed the Lord.

<sup>3</sup>Just the same, Paul and Barnabas stayed there a long time, continuing to speak out boldly for the Lord. And the Lord continued to confirm the message of His great kindness by enabling them to perform miracles and wonders.

<sup>4</sup>But the people of the city were divided in opinion about them, some siding with the Jews and some with the apostles.

<sup>5</sup>Finally, an attack was planned by some of the Jews and Gentiles, together with their leaders. They planned to mistreat Paul and Barnabas shamefully, and then stone them to death.

<sup>6</sup>But when they learned about it, they made their escape to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe, and the surrounding region.

<sup>7</sup>There they continued to tell the Great News.

### *In Lystra and Derbe*

<sup>8</sup>There was a man in Lystra who had no strength in his feet. He had been born disabled, so he had never walked.

<sup>9</sup>Paul noticed the man as he sat there listening to him speak. And, looking intently at him, Paul could see that the man had faith to be healed.

<sup>10</sup>So Paul shouted to him, "Get up on your feet and stand erect!" And the man jumped up and started walking!

<sup>11</sup>When the crowd saw what Paul had just done, they cried out in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in the form of men!"

<sup>12</sup>They called Barnabas, Zeus; and Paul, Hermes, because he was the main speaker.

<sup>13</sup>Then the priest of Zeus, whose Temple stood just outside the city near the main entrance, brought some bulls and flowers to the city gates because he and the crowds wanted to offer sacrifices to them.

<sup>14</sup>But when Barnabas and Paul heard about it, they ripped their clothes in horror and ran shouting into the crowd.

<sup>15</sup>"Men! Why are you doing this?" they shouted. "We're only men! We're just as human as you are! We're here preaching the Great News that you should turn from these worthless idols to the living God, who made Heaven, and the earth, the sea, and everything in them.

<sup>16</sup>"In times past, He allowed everyone everywhere to go their own way.

<sup>17</sup>"But He has always given us proof that He is with us, by the good things He constantly does for us, by giving us rain from the skies, and the various crops in their seasons. He has literally filled us with food and happiness."

<sup>18</sup>Still they had a hard time keeping the people from sacrificing to them, even after speaking to them in this way.

<sup>19</sup>But a few days later, some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium. And after turning the crowds into a blood-thirsty, riotous mob, they stoned Paul and then dragged him out of the city, believing him to be dead.

<sup>20</sup>But as the Lord's followers gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day, he and Barnabas went to Derbe.

### *The Return to Antioch in Syria*

<sup>21</sup>As they preached the Great News to the people of that city, it resulted in many becoming followers

His messengers who seek to bring the light of His message to the whole world.

**13:47b** Isaiah 49:6.

**13:48a** This does not destroy our free will. God knew before the world was formed who would be disposed and determined to accept eternal life

under His conditions. It is these whom God effectively calls to Himself. See Romans 8:29-30 note.

**14:22a** John 8:31; Colossians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 13:5; 1 John 2:24.

**14:22b** We suffer when we experience abuse and rejection because of our stand for Jesus. We also

of the Lord. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch.

<sup>22</sup>There they strengthened the understanding and will of the followers, urgently encouraging them to continue in the faith.<sup>a</sup> “Because,” they said, “in order to enter the Kingdom of God, we must be willing to go thru severe testings and sufferings.”<sup>b</sup>

<sup>23</sup>After praying and fasting, they appointed elders to take charge in every church, and then turned them over to the Lord in whom they had believed.

<sup>24</sup>Then they went back thru Pisidia and into the province of Pamphylia.

<sup>25</sup>After they had preached the Lord’s message in Perga, they went down to Attalia.

<sup>26</sup>From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch in Syria, from where they had been confidently given over by their fellow-believers to God’s favor and help for the accomplishment of the work they had now completed.

<sup>27</sup>Upon arriving home, they gathered the people of the church together and told them all that God, working thru them, had done, and how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

<sup>28</sup>They then stayed home with the followers for quite some time.

### *The Church Council*

**15** Then some men came down from Judea and began teaching the Lord’s followers that, “Unless you are circumcised, as the Law of Moses requires, you can’t be saved.”

<sup>2</sup>Paul and Barnabas strongly disagreed, and entered into quite an argument with them. So it was decided that Paul and Barnabas and some of the other believers in Antioch should go up to Jerusalem and talk to the apostles and church leaders about this matter.

<sup>3</sup>After being sent on their way by the church, they traveled thru Phoenicia and Samaria. They brought great joy to all the Lord’s followers in these areas as they told them in detail how the Gentiles had been converted to the Lord.

<sup>4</sup>When they arrived in Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church, the apostles, and the leaders, to whom they reported everything that God had

done thru them.

<sup>5</sup>But then some Pharisees who had become believers stood up and said, “It’s necessary now that these Gentiles be circumcised, and that they be told they must obey the Law of Moses.”

<sup>6</sup>So the apostles and church leaders met together to consider this matter.

<sup>7</sup>After much vigorous debate, Peter stood up and said, “Men and brothers, you know that quite some time ago, God decided that it should be from my lips that the Gentiles should hear the message of the Great News and believe.

<sup>8</sup>“And God, who knows the deepest motives of everyone, accepted them, as proven by His giving them the Holy Spirit in the same way He had to us.”<sup>a</sup>

<sup>9</sup>“He didn’t distinguish between us and them. He purified their hearts from all guilt when they firmly believed.

<sup>10</sup>“So why do you now want to question God’s actions by putting a heavy burden on His followers, that neither we nor our ancestors were able to bear?

<sup>11</sup>“We believe that we are saved by God’s undeserved favor thru Jesus Christ. The same is true with them!”

<sup>12</sup>Then silence came over the whole crowd as they listened to Barnabas and Paul tell of the many miracles and wonders God had done thru them among the Gentiles.

<sup>13</sup>After they finished speaking, James responded: “Men and brothers, listen to me!

<sup>14</sup>“Simon Peter has just told us how God, for the first time, has showed His concern for the Gentiles by taking out from among them a people who would belong to Him.

<sup>15</sup>“And this agrees with the words of the prophets, which say:

<sup>16</sup> **After all these things have happened I will return, and I will rebuild the house of David which has fallen down. I will rebuild its ruins and restore it,**

<sup>17</sup> **so that all the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles whom I have called to be My own. This is the declaration of the Lord, the One who is doing all these things.**<sup>a</sup>

<sup>18</sup>“The Lord has known from eternity what He

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suffer in our flesh when we refuse to satisfy our fleshly desires in a wrong way. Jesus suffered on the cross to remove our guilt, but when we accept God’s forgiveness of our sins thru Jesus we must then be willing and determined to suffer *in our flesh also*, by refusing to sin by satisfying the desires of our flesh in a wrongful way.

This is what being converted is all about. It is being converted from living to satisfy ourselves to living to please God, and to continually obey Him, with His help. John 3:36; Romans 2:1-11; 6:16; Hebrews 3:19; 4:6,11; 5:9.

**15:8a** 10:1-48.

**15:17a** Amos 9:11-12.

will do.

<sup>19</sup>“So it is my opinion that we should not put difficulties in the way of the Gentiles who are turning to God.

<sup>20</sup>“But we should write to them to abstain from food that had been offered to idols, from sexual immorality, and from eating blood or the meat of strangled animals.

<sup>21</sup>“Because the Gentiles are familiar with these basic Laws of Moses that have been preached in every city for many generations. And they are read in the synagogues every Sabbath.”

### *The Letter to Gentile Believers*

<sup>22</sup>It was then decided by the apostles and church leaders, and agreed to by the whole church, to appoint some of their own men to accompany Paul and Barnabas to Antioch. They chose Judas, called Barsabas, and Silas. These were leading men among the Lord’s followers.

<sup>23</sup>The following letter was sent with them:

From the apostles, leaders, and other followers of the Lord at Jerusalem, to the Gentile followers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings.

<sup>24</sup>We have heard that some men, coming from us but without any instructions from us, have troubled you by their teachings, and continue to upset you by insisting that, *You must be circumcised and keep the Law.*

<sup>25</sup>So it seemed good to us after coming to full agreement on this matter to choose some of our men and send them to you with our much-loved Barnabas and Paul,

<sup>26</sup>men who have risked their very lives to glorify the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>27</sup>So we are sending Judas and Silas to assure you in person of the same things we are now writing you.

<sup>28</sup>It seemed right to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything more than the following necessary requirements:

<sup>29</sup>Abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from eating blood, from the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these things, you will do well. Farewell.

<sup>30</sup>So the men were sent off, and in due time arrived in Antioch. When they had gathered all the Lord’s followers together, they delivered the letter.

<sup>31</sup>When it was read, the followers were overjoyed

by its encouraging message.

<sup>32</sup>Judas and Silas were prophets too, so they taught the followers many things and strengthened them in the faith.

<sup>33</sup>After they had been there for some time, they were sent back with words of greeting from the followers to the apostles.

<sup>34</sup>But Silas decided it would be best if he stayed there.

<sup>35</sup>Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, where together with many others they taught and preached the message of the Lord.

### *Paul and Barnabas Separate*

<sup>36</sup>Sometime later Paul said to Barnabas, “Let’s go back now and visit the Lord’s followers in every city where we preached His message, and find out how they’re getting along.”

<sup>37</sup>Barnabas agreed, but he was determined that they take John Mark along too.

<sup>38</sup>But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had deserted them in Pamphylia, and hadn’t gone on with them to the work.

<sup>39</sup>The argument between them became so sharp that they broke off their partnership. So Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus.

<sup>40</sup>Paul then chose Silas. They left, with the followers declaring their confidence that God’s favor and help would be with them.

<sup>41</sup>Paul first of all traveled thru Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

### *Timothy Joins Paul and Silas*

**16** Then he went on to Derbe, then to Lystra. A follower named Timothy lived there, whose Jewish mother was a follower of the Lord, but whose father was a Greek.

<sup>2</sup>The followers in both Lystra and Iconium spoke well of Timothy.

<sup>3</sup>And Paul wanted to take him along with him. So he had him circumcised, because all the Jews living in those areas knew that his father was a Greek.

<sup>4</sup>As they went from city to city, they delivered to each church a copy of the decisions the apostles and elders had arrived at in Jerusalem, which the people were to obey.

<sup>5</sup>As a result, the churches were each strengthened in the faith, and they increased in number every day.

**16:6a** Which is now western Turkey.

**16:18a** Literally *that very hour*. This is an idiom Luke uses to mean *instantly*, as can be seen by

comparing Acts 9:18 and 22:13.

**16:31a** In order to have your sins forgiven you must first believe in Jesus as *Lord* (Lord means

### *The Macedonian Call*

<sup>6</sup>Then, because they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the message in the province of Asia<sup>a</sup> at that time, they traveled thru Phrygia and Galatia, and then on to the region of Mysia.

<sup>7</sup>They tried to go into the province of Bithynia from there, but the Spirit wouldn't let them go there either.

<sup>8</sup>So they traveled thru Mysia, and went down to the city of Troas.

<sup>9</sup>One night there, Paul saw a vision of a man from northern Greece standing and pleading with him, "Come over into northern Greece and help us!"

<sup>10</sup>Immediately after Paul saw that vision, we got ready to go to northern Greece. We were sure the Lord had called us to tell them the Great News.

### *Lydia's Conversion in Philippi*

<sup>11</sup>So we took passage on a boat at Troas, and sailed straight across to Samothrace. The next day we arrived at Neapolis.

<sup>12</sup>From there we went to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city in that part of northern Greece. We stayed there several days.

<sup>13</sup>On the Sabbath we went outside the city to the river, where it was customary to have a prayer meeting. There we sat down and talked to the women who had gathered.

<sup>14</sup>One woman who listened to us there was Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, who sold expensive purple cloth. She sincerely worshiped God. And the Lord so opened her heart to what Paul was saying that she responded.

<sup>15</sup>After she and her entire household were baptized, she begged us, "If you are convinced that I am truly faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my house." She insisted that we do so, and so we did.

### *Paul and Silas in Jail*

<sup>16</sup>One day as we were on our way to prayer, a slave girl, possessed by an evil spirit claiming to predict the future, met us. Her fortune telling made her owners a good deal of money.

<sup>17</sup>She followed Paul and the rest of us, and kept shouting, "These men are bond-servants of the Most High God. They are telling us how to be saved."

<sup>18</sup>She kept this up for many days. But finally Paul, becoming greatly annoyed, turned around

and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ, come out of her!" And instantly<sup>a</sup> it left her.

<sup>19</sup>But when her owners realized that their means of making money thru her was gone, they grabbed hold of Paul and Silas and dragged them into court.

<sup>20</sup>When they came before the judges, they charged, "Here are some Jews who are continually causing trouble in our city.

<sup>21</sup>"They are teaching the people to do things that are unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice!"

<sup>22</sup>Then the whole crowd there joined in the attack against them, and finally the judges themselves tore off the robes of Paul and Silas and ordered that they be beaten with rods.

<sup>23</sup>After being badly beaten and having their backs covered with stripes, they were thrown in jail. The jailer was then ordered to make sure they were locked up securely.

<sup>24</sup>Upon receiving such an order, the jailer threw them into the inner cell and chained their feet between heavy blocks of wood.

<sup>25</sup>About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, while the other prisoners listened.

<sup>26</sup>Suddenly there was a great earthquake that shook the jail to its very foundations. Immediately all the doors flew open, and the shackles on all the prisoners fell off.

<sup>27</sup>When the jailer woke up and saw the jail doors open, he pulled out his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped.

<sup>28</sup>But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We're all here!"

<sup>29</sup>After calling for torches, the jailer ran in and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas.

<sup>30</sup>After bringing them out of the jail he said, "O Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

<sup>31</sup>They replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.<sup>a</sup> This is also true for everyone in your household."

<sup>32</sup>Then they told him and everyone in his home about the Lord.

<sup>33</sup>That very hour, in the middle of the night, the jailer took them where he could wash their cuts and bruises. Then he and everyone in his home were immediately baptized.

<sup>34</sup>After that, he brought them into his house and served them a meal. All the while he, and his

ruler), which means you must surrender yourself to Him with a deep desire and willingness that He

become the Lord and Ruler of your life. You must seek to do what is right, and obey His orders—and

entire household were rejoicing in what they now had come to believe about God.

<sup>35</sup>When it was daylight, the authorities sent police to the jailer with the order, “Let those men go.”

<sup>36</sup>So the jailer reported this to Paul, saying, “The authorities have sent word that I’m to release you. So you may leave now and go on your way in peace.”

<sup>37</sup>“No, we’re not leaving!” Paul told the police. “Do they think they can condemn, publicly whip, and throw Roman citizens into jail without giving them a fair trial? And now they wish to have us leave jail secretly! Let them come themselves and talk to us about leaving.”

<sup>38</sup>When the police reported this to the judges—that they were Roman citizens—they became alarmed.

<sup>39</sup>So they came and released them and told them how extremely sorry they were. Then they asked them to please leave town.

<sup>40</sup>But when they left the jail, they went to Lydia’s house. There they met with the Lord’s followers and encouraged and advised them. Then they left.

### *The Uproar in Thessalonica*

**17** After they had traveled thru Amphipolis and Apollonia, they arrived at Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue.

<sup>2</sup>So as usual, Paul went to their meetings, and on three Sabbath days he spoke to them.

<sup>3</sup>He explained and showed them from the Scriptures that the Messiah had to suffer<sup>a</sup> and rise again from the dead.<sup>b</sup> “This Jesus whom I’m telling you about is the Messiah!” he said.

<sup>4</sup>Some of the Jews were convinced, along with a great number of the God-fearing Greeks, including quite a number of the leading women. They all joined Paul and Silas.

<sup>5</sup>But the Jewish leaders who refused to believe were jealous, and got some of the worthless dead-beats who hung around the marketplace to form a mob and start a riot. Then they whipped the whole city into an uproar and attacked the home of Jason, looking for Paul and Silas. They tried to bring them out of the house so the people could deal with them.

<sup>6</sup>But when they couldn’t find them, they dragged Jason and several other followers of the Lord before the city authorities and shouted, “Those who have turned the world upside down have now come here!”

<sup>7</sup>“They all defy Caesar, saying there’s another king, called Jesus. Jason has even lodged them in his house!”

<sup>8</sup>The crowd and the city officials were extremely stirred up when they heard these charges.

<sup>9</sup>But after making Jason and the other followers post bail, they released them.

### *Paul and Silas in Berea*

<sup>10</sup>As soon as it was night, the Lord’s followers sent both Paul and Silas away to Berea, where they went into the Jewish synagogue upon arrival.

<sup>11</sup>The people in Berea were more noble and fair-minded than those in Thessalonica. They eagerly listened to the message, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out if these things were really true.

<sup>12</sup>As a result, many became believers. This was also true of quite a number of prominent women among the Greeks, and Greek men as well.

<sup>13</sup>But when the Jewish leaders in Thessalonica learned that Paul was now preaching God’s message in Berea, they came there too, exciting the masses.

<sup>14</sup>Immediately the Lord’s followers sent Paul away, pretending to take him to the coast. But both Silas and Timothy remained there.

<sup>15</sup>Those escorting Paul brought him down to Athens. And as they left him, he instructed them to have Silas and Timothy join him as soon as possible.

### *Paul in Athens*

<sup>16</sup>While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he became greatly upset and concerned when he saw all the idols thruout the city.

<sup>17</sup>So he had earnest discussions in the synagogue with both Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and also every day in the marketplace with everyone he met.

<sup>18</sup>Then he came in contact with some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. Some of them questioned,

you must continue to do so. His orders are set forth thruout the entire New Testament.

Then you must believe on Him as *Jesus*. The name Jesus means Savior. You must believe that He died on the cross because of your sins, so that He might save you. The Bible calls Him the Lamb of

God, the Lamb that God gave in sacrifice so that He could forgive your sins.

And you must believe in Him as *Christ*, or *Messiah*. They mean the same. Messiah is the Hebrew word, and Christ is the Greek form of the same word. The name Christ means *the anointed One*,



“What’s this babbler trying to tell us?” Others said, “He seems to be promoting some foreign gods,” because he was telling them the Great News about Jesus, and that someday everyone would rise back to life again.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>19</sup> So they took him by the arm and brought him before the Areopagus Council on Mars Hill, saying, “Let’s hear now what you have to say about this new teaching you’re promoting.

<sup>20</sup> “Because you’re bringing some strange things to our attention. We’d like to know what it’s all about.”

<sup>21</sup> (It should be explained here that all the Athenians and visiting foreigners who gathered there whiled away their time just telling about or listening to others tell about the latest new idea.)

<sup>22</sup> So Paul stood in the middle of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I can see that you are very religious in all respects.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>23</sup> “Because as I was walking about and observing your various objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription:

#### TO AN UNKNOWN GOD

Well, I’m here to tell you about this One of whom you are ignorant, but still worship.

<sup>24</sup> “He is the God who made the world and everything in it! And since He is Lord of Heaven and earth, He doesn’t live in temples made by human hands.

<sup>25</sup> “He doesn’t need the helping hand of any man. Since He’s the One who gives life and breath and everything else to all of us, He doesn’t need anything.

<sup>26</sup> “Beginning with one man, He made the people in every nation, and caused them to inhabit every part of the earth. It is He who determines when each nation will rise and when it will fall, and what its boundaries will be.

<sup>27</sup> “God’s purpose in all His dealings with mankind is to cause them to look for Him—hoping they will reach out for Him and find Him, though He isn’t far from any of us.

<sup>28</sup> “He is everything to us. The fact that we’re alive and kept alive, that we have the ability to move, and the greater fact that we exist at all—all

of this is due to Him. What some of your own poets have said is true: ‘We are certainly His offspring!’

<sup>29</sup> “Since we are the children of God, we certainly shouldn’t think that the Divine One can be portrayed for us as being like some sculptured gold, silver, or stone idol, shaped by the skillful abilities of man.

<sup>30</sup> “True, in the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now He commands that everyone everywhere turn from their evil ways and turn to Him.

<sup>31</sup> “In fact, He has assigned a certain Day when the Man<sup>a</sup> He has chosen will in an honest and right way judge every person on earth! He gave proof to everyone that this will indeed happen, when He raised this Man<sup>a</sup> from among the dead.”

<sup>32</sup> When they heard about the resurrection of someone who had been dead, some of them began to jeer at him, while others said, “We’d like to hear more about that sometime.”

<sup>33</sup> So Paul then left them.

<sup>34</sup> But some of the people believed, and they went with him. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus Council, and a woman named Damaris, and several others.

#### In Corinth

**18** Then Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.

<sup>2</sup> There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, (because Emperor Claudius had demanded that all Jews leave Rome). Paul went to visit them.

<sup>3</sup> And because they worked at the same trade, making tents, he stayed and worked with them.

<sup>4</sup> But every Sabbath, he was in the synagogue, reasoning with both Jews and Greeks, doing his best to convince them of the truth.

<sup>5</sup> When Silas and Timothy arrived from northern Greece, Paul felt compelled by the Holy Spirit to spend all his time in telling the Jews that Jesus is indeed the Messiah.

<sup>6</sup> But when they continued to firmly oppose him with abusive language and cursing, he finally shook the dust from his coat and said, “Your fate is now in your own hands! I am no longer responsi-

the One to whom God the Father has given all power and authority. God has given Jesus power to do everything that He Himself can do.

According to v 32, Paul and Silas no doubt explained all this and much more to the jailer and his family.

**17:3a** See Acts 13:27 references.

**17:3b** Acts 2:24; 13:32-37; Psalm 16:10. If He didn’t rise from the dead, He is still dead, and unable to save us.

**17:18a** 24:15; John 5:28-29; Revelation 20:4-15.

**17:22a** ... and don’t take any chances.

**17:31a** Jesus Christ.

**18:26a** *The Way of God* evidently refers to all of

ble for you. From now on I will teach the Gentiles.”

<sup>7</sup>So he left the synagogue and went right next door to the home of a godly man named Justus.

<sup>8</sup>But Crispus, the president of the synagogue, together with everyone in his family, believed in the Lord. And many other people in Corinth who heard the Great News also believed and were baptized.

<sup>9</sup>One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision. “Don’t be afraid,” He said. “Keep on speaking out! Don’t be quiet!

<sup>10</sup>“Because I am with you, and no one will attack or harm you here. Many people in this city belong to Me.”

<sup>11</sup>So he stayed there and continued teaching God’s truths to them for a year and a half.

<sup>12</sup>But when Gallio was appointed governor of southern Greece, the Jews rose up in a united front against Paul and brought him to court.

<sup>13</sup>“This man is persuading our people to worship God in ways that are against our Law,” they charged.

<sup>14</sup>When Paul was about to answer this charge, Gallio said, “Listen, you Jews, if it were a matter of some wrongdoing or serious crime, there would be good reason for me to listen to you.

<sup>15</sup>“But if you’re bickering about words and names relating to your own law, settle those matters yourselves. I flatly refuse to be a judge in such matters.”

<sup>16</sup>Then he ordered that they be thrown out of the courtroom.

<sup>17</sup>At this point, all the Greeks grabbed hold of Sosthenes, the president of the synagogue, and beat him up right in front of the judge’s bench. But Gallio did nothing, and had no concern about such matters.

### *Paul’s Return to Antioch*

<sup>18</sup>Paul stayed in Corinth for quite some time after that, but he finally said good-bye to the Lord’s followers there and sailed with Priscilla and Aquila for Syria. But before sailing, he had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, because of a solemn promise he had made to God.

<sup>19</sup>Upon arriving in Ephesus, Paul left Priscilla and Aquila and went into the synagogue and had some serious discussions with the Jews.

<sup>20</sup>They begged him to stay on longer with them,

but he declined.

<sup>21</sup>“I must make every effort to take part in the coming Feast in Jerusalem,” he said as he left them. “But I will return to you again, if God is willing.” Then he sailed from Ephesus.

<sup>22</sup>After landing at Caesarea, he went up to Jerusalem and had fellowship with the Lord’s followers there, and then went on to Antioch.

<sup>23</sup>After spending some time there, he left again for the region of Galatia and Phrygia, traveling successively from place to place, strengthening all the followers.

### *The Ministry of Apollos*

<sup>24</sup>About this time, a Jew named Apollos, who had grown up in Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent speaker, with outstanding knowledge of the Scriptures.

<sup>25</sup>He had been taught the various truths about the Lord, and, with great enthusiasm, he accurately told the people about the Lord Jesus. But all he knew about baptism was what John had taught.

<sup>26</sup>So he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him more accurately the Way<sup>a</sup> of God.

<sup>27</sup>When he decided to go across into southern Greece, the Lord’s followers wrote the followers there to welcome and encourage him. And upon arriving, he was enabled by God to greatly help those who had believed and accepted God’s great kindness.

<sup>28</sup>Because in front of everyone he continued to powerfully overthrow the arguments of the Jewish leaders, conclusively proving from the Scriptures that Jesus is indeed the Messiah.

### *Paul in Ephesus*

**19** Now while Apollos was in Corinth, Paul had traveled the mountain route thru the interior of the province of Asia, finally arriving at Ephesus, where he found some of the Lord’s followers.

<sup>2</sup>“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you were converted and became followers of the Lord?” he asked them.

“No,” they replied, “we haven’t even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”

<sup>3</sup>“Well, what then did you profess to believe when you were baptized?” he inquired.

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God’s plans for mankind thru Jesus Christ—dealing with His person, the reason for His coming to earth, His life, death, resurrection, and the way His people

are to follow Him.

**19:6a** See Luke 11:13; John 14:15-18; Acts 1:1 to 2:18; 8:14-24; 10:1-48.

“What John the Baptizer taught,” they responded.

<sup>4</sup>“John’s baptism did, of course, give testimony to God and others that the one being baptized was turning from his sinning,” Paul stated. “But John also told the people to believe in the One who would come after him. He was talking about Jesus, the Messiah.”

<sup>5</sup>When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

<sup>6</sup>And when Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they began to speak in other languages and to prophesy.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>7</sup>There were about twelve of them.

<sup>8</sup>Then Paul went into the synagogue, where for three months he spoke out boldly, continually reasoning with them and trying to convince them of the truths about the Kingdom of God.

<sup>9</sup>But when some became completely stuck in the rut of their error and utterly refused to obey the truth, so that they publicly ridiculed the Way of the Lord, he left them. But he took those who believed with him, and taught them every day in the school of Tyrannus.

<sup>10</sup>This went on for two years, so that everyone living in the province of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the message of the Lord Jesus.

### *The Sons of Sceva*

<sup>11</sup>And during this time, God was working unusual miracles thru Paul.

<sup>12</sup>Even when handkerchiefs and aprons that Paul had handled were brought to the sick, they were cured of their diseases, and the evil spirits went out of them.

<sup>13</sup>Then some Jews who traveled about driving out evil spirits decided to use the name of Jesus over those possessed by demons, so they were saying, “We command you to come out of him in the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches about.”

<sup>14</sup>Seven brothers, the sons of a Jewish chief priest named Sceva, were doing this.

<sup>15</sup>But when they gave this command to the spirit in a certain man, the evil spirit answered, “I know Jesus, and I know about Paul, but you, who are you?”

<sup>16</sup>Then the man possessed by the evil spirit jumped on them, and attacked them so fiercely that he overpowered them. They were beaten so badly that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.

<sup>17</sup>Everyone in Ephesus heard about it, both Jews and Greeks, and they were all frightened. As a result, the name of the Lord Jesus came to be most highly respected.

<sup>18</sup>And many who had come to believe, now came forward, one after another, confessing their sins and revealing the evil lives they had lived.

<sup>19</sup>Also, many who had practiced black magic brought their books<sup>a</sup> together and burned them in public. When they figured up the cost of all these books, they found the total came to 50,000 silver coins!

<sup>20</sup>So the message of the Lord continued to go everywhere, with power that continued to conquer.

### *The Riot in Ephesus*

<sup>21</sup>Right after all this happened, Paul decided to leave and go thru both northern and southern Greece, and then to Jerusalem. “After I’ve been there,” Paul said, “I must also visit Rome.”

<sup>22</sup>But Paul stayed a while longer in the province of Asia, although he sent two of his assistants, Timothy and Erastus, into northern Greece.

<sup>23</sup>About this time, a great disturbance erupted in Ephesus as a result of the Christian advance.

<sup>24</sup>The man who started it all was Demetrius, a silversmith who made miniature silver shrine models of the temple of the Ephesian goddess Artemis. The profit made by these craftsmen was no small amount.

<sup>25</sup>Demetrius called the silversmiths together, along with those in related trades, and said: “Men, you all know that we can continue to make good money only if we can continue to make and sell these shrines.

<sup>26</sup>“And you’ve all seen and heard what this fellow Paul has done, how he’s preached, not only here in Ephesus, but thruout almost all of Asia. He’s persuading and convincing vast numbers of people that gods made by human hands are not gods at all!

<sup>27</sup>“So not only is our trade in danger of becoming despised, but also the people will come to consider the temple of the great goddess Artemis as worthless. In that event, even Artemis, whom all in Asia and the world worship, will be stripped of all her glory!”

<sup>28</sup>After listening to this blistering tirade, the men gathered there became furious, and began furiously shouting,<sup>a</sup> “Great is Artemis, the goddess of the Ephesians! Great is Artemis, the goddess of the

**19:19a** Refers to books that contained spells, charms, and magical formulas.

**19:28a** Continuous shouting, indicated by imper-

Ephesians!”

<sup>29</sup>This threw the whole city into an uproar, until the people made one mad rush for the theater, dragging along with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul’s traveling companions from northern Greece.

<sup>30</sup>When Paul wanted to go in and speak to the people, the Lord’s followers wouldn’t let him.

<sup>31</sup>Even some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, sent word to him begging him not to venture into the theater.

<sup>32</sup>Meanwhile inside, they kept on shouting, some one thing, some another. The whole place was in an uproar. In fact, most of the people didn’t even know what the meeting was all about.

<sup>33</sup>Finally, the Jews brought Alexander out of the crowd and pushed him forward. He put up his hand, motioning for silence, as he wished to present his defense before the people.

<sup>34</sup>But when the crowd realized he was a Jew, they all began shouting in unison, “Great is Artemis, the goddess of the Ephesians!” And they continued shouting this for about two hours.

<sup>35</sup>When the city clerk was finally able to calm the crowd, he said, “People of Ephesus, who doesn’t know that the city of the Ephesians is the guardian of the temple of the great goddess Artemis, and of her image which fell down from Zeus?”

<sup>36</sup>“Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you must calm down so you don’t take some foolhardy action.

<sup>37</sup>“These men you have brought here are neither temple thieves nor have they heaped abuse on your goddess with foul language and cursing.

<sup>38</sup>“If Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a case against anyone, the courts are open and there are judges. Let them bring their accusations there.

<sup>39</sup>“If other matters need attention, they must be settled in a legal assembly.

<sup>40</sup>“Because we are in danger of being accused by the Roman government of starting a riot as a result of today’s uproar. And there’s no good reason we can give for this disorderly gathering.”

<sup>41</sup>When he finished speaking, he dismissed the meeting.

### *Paul Goes to Macedonia and Greece*

**20** After the uproar died down, Paul sent out a call to the Lord’s followers to meet with him. After giving them words of encouragement, he bid them farewell and left for northern Greece.

<sup>2</sup>He gave many encouraging messages as he traveled thru northern Greece, and then went down to southern Greece, where he stayed for three months.

<sup>3</sup>But when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail for Syria, he decided to return thru northern Greece.

<sup>4</sup>Several men accompanied him to the province of Asia<sup>a</sup>: Sopater from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia,<sup>a</sup> and Timothy.

<sup>5</sup>All of these went ahead, and waited for us at Troas.

<sup>6</sup>After the Feast of Unleavened Bread, we sailed from Philippi, Greece, and five days later, joined the others in Troas, where we stayed a week.

### *Paul’s Last Visit to Troas*

<sup>7</sup>On Saturday evening,<sup>a</sup> the followers came together for a communion service, and Paul spoke to them. And since he was getting ready to leave the next day, he continued speaking until midnight.

<sup>8</sup>There were many oil lamps burning in the upstairs room where they met.

<sup>9</sup>And as Paul kept preaching on and on, a young teenager named Eutychus, who was sitting in an open window, became very drowsy and began falling asleep. Finally he did fall asleep, and fell to the ground from the third story. He was dead when they picked him up.

<sup>10</sup>But Paul immediately went down and threw himself on the young man and embraced him. “Don’t be alarmed,” he then said. “He’s alive!”

<sup>11</sup>After Paul went back upstairs and took part in a communion service, and then in a fellowship dinner, he again spoke at length—until day-break—and then left.

<sup>12</sup>The family that was then able to bring the young man home alive was truly comforted in

fect tense.

**20:4a** Western Turkey.

**20:7a** The first day of the week for the Jews (Sunday) began on our Saturday evening at sundown.

**20:21a** Present participle—present, continuous action.

**20:21b** Is Paul actually saying here that one must obey God besides believing in Jesus as Savior in order to gain eternal life? See 26:18-20 and Appendix 211, page 476.

**20:23a** Present participle—present, continuous action.

great measure.

<sup>13</sup>We then went ahead and boarded the ship and sailed off to Assos, where Paul planned to join us. These were Paul's arrangements, as he intended to walk there.

<sup>14</sup>When he met us at Assos, we took him on board and continued on to Mitylene.

<sup>15</sup>We sailed on from there and the next day arrived offshore from the island of Chios. The following day we arrived at Samos Island, and stayed overnight at Trogyllium. The next day we reached Miletus.

<sup>16</sup>Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus to avoid spending any time during this trip in the province of Asia, as he was in a hurry to get to Jerusalem—hopefully, by the Day of Pentecost.

### *Paul's Farewell to the Ephesian Elders*

<sup>17</sup>However, on reaching Miletus, he sent a message to Ephesus calling the elders of the church to meet with him.

<sup>18</sup>When they arrived, he said, "You know the kind of life I lived when I was with you, from the very first day I came into your province.

<sup>19</sup>"And you will recall how I served the Lord humbly, shedding many tears as a result of the trials that came my way by the plotting of the Jews.

<sup>20</sup>"I never refrained from telling you anything that was for your good, both as I taught you publicly and in your homes.

<sup>21</sup>"To both Jews and Greeks, my earnest and emphatic message was always the same<sup>a</sup>: 'You must both turn from your sinning and obey God, and believe in our Lord Jesus<sup>b</sup> the Messiah as your Savior!'

<sup>22</sup>"And now I am on my way to Jerusalem, strongly urged on by the Holy Spirit, but with a sense of foreboding, as I don't know what will happen to me there.

<sup>23</sup>"All I know is that the Holy Spirit continues to testify solemnly and earnestly<sup>a</sup> in every city, that jail and deep trouble are ahead for me.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>24</sup>"But none of these messages from the Holy Spirit cause me any real concern, as I don't look at my life as something to be selfishly guarded. My only concern is to finish my race with joy, by completing the assignment I received from the Lord

Jesus, that of most solemnly and earnestly announcing the Great News about the undeserved kindness and mercy of God toward man.

<sup>25</sup>"I have spent much time with you, telling you about the Kingdom of God. But now I know that none of you will ever see me again.

<sup>26</sup>"So I solemnly say this to you: If any of you should be lost, I am not the one responsible.

<sup>27</sup>"I have held nothing back. I have given you God's complete message.

<sup>28</sup>"So follow my example and keep a close watch on your own lives and on the lives of the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you the guardians. See to it that you continually shepherd<sup>a</sup> the Lord's church, that He bought at such great cost with His own shed blood.

<sup>29</sup>"Because I know this, that after I leave you, false teachers, like bloodthirsty wolves, will appear among you—and they won't spare the flock.

<sup>30</sup>"Even from among yourselves some will rise up and twist and distort the truth in order to get the Lord's followers to break away and follow them.

<sup>31</sup>"So you are the ones who must now be constantly on your guard, always remembering that with tears, for three years, night and day, I never stopped advising and warning each one of you.

<sup>32</sup>"And now, my dear beloved friends, I turn you over to God, and to the message of His mercy and goodwill, which can build you up and give you an inheritance along with all those who have in all sincerity and honesty given their whole hearts to God.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>33</sup>"I have never wanted any gold or silver or clothing belonging to anyone.

<sup>34</sup>"In fact, you all know that I worked with my own hands to supply my personal needs, and the needs of those who were with me.

<sup>35</sup>"All along I have offered you an example, to show you that we have a duty to help the weak. And we are always to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, when He said, 'You will receive greater happiness and success in every way when you give—much more so than when you receive.'<sup>''</sup>

<sup>36</sup>After he had said this, he knelt down with all of them and prayed.

<sup>37</sup>They all cried a great deal as they hugged and kissed<sup>a</sup> him good-bye.

**20:23b** The Holy Spirit was no doubt speaking to Paul thru other believers speaking in tongues and interpretation, and thru those with the gift of prophecy.

**20:28a** Present participle—present, continuous action. To tend, guard, watch over carefully, shelter,

protect, guide, preserve, look after, lead, oversee.

**20:32a** We must study and meditate often on God's word. And we must come often to God to take inventory, to make sure we haven't taken back from Him any of what we have given Him of ourselves.

**20:37a** The eastern custom is still to hug and kiss

<sup>38</sup>His statement that they would never see him again especially grieved them. Then they walked with him to the ship.

### *Paul's Journey to Jerusalem*

**21** After we had torn ourselves away from them, our ship set sail and we put out to sea and headed straight for Cos. The next day we reached Rhodes, and from there we sailed to Patara.

<sup>2</sup>Upon finding a ship there that was crossing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and sailed with them.

<sup>3</sup>When the island of Cyprus came into view, we sailed south of it and continued on our voyage to Syria. We docked at Tyre, where the ship was to unload its cargo.

<sup>4</sup>When we found the Lord's followers who lived there, we stayed a week with them. Thru the Holy Spirit they kept telling Paul to give up his plan to visit Jerusalem.

<sup>5</sup>But when our time was up, we left and continued on our way. The entire congregation, including wives and children, went with us, until we were outside the city. There we knelt down together on the shore and prayed.

<sup>6</sup>When we had finally said our last good-bye, we boarded the ship, and they returned to their homes.

<sup>7</sup>Our voyage ended after we sailed from Tyre to Ptolemais. We brought greetings to the Lord's followers there, and stayed with them one day.

<sup>8</sup>The next day, Paul, and those of us who were accompanying him, left and went on to Caesarea. There we went to the home of Philip the evangelist, one of the seven original deacons,<sup>a</sup> and stayed with him.

<sup>9</sup>He had four unmarried daughters who had the gift of prophecy.

<sup>10</sup>After we had been there several days, a man named Agabus, who also had the gift of prophecy, came down from Judea.

<sup>11</sup>When he arrived, he took Paul's belt, and tied his own hands and feet with it. Then he said, "This is what the Holy Spirit is saying, 'This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will tie up the man who owns this belt. Then they will hand him over to the Romans.'"

<sup>12</sup>When we heard this, both we and those who lived there pleaded most earnestly with Paul to

abandon his visit to Jerusalem.

<sup>13</sup>"What are you doing here," Paul responded, "crying like this and breaking my heart? Not only am I willing to be bound, but I am also willing to die in Jerusalem for the sake of Jesus Christ."

<sup>14</sup>So when it became clear that we couldn't change his mind, we gave in, and said, "May the Lord's will be done."

<sup>15</sup>When our visit there was over, we got our things together and went up to Jerusalem.

<sup>16</sup>Some of the followers from Caesarea also went with us. They brought with them a man named Mnason, in whose home we were to stay. He was from Cyprus, and had been a follower since the early days.

### *Paul's Visit With James*

<sup>17</sup>When we arrived in Jerusalem, the Lord's followers there warmly welcomed us.

<sup>18</sup>The next day Paul and the rest of us went in to see James. All the other elders were also there.

<sup>19</sup>After Paul had greeted them he gave them a complete, detailed report of what God had done among the Gentiles thru his witness.

<sup>20</sup>When they had heard his report, they praised the Lord. But then they said, "You see, brother, how many thousands upon thousands of Jews have become followers—but all of them are also zealous about obeying the Law of Moses.

<sup>21</sup>"But they've been repeatedly told that you teach all Jews who live among the Gentiles to abandon the teachings of Moses, and that you tell them they should not circumcise their children or follow any of the Jewish customs.

<sup>22</sup>"What should we do about this? The people will certainly hear that you have come, and they'll want to meet with you about this.

<sup>23</sup>"So why not do this? Four of our men have made solemn promises to God.

<sup>24</sup>"Go with them and join them in the ceremony of purification, and pay their expenses to have their heads shaved. Then everyone will know that these rumors about you are not true, but that you yourself live in accordance with the requirements of the Laws of Moses.

<sup>25</sup>"But we have written the Gentile followers that in our judgment they do not need to observe these Laws, but that they refrain from eating food offered to idols, from eating blood or the meat of

on the cheek. The tense is imperfect active, denoting repeated kissing, or probably one after the other embracing and kissing him.

**21:8a** 6:1-6.

**21:25a** See Ephesians 5:3 note.

**22:9a** Acts 9:7.

strangled animals, and from sexual immorality.”<sup>a</sup>

<sup>26</sup>So the next day, Paul took the four men and was purified along with them. He then went to the Temple to announce the date when the purification would end. At that time, a sacrifice would be offered for each one of them.

### ***Paul Arrested***

<sup>27</sup>But when the seven days had nearly ended, some Jews from the province of Asia saw him in the Temple courts, and they turned everyone there against him.

<sup>28</sup>Grabbing hold of him they screamed, “Men of Israel, help! This is the man who’s going around speaking to everyone everywhere against our people and the Law, and against this holy place! And added to that he’s also defiled this holy place by bringing some Greeks into the Temple!”

<sup>29</sup>(They said this because they had previously seen Trophimus from Ephesus with him in the city, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the Temple as well.)

<sup>30</sup>This aroused the whole city, and the people came running together from every direction. They grabbed hold of Paul and dragged him out of the Temple courts, and immediately the gates were shut.

<sup>31</sup>As they were trying to kill him, news reached the commander of the Roman garrison that all Jerusalem was rioting.

<sup>32</sup>He at once took some captains and soldiers and ran down to the mob. As soon as the rioters saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.

<sup>33</sup>The commander then took Paul from them, and gave orders that he be bound with two chains. Then he asked the people, “Who is this man? What’s the problem?”

<sup>34</sup>In response the crowd began shouting, some one thing, some another. So when he couldn’t make out what the truth was because of the turmoil, he ordered that Paul be brought into the barracks.

<sup>35</sup>When they reached the steps to the barracks, the mob became so violent that the soldiers had to carry him.

<sup>36</sup>And still the mob followed, shouting, “Away with him! Away with him!”

### ***Paul’s Defense before the Angry Crowd***

<sup>37</sup>As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the commander, “May I speak to

you?”

“Do you speak Greek?” he replied.

<sup>38</sup>“Aren’t you the Egyptian who stirred up a revolt and led four thousand terrorists out into the desert some time ago?”

<sup>39</sup>“No, I am a Jew from Tarsus, an important city in Cilicia,” Paul replied. “May I have your permission to speak to the people?”

<sup>40</sup>Upon receiving permission, Paul stood on the steps and motioned with his hand to the crowd. When there was a great hush, he spoke to them in Hebrew, saying,

**22** “Brothers and fathers, please allow me to explain what has happened.”

<sup>2</sup>When they heard him speaking to them in Hebrew, they became even more quiet.

<sup>3</sup>“I am indeed a Jew,” he said, “born in Tarsus in Cilicia. But I was brought up in this city, and educated under Gamaliel, who taught me the Law of our Fathers with uncompromising exactness. And I was just as zealous and fired up to obey God as all of you are today.

<sup>4</sup>“I persecuted to death those who followed the Way of Jesus, arresting both men and women, and throwing them in jail.

<sup>5</sup>“The High Priest and the whole Council can tell you that this is true, because they are the ones who gave me letters of introduction to our Jewish leaders in Damascus. With those letters in hand, I was on my way to Damascus to arrest these followers of Jesus and bring them to Jerusalem in chains to receive their punishment.

<sup>6</sup>“About noon, as I was on my way and approaching Damascus, a most brilliant bolt of light from the sky suddenly blazed all around me.

<sup>7</sup>“I fell to the ground, and then I heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you so cruel to Me?’

<sup>8</sup>“Who are you, Sir?’ I asked.

‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, the One you are persecuting.’ He answered.

<sup>9</sup>“The men with me also saw the light, and were frightened. But they didn’t understand what the One speaking was saying to me.”<sup>a</sup>

<sup>10</sup>“What do You want me to do, Lord?’ I asked Him.

‘Get up and go into Damascus,’ the Lord replied. ‘There you will be told about all the things you have been assigned to do.’

<sup>11</sup>“But since I had been blinded by the brilliance of the intense light, the men with me had to take

me by the hand and lead me into Damascus.

<sup>12</sup>“Then a man by the name of Ananias came to see me. He was a devout man by the standards of the Jewish Law, and highly respected by all the Jews living there.

<sup>13</sup>“He came and stood by my side and said, ‘Brother Saul, look up here.’ And the moment I turned my eyes toward him I could see again!<sup>a</sup>

<sup>14</sup>“Then he said, ‘The God of our fathers has chosen you to know how He wants His people to live and serve Him. You will see the Righteous One and receive understanding and instructions directly from His own mouth.

<sup>15</sup>‘You will be His witness to everyone, telling them what you have both seen and heard.

<sup>16</sup>‘And now, what are you waiting for?’ Ananias continued. ‘Get up and be baptized, and wash your sins away by calling on the name of the Lord.’<sup>a</sup>

<sup>17</sup>“When I went back to Jerusalem, I was praying in the Temple one day when I had a vision.

<sup>18</sup>“I saw Jesus, and He said to me, ‘Hurry! Get out of Jerusalem immediately! Be quick about it, because the people here will refuse to listen to what you have to tell them about Me!’

<sup>19</sup>‘But Lord,’ I said, ‘they know I went into every synagogue, imprisoning and beating those who believe in You.

<sup>20</sup>‘And when your witness, Stephen, was killed because he boldly spoke out for You, I was standing there, agreeing that he should die. I was even guarding the clothes of those who were killing him!’

<sup>21</sup>‘Leave this place!’ He then said to me, ‘because I’m going to send you far away to the Gentiles.’”

### ***Paul and the Roman Commander***

<sup>22</sup>The mob listened to Paul until he said he had been sent by the Lord to the Gentiles. But then they roared their disapproval, shouting, “Away with such a fellow! Kill him! He’s not fit to live!”

<sup>23</sup>As they continued screaming, they tore off their coats and threw dust into the air.

<sup>24</sup>Whereupon the Roman commander ordered the captains to have Paul brought into the barracks. He also ordered that he be whipped, in order to force a confession from him. He wanted to find out why the mob was so violently against him.

<sup>25</sup>But as he was being tied with leather thongs and stretched out for the whipping, Paul said to the captain standing by, “Is it legal for you to whip

a Roman citizen before he’s been found guilty?”

<sup>26</sup>When the captain heard this, he went to the commander and said, “Do you realize what you’re about to do? This man is a Roman citizen.”

<sup>27</sup>The commander then went to Paul and asked, “Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?”

“Yes,” he replied.

<sup>28</sup>“It took a large sum of money for me to get my citizenship,” the commander said.

“But I was born a citizen,” Paul responded.

<sup>29</sup>As a result, those who were about to force a confession from him simply vanished. Even the commander was afraid, once he realized that he had taken Paul, a Roman citizen, and tied him up to be whipped.

### ***Paul’s Trial before the Council***

<sup>30</sup>However, he still wanted to know what charges the Jews were making against Paul. So the next day, he ordered the chief priests and their entire Council to assemble. Then he had Paul’s chains taken off, and brought him in before them.

**23** Then Paul, looking straight into the eyes of the Council members, said, “Men and brothers, up to this moment I have a clear conscience about the way I have lived to please God.”

<sup>2</sup>Immediately the High Priest, Ananias, ordered those standing near him to strike him in the mouth.

<sup>3</sup>“God is about to strike you, you whitewashed wall!<sup>a</sup>!” Paul retorted. “There you sit, intending to judge me according to the Law, but at the same time you are breaking the Law by commanding these men to strike me.”

<sup>4</sup>“How dare you insult God’s High Priest?” challenged those standing near him.

<sup>5</sup>“Brothers,” Paul replied, “I didn’t realize he was the High Priest, because the Scriptures tell us, ‘You shall not speak disrespectfully about a ruler of your people.’”<sup>a</sup>

<sup>6</sup>But then Paul remembered that the Jewish Council was made up of both Pharisees and Sadducees, so he shouted, “Men and brothers, I am a Pharisee, and my father was a Pharisee. The reason I am being judged here today is because of the confident assurance I have that the dead will be resurrected to live again!”

<sup>7</sup>That statement caused an argument between the Pharisees and Sadducees, causing a split in the Council.

**22:16a** ... our Savior for pardon and the new birth (a new beginning, and a new life lived in fel-

lowship with God, and in obedience to Him).

**23:3a** A hypocrite, fraud, deceiver.



<sup>8</sup>Because the Sadducees claim there will be no resurrection, and that there are no angels or spirits, while the Pharisees believe in all of them.

<sup>9</sup>So a lot of shouting was the result. The teachers of the Law who were Pharisees stood up and fiercely argued, “We don’t find anything wrong with this man! If a spirit or an angel has spoken to him,” they said, “let’s not fight against God!”

<sup>10</sup>The argument became so heated that the commander feared Paul would be torn apart by them. So he ordered his soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and return him to the barracks.

<sup>11</sup>But that night, the Lord stood beside him and said, “Keep up your courage, Paul! Because in the same way that you have courageously and earnestly taken a stand for Me here in Jerusalem, you must also tell others about Me in Rome.”

### *The Plot to Kill Paul*

<sup>12</sup>The next morning, however, some of the Jews got together and asked God to curse them if they ate or drank anything until they had killed Paul.

<sup>13</sup>More than 40 men were involved in this conspiracy.

<sup>14</sup>Then they went to the chief priests and elders and said, “We have bound ourselves by an oath, asking God to send a curse upon us if we eat anything before we kill Paul.

<sup>15</sup>“Now then, we ask that you, together with the Council, ask the Roman commander to bring Paul down to you tomorrow so you can further study his case. We are prepared to kill him before he ever gets near this place.”

<sup>16</sup>But the son of Paul’s sister heard of the plot, so he went into the barracks and told Paul.

<sup>17</sup>Paul then called one of the captains over to him and said, “Please take this young man to the commander. He has a very important message for him.”

<sup>18</sup>So the captain brought the boy to the commander and said, “Paul, the prisoner, called me over and asked that I bring this young man to you. He has an important message for you.”

<sup>19</sup>The commander then took the boy by the hand and brought him aside. There he asked him privately, “What is it you wish to tell me?”

<sup>20</sup>“The Jewish leaders have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down tomorrow to again appear before the Council,” he said, “pretending they want to question him some more.

<sup>21</sup>“But please don’t do it, because more than 40

men will be waiting to attack him. They have put themselves under a curse not to eat or drink until they kill him. They are ready right now, just waiting for you to promise you’ll send him.”

<sup>22</sup>The commander said, “Don’t tell even one person that you told me this,” after which he dismissed him.

### *Paul Is Sent to Governor Felix*

<sup>23</sup>Then he called for two particular captains and ordered them, “Get 200 soldiers ready, as well as 70 horsemen and 200 soldiers armed with spears. You are to leave with them for Caesarea at nine o’clock tonight.

<sup>24</sup>“Also have horses ready for Paul to ride, and bring him safely to Governor Felix.”

<sup>25</sup>Then he wrote the following letter:

<sup>26</sup>From Claudius Lysias,

To His Excellency, Governor Felix:

Greetings!

<sup>27</sup>This man was mobbed by the Jews, and was about to be killed by them. When I learned that he was a Roman citizen, I rushed in with my troops and rescued him.

<sup>28</sup>I wanted to know what they had against him, so I brought him down to appear before their Council.

<sup>29</sup>I found he was being accused in some controversy involving their religion, but it certainly wasn’t anything that would require the death penalty or even jail.

<sup>30</sup>When I learned that the Jews are still plotting to kill him, I immediately sent him on to you. I have also ordered his accusers to state their charges against him before you. Farewell.

<sup>31</sup>So the soldiers took Paul, as they had been ordered, and brought him that night as far as Antipatris.

<sup>32</sup>The next day, they let the soldiers on horses continue on with him, and the foot soldiers returned to the barracks.

<sup>33</sup>When the horsemen arrived in Caesarea, they delivered the letter to the governor and turned Paul over to him.

<sup>34</sup>When the governor had finished reading the letter, he asked Paul what province he was from.

“From Cilicia,” Paul replied.

<sup>35</sup>“I will give your case a full hearing when your accusers also arrive,” he said. Then he ordered that he be kept in jail at Herod’s palace.

*The Trial before Felix*

**24** Five days later, Ananias the High Priest arrived with the elders and a certain lawyer named Tertullus, to present their case against Paul before the governor.

<sup>2</sup>Paul was sent for, and after he arrived, Tertullus began his accusations:

“Thanks to Your Excellency we have enjoyed a long period of peace,” he said, addressing the governor. “Because of your insight, our nation is becoming prosperous everywhere and in every way.

<sup>3</sup>“We are most grateful and thankful for these blessings, Most Excellent Felix.

<sup>4</sup>“But I don’t want to take up too much of your time, so I beg you to listen kindly to us for just a few minutes.

<sup>5</sup>“We have found this man to be a most dangerous troublemaker, a real pest. He has constantly been stirring up riots among the Jews thruout the world. He’s a ringleader of the Nazarene sect.

<sup>6</sup>“He even tried to desecrate the Temple. We arrested him and wanted to judge him according to our Law.

<sup>7</sup>“But Commander Lysias came along and violently took him out of our hands. Now he has ordered his accusers to come before you.

<sup>8</sup>“By questioning him yourself, you can verify these accusations.”

<sup>9</sup>Then the other Jews also joined in the attack, insisting that all this was true.

<sup>10</sup>The governor then motioned to Paul to speak. “I am very happy, your Honor, to defend myself before you,” Paul began, “as I know you have administered justice in the affairs of our nation for many years.

<sup>11</sup>“You can easily verify that it was no more than twelve days ago that I went up to Jerusalem to worship.

<sup>12</sup>“My accusers didn’t find me arguing with anyone, or stirring up a riot, neither in the Temple, the synagogue, nor anywhere else in the city.

<sup>13</sup>“Nor can they prove the charges which they are now making against me.

<sup>14</sup>“I confess that I do serve the God of our fathers by following the Way of Jesus, which they call a sect. But I still believe everything that is written in the Law and in the Prophets.

<sup>15</sup>“I have the same hope in God that these men

have—that there will be a resurrection of the dead, of both those who have lived pure and honest lives, and of those who have lived in sin.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>16</sup>“Because of this, I do my best to keep my conscience clear at all times, by living honorably in my dealings with both God and man.

<sup>17</sup>“And now, after many years of absence, I returned to bring gifts to the poor in my nation and to offer sacrifices.

<sup>18</sup>“It was while I was doing this that some Jews from the province of Asia found me in the Temple after I had completed the ceremony of purification. I hadn’t gathered a crowd, and there was no riot.

<sup>19</sup>“It is those Jews who ought to present themselves before you and accuse me, if they have anything against me.

<sup>20</sup>“Or let these who are here speak up, if they found me guilty of any crime when I stood before their Council,

<sup>21</sup>unless it was the one statement I made when I cried out, ‘I am being judged by you today for only one reason, because I believe in the resurrection of the dead!’”

<sup>22</sup>After hearing both sides, Felix, who was well informed about the Way of Jesus, put the Council off by saying, “I will make a thorough examination regarding your case when Commander Lysias comes down.”

<sup>23</sup>He then ordered the captain to keep Paul under guard, but to allow him some freedom and to allow his friends to visit him and bring him whatever he needed.

*Paul before Felix and Drusilla*

<sup>24</sup>Several days later Felix sent for Paul. His wife Drusilla, a Jewess, was with him, and they listened as Paul explained what it meant to believe in Christ Jesus.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>25</sup>But as Paul told him about the absolute necessity of living a life of purity, goodness, and self-control,<sup>a</sup> as well as about the coming Day of Judgment, Felix became frightened, and said, “That’s all for now. When I find a convenient time I’ll call for you again.”

<sup>26</sup>He was also hoping that Paul would offer him money to release him, so he called him in quite often and talked with him.

<sup>27</sup>Two years later, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. But because Felix wanted to gain favor

selfish, forbidden, immoral gratification, or, complete joy and pleasures forever. See Psalm 16:11.

**24:24a** What does it mean to believe in Jesus? See

Luke 14:26-33; John 3:36; Acts 16:31; Galatians 3:11, and the notes there.

**24:25a** ... *if one is to escape God's judgment*

with the Jews, he left Paul in jail.

### **Paul Asks to be Tried by the Roman Emperor**

**25** Three days after Festus arrived in the province, he left Caesarea and went up to Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup> There the High Priest and other Jewish leaders brought their charges against Paul before him.

<sup>3</sup> They also asked him to order Paul's transfer to Jerusalem, because they were still plotting to ambush and kill him on the way.

<sup>4</sup> But Festus said, "Paul should stay in Caesarea, and I'll be returning there soon.

<sup>5</sup> "So let your leaders go with me and press charges if he has done any wrong."

<sup>6</sup> He stayed more than ten days in Jerusalem, and then returned to Caesarea. The next day, he took his place on the judge's bench and ordered that Paul be brought in.

<sup>7</sup> When Paul arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around making many serious charges against him. But they couldn't prove any of them.

<sup>8</sup> In his defense, Paul continued to insist, "I am not guilty. I have committed no crime against the Jewish Law or the Temple or against the Emperor."

<sup>9</sup> But Festus, who wanted to please the Jewish leaders, asked Paul, "Would you be willing to go up to Jerusalem and be tried on these charges before me there?"

<sup>10</sup> "I am now standing before Caesar's court, where I should be tried," Paul replied. "I have not wronged the Jews in any way, as you well know.

<sup>11</sup> "But if I had committed a crime deserving death, I would not beg to escape the death penalty. But the charges these men are bringing against me amount to nothing, and no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal for a hearing before Caesar!"

<sup>12</sup> On hearing this, Festus talked the matter over with his legal advisers. Then turning to Paul he said, "You have appealed to Caesar, so to Caesar you will go!"

### **Paul Before Agrippa and Bernice**

<sup>13</sup> Several days later, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to pay official respects to Festus.

<sup>14</sup> They had been there several days when Festus told the king about Paul's case. "There's a man

here," he said, "who was left in jail by Felix.

<sup>15</sup> "When I was in Jerusalem, the chief priests and elders of the Jews talked to me about him, insisting that I condemn him.

<sup>16</sup> "I, of course, reminded them that Roman law does not allow a man to be condemned before he's been allowed to meet his accusers face to face so that he can defend himself against the charges being made.

<sup>17</sup> "So when they came here with me from Jerusalem, I convened the court the next day without delay, and ordered that the accused be brought in.

<sup>18</sup> "But when his accusers got up to speak, they didn't accuse him of anything I had supposed they would.

<sup>19</sup> "Instead, they brought up some trivia about their own religion in which Paul didn't believe as they did. They also differed about someone named Jesus who had died, but whom Paul kept insisting was alive.

<sup>20</sup> "Perplexed as to how to handle such a case, I asked him if he would go to Jerusalem and stand trial there on these charges.

<sup>21</sup> "But when Paul appealed his case to the Emperor, I ordered that he remain in custody until I could send him to Caesar."

<sup>22</sup> "As a matter of fact," Agrippa said, "I've been wanting to hear<sup>a</sup> the man myself."

"I'll arrange for you to hear him tomorrow," Festus agreed.

<sup>23</sup> So the next day, after Agrippa and Bernice had entered the audience hall with great pomp and ceremony, along with the army commanders and prominent men of the city, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in.

<sup>24</sup> Then Festus addressed those assembled: "King Agrippa, and all of you present here with us, you see this man standing here. The entire Judean community has brought charges against him before me, both while I was in Jerusalem, and also after I returned here. They continue to loudly demand that he should not be allowed to live any longer.

<sup>25</sup> "But I haven't found him guilty of anything deserving death. And since he has himself requested that his case be tried before the Emperor, I've decided to send him to Rome.

<sup>26</sup> "But I have nothing that amounts to anything that I can write to His Majesty concerning the

and gain eternal life ... (Note Paul's concern about his own living in vss 15-16.)

**25:22a** Imperfect tense—action in past time that

continues.

**26:1a** ... as orators were prone to do in that day

charges against him. So I've brought him out to appear before all of you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after this inquiry I may have at least something to write.

<sup>27</sup>“After all, it seems rather senseless to me to send a prisoner to the Emperor without stating valid charges against him.”

### *Paul's Defense before Agrippa*

**26** Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You may speak for yourself.” So extending his right hand,<sup>a</sup> Paul presented his defense, saying:

<sup>2</sup>“I consider myself fortunate, King Agrippa, that I may stand before you here today, in order to defend myself in regard to all the things that I am accused of by my own people.

<sup>3</sup>“The main reason for my confidence is because you are so well acquainted with all the customs and concerns of the Jews. So I ask you to listen to me patiently.

<sup>4</sup>“All the Jews know the kind of life I've lived from my earliest youth, because I lived from the very beginning among my own people, the Jews, in Jerusalem.

<sup>5</sup>“They know first of all, if they would admit it, that I lived in full obedience to the most demanding branch of our religion, as a Pharisee.

<sup>6</sup>“And now I stand here on trial because of the hope I have in the promise God made to our people long ago.

<sup>7</sup>“In fact, it is the hope of the fulfillment of this very promise that keeps our twelve tribes devotedly serving God day and night. And yet, O King Agrippa, it is because of this hope that I am accused by the Jews.

<sup>8</sup>“Why should any of you think it incredible to believe that God raises the dead back to life?

<sup>9</sup>“But I myself once thought it my duty to take extreme measures and do everything in my power to fight the cause and influence of Jesus, the Nazarene.

<sup>10</sup>“And that's exactly what I did in Jerusalem. I jailed many who were dedicated to Jesus, having been authorized by the chief priests to do so. And when they were put to death, I agreed, and cast my vote against them.

<sup>11</sup>“I often went from one synagogue to another to have them punished and to do my best to compel them to renounce their faith and curse this Jesus. And because of my extreme hatred for them, I even went to foreign cities to hunt them down.

<sup>12</sup>“It was on just such a trip, as I was on my way to Damascus, after having been authorized and commissioned by the chief priests,

<sup>13</sup> that about noon, O King, as I was traveling the highway, I saw a bolt of light from the sky more brilliant than the sun. It blazed all around me and around those traveling with me.

<sup>14</sup>“We all fell to the ground. Then I heard someone say to me in Hebrew, ‘Saul! Saul! why are you so cruel to Me? It is hard on you to continually kick against the prods<sup>a</sup> of your Master.’

<sup>15</sup>“So I said, ‘Who are you, Sir?’ And He replied, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.’

<sup>16</sup>“But get up on your feet now. Because I have appeared to you for the very purpose of making you a minister and a witness of the things you have seen, and also of things I will reveal when I appear to you later on.

<sup>17</sup>“I will continually rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles to whom I am now sending you.

<sup>18</sup>“You are to open their eyes to the truth, so they may turn from living in Satan's darkness to living in God's Light, and so they may turn from allowing Satan to rule their lives to allowing God to rule. They must do this in order to receive forgiveness of their sins and a share in the inheritance that will be theirs together with all others who are made holy by believing in Me.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>19</sup>“And King Agrippa, I did not disobey the command I received in that vision from Heaven.

<sup>20</sup>“First, I spoke to the people in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and thruout the entire province of Judea, and finally to the Gentiles. I preached that they must have a complete change of mind and heart, and turn from their sinning to obedience to God. And they must then prove they have truly been changed by continuing to live in obedience to God.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>21</sup>“That's why the Jews mobbed me in the Temple courts and tried to kill me.

...

**26:14a** Actually a goad, a stick with a pointed end for driving cattle.

**26:18a** Notice again that repentance comes first. We must first turn from our sins to obey and serve God. Then He will grant forgiveness. But still, both occur at the same moment. The moment you com-

mit yourself wholly to God, in all sincerity, God will forgive you thru Jesus Christ.

It's true, we are not saved by works. But obedience is not works. Every sensible father expects and demands obedience on the part of his children. An obedient child will also do the work his father assigns him.

<sup>22</sup>“But with God’s help and protection, I have continued to this day to take my stand. To both small and great I preach nothing except what Moses and the prophets said would happen.

<sup>23</sup>“I pointed out to them how the Scriptures prophesied that Messiah would suffer,<sup>a</sup> and that, by His resurrection<sup>b</sup> from the dead, He would be the first to bring light and understanding to both Jews and Gentiles.”

<sup>24</sup>At this point in Paul’s defense, Festus shouted, “Paul, you’re crazy! All your great education is driving you insane!”

<sup>25</sup>“I am not crazy, Most Excellent Festus,” Paul replied. “What I’m saying is reasonable. What’s more, it is true.

<sup>26</sup>“The king before whom I am freely speaking is well informed about these matters. I’m sure that none of these events has escaped his attention, because they did not take place in some dark corner.

<sup>27</sup>“King Agrippa, do you believe what the prophets said? I know you do.”

<sup>28</sup>The king replied, “In a short while you’ll convince me to become a Christian.”

<sup>29</sup>“Whether in a short while or a long while,” Paul replied, “I pray God that not only you but also all who are listening to me today may become the same as I am—except, of course, for these chains.”

<sup>30</sup>When Paul finished that statement, the king stood up, as well as the governor and Bernice and all who sat there with them.

<sup>31</sup>After they left, they spoke among themselves in agreement, saying, “This man hasn’t done anything to warrant the death sentence or even jail.”

<sup>32</sup>Agrippa then said to Festus, “He could have been set free if he hadn’t appealed to Caesar.”

### **Paul Sails for Rome**

**27** When it was finally decided that we were to sail for Italy, they put Paul and several other prisoners in the custody of a man named Julius, a captain of the Augustan Regiment.

<sup>2</sup>So, after boarding a ship from Adramyttium, we put out to sea, intending to sail along the coast of the province of Asia. Aristarchus from Thessaloni-

ca, in northern Greece, was with us.

<sup>3</sup>The next day we docked at Sidon. Captain Julius was very kind to Paul, even letting him go ashore to visit some of his friends and accept their hospitality.

<sup>4</sup>When we put to sea from Sidon, we encountered strong westerly winds blowing against us. So we sailed on the sheltered side of Cyprus.

<sup>5</sup>After sailing along the coasts of the provinces of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we crossed the open sea and landed at Myra in the province of Lycia.

<sup>6</sup>There the captain found a ship from Alexandria that was sailing to Italy, so he put us on board.

<sup>7</sup>For many days we made very slow progress, but with great difficulty we finally arrived off the town of Cnidus. Since the wind wouldn’t allow us to continue our course, we sailed along the sheltered side of Crete, offshore from Cape Salmone.

<sup>8</sup>The sailing was difficult here too, but we finally came to a place called Fair Havens, near the town of Lasea.

<sup>9</sup>We had lost a lot of time by now, and sailing had become dangerous because it was already past the Day of Atonement.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>10</sup>So Paul advised them, “Men, from what I can see, this voyage will end in disaster and great loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our own lives.”

<sup>11</sup>But the captain paid more attention to the pilot and the owner of the ship than to what Paul said.

<sup>12</sup>Also, because the harbor was not a good one to winter in, most of the men were in favor of putting out to sea and try, if possible, to reach Phoenix, a harbor in Crete which faced both northeast and southeast, and spend the winter there.

### **The Storm at Sea**

<sup>13</sup>And when a gentle southern breeze began blowing, they believed they had gotten what they had hoped for. So they pulled up anchor and began sailing close to the shore of Crete.

<sup>14</sup>It wasn’t long, however, before a fierce gale of hurricane proportions, called a Northeaster, hurled violently down upon us from the island.

<sup>15</sup>It hit the ship so hard that they couldn’t keep it headed into the wind. So they just allowed us to be

Remember, if you are not wholly committed to God, to obey and serve Him, you are not yet converted (born again). And Jesus said that unless you are born again you will never see Heaven and the Kingdom of God. John 3:3.

**26:20a** ... if they are to escape God’s judgment, and gain eternal life with Him.

**26:23a** See Acts 13:27 the note.

**26:23b** 1 Corinthians 15:4, and the note.

**27:9a** Presently called *Yom Kippur* by the Jewish community. It occurs in late September or early October.

**27:28a** Or 37 meters.

driven along.

<sup>16</sup>As we sailed along the southern coast of a small island called Clauda, we pulled the lifeboat aboard and tied it down. We even had a hard time doing that.

<sup>17</sup>Then they put cables underneath the ship to hold it together. Then fearing they would run aground on the quicksands off the coast of Libya, they finally lowered the sail and let her drift.

<sup>18</sup>The next day, because we were being so violently battered by the storm, they began throwing some of the ship's cargo overboard.

<sup>19</sup>On the third day, we threw the ship's tackle overboard with our own hands.

<sup>20</sup>When we hadn't seen the sun or stars for many days, and the violent storm continued to rage, we finally gave up all hope of being saved.

<sup>21</sup>After the men had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up among them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me and not sailed from Crete; then you would have avoided all this damage and loss.

<sup>22</sup>"But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because no one here will lose his life. Only the ship will be lost.

<sup>23</sup>"Because last night an angel of the God whom I serve and to whom I belong came and stood by me and said,

<sup>24</sup>"Don't be afraid, Paul, because you must stand before Caesar. In fact, God has given you a safe arrival for all who are sailing with you."

<sup>25</sup>"So cheer up, men, because I'm convinced that God will do exactly what He told me.

<sup>26</sup>"But, we must run aground on some island."

<sup>27</sup>Well, about midnight of the fourteenth night, as we were still being carried here and there on the Adriatic Sea, the sailors began to sense that we were approaching some land.

<sup>28</sup>So they dropped a line overboard with a weight on it, and found that the water was 120 feet<sup>a</sup> deep. A short while later they did it again, and it was only 90 feet deep.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>29</sup>Then, fearing we would run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern, and then anxiously waited for daylight.

<sup>30</sup>But then the sailors tried to leave the ship. Pretending they were preparing to drop more anchors from the prow, they lowered the lifeboat into the water.

<sup>31</sup>"Unless these men stay in the ship, you can't be saved!" Paul warned the captain and the soldiers.

<sup>32</sup>Immediately the soldiers cut the rope to the lifeboat and let it fall away.

<sup>33</sup>It was then about daybreak, so Paul encouraged everyone to eat something. "Today is the 14th day that you've been so concerned that you haven't eaten a thing," he said.

<sup>34</sup>"So take some nourishment now. You need it in order to survive. Don't worry any longer, because not a one of you will lose as much as a single hair from your head."

<sup>35</sup>After saying this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of all of them. Then he broke it and began to eat.

<sup>36</sup>The rest were then all encouraged, and they also took food for themselves.

<sup>37</sup>We were a total of 276 people on that ship.

<sup>38</sup>After they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship further by throwing the wheat overboard.

### *The Shipwreck*

<sup>39</sup>Even when daylight came, they couldn't recognize what land they had come to, but they noticed a bay with a beach, so they decided, if possible, to run the ship aground there.

<sup>40</sup>So they cut the ropes attached to the anchors, leaving them in the sea. At the same time, others untied the ropes holding the rudder. Then they hoisted the foresail to the wind and headed for shore.

<sup>41</sup>But the ship got caught in cross-currents and ran aground on a sandbar. The prow stuck firmly and remained immovable, while violent waves kept smashing into the stern and pounding it to pieces.

<sup>42</sup>The soldiers decided to kill the prisoners to keep them from swimming away and escaping.

<sup>43</sup>But Captain Julius wanted to save Paul, so he kept them from carrying out their plan. Instead, he ordered that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land.

<sup>44</sup>The rest were to get ashore on planks and other broken pieces of the ship. And that's how they all escaped safely to land.

### *All Safe on Malta*

**28** When we were safe on shore, we learned we were on the island of Malta.

<sup>2</sup>The local people were unusually kind to us. And because it was raining and cold, they built a fire and made us all feel welcome.

<sup>3</sup>Paul helped by gathering a bundle of sticks.

**27:28b** Or 27 1/2 meters.

**28:11a** These were twin sons of Jupiter and Leda

in Roman mythology, said to be patrons of sailors and athletes. Their figures were evidently painted

But when he placed them on the fire, a poisonous viper was forced out by the heat, and latched onto his hand.

<sup>4</sup>When the local people saw the snake hanging there from his hand, they said to one another, “This man must be a murderer, and even though he escaped death at sea, divine justice won’t allow him to live.”

<sup>5</sup>But Paul just shook the snake off into the fire and wasn’t harmed at all.

<sup>6</sup>The people, however, expected to see him swell up or drop dead. But after they’d watched him for a long time and saw that he hadn’t been harmed in any way, they changed their minds and exclaimed, “He’s a god!”

<sup>7</sup>The governor of the island was a man named Publius. He welcomed us to his estate, which was in the area, and for three days he graciously fed and housed us.

<sup>8</sup>Now it happened that the father of Publius was sick in bed, suffering from recurring attacks of fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him.

<sup>9</sup>When this happened, the rest of the sick people on the island came and were healed.

<sup>10</sup>In return they honored us with many gifts. And when we set sail, they gave us all the supplies we needed.

### ***Paul Arrives at Rome***

<sup>11</sup>Three months after our shipwreck, we sailed in an Alexandrian ship, decorated with the figure-heads of Castor and Pollux,<sup>a</sup> a ship that had wintered in the island.

<sup>12</sup>We landed at Syracuse, and stayed there three days.

<sup>13</sup>Then after some tacking<sup>a</sup> we arrived at Rhegium. The next day the south wind started blowing, and a day later we arrived at Puteoli.

<sup>14</sup>There we discovered some of the Lord’s followers, who invited us to stay with them a week. From there we went on to Rome.

<sup>15</sup>When the followers in Rome heard we were coming, some of them came as far as the town of the Market of Appius<sup>a</sup> on the Appian Way to welcome us, while others came as far as the Three

Hotels.<sup>b</sup> Paul thanked God when he saw them, and was greatly encouraged.

<sup>16</sup>When we arrived in Rome, Captain Julius turned the prisoners over to the captain of the guard. But Paul was permitted to live wherever he wanted, with a soldier guarding him.

### ***Paul Witnesses for Jesus in Rome***

<sup>17</sup>After only three days, Paul invited the local Judean leaders to meet with him. When they arrived he said, “Men and brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our ancestors, still I was handed over to the Romans in Jerusalem and have become their prisoner.

<sup>18</sup>“After the Jewish leaders had cross-examined me in court, the Romans wanted to release me, because they couldn’t see any reason why I should be put to death.

<sup>19</sup>“But when the Jews objected, I had no choice but to appeal to Caesar. But I did not do this in order to level counter-charges against my own people.

<sup>20</sup>“I called for you because I wanted to meet you and explain to you that I am chained because of the hope of Israel.”<sup>a</sup>

<sup>21</sup>“We haven’t received any correspondence from Judea about you,” they replied, “nor have any who have come from there given a bad report or spoken against you.

<sup>22</sup>“But we would like to hear what your views are in regard to these Christians. All we know is that people everywhere are speaking against them.”

<sup>23</sup>So they set a date, and a large number showed up that day at the place where Paul was staying. Then from morning until evening he went into a very intensive and earnest explanation as he taught them about the Kingdom of God. He also did his best to convince them about Jesus by pointing out the many places in the Law of Moses and the Prophets that refer to Him.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Some were convinced by what he said, but others continued to disbelieve.

<sup>25</sup>So on that note of disagreement among themselves, they began to leave, but not before Paul had made one final statement, saying, “The Holy Spirit certainly spoke the truth to our ancestors thru

on the prow of this ship, or they may have been carved figures.

**28:13a** Literally *after going around*.

**28:15a** About 40 miles from Rome.

**28:15b** About 30 miles from Rome.

**28:20a** The *hope of Israel* is the Messiah, the

Christ, and resurrection to eternal life thru Him.

**28:23a** Paul may have ponted them to Genesis 3:15; 49:10; Deuteronomy 18:15; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7; 53:1-12; Daniel 7:13-14; 9:24-26; Micah 5:2; Zechariah 9:9, etc.

**28:26-27a** Isaiah 6:9-10.

Isaiah the prophet, when he said:

<sup>26</sup> Go to these people and tell them, ‘On the matter of listening, you will indeed continue to listen, but you won’t understand. And in regard to looking, you will continue to look, but you won’t gain knowledge.’

<sup>27</sup> This is true because their hearts have become calloused. They can scarcely hear with their ears, and they’ve closed their eyes. They’ve done this so they won’t be able to see with their eyes or hear with their ears or understand from their hearts and be changed, and thereby be healed by Me.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>28</sup> “So I want you to know that God’s salvation has now been offered to the Gentiles, and they will

listen.”

<sup>29</sup> After he finished his remarks, the Jews left, arguing intensely among themselves.

<sup>30</sup> For two whole years Paul lived in his own rented house, and always welcomed everyone who came to visit him.

<sup>31</sup> He openly taught them about the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, and the Kingdom of God, and no one tried to stop him.

The last time He was with them, He ordered them not to leave Jerusalem. “You must wait here now,” He said, “until you receive the gift I told you about, the gift My Father promised you.

<sup>5</sup> “It’s true that John baptized the people in water, but in a few days you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit!”

<sup>6</sup> And while they were together there, they asked Him, “Lord, is this the time when You will free us from Rome and give the Kingdom back to Israel?”

<sup>7</sup> “It is not for you to know the dates and periods of time that God has set. He alone has the right to decide such matters,” He replied.

<sup>8</sup> “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And you will then be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and thru-out all Judea and Samaria, and even to the most remote parts of the earth.”

<sup>38</sup> “Each one of you must now turn from all your sinning and surrender in obedience to the Lord, and be baptized in the name of Jesus the Messiah, so that your sins may be forgiven,” Peter replied. “Then you too will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>39</sup> “Because God’s promise is to you and to your children, and even to all those in distant lands and times, to all whom the Lord our God will call.”

—Acts 1:4-8; 2:38-39