

The ACTS of the APOSTLES

INTRODUCTION

1. Title. Since ancient times this book has been known as The Acts of the Apostles, but the title does not appear in the book itself.

In the earliest extant (but incomplete) copy of the book, known as Papyrus 45 (see Vol. V, p. 116), and in the Codex Sinaiticus the title is given simply as “Acts,” with no mention of the apostles. This is reasonable, for the book is not a full history of all these men. A few chapters describe the work of Peter and John, while the remainder of the book records the conversion and ministry of Paul until his first Roman imprisonment. Consequently the book does not completely cover the work of any one of the apostles, and, indeed, is silent about most of them. Of the Twelve, only Peter, James, and John play leading parts in the narrative, but much of the book is devoted to Paul, who, though an apostle, was not one of the original disciples. The title “Acts” would therefore seem sufficient.

From the 2d century onward there appeared a stream of tales purporting to give the lives and experiences of the apostles (see *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 8; cf. Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* iii. 25. 4–7). These writings were also called “Acts.” It was perhaps to distinguish the canonical Acts from these apocryphal imitations that the name of the Biblical book was variously elaborated as “Acting of the Apostles,” “Acts of All the Apostles,” or “Acts of the Apostles.”

2. Authorship. The introduction to the book of Acts (ch. 1:1–4) makes it clear that the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts were written by the same author. For a detailed discussion of the authorship of both Luke and Acts see Vol. V, pp. 175–179, 663–665.

The early church never seriously questioned the canonicity of the book, and it soon gained a secure place among New Testament writings.

3. Historical Setting. The Roman Empire was enjoying its heyday. Augustus had laid a firm administrative foundation on which the better of his successors were able to build, and which the lesser were unable to demolish. The benefits that Roman civilization brought to the empire’s inhabitants continued to be enjoyed by them even when the ruler himself was weak or tyrannical or both. Thus, during the period covered by the book of Acts, c. A.D. 31–63, the emperors were Tiberius (14–37), Caligula (37–41), Claudius (41–54), and Nero (54–68). Of these, Tiberius and Claudius used their abilities for the good of their far-flung possessions, whereas Caligula and Nero did little but harm. Yet, in spite of this checkered leadership, the empire maintained conditions that were favorable to the spread of the gospel. A fairly stable government, a common administrative system, Roman justice, an expanding citizenship, peace preserved by disciplined legions, roads pressing into every corner of the then-known world, a language (Greek) that was almost universally understood—these were factors that favored the program undertaken by the apostles.

At first the new religion profited from its connections with Judaism. The chosen race had been dispersed to many corners of the empire, and its basic beliefs were eventually tolerated by the Romans. Christianity, as an offshoot of the older faith, shared in this toleration. But Judaism fell into disfavor. Its adherents were expelled from Rome during the reign of Claudius (Acts 18:2), and intense Jewish national aspirations led to rebellion in Palestine and to the disastrous wars of A.D. 66–70 that culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70. As the position of Judaism worsened, the situation of

Christianity grew more perilous. It was a religion with no legal standing, and its members were without protection in the eyes of the law. When trouble arose, such as when Rome burned in A.D. 64, it was easy to make a scapegoat of the Christian community, and the subsequent persecution set a terrible precedent that was all too faithfully followed in succeeding years.

It is against this background that Luke prepared his history of the early church, and wrote the Acts of the Apostles. For a fuller discussion of the subject see Vol. V, pp. 46–73, 664, 665, and Vol. VI, pp. 22–33, 71–84, 89–95.

4. Theme. Luke declares (Acts 1:1) that his “former treatise” dealt with “all that Jesus began both to do and teach.” With clear historical insight he recognized that the work of Jesus on earth was but a beginning, which beginning he recorded in his Gospel. But he knew that his history would be incomplete without an account of what Jesus did through the infant church after His ascension. He therefore sets his hand to describe the continuation of Christ’s work through the ministry of His disciples. He does this in an orderly way by taking Acts 1:8 as the theme around which the acts of the apostles are developed. In obedience to their Master’s command, the disciples witnessed (1) in Jerusalem, (2) in all Judea, (3) in Samaria, and (4) in the uttermost parts of the earth. As Luke follows their movements, his record falls naturally into those divisions, and his book thus traces the geographical growth of the early church.

He also records another significant development. The church was Jewish in its origin, but it could never fulfill a worldwide mission if it remained within the limits of an exclusive religion like Judaism. It had to free itself from such exclusiveness. Luke outlines the steps that led to freedom. His narrative describes the growth of Christianity from a Jewish sect to an international religion, until the time when Paul could say that the gospel “was preached to every creature which is under heaven” (Col. 1:23). Luke records that thousands of Jews, including priests, early accepted the gospel (Acts 6:7); and that persecutions soon drove Philip to evangelize the Samaritans and the partly Judaized Ethiopian (ch. 8). He tells how Peter reached the Roman centurion Cornelius (ch. 10). He emphasizes how men of Cyrene and Cyprus preached to non-Jews for the first time (ch. 11); how, the way having been opened, Paul and his associates evangelized the heathen in great numbers (chs. 13; 14); how they were actually able, with the help of Peter and James, to secure for Gentile converts freedom from subjection to Jewish ritual (ch. 15). His record closes with a vivid picture of the gospel’s spread throughout the eastern Roman world (chs. 16 to 28). He sees Christianity becoming largely a Gentile religion.

Luke was peculiarly fitted to be the historian of such a movement. He is thought to have been a Gentile. He showed a deep interest in ministry to non-Jews (see Vol. V, pp. 663, 664). How appropriate, then, that he should be chosen to relate the story of the proclamation of the gospel to the Gentile world!

The author of Acts fully recognizes the position of the Holy Spirit in the growth of the infant church. From the day when Jesus “through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles” (ch. 1:2), the Spirit appears as the counselor of the leaders and their associates. By the miracle of Pentecost “they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (ch. 2:4). A little later the believers also were “filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness” (ch. 4:31). The seven men chosen as deacons were “full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom” (ch. 6:3), and one of the most prominent of their number,

Stephen, was “full of faith and of the Holy Ghost” (v. 5). As the narrative progresses the Spirit continues to guide—in such situations as the ordination of Saul (ch. 9:17), in the acceptance of Gentiles into the church (ch. 10:44–47), in the separation of Barnabas and Saul for missionary work (ch. 13:2–4), in the Council of Jerusalem (ch. 15:28), and in Paul’s missionary journeys (ch. 16:6, 7). The book of Acts may therefore be said to stand as a partial record of the Spirit’s accomplishments through the apostles and their followers.

5. Outline.

- I. Introduction, 1:1–11.
 - A. Luke’s “former treatise,” the Gospel, 1:1.
 - B. The gospel commission, 1:2–8.
 - C. Christ’s ascension, 1:9–11.
- II. Ministry in Jerusalem, 1:12 to 7:60.
 - A. Waiting for the power of the Spirit, 1:12–26.
 1. The apostles’ return to Jerusalem, 1:12, 13.
 2. The prayer season, 1:14.
 3. The death of Judas, 1:15–20.
 4. The appointment of Matthias to succeed Judas, 1:21–26.
 - B. The power of the Spirit, 2:1–47.
 1. The outpouring of the Spirit, 2:1–13.
 2. Peter’s sermon, 2:14–36.
 3. Results of the sermon, 2:37–41.
 4. The devotion and increase of the infant church, 2:42–47.
 - C. The healing of the lame man, 3:1 to 4:31.
 1. The miracle of healing done in Christ’s name, 3:1–11.
 2. Peter’s address, 3:12–26.
 - a. Accusation against the Jews, 3:12–18.
 - b. Call for repentance, 3:19–26.
 3. The arrest of Peter and John, 4:1–4.
 4. The trial and release of the apostles, 4:5–22.
 5. The church’s praise service, 4:23–31.
 - D. The early Christian community, 4:32 to 6:7.
 1. Community of goods, 4:32 to 5:11.
 - a. The believers share their possessions, 4:32–37.
 - b. The deception and death of Ananias and Sapphira, 5:1–11.
 2. Official opposition, 5:12–40.
 - a. Miracles of healing, 5:12–16.
 - b. The arrest, escape, and rearrest of the apostles, 5:17–28.
 - c. The defense of Peter, 5:29–32.
 - d. Gamaliel’s plea for moderation, 5:33–40.
 3. Preaching from house to house, 5:41, 42.
 4. Appointment of deacons, 6:1–7.
 - E. Arrest and death of Stephen, 6:8 to 7:60.
 1. The preaching of Stephen, one of the deacons, 6:8–10.
 2. Stephen’s arrest and trial, 6:11 to 7:53.
 - a. The arrest, 6:11–14.

- b. Stephen's illumination, 6:15.
- c. His defense, 7:1–53.
- 3. The death of Stephen, 7:54–60.
- III. Ministry in Palestine and Syria, 8:1 to 12:23.
 - A. Scattering of the church under persecution, 8:1–4.
 - B. Philip, Peter, and John in Samaria, 8:5–25.
 - 1. Philip's successful ministry, 8:5–13.
 - 2. Simon and his simony rebuked by Peter, 8:14–25.
 - C. Philip's further ministry, 8:26–40..
 - 1. Philip and the Ethiopian, 8:26–39.
 - 2. Philip in Azotus and Caesarea, 8:40.
 - D. The conversion of Saul, 9:1–31.
 - 1. Saul of Tarsus the persecutor, 9:1, 2.
 - 2. Saul's vision of the Christ and consequent conversion, 9:3–17.
 - 3. His baptism and first preaching, 9:18–22.
 - 4. Jews plot to kill him, 9:23, 24.
 - 5. His escape to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and return to Tarsus, 9:25–30.
 - 6. The church has rest from persecution, 9:31.
 - E. Peter's later ministry, 9:32 to 10:48.
 - 1. Miracles of healing, 9:32–42.
 - a. Aeneas cured of palsy, 9:32–35.
 - b. Dorcas resurrected, 9:36–42.
 - 2. The conversion of Cornelius, 9:43 to 10:48.
 - a. Cornelius directed to Peter in Joppa, 9:43 to 10:8.
 - b. Peter's vision concerning clean and unclean, 10:9–16.
 - c. Peter goes to Caesarea and instructs Cornelius, 10:17–43.
 - d. Cornelius and his company are baptized, 10:44–48.
 - F. The gospel to the Gentiles, 11:1–30.
 - 1. Peter defends his Gentile ministry before the apostles, 11:1–18.
 - 2. The gospel to the Jews beyond Palestine, 11:19–21.
 - 3. Barnabas and Paul in Antioch, 11:22–26.
 - 4. Famine in Judea relieved by Christians in Antioch, 11:27–30.
 - G. Persecution of James and Peter, 12:1–23.
 - 1. Imprisonment and execution of James by Herod Agrippa I, 12:1, 2.
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- IV. Paul's First Missionary Journey, 12:24 to 14:28.
 - A. Paul and Barnabas at Antioch, 12:24, 25.
 - B. Paul and Barnabas commissioned by the prophets and teachers of Antioch, 13:1–3.
 - C. Their ministry, 13:4 to 14:28.
 - 1. Cyprus, 13:4–12.
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 - A. Trouble with the Judaizers, 15:1, 5.
 - B. Delegates to the council, 15:2–4.
 - C. The discussion, 15:6–18.
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 - E. The decision made known in Antioch, 15:30–33.
 - F. Silas, Paul, and Barnabas remain in Antioch, 15:34, 35.
- VI. Paul's Second Missionary Journey, 15:36 to 18:22.
 - A. Dissension between Paul and Barnabas, 15:36–39.
 - B. Paul and Silas depart for Cilicia, 15–40, 41.
 - C. The calling of Timothy at Lystra, 16:1–3.
 - D. The ministry in Galatia, 16:4–10.
 1. The care of the churches, 16:4, 5.
 2. The Spirit's restraint concerning Asia and Bithynia, 16:6, 7.
 3. Macedonian call at Troas, 16:8–10.
 - E. The gospel in Europe, 16:11 to 18:17.
 1. Philippi, 16:11–40.
 2. Thessalonica, 17:1–9.
 3. Berea, 17:10–14.
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 5. Corinth, 18:1–17.
 - a. Paul's labor, 18:1–5.
 - b. Expulsion from the synagogue, 18:6–11.
 - c. Intervention of Gallio, 18:12–17.
 - F. Return to Antioch, 18:18–22.
- VII. Paul's Third Missionary Journey, 18:23 to 21:17.
 - A. Ministry in Galatia and Phrygia, 18:23.
 - B. Apollos in Ephesus and Corinth, 18:24–28.
 - C. Paul rebaptizes converts of John the Baptist, 19:1–7.
 - D. Evangelization of Ephesus, 19:8–41.
 - E. Ministry in Macedonia and Greece, 20:1–5.
 - F. The first-day meeting in Troas, 20:6–12.
 - G. Meeting with the elders of Ephesus at Miletus, 20:13–38.
 - H. The journey to Jerusalem, 21:1–17.
- VIII. Paul's Arrest and Trials, 21:18 to 26:32.
 - A. Paul's report to the apostles and purification in the Temple, 21:18–26.
 - B. The riot, 21:27–32.
 - C. Paul's detention, 21:33–39.
 - D. His defense before the multitude, 21:40 to 22:22.
 - E. Paul's first imprisonment, 22:22 to 26:32.
 1. Remanded for a hearing, 22:22–30.
 2. Defense before the Sanhedrin, 23:1–10.
 3. Paul's vision, 23:11.
 4. The Jewish plot against Paul, 23:12–22.
 5. Paul's removal to Caesarea, 23:23–35.

6. Detention under Felix, 24:1–27.
7. Paul’s appeal from Festus to Caesar, 25:1–12.
8. Festus takes counsel with Herod Agrippa II, 25:13–27.
9. Paul’s defense before Agrippa and Festus, 26:1–19.
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- IX. Journey to Rome and Imprisonment, 27:1 to 28:31.
 - A. The voyage, 27:1 to 28:16.
 1. From Caesarea to Myra, 27:1–5.
 2. From Myra to The fair havens, 27:6–12.
 3. From Crete to shipwreck, 27:13–44.
 - a. The storm, 27:12–20.
 - b. Paul’s assurance of final safety, 27:21–26.
 - c. The shipwreck, 27:27–44.
 4. Landing on Melita, 28:1–10.
 5. Completion of the journey to Rome, 28:11–16.
 - B. Paul’s defense before the Jews of Rome, 28:17–29.
 - C. Paul’s two years in Rome, 28:30, 31.

CHAPTER 1

- 1 *Christ, preparing his apostles to the beholding of his ascension, gathereth them together into the mount Olivet, commandeth them to expect in Jerusalem the sending down of the Holy Ghost, promiseth after few days to send it: by virtue whereof they should be witnesses unto him, even to the utmost parts of the earth. 9 After his ascension they are warned by two angels to depart, and to set their minds upon his second coming. 12 They accordingly return, and, giving themselves to prayer, choose Matthias apostle in the place of Judas.*

1. Former. Literally, “first,” indicating that the present work is the second in a series. The Gospel according to Luke obviously is the “former treatise” (see Vol. V, p. 663).

Theophilus. See on Luke 1:3.

All. The Gospel of Luke is an essentially complete account of “all things from the very first” (Luke 1:3). Luke records principal facts, not all the details (see p. 114). This may be seen by a comparison with John’s Gospel, which contains much omitted by Luke. Yet John also omits much (see John 20:30; 21:25). In Scripture the word “all” (or “very”) is often used in a general sense (see Matt. 2:3; 3:5; Acts 2:5; Acts 12:11; Rom. 11:26; Col. 1:6; 1 Tim. 1:16; James 1:2).

Began. Gr. *archomai*, “to begin,” is characteristic of Luke’s Gospel, in which it occurs some 30 times. Its presence in Acts provides an unstudied evidence of Luke’s authorship.

The work of the gospel, begun by Jesus in person, is carried forward in Acts by Jesus through the Holy Spirit in the work of the church.

To do and teach. Jesus was “mighty in deed and word” (Luke 24:19). The deeds referred to are His miracles (Acts 10:38). The words and works of Jesus alike were with “authority” and “power” (see on Luke 4:32). The writer implies that this twofold activity will also be found in the book he is about to write.

2. Until the day. That is, the 40th day after His resurrection (see v. 3).

Was taken up. The passive form of the verb, as used here and in vs. 9, 11 and Luke 24:51, implies that Jesus’ ascension was a manifestation of the Father’s power.

Through the Holy Ghost. This expression may be understood to mean either that the Holy Spirit was to guide the disciples into all truth (John 16:13), or that Jesus, both before and after His crucifixion, spoke as one possessed of the Holy Spirit. The latter must be intended, for everything pertaining to Christ's life on earth was accomplished by the power of the Spirit: (a) His conception (Luke 1:35); (b) His baptism (ch. 3:21, 22); (c) His justification, that is, the manifestation of His righteous life (1 Tim. 3:16); (d) His guidance in His life of service (Luke 4:1; see on ch. 2:49); (e) His miracles (Matt 12:28); (f) His resurrection (1 Peter 3:18).

Had given commandments. Better, "having commanded," with particular reference to the gospel commission by our Lord (see Matt. 28:18–20).

Apostles. Gr. *apostoloi*, "those who are sent," from *apo*, "off," "away," and *stellō*, "to send." In classical Greek *apostolos* (pl., *apostoloi*) frequently was connected with the dispatching of a ship or a naval expedition, and it was also used for the commander of a squadron and for an ambassador. These two general applications, to things and to persons, carried over into Koine Greek. Thus an Egyptian papyrus from the 2d or 3d century A.D. speaks of the "account for the ship [*apostolos*] of Triadelphus" (J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, p. 70). The papyri also show that from the ship itself the meaning of the word was transferred to its cargo, for that also was "sent." Not only was the cargo called *apostolos*, but also the documents that represented the ship and its cargo, so that the word might refer to an order for the dispatch of a vessel, a bill of lading, or even an export license. At the same time, in Koine as in classical Greek, *apostolos* might refer to a person, as Josephus uses it of ambassadors sent by the Jews to Rome (*Antiquities* xvii. 11. 1).

None of these usages, however, appear to shed light directly on the origin of the word "apostle" as it was employed in early Christianity. Paul is the first NT writer to use the word (1 Thess. 2:6), and for him it was, apparently, already a technical term designating a specific group of men performing with authority generally recognized functions in the church (see 1 Cor. 4:9; 9:1, 2). The fact that in this very earliest Christian literature such a specific meaning of the word already was taken for granted suggests that it probably had some earlier authoritative inauguration. Writing in Greek, years after Jesus' death, Luke and John used the word *apostolos* (Luke 6:13; 11:49; John 13:16 ["he that is sent"]). The office of apostle in the early church apparently stems from Jesus' ordination and commission of the twelve disciples.

In terming His disciples "apostles," Jesus probably used the Aramaic word *shelicha'*, the equivalent of the Hebrew participle *shaluach*, "sent." These words appear to have had a technical use among the Jews as well as among Christians. Rabbinical literature used the term *shaluach* (or, in another form, *shaliach*) of various authoritative messengers. Justin Martyr says (c. A.D. 146) that the Jews sent messengers throughout the world telling blasphemies against Christ (*Dialogue With Trypho* 17, 108). Eusebius, the 4th-century church historian, declares that writings already ancient in his day recorded that the Jewish priests and elders sent men all over the world to warn their people against Christianity. He goes on to call these Jews "apostles," and says that in his own time they

traveled throughout the Dispersion with encyclical letters (*Commentaria in Isaiam* xviii. 1, 2). Epiphanius (d. A.D. 403) records that these “apostles” consulted with leading Jews and traveled among the Jews outside Palestine, restoring peace to disorderly congregations and collecting tithes and first fruits—functions that have striking parallels with the apostolate of Paul (see Acts 11:27–30; Rom. 15:25–28; 1 Cor. 16:1; Epiphanius *Against Heresies* i. 2., Heresy xxx. 4, 11). The Theodosian Code (A.D. 438) remarks, “It is part of this worthless superstition that the Jews have chiefs of their synagogues, or elders, or persons whom they call *apostles*, who are appointed by the patriarch at a certain season to collect gold and silver” (Theodosian Code xvi. 8. 14; translation in Adolf Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, vol. 1, p. 329).

Therefore, although it cannot be proved that the word *apostolos* was used in NT times of Jewish messengers to the Dispersion, the evidence suggests that it was, and that particular usage made of this word by the early Christian church was derived from a somewhat similar custom among the Jews.

Whom he had chosen. See Mark 3:13–19.

3. Shewed himself alive. See Additional Note on Matt. 28.

Passion. Rather, “suffering.”

Infallible proofs. Gr. *tekmēria*, “proofs” which carried with them certainty of conviction, in contrast to what was only probable or circumstantial. These “infallible proofs” were the postresurrection appearances of Christ, not the miracles the disciples had seen Jesus perform (ch. 2:22). They confirmed the crowning miracle of the resurrection. These proofs consisted of: (1) His eating and drinking with the disciples (Luke 24:41–43; John 21:4–13); (2) His real body, which He permitted them to touch (Matt. 28:5–9; John 20:27); (3) His repeated visible appearances to as many as 500 at once (Matt. 28:7, 10, 16, 17; Luke 24:36–48; John 20:19–29; 1 Cor. 15:6); (4) His instruction in the nature and doctrines of the kingdom (Luke 24:25–27, 44–47; John 20:17, 21–23; 21:15–17; Acts 1:8). The certainty of the resurrection gave dynamic power to the message of the apostles (Acts 2:32, 36, 37; 3:15; 4:10; 5:28, 30–33). It was the basis of Paul’s magnificent argument on the certainty of the bodily resurrection of the redeemed (see 1 Cor. 15:3–23).

Forty days. Literally, “through,” or “during,” 40 days. Jesus did not remain with them continuously, but manifested Himself repeatedly during the postresurrection period (see Additional Note on Matt. 28). There is no conflict between these 40 days and Luke’s much-abbreviated account in the Gospel (see Luke 1:24).

The things. Here, the expression includes (1) the correct interpretation of the Messianic prophecies (Luke 24:27, 44, 45); (2) the extension of the mission of the church to the whole world and the admission of the saved to the kingdom by baptism (Matt. 28:19); (3) the promise of supernatural power and divine protection (Mark 16:15–18); and (4) the promise of Christ’s own perpetual presence in His church (Matt. 28:20). See on Matt. 4:17; 5:3.

4. Assembled together. Gr. *sunalizō*, literally, “to salt with,” hence, “to eat with,” or “to gather together,” “to assemble.” This possibly refers to a meeting in Galilee (Matt. 28:16–18), for the last meeting, at which the disciples saw Jesus ascend, is not introduced until v. 6 of Acts 1.

Not depart from Jerusalem. They were to return to the capital, the place where the Saviour had so often ministered and where He finally suffered, was buried, and rose from the dead. There His disciples were to be empowered, and there they were to begin their witness (AA 31, 32).

Wait. Compare Luke 24:49. The task confronting the disciples could not be accomplished by human means alone. They must wait (1) until the *time* appointed, (2) at the *place* appointed, Jerusalem, the place of greatest danger and greatest challenge. The disciples were to “wait,” not to “go a fishing,” as Peter and others had done a little while before (John 21:3). There was to be (1) a devout expectancy of the great power of God; (2) a deep longing for that power, and for fitness to receive it; (3) and earnest, united prayer that God would fulfill His promise.

Promise of the Father. That is, the promise concerning the gift of the Holy Spirit (see John 14:16; 16:7–13).

Of me. That is, from Me. The promise was spoken by Jesus, but its fulfillment was to come jointly from the Father and the Son (see John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7–15).

5. John truly baptized. That is, John the Baptist (see Matt. 3:1–11).

With the Holy Ghost. Such a baptism had been promised by John the Baptist (see Matt. 3:11). The promise (Acts 1:4) called for a baptism, not with water (see on Matt. 3:6, 11), but with the Spirit, “not many days” after the promise had been given—at Pentecost.

6. Come together. That is, in Jerusalem, in obedience to the Lord’s will (v. 4) and by agreement with one another. Jesus Himself was with them, though no unexpected, supernatural appearing is mentioned. This was the last meeting of the disciples with their Lord, for it was the day of His ascension (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:50, 51; 1 Cor. 15:7).

They asked of him. The Greek suggests that they asked Him repeatedly.

Wilt thou at this time restore? Rather, “Art thou restoring at this time?” The disciples did not yet understand the nature of Christ’s kingdom. He had not promised the sort of restoration they were anticipating (see on Luke 4:19). They thought Jesus “should have redeemed Israel” (Luke 24:21), that is, from the Romans. Peter and the other disciples found a different redemption at Pentecost (Acts 2:37–39). The ascension, and the Pentecostal experience which followed, gave them new understanding; they finally realized the spiritual nature of their Master’s kingdom.

The Jews were eager with Messianic hope. In the Psalms of Solomon, an apocryphal work written shortly before the Christian Era (see Vol. V, p. 90), repeated expression is given to this idea. The following prayer is typical: “Behold, O Lord, and raise up unto them their king, the son of David, at the time in the which Thou seest, O God, that he may reign over Israel Thy servant. And gird him with strength, that he may shatter unrighteous rulers, and that he may purge Jerusalem from nations that trample (her) down to destruction.... And he shall purge Jerusalem, making it holy as of old: so that nations shall come from the ends of the earth to see his glory, bringing as gifts her sons who had fainted, and to see the glory of the Lord, wherewith God hath glorified her” (The Psalms of Solomon 17:23–35; cited in R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2, pp. 649, 650). Such thoughts may very well have led the disciples to hope that the time had arrived for establishing the promised dominion, and prompted their question.

Israel. Even yet the disciples had not grasped the concept of the spiritual kingdom from all nations (Matt. 8:11, 12), composed of the true Israel of the circumcised heart

(Rom. 2:28, 29). Nor did they realize that when the Jewish nation rejected Jesus, it cut itself off from the root and stock of the true Israel, into which the Christian converts, both Jew and Gentile, were not to be grafted (see Rom. 11). Obviously they still expected the Messianic kingdom of David to be set up in the royal nation of Judah, among the literal Jewish people. See Vol. IV, pp. 26–36.

The disciples' use of the term "Israel" to mean "Judah" offers no difficulty. It is true that "Israel" often means the northern tribes in contradistinction to Judah. But it is also often applied to the whole twelve tribes and even to Judah in particular, as well as to the chosen people of God without tribal designation (see, for example, on Isa. 9:8). The context must indicate the usage in any given case. Therefore it is not surprising that we find the NT consistently applying the term "Israel" to the Jewish nation. Although the Jews of that time were predominantly of the tribe of Judah, they were in the direct and legitimate line of succession not only from the postexilic province of Judah (which was the continuation of the earlier kingdom of Judah) but also from the original united nation of Israel.

The Jews of Christ's day were the heirs of the old theocracy that had been governed by the divinely appointed Davidic dynasty, centered in the divinely prescribed Temple worship, and founded on the national covenant between God and His chosen people. Paul called his fellow Jews "Israelites," to whom, after the flesh, pertained "the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came" (Rom. 9:4, 5; cf. v. 3; see also chs. 3:1, 2; 11:1).

These disciples, therefore, were not unreasonable in their belief that the prophecies and promises given to early Israel belonged to the Jews as the successors of the old Davidic kingdom—not to the "Israel" of the ten tribes that had seceded from the house of David. For those tribes had separated themselves not only from Judah, but also from the Temple and the true worship of God, and hence from the national covenant. To the fact of Judah's royal heritage was added the fact that the southern nation had, from the time of the division under Jereboam, included numerous members of the northern tribes who wished to remain true to Jehovah (2 Chron. 11:13–16; 15:9; cf. ch. 16:1). These facts explain the repeated use of the term Israel for both the kingdom of Judah and, after the Captivity, for the Jewish community reconstituted as the province of Judah, to which belonged all those, of whatever tribe, who returned from exile (see Ezra 2:70; 3:1; 4:3; 7:7, 13; 8:29; 9:1; 10:5; Neh. 1:6; 9:1, 2; 10:39; 11:3, 20; Eze. 14:1, 22; 17:2, 12; 37:15–19; Dan. 1:3; Zech. 8:13; Mal. 1:1).

Further, the Jewish nation of Jesus' day represented the other tribes of Israel not only in population (see Luke 2:36) but also in territory (Vol. V, pp. 45, 46). It was referred to as Israel by John the Baptist (John 1:31), by Simeon (Luke 2:32, 34), by Jesus Himself (Matt. 8:10; Luke 7:9; John 3:10), by the disciples and others in Judea (Matt. 2:20–22; 9:33; Luke 24:21; Acts 1:6; 2:22, 23; 3:12; 4:8, 27; 5:31; 21:28), by Gamaliel (Acts 5:35), by Luke (Luke 1:80), and by Paul (Acts 13:16, 17, 23, 24; Rom. 9:4, 6, 31; 11:1; 1 Cor. 10:18; 2 Cor. 11:22; Phil. 3:5).

Thus the Messianic reign prophesied for Israel was still sought by these disciples as a restoration of Jewish national sovereignty. Indeed, the Messiah's kingdom would have belonged to the Jews if they had not forfeited it by rejecting the Son of David because He came offering a kingdom of universal righteousness instead of Jewish conquest. The

nation's rejection as the chosen people, a status that had been conditional from the first (Ex. 19:5, 6; Jer. 18:6–10; Matt. 8:11, 12; 21:33–45), was too recent for the disciples to understand. They well knew that the old northern kingdom of Israel had severed itself irrevocably from the true Israel of the covenant except as its individual members might choose to rejoin the chosen people. What they did not yet see was the fact that the Jewish nation likewise, having rejected the rule of the Son of David, was the chosen people no longer, although individual Jews might be grafted into the stock of true Israel, the church of Jesus Christ (see Vol. IV, pp. 25–38), in whom there is no distinction of race, nationality, or position (Gal. 3:28, 29; Col. 3:11).

7. He said. Christ did not give a direct answer to His disciples' inquiry. Instead, He directed them to the work that lay ahead.

Times or the seasons. Gr. *chronoi ē kairoi*. *Chronoi* refers to chronological "time," thought of simply as such, in a general sense, and *kairoi* to specific, climactic points of time, with emphasis on what takes place. Thus by "times" Jesus here apparently refers to the seemingly endless procession of the ages, and by "seasons" to the climactic events to occur at the end of the age (see on Matt. 24:3). It is as if Jesus said, "It is not for you to know the date, or the precise manner in which the kingdom will be established." Living as a man among men, Jesus knew neither the day nor the hour of His coming (see on Matt. 24:36). Here is a gentle rebuke to men (1) who are not yet ready to receive all knowledge (John 16:12), but (2) who know enough to carry out their Lord's commission (Matt. 28:19, 20), and (3) who will be guided by signs and by the Spirit (Matt. 24:32, 33; Mark 16:17, 18; John 16:13).

Put in his own power. Rather, "fixed by his own authority." The Greek word used here for "power" or "authority" (*exousia*) differs from that used for "power" (*dunamis*) in v. 8 (see on John 1:12). God is not the servant of time, but its Master. His knowledge transcends time, for He is omniscient, knowing all things (Ps. 139:1–6; Prov. 15:3; Heb. 4:13). His foreknowledge is a proof of His deity (Isa. 46:9, 10). He shares what He will with those who serve Him (Deut. 29:29; Ps. 25:14; John 15:15; 16:25).

8. Power. Gr. *dunamis*, "strength," "ability," "power" (see on John 1:12). Our English word "dynamite" is derived from *dunamis*. Luke here refers to supernatural "power," received only by those upon whom the Holy Spirit comes (see on Luke 1:35; 24:49). This power is for witnessing: it gives (1) power within, (2) power to proclaim the gospel, (3) power to lead others to God. Through the disciples, thus empowered, Jesus would continue the work He began on earth, and even "greater works" than those would be accomplished (John 14:12). This Spirit-given witness was to be a distinguishing mark of the Christian church.

Witnesses. Gr. *martures*, those who confirm, or can confirm, what they themselves have seen or heard or known by any other means. The word is used 13 times in Acts. As "witnesses" the apostles knew Christ to be the Messiah of prophecy and the Redeemer of mankind. They could also testify of His promise to return. As witnesses, the disciples were the first and foremost link of visible evidence between the crucified, risen, and ascended Lord and the world, which, through their testimony, might believe (see on John 1:12). John writes, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you" (1 John 1:3). Followers of Christ today are similarly called to bear personal witness to the works

and teachings of Jesus, to the purpose of God to save the world through His Son and to the effectiveness of the gospel in their own hearts. No more convincing testimony can be borne. Without personal experience there can be no true Christian witness. Peter's bold statement following the healing of the lame man (Acts 4:10) is an excellent example of witnessing in apostolic times.

In Jerusalem. It was the divine plan that the chosen people should have the first opportunity to benefit from the apostles' ministry (see on Luke 14:21–24). During this brief time thousands of Jews believed (see Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4, 32, 33; 5:14; 6:1, 7; EGW Supplementary Material on ch. 2:1, 4, 14, 41). When the Jews spurned this privilege, and stoned Stephen (ch. 7), the good news was carried farther afield.

In Samaria. The Samaritans were a mixed race, ever at enmity with the Jews (see on John 4:9). For Jesus' personal ministry to the people of Samaria see on Luke 10:1, 33; 17:16; John 4:39–42. After the stoning of Stephen they were first visited by Philip the deacon (Acts 6:5; 8:5), then by Peter and John, who went to Philip's aid (ch. 8:14). There was a good harvest in Samaria.

Uttermost part. The disciples were to go "into all the world" (Mark 16:15), "unto all nations" (Matt. 24:14). The worldwide work was begun by scattered representatives of the gospel who preached to Jews in Phoenicia, Cyprus, Syrian Antioch (Acts 8:4; 11:19), and by Saul of Tarsus in Syria and Cilicia (Acts 9:15, 30; 11:25; Gal. 1:21, 23). Soon, it was vigorously extended by Paul's great missionary journeys (Acts 13 to 28). Paul was inspired to declare that in his day the gospel "was preached to every creature which is under heaven" (Col. 1:23; cf. Titus 2:11). In contrast with the commission given when Christ first sent out the Twelve (see on Matt. 10:5, 6), this work was to be, not national, but universal. It is the beginning of this worldwide work that Luke describes in Acts. This book is not a miscellany of biographies of the apostles, nor even of certain apostles, nor yet exclusively concerning the apostles, but of what was done by all believers to proclaim the gospel "unto the uttermost part of the earth." When this work is finally completed, Christ will come (Matt. 24:14).

Luke here gives the outline for the book of Acts: The proclamation of the gospel to (1) Jerusalem and Judea (chs. 1 to 7), (2) Samaria (chs. 8 to 10), (3) and the uttermost part of the earth (chs. 11 to 28).

9. When he had spoken. See on Luke 24:50.

While they beheld. No believer had seen the Saviour rise from the dead, but the eleven disciples and the mother of Jesus (EW 191) were permitted to see Him ascend to heaven. Thus they became reliable witnesses to the fact of the ascension.

Taken up. Here the ascension is related as a simple historical fact. Hereafter in the NT it is not often mentioned, but it is implicitly accepted as a cardinal truth of historical Christianity. It had been foretold by Jesus (John 6:62). The event was again related by Peter (Acts 3:21), and was later referred to by Paul (1 Tim. 3:16).

The ascension was a fitting climax to Christ's ministry on earth. Our Saviour had descended from heaven to effect man's salvation (John 3:13, 16). When His earthly work was finished, He planned to return to His heavenly home (John 14:2), to mediate for man (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:25; 8:1, 2, 6; 1 John 2:1) until His second coming (John 14:3).

A cloud. This cloud was an angelic host (see DA 831). Christ's return will likewise be "with clouds" (Matt. 24:30; 26:64; Rev. 1:7). Vast companies of angels will

accompany their Lord when He appears in glory (Matt. 25:31). He will “so come in like manner” (Acts 1:11).

Out of their sight. Literally, “away from their eyes.”

10. Looked stedfastly toward. Literally, “were gazing into”—with upturned faces.

As he went up. Rather, “as He was going.” Jesus ascended gradually. There was no sudden disappearance as at Emmaus (Luke 24:31).

Two men. Concerning the identity of one of these two angels see on Luke 1:19. Although called “men,” because in human form, they were angels (DA 831, 832). Compare the two angels clothed “in white” who greeted Mary at the tomb (John 20:12, 13), one of whom is called “a young man” (Mark 16:5).

Stood by. Rather, “had been standing by”; they were already there when the disciples noticed them.

White apparel. In his Gospel, Luke describes the angels of the resurrection announcement as “two men ... in shining garments” (Luke 24:4). See also Acts 10:30; cf. ch. 11:13.

11. Men of Galilee. Literally, “men, Galileans.” All of the disciples, except perhaps Judas (see on Mark 3:19), were natives of Galilee and were distinguished for their Galilean speech (cf. Matt. 26:73; see on Acts 4:13). But the angels knew these men without reference to their speech, even as they knew other men’s lives (cf. ch. 10:3–6).

Why stand ye gazing? The rapt disciples seemed unable to take their gaze from the spot where their beloved Master had disappeared from view. The two angels break the spell with a question: The ascended One is God the Son; He has told you His plans, He will come again—“why stand ye gazing?” He has given you work to do in preparation for His return. Compare the question of the angel at the resurrection, “Why seek ye the living among the dead?” (Luke 24:5). There is a sense in which Christians should ever be gazing into heaven (see Phil. 3:20).

This same Jesus. The Jesus whom the disciples had intimately known during the previous three and one-half years. Although He had risen from the dead and ascended to heaven, as the Son of God, He still retained His human nature (see DA 23–25).

Shall so come. The second coming of Christ is indissolubly bound up with the resurrection and ascension as a promised event tied to historical incidents. Scripture reveals (1) Christ the Creator (Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2; see on John 1:1–3); (2) Christ the Incarnate (Phil. 2:7; Heb. 2:14, 15; see on John 1:14); (3) Christ the Crucified (Acts 17:3; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; see on Matt. 27:31–56; John 19:17–37); (4) Christ the Risen One (Rom. 1:3, 4; 1 Cor. 15:3–22; see on Matt. 28:1–15; John 20:1–18); (5) Christ the Coming King (Matt. 24:30; Rev. 11:15; 19:11–16; see on Matt. 25:31). These revelations, no one of which we dare omit, constitute a unified presentation of the Son of God in successive and related phases of His great work of saving men for His kingdom. In all these phases He is “this same Jesus.” “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Heb. 13:8).

In like manner. By this promise, His return must be (1) personal—“this same Jesus” (see DA 832); (2) visible—“ye have seen him go”; (3) with clouds—“a cloud received him”; (4) certain—“shall so come.” This quiet but solemn pledge of the angelic counselors brings to the doctrine of the second coming of Christ an utter certainty, assured by the reality of the ascension. It is all true, event and promise, or none of it is true. Without the second advent, all the preceding work in the plan of salvation would be as vain as the sowing and cultivation of crops without a harvest.

12. Returned they. The disciples turned away from the cross in profound sorrow and utter frustration. After each of the Master's resurrection appearances they were left in perplexed hope. Now, however, having seen their Lord taken up into heaven, they returned in joy, with an unshakable assurance that He would come back again.

Unto Jerusalem. In obedience to the command of v. 4.

Olivet. The place of the ascension, the Mount of Olives, lying east of Jerusalem toward Bethany, and halfway distant toward that village (see on Matt. 21:1). Bethany is 15 furlongs (Gr. *stadia*, see Vol. V. p. 50), that is, about 2 mi. (c. 3 km.), from Jerusalem (John 11:18). Luke explains that after the last meeting with the disciples in Jerusalem, Jesus "led them out as far as to Bethany" (Luke 24:50), possibly because it was in the old familiar setting He loved so well. From there, a short return walk over "the mount called Olivet" would bring them back to Jerusalem.

Sabbath day's journey. A phrase occurring in Scripture only here, describing the distance from Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives (see on Ex. 16:29; see Vol. V, p. 50). This distance is measured by Josephus as 5 or 6 *stadia*, or furlongs (*Antiquities* xx. 8. 6; *War* v. 2. 3 [70]), or about two-thirds mile (c. 1 km.). The Mishnah agrees with these figures, for it defines the "Sabbath limit" as 2,000 cu. It says: "If a man who was permitted to do so went out beyond the Sabbath limit and was then told that the act [which he intended to do] had already been performed, he is entitled to move within two thousand cubits in any direction. If he was within the Sabbath limit he is regarded as if he had not gone out. All who go out to save life may return to their original places" (*Erubin* 4. 3, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 306).

There were ways provided for overcoming the inconvenience caused by such a "limit." "If a man who was on a journey [homeward] was overtaken by dusk, and he knew of a tree or a wall and said, 'Let my Sabbath base be under it,' his statement is of no avail. If, however, he said, 'Let my Sabbath base be at its root,' he may walk from the place where he stands to its root a distance of two thousand cubits, and from its root to his house another two thousand cubits. Thus he can walk four thousand cubits after dusk. If he does not know of any tree or wall, ... and said, 'Let my present position be my Sabbath base,' his position acquires for him the right of movement within a radius of two thousand cubits in any direction. ... The Sages, however, ruled: The distances are to be squared in the shape of a square tablet, so that he may gain the area of the corners"

(Mishnah *Erubin* 4. 7, 8, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, pp. 343, 344).

"The Sages did not enact the law in order to add restrictions but in order to relax them" (*ibid.* 5. 5, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 411).

The origin of the 2,000-cu. measurement is said to have been found in the tradition that the distance from the farthest tent in the wilderness camp of the Israelites to the tent of meeting, or tabernacle (cf. Num. 35:5), was the greatest distance a Hebrew might walk without its being said that he had gone "out of his place on the seventh day" (Ex. 16:29). More probably, it was the distance specified by Joshua to lie between the people and the Levites bearing the ark, at the crossing of the Jordan (Joshua 3:4).

Chrysostom (*Homily III, Acts 1:12*) supposed that the ascension must have been on a Sabbath, to account for the mention here of a "sabbath day's journey." Such a conclusion is not necessary. The ascension probably took place on a Thursday (see Additional Note on Matt. 28).

13. An upper room. Rather, “the upper room.” Not in the Temple (Luke 24:53), where the disciples still worshiped (cf. Acts 3:1), but in the upper story of a private house, under the flat roof, where there would be seclusion (see on Matt. 26:18; Mark 14:15; Luke 24:33; John 20:19).

Both Peter. For the list of the apostles see on Matt. 10:2–5; Mark 3:13–19.

14. Continued with one accord. Rather, here and in ch. 2:46, “persevered with one mind.” What a contrast to the competitive spirit shown at the time of the Last Supper (Luke 22:24). How different in its calm, solemn joy was this period of waiting. Here is the commencement of the “accord” that bore such dynamic results a few days later (Acts 2:1, 41).

In prayer. Gr. *te proseuchē*. This is capable of at least two interpretations: (1) “in prayer”; or (2) “in the place of prayer,” in which sense it occurs in ch. 16:16. Some commentators suggest that the disciples did not constantly remain in the “upper room,” but went, from time to time, to a synagogue, and that such visits are included in Luke 24:53, “And were continually in the temple.”

And supplication. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of these words. The fact of the disciples’ unity in prayer, however, remains. During the days before Pentecost the 120 (v. 15) reverently urged the fulfillment of the pledge that the Spirit, the Comforter, would come (John 14:16) with power (Acts 1:8) “not many days hence” (v. 5). See AA 36, 37.

This text contains an excellent formula for effective prayer: (1) The petition—they prayed; (2) the perseverance—they continued in prayer; (3) the unanimity—they prayed with one accord. See on Matt. 18:19, 20 Luke 18:1–8.

With the women. Rather, “with women,” which may refer to the wives of the men there assembled. This receives support from the fact that “Mary the mother of Jesus,” who was not the wife of any man present, is separately mentioned. However, the usual interpretation is to see in “the women” a reference to those who ministered to Christ, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, “and many others” (see Additional Note on Luke 7; see on Luke 8:2, 3).

Mary. This reference to the mother of Jesus is instructive. Her unique relationship to the ascended Lord justifies her being singled out for special mention, but she is not given any undue pre-eminence. In this, her last appearance in Scripture, she is one of the united group who “continued with one accord in prayer and supplication.” Legends concerning her later life and position after death have no Biblical or factual basis.

His brethren. These were James, Joses, Simon, and Judas (Matt. 13:55; see on Matt. 12:46; Mark 6:3). They had stood aloof from Jesus (John 7:5; DA 450, 451), and are not mentioned among those who gathered around the cross (John 19:25–27). But the final scenes in Christ’s earthly life had brought about their conversion, and they are now numbered with His adherents. No more is heard of Simon and Joses, but James is probably the one who became a leader in the church (see on Acts 12:17; see Acts 15:13; 1 Cor. 15:7; Gal. 1:19; Vol. V, p. 71), and is thought by many to be the author of the Epistle of James (see Introduction to the Epistle of James, Vol. VII). Judas may be the Jude who wrote the brief epistle that bears his name (see on Mark 6:3; see Introduction to the Epistle of Jude, Vol. VII).

15. *Those days.* Between the ascension and Pentecost. The ascension came forty days after the resurrection (v. 3). Thus ten days were left until Pentecost, the “fiftieth,” the day of the Feast of Weeks (see on Lev. 23:16; Acts 2:1). See Vol. V, p. 233.

Peter. For his calling, position, and character see on Mark 3:14–16. The lessons he had received from Jesus (Luke 22:32; John 21:15–17; see DA 812, 815) now bear good fruit. His natural gifts have been sanctified through conversion, and he emerges as a leader in the church. But there is nothing dictatorial in his guidance. He stimulates his brethren to concerted action, and subsequent decisions come from the whole group and not from one man. He takes a prominent part in early church affairs. His is the only Pentecostal sermon that is recorded (Acts 2:14–40), and other sermons of his receive special notice (chs. 3:12–26; 4:8–12; 10:34–43). He, with John, performed the first miracle of healing recorded in Acts (ch. 3:1–11), and his miraculous powers are specially mentioned (chs. 5:15; 9:32–41). He plays the chief part in rebuking Ananias and Sapphira (ch. 5:3–11). It is clear that he held a leading position in the early church, but he disappears from Luke’s record after ch. 15:7, and attention is then focused on Paul. For a discussion of the supposed supremacy of Peter see on Matt. 14:28; 16:16–19.

The disciples. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the reading “the brethren” (not to be restricted to Christ’s brethren only, as in v. 14, for there were about 120 persons present). The occasion was obviously a formal meeting, called for the election of a twelfth apostle to take the place of Judas Iscariot.

Number of names. Literally, “crowd of names,” that is, group of persons.

Hundred and twenty. The word “about” indicates that this was an approximate figure, but the group is large enough to form a firm foundation for the young church in Jerusalem. The number does not include all those who believed, for “above five hundred brethren” saw Christ after His resurrection (1 Cor. 15:6).

16. Men and brethren. Literally, “men, brethren.” Some have suggested that Peter particularly addressed the men in the company, and that they alone took part in the election of the twelfth apostle.

This scripture. Rather, “the scripture,” which is quoted in v. 20. Note how, from its beginning, the apostolic church appealed to the OT for its authority.

Must needs. Not that events were engineered to fit the scripture, but that scripture, inspired by the Holy Ghost, foresaw the events. Matthew has many somewhat similar uses of OT quotations (see on Matt. 1:22).

Holy Ghost. Here Peter reveals the disciples’ convictions concerning the inspiration of David’s psalms. They believed that David spoke (or wrote) as the mouthpiece of the Spirit. This teaching accords with 2 Tim. 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:21.

Judas. Note the way in which the apostle uses Scripture. He sees its fulfillment after the event, and boldly applies it to an individual, Judas, although David does not mention the betrayer by name.

Which was guide. Literally, “became a guide” (see on Matt. 26:3, 14, 47). What a fearful change in occupation! He who had been ordained to lead men to Christ that they might be saved, chose to lead men to Christ that the Saviour might be destroyed. But note the restraint in the description of Judas. In spite of the horror that Peter and his fellow apostles must have felt, there are no recriminations. He leaves the judgment of Judas in the hands of God.

17. Numbered with us. Accounted one of the apostolic company (Matt. 10:4; Mark 3:19; Luke 6:16). There is no record of his being called to discipleship; he offered himself for inclusion among the Twelve (see DA 293, 294).

Obtained. Rather, “obtained by lot,” or “received by divine allotment,” which emphasizes Christ’s acceptance of him as a disciple.

Part. Gr. *klēros*, “lot,” “allotted portion,” or “share.” From this comes our word “clergy.”

Ministry. Gr. *diakonia*, “service,” “ministry,” which later came to mean “diaconate.” The workers in the early church keenly felt the responsibility of the ministry (*diakonia*) of the gospel (Acts 12:25; 20:24; 1 Cor. 16:15; Col. 4:17; 2 Tim. 4:5).

18. This man purchased. Verses 18, 19 may be Luke’s explanation inserted in Peter’s speech; Peter would scarcely need to give to the 120 details concerning Judas’ death. It need not be taken from this wording that Luke believed Judas had purchased the “field of blood” before his death. Judas’ money, ill-gotten, bought the field, and his burial in it was a reward of his iniquity. Matthew’s record is explicit: When Judas saw that Jesus was condemned to be crucified, and was making no effort to save Himself, he felt remorse over his treachery. He returned the 30 pieces of silver to the priests with whom he had made his nefarious bargain and then hanged himself. With the money the chief priests bought a potter’s field, where the waste from potteries had been dumped, and there they buried Judas. Because of this, or because the money was the price of “innocent blood,” the place was called “the field of blood” (see on Matt. 27:3–10; see DA 722). The difference between the accounts of Matthew and Luke is rhetorical, not factual: all Judas received as his reward was disgraceful burial in a barren piece of ground.

Falling headlong. There is some evidence that the words thus translated should be understood instead to mean “swelling up.” However, the evidence is insufficient to clearly recommend such a translation. Judas, perhaps the most personally ambitious of Jesus’ disciples, had sought to reach great heights of worldly power by identifying himself with the kingdom he thought Jesus would set up on earth. His horrible death seems strikingly significant of the tragic results of such ambition. Instead of gaining the heights to which he treacherously aspired, “falling headlong,” he perished.

19. Known unto all. Rather, “it became known.” As the report of the treachery of Judas and his suicidal death spread abroad, it probably influenced the people of Jerusalem in Christ’s favor, for they would realize that He was the victim of priestly plots and a disciple’s betrayal. Furthermore, the scenes of the crucifixion had been witnessed by crowds (Luke 23:27, 35; John 19:19, 20; DA 741, 775–777). Those who rose from the grave after the great earthquake, appeared to many (Matt. 27:52, 53; DA 786). The events attending the sacrifice of Christ for sinners did not take place secretly; they were not hidden in a corner (Acts 26:26).

Is called. Some have suggested that the use of the verb form “is called” provides unstudied evidence that Luke wrote the Acts before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, after which event place names, except the most significant, would be largely lost sight of.

Their proper tongue. Literally, “their own dialect [*dialektos*].” This would suggest that Aramaic was not Luke’s own language, and that he was not a Jew.

Aceldama. A transliteration, through Greek, of the Aramaic, *chaqel dema'*, “the field of blood.” Tradition associates it with *Hakk ed–Dumm*, on the south bank of the Valley of Hinnom, to the south of Jerusalem (see on Matt. 5:22). The field bought with the 30 pieces of silver was used for burying strangers who lacked relatives or friends to inter them (Matt. 27:6–10; cf. Zech. 11:12, 13).

20. It is written. The connection with v. 17 should be noted and maintained. After the explanation of vs. 18, 19 Peter quotes Ps. 69:25 (from the LXX, with some changes) and Ps. 109:8 (also from the LXX). Ps. 69 includes imprecations upon the enemies of David, but also contains prophetic utterances that pertain to the Messiah, as can be seen from vs. 7–21. Verse 25 is primarily a curse upon David’s enemies, and in an extended sense upon the enemies of the Messiah, and hence is applicable to Judas. Ps. 109 is also imprecatory, in terms even more bitter than the other, and v. 8 is a plea that the composite foe being imprecated may have a short life, and be removed from his responsibility (see on Ps. 69; 109).

Judas and his dreadful deeds stand as counterparts of what the psalms describe, and his deserved fate corresponds to that of the enemies described in these passages. This is a type of exegesis frequently employed in the NT to interpret and apply the OT (cf. 1 Peter 1:10, 11; cf. on Deut. 18:15).

Here, Peter has taken the quotation and applied it to the field that Judas bought (see on v. 18), foreseeing that it would not be inhabited.

Bishoprick. Gr. *episkopē*, “oversight,” “charge,” “office,” correctly translating the Heb. *pequddah*. The word “bishoprick” should read, rather, “overseership.” Bishops were the ruling officers in the Church of England in 1611, when the KJV was translated, and it is psychologically understandable that the Anglican translators read into the Greek word, which means “oversight,” or “superintendence,” a much later and stronger ecclesiastical significance. Compare the mention of “Easter” in ch. 12:4, where the Greek means “passover.” The Calvinistic refusal to recognize any church official of higher authority than “elder” (Gr. *presbuteros*) was not reflected in the Anglican translation of 1611, although it had appeared in the Geneva Bible of 1560, in the translation, “charge.” For the NT meaning of the Greek words *presbuteros*, “elder,” and *episkopos*, “bishop,” see pp. 26, 38. In the NT, “elders” were sometimes called “bishops,” that is, “overseers,” but only here in Scripture are three apostles even indirectly referred to as “bishops.” Hence, the translation “charge,” or “office,” is preferable here. See pp. 26, 38.

The apostle uses Ps. 109:8 as authority for the election of another to take the place left vacant by Judas.

21. These men. There seem to have been several among the believers who fulfilled the qualification needed by the successor of Judas, although only one was chosen.

Companied with us. Peter describes the qualifications desired of the candidate. He must have been with the disciples throughout the Lord’s earthly ministry—from the days of John the Baptist to the day of Christ’s ascension.

Went in and out. A Hebraism referring to daily activities, such as Jesus and shared with His disciples.

22. Beginning. Compare “the beginning” (Mark 1:1).

Baptism of John. This can refer either to the days when John was preaching and baptizing or to the specific day when John baptized Jesus.

Must. Gr. *dei*, “it is necessary” (cf. v. 16). Peter apparently thought that the original number of the disciples should be maintained. The apostles doubtless had a concept of 12 as a full number, after the example of the 12 tribes of Israel. In fact, they had been promised 12 thrones from which to govern the tribes (Matt. 19:28), a promise that calls to mind the 12 stars in the crown of the church (Rev. 12:1), and the 12 foundations of the walls of the New Jerusalem, with the names of the 12 apostles on them (Rev. 12:14). Jesus had ordained a company of 12, one of whom was lost. Peter reasoned: The full number is necessary to give testimony concerning all aspects of the Lord’s life and works; a mighty task lies before the apostles, and the full quota of witnesses is needed for its accomplishment.

The number 12 was broken by the martyrdom of James about A.D. 44 (ch. 12:2), but we do not read of the appointment of a successor.

Ordained. Gr. *ginomai*, “to become.” Some feel that the expression “be ordained” too strongly reflects the principles of church government held by the KJV translators. That assumption is not necessary, for the Twelve had been “ordained” by their Master (see on Mark 3:14; see DA 296), and it would be fitting that the elected one should be similarly set aside for the ministry.

Witness. See on v. 8. The emphasis rests on the witnessing to the historical fact of the resurrection (see on Luke 24:48).

23. They. This probably indicates the whole company of 120, though the immediate context of vs. 21, 22 might possibly suggest limiting the reference to the eleven apostles only.

Appointed two. Gr. *estēsan duo*; these words may be translated either “they set two forward” or “two stood.” In the former sense, this passage would mean that Joseph and Matthias were proposed by the disciples as candidates upon whom the lot might be cast. If the verb is to be understood in the latter sense, it would imply that when Peter had stated the qualifications necessary for the man to fill Judas’ place, he asked whether there were any such present, and Joseph and Matthias stood.

Joseph. A common Jewish name (see on Gen. 30:24).

Barsabas. Gr. *barsabas*, a transliteration from the Aramaic, perhaps *bar shabba*’ meaning, “son of the Sabbath,” that is, one who is born on the Sabbath, or *bar saba*’, “son of the aged.” Some have tried to identify this Barsabas with Barnabas, the Levite from Cyprus, who became a companion of Paul (chs. 4:36; 9:27; 11:22, 24), but there is no scriptural support for this. It is possible that he was the brother of Judas Barsabas mentioned in ch. 15:22.

Justus. A Latin surname. In Roman times many Jews assumed such names.

Matthias. Perhaps a shortened form of Mattathias, which is from the Heb.

Mattithyah, “gift of Jehovah.” He is not mentioned again, apart from v. 26, and there is no reliable tradition concerning his career. Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* i. 12. 3; iii. 25. 6) includes him among the Seventy, and mentions an apocryphal gospel attributed to him. He is said to have been martyred in Ethiopia or in Judea (see p. 36).

24. They prayed. What a prayer this must have been, springing fresh from a simple insistent faith. In every great moment of the infant church prayer was spontaneously resorted to. This was not from mere habit, though the habit was good; nor as a ritual, for this had not yet come to formalize the worship of the church, but because it seemed to the apostles as natural to talk, through prayer, to their Lord in heaven as it had been to talk face to face with Jesus on earth. So should it have ever been in the church's experience, and so should it now be.

Lord. Inasmuch as Jesus had instructed His disciples to address their requests to the Father, in His (Jesus') name, it is to be presumed that the word "Lord" here refers to the Father.

Knowest the hearts. Compare 1 Sam. 16:7; Ps. 139:1–4; John 2:25.

Shew. The 120 had used their best judgment in putting forward the names of Barsabas and Matthias. Now they called on the Lord to make the final choice.

25. Part. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) "place."

Ministry and apostleship. The apostles were highly conscious of the spiritual dignity of their calling (see on v. 17).

By transgression fell. Rather, "turned aside." "transgressed."

His own place. The Lord was being asked to choose one to replace him who had chosen apostasy, and who had found "his own place," in disaster and death. Such a place was Judas' own, by his own choice. Events had proved what the Lord had already foreseen (John 6:70, 71; John 13:2, 21, 26), that a place among the Twelve did not properly belong to Judas.

26. Gave forth their lots. Literally, "gave lots for [or, "unto"] them." This can mean either, (1) the company drew lots on behalf of the two men, or, (2) the candidates themselves drew lots. Whichever method was used, it resulted in the election of Matthias. Jews were well acquainted with the lot as a standard OT method of decision: (1) in choosing the goats in the highly significant ceremonies of the Hebrew Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:5–10); (2) in allotting land in Canaan to the tribes (Num. 26:55; Joshua 18:10), and upon the return from exile (Neh. 10:34; 11:1); (3) in settling criminal cases where there was uncertainty (Joshua 7:14, 18; 1 Sam. 14:41, 42); (4) in choosing forces for battle (Judges 20:8–10); (5) in appointing to high office (1 Sam. 10:19–21); and (6) in allotting the cities of the priests and Levites (1 Chron. 6:54–65). The method is seen in operation in 1 Chron. 24 to 26. The Lord was understood to have the final dispensing of lots (Prov. 16:33). Soldiers cast lots on Calvary for the Lord's seamless garment (Matt. 27:35; see on John 19:23, 24). But the choice of Matthias by lot is the only recorded instance among Christians in the NT. For caution against relying on such methods today see on Joshua 7:14; Prov. 16:33.

As far as the record shows, Peter's proposal to use the lot was accepted without challenge or discussion. It appears that after Pentecost the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit made the casting of lots superfluous (Acts 5:3; 11:15–18; 13:2; 16:6–9). An instance of the lot in the postapostolic church is the provision for its use in the selection of a bishop in the third canon of the Council of Barcelona in Spain, in the year A.D. 599.

He was numbered. Gr. *sugkatapsēphizomai*, from *sun*, "with," *kata*, "down," and *psēphos*, "a pebble," referring to the ancient method of electing a person by casting a pebble into an urn. The word may be translated as "voted" or "enrolled."

With the eleven. In the eyes of the world, Matthias had succeeded to a very humble position, that of a leader in an insignificant group of humble people who were soon to be persecuted. But to the believers, the position to which Matthias was commissioned held immeasurable possibilities for the future. There is no reason to deny Matthias his dignity as a replacement in the apostolic body. If it be argued that nothing is said in Scripture concerning Matthias' later work, let it be remembered that nothing is said there of the later work of Andrew, Philip (the Philip of ch. 8 was the deacon), Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James the Less, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Lebbaeus Thaddeus.

There is no record that the disciples laid their hands upon Matthias (cf. chs. 6:6; 13:3). Evidently the church believed the Holy Spirit had shown His approval in the election by lot. In this choice of Matthias we have early and significant evidences of church organization: (1) an official meeting of believers, (2) the discussion of an important item of church business, (3) the decision and its execution. The church was organized and now awaited divine power.

Some would make Paul the twelfth apostle. But though Paul called himself an apostle again and again (Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1, and in other epistles), he never claimed to be one of the Twelve, nor is he ever so designated. In fact, he knew and emphasized a distinction on the point (1 Cor. 15:5, 8). He made it plain that he did not receive his knowledge of the gospel from the Twelve (Gal. 1:11, 12, 15–19). He followed a program separate from theirs (Rom. 15:20, 21). In EW 199 and AA 102 it is stated that Paul took the place of Stephen.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

3 AA 26; EW 189; FE 535

5 ML 57

5–7AA 30

6, 7 SR 241

7 Ev 702; TM 55

8 AA 17, 31, 107; GW 273, 284; LS 336; ML 47; TM 65, 198, 267; 7T 273; 8T 15, 56

9 EW 190

9–11DA 831; EW 191

10, 11 AA 33; LS 50; 1T 41; 2T 194

11 EW 110; GC 301, 339

14 EW 191; TM 170; 5T 158; 6T 140; 7T 32, 213

16–18DA 722

21–69T 263

24 1T 333

CHAPTER 2

1 *The apostles, filled with the Holy Ghost, and speaking divers languages, are admired by some, and derided by others. 14 Whom Peter disproving, and shewing that the apostles spake by the power of the Holy Ghost, that Jesus was risen from the dead, ascended into heaven, had poured down the same Holy Ghost, and was the Messiah, a man known to them to be approved of God by his miracles, wonders, and signs, and not crucified without his determinate counsel and foreknowledge: 37 he baptizeth a great number that were converted. 41 Who afterwards devoutly and charitably converse together: the apostles working many miracles, and God daily increasing his church.*

1. Day. Rabbinic authority allowed Palestinian Jews one day for the celebration of Pentecost, but the Jews of the Dispersion were given two days for the feast.

Pentecost. Gr. *pentēkostēs*, from the adjective meaning “fiftieth,” a reference to the fifty days between the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Feast of the First Fruits (Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost). The first known uses of this Greek word for the Hebrew Feast of Weeks occur in Tobit 2:1 (written c. 200 B.C. and 2 Maccabees 12:32), showing that the word had been employed among the Jews for many years before the Christian Era. For a fuller discussion of Pentecost and its position in the Jewish calendar see on Ex. 23:16; Lev. 23:16; cf. Vol. I, p. 709; Vol. II, pp. 106, 108; Resurrection to Ascension. A brief summary of relevant facts and their connection with the bestowal of the Holy Spirit at that time, follows:

The dating of Pentecost hinges upon the date of the Passover. The Passover was held on Nisan 14. The 15th marked the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and on the 16th a sheaf of the first fruits (of the barley harvest) was waved before the Lord (Lev. 23:5–11). From the 16th, seven weeks and a day, 50 days by inclusive reckoning, were counted to the Feast of First Fruits (of the wheat harvest), which was also known as the Feast of Weeks, because of the seven weeks that intervened (Lev. 23:15, 16). It is this feast that came to be known as Pentecost.

Since, in the year of the crucifixion, Nisan 16 fell on a Sunday (see Additional Notes on Matt. 26, Note 1), Pentecost, coming 50 days, inclusive, later (seven weeks and one day), would also fall on a Sunday in that year. There is no scriptural support, however, for assigning sacredness to Sunday on this account (cf. on Matt. 28:1).

Pentecost, of all feasts of the Jewish year, attracted the largest number of pilgrims from distant lands. The dangers of travel by sea and land in the early spring and late autumn (see Acts 27:9) prevented the coming of people from abroad in any large numbers to the Passover or to the Feast of Tabernacles. But the Pentecostal season was favorable, and at no other feast would there have been present at Jerusalem representatives of so many nations. There was no other time in which the gift of the Spirit was likely to produce such direct, immediate, and far-reaching effects. Also, the character of the offerings, which were mainly those of peace and consecration, put a joyous stamp upon the day. Even the bread was leavened, indicating a new spirit of release and fellowship working through the celebrants as they rejoiced together. Pentecost had much of the air of a harvest festival. Even Paul, least interested in observances as such (Rom. 14:5), was eager to celebrate Pentecost at Jerusalem in spite of his missionary journeys in Asia and Greece (Acts 18:21; 20:16).

Each aspect of the old Feast of Weeks presented a symbolic meaning that made it typical of the work now about to be accomplished. As the Feast of First Fruits, it was fitting that it should be the occasion of the first great gathering from the fields that were “white already to harvest” (Ex. 23:16; John 4:35). At this feast the Israelites, remembering that they had been slaves in Egypt, could feel again the liberty the Exodus had given them (Deut. 16:9–12), and be free of servile work (Lev. 23:21). It was therefore a fit time for the outpouring of the Spirit of God; and “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Cor. 3:17). That Spirit was to guide the church into the truth, which makes all who receive it free indeed (John 8:32).

It is interesting to recall that the rabbis, who computed the interval between the first Passover and the giving of the law on Sinai, concluded that God spoke the law to the

people (Ex. 20:1) on the day that was later observed as Pentecost. Through this tradition, the feast is thought to have acquired a commemorative character.

Pentecost was a great day in Israelitish experience, and was fittingly a type of the greater day that made the Spirit of God available for all who prepared themselves for Him.

Was fully come. Literally, “was being fulfilled,” or “filled up.” The words seem chosen to express the fact that the day was in the progress, perhaps to indicate the early morning hour.

They. Probably the 120 and other believers who may have joined them.

With one accord. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the reading “together.” Here, the writer is merely stating that “they were all together.”

However, though the Greek word does not say there was “accord,” it is evident that unity existed among the disciples. The jealousies revealed in their failure to heal the demon-possessed boy (Mark 9:14–29; DA 427, 429–431), in their striving for high position (Luke 22:24), and in refusing to wash one another’s feet (cf. John 13:3–17; DA 643, 644), had all been swept from their hearts by the agonies of the crucifixion, the glory of the resurrection, and the majesty of the ascension. Their Master had risen on the day of the offering of the wave sheaf of barley, which typified Himself, the First Fruits. Over a period of 40 days He had had repeated contact with them on earth. Ten more days had remained till this day, while they awaited “the promise of the Father.” What would this promise bring forth? The ten days of expectancy had been ten days of earnest prayer (Acts 1:14), offered in unity of desire (AA 36, 37). This is the unity that must characterize the people of God whenever they aspire to a special experience with their Lord, or expect of Him a manifestation of power. Whatever interferes with such unity must be removed, or it will obstruct the Spirit, who does the work of God for His people.

In one place. Perhaps the same large upper room in which the Lord’s Supper was eaten (Luke 22:11–14), which may have been the same as that in which the disciples were sheltered after the crucifixion, and to which they returned after Jesus had ascended (see on Acts 1:13). Some hold that the disciples were perhaps meeting in one of the rooms of the Temple, which Josephus (*Antiquities* viii. 3. 2 [65, 66]) calls *oikoi*, “houses,” and which could be used by groups of friends, or members of an association, at a feast time. But it seems unlikely that the disciples would risk being seen together in so public a place as the Temple precincts.

2. Suddenly. Without warning, unexpectedly. The 120 could have had no inkling of the way in which the Comforter would come.

A sound. Gr. *ēchos*, “sound,” or “noise,” whence our word “echo.” It is used by Luke in his Gospel (ch. 21:25) to describe the “roaring” of the sea and the waves, and by the writer of Hebrews (ch. 12:19) for the “sound” of a trumpet from Sinai.

From heaven. Literally, “out of the heaven,” the place from which the Holy Spirit came to descend on Jesus at His baptism (Matt. 3:16; Luke 3:21, 22).

A rushing mighty wind. Literally, “a violent wind being borne onward.” Note that it was not actually a wind, but “as of,” or “like to,” a wind. The sensory impression made upon those going through the experience was as though it were a wind. The word translated “wind,” (*pnoē*) is used in the NT only here and in ch. 17:25 where it means “breath.” It is used in this same sense in the LXX. Luke may have chosen *pnoē* here as

describing the supernatural “breathing” that the disciples were about to experience, and that must have recalled to them their sensations when the Lord “breathed on them,” and said, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost” (John 20:22). Now once more they felt the divine impact of the awe-inspiring, divine “breathing.”

It filled. No subject of the verb is given, and the context does not make clear to what the “filling” refers. “It” may refer to the “sound,” or to the “wind.” Many commentators, however, hold that “it” refers to the wind “wind,” that is, to the Holy Spirit (cf. John 3:8).

All the house. Rather, “the whole house,” that is, the “one place” of v. 1. Sound or wind has the ability to fill quickly every nook and cranny of a building. Even so did the coming of the Spirit fill the place where these Christians were assembled.

Were sitting. Early in the day (see v. 15), possibly awaiting the hour of prayer.

3. *There appeared unto them.* Literally, “there appeared to them.” They had just received an audible intimation of the Spirit’s coming (v. 2); now they had visible evidence of His arrival.

Cloven tongues. Better, “tongues distributing themselves,” or “tongues being distributed.” The Greek conveys a picture of an initial body of fire that divides itself into many small tongues, which then settle on each member of the waiting assembly. The figure of “tongues” is apt in view of the gift of speech the Spirit bestowed on the believers.

Fire. Not that they were actual flames of fire, but “like as of fire,” that is, “resembling fire” (cf. “as of a rushing mighty wind,” v. 2). Divinity and fire are often linked in Scripture (cf. Ex. 3:2; Deut. 5:4; Ps. 50:3; Mal. 3:2), doubtless because of the power, glory, and purifying effects of fire. John the Baptist had promised that Christ would baptize “with the Holy Ghost, and with fire” (Matt. 3:11).

The Diaspora: World Dispersion of the Jews, First Century A.D.

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¹Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Ac 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.



It sat. There are two possible interpretations of this construction. The singular subject “it” can either refer to each one of the individual tongues or look forward to v. 4 and refer to the Holy Spirit. The Greek verb for “sat” indicates a settling down upon, while the tense suggests momentary rather than continuous action. Even though the fiery-appearing tongues remained upon the believers for only a brief time, the effects of the visitation lasted for the lifetime of the faithful Christians who received the Spirit.

4. They were all filled. Here is the fulfillment of “the promise of the Father” (see on ch. 1:4, 5), and the fruition of ten days of prayerful waiting. The disciples had been taught to pray for the Spirit (Luke 11:13). On the night following the resurrection, Christ had “breathed on them” and declared, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost” (John 20:22). Suffusing the inner depths of their beings, and stirring their every faculty to intense activity, the promised Spirit came upon them. Now they entered into the experience of the prophets, thinking thoughts and, with the gift of tongues, speaking words that were not their own (cf. 2 Peter 1:21).

It is not to be thought that this filling was confined to the apostles. The words and the context lead the reader to believe that all who were assembled, not excepting the women, were sharers in this distribution of the gift of the Holy Spirit. If this were not so, Peter could scarcely have made of Joel’s prophecy the application he did (Acts 2:16–18).

Holy Ghost. There are many clear OT references to the Spirit of God (Num. 24:2; Judges 6:34; 1 Sam. 16:13; 2 Sam. 23:2; 2 Chron. 24:20; Ps. 51:11; Isa. 48:16; Eze. 11:5; Joel 2:28, 29; etc.). But no manifestation of the Spirit in the OT can compare with that made to the disciples on Pentecost: (1) in the unmistakable identification of the Agent, (2) in the fullness of the outpouring, and (3) in the results that followed. Hence that day is

often called the birthday of the church. The great episodes in the incarnate life of Jesus, His birth, His baptism and reception of the Holy Spirit, His crucifixion, His resurrection, His ascension, were of supreme importance, and central to the unfolding plan of salvation. But the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost followed upon the heavenly acceptance of Christ's great sacrifice, and His enthronement with the Father (see AA 38, 39). By that outpouring the church was empowered to do for Christ what had never before been attempted, the preaching of the good news of salvation to all nations.

This was not a mere "moving" of the Spirit. It was not merely the "breath" of the Spirit. It was an in filling of the disciples, the complete possession of them by the Holy spirit. From that time on the church was the instrument of the Spirit. There is nothing in the later record to suggest that any of those possessed with the Spirit on that memorable day ever lost that possession. Succeeding generations of Christians, ever further removed from the experience of Pentecost, grew less and less receptive to the divine gift, and apostasy resulted. Present-believers believers may profit from this sober fact of early church history.

Began. This marks the immediate effect of the Spirit's descent upon the disciples. There was no waiting, no period of apprenticeship; they "began to speak" immediately.

Other tongues. Or, "different tongues," that is, tongues different from their native speech. The Greek word translated "tongues" (*glōssai*) here and in v. 11 refers primarily to the organ of speech, but it is often used with reference to language.

The ability to speak foreign languages was a gift given to the disciples for the special purpose of carrying the gospel message into all the world. Pilgrims from the four corners of the earth (see on vs. 9–11) were assembled in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. These, being Jews of the Dispersion (see The Diaspora; Vol. V, pp. 59–61), may have understood enough Hebrew to enjoy the Temple services, but they may have been unable to cope with the Aramaic in which the disciples would ordinarily have been speaking. For their sakes, and for those who would receive the message through them, the Holy Spirit enabled the disciples to proclaim the gospel fluently in the pilgrims' home languages. This was a major miracle and fulfilled one of the Lord's last promises (see on Mark 16:17). It facilitated the reaping of a large harvest on that day (Acts 2:41) and had worldwide effects in the years that followed. See also on Acts 10:45, 46; 1 Cor. 14.

The record does not explicitly state that this gift of speaking with other tongues was permanent, but it should be borne in mind that what the Spirit once performed He was well able to repeat whenever there was a need (cf. AA 40).

As the Spirit. The Spirit gave the disciples not only the gift of speaking other languages but also their message. They spoke under the Spirit's direct guidance.

Gave. The tense of the Greek verb suggests "kept on giving," which evokes a picture of the Spirit giving words to each of the speakers as the need arose. It is possible that the disciples addressed the different language groups in turn, and that Peter's sermon (vs. 14–36), given to the whole multitude, summarized their messages.

Utterance. Gr. *apophtheggomai*, "to speak forth." In the LXX this word is used to describe prophesying (1 Chron. 25:1; Eze. 13:19; Zech. 10:2). Here it is employed to convey the idea of clear, elevated, vigorous speech, which led to the conversion of 3,000 people in one day. For the connection between the day of Pentecost and the "former rain" see on Joel 2:23.

5. Dwelling at Jerusalem. The question has been raised as to how the foreigners enumerated in vs. 9–11 may be considered to have been “dwelling” at Jerusalem. Two explanations are possible. The Jews mentioned here may have come to the city of their fathers for a protracted stay, perhaps on business; or perhaps, like Paul, to study (ch. 22:3), or some may have been men in retirement from active life. On the other hand, it is not impossible to understand their “dwelling” to indicate a temporary stay, particularly in view of the fact that some are called “dwellers in Mesopotamia” (ch. 2:9) and others, “strangers of Rome” (v. 10)

Devout. The word is used of Simeon (Luke 2:25). The primary meaning is one of circumspection, the disposition that handles sacred things carefully, devoutly, worshipfully. With this meaning it could include proselytes as well as Jews by birth. The expression “out of every nation under heaven” makes such inclusion a necessity. The word appears again in Acts 8:2.

Out of every nation. Herod Agrippa II, in his famous speech made two generations later in an effort to keep the Jews from rebelling against the Romans, declared that “there is not a people in the world which does not contain a portion of our race” (Josephus *War* ii. 16. 4 [399]), and James addressed his inspired epistle “to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (James 1:1). This dispersion of the Jews was due primarily to the great captivities they had suffered: (1) the ten tribes to Assyria and Media in 722 B.C. (2 Kings 17:6); (2) the tribe of Judah to Babylonia, in three separate transportations beginning in 605 (see on 2 Chron. 36:1–21; Jer. 52:1–30; Dan. 1:1–7); (3) the great numbers to Egypt by the Macedonian Ptolemy Soter (Josephus *Antiquities* xii. 1. 1 [6, 7]). In addition to the Jews who were dispersed by the captivities, thousands of them were lured to every part of the world by commercial activities.

6. When this was noised abroad. Or, “this noise having occurred.” The Greek word for “noise” or “sound,” *phōnē*, is often translated “voice.” In John 3:8 it is used for the “sound” of the wind to illustrate the movements of the Spirit. Here the word has two possible meanings: (1) the “sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind” (Acts 2:2); (2) the sound created by the mixed speech of the disciples (v. 4). Since *phōnē* is in the singular, it seems most likely to refer to the divine sound, which may well have been heard outside the house where the believers were, but it may also refer to the many voices of v. 4.

The multitude. That is, the crowds of people in Jerusalem, including particularly the visitors from foreign lands.

Were confounded. Gr. *sugchunō*, “to pour together.” The word is peculiar to Acts, where it is used five times. It is better translated “confused,” or “bewildered.” The multitude were naturally surprised, on arriving at the place whence the noise originated, to hear speakers using so many different tongues.

Heard them speak. The question sometimes is raised as to whether the gift operated here upon the apostles, giving them the power to speak other languages, or upon the hearers, giving them understanding of what the apostles said. Although it is true that Paul later recognizes the existence of a gift of interpretation of tongues (see 1 Cor. 12:30; 14:13, 27), the gift at Pentecost seems quite clearly to have been one bestowed on the apostles, because it was upon them that the Spirit came (Acts 2:3, 4; see AA 40; DA 821).

Language. Gr. *dialektos* (see on ch. 1:19). The list that follows (ch. 2:9–11) refers to language groups. Probably each speaker was using a different language according to the group he was addressing. Latecomers to the assembly doubtless moved about until they found the group where their own tongue was being spoken. In this way many nationalities were served simultaneously.

7. *Amazed and marvelled.* The Greek word translated “amazed” literally means “to be standing out of oneself,” and refers to the first wide-eyed astonishment that overwhelmed those who heard the miracle of tongues. Compare its use in Mark 3:21, “He is beside himself.” The Greek word for “marvelled” contains the idea of continuity, “to be marveling,” for their wonder grew greater the more they heard.

Galileans. This description of the gospel messengers may refer primarily to the apostles, who were all from Galilee (see on Mark 3:14), if Matthias be counted as coming from that province. In a general way it may also be true of the 120, many of whom doubtless had come from Galilee.

The title “Galilaeans” seems to have been used scornfully, because the inhabitants of Galilee lacked culture (see on Matt. 2:22; 4:15; 26:73; see DA 232). It was all the more surprising, therefore, to find men of Galilee fluently speaking foreign languages.

8. *Hear we every man.* Obviously a composite statement, in which the writer embodies numerous remarks from representatives of the various nationalities next enumerated. The fact stated by these amazed listeners was both a foretaste and a pledge of the giving of the gospel to all the world, despite the fact of the many languages involved.

Wherein we were born. Many of those present, although Jews by religion, had been born in other lands and had grown up speaking the languages of their various birthplaces. The list that follows reveals the trained historian, who had inquired carefully as to the nations represented at this great occasion, who himself later attended at least one Pentecost (ch. 21:15), and who therefore knew the kind of crowd that gathered at the Pentecostal season. Luke follows a sequence of sorts in naming the nations, as though he were taking a mental bird’s-eye view of the Roman Empire. With Palestine as his center he looks first at the east, then passes north, west, and south in that order. In this way the reference to “every nation under heaven” (ch. 2:5) is justified. The Jews of the Dispersion (see Vol. V, pp. 59, 60; John 7:35; Acts 6:1) seem generally to have been divided into four classes. These classes, together with some of their component parts to which Luke refers, are: (1) those from Babylonia and other eastern areas: Parthians, Medes, Elamites; dwellers in Mesopotamia; (2) those from Syria and Asia Minor: Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia; (3) those from northern Africa: Egypt, parts of Libya about Cyrene; (4) those from Rome: strangers of Rome. It appears, therefore, that the list is given according to a generally known scheme. For the geographical positions of the various peoples referred to see, *The Roman World at the Birth of Jesus; The Diaspora.*

9. *Parthians.* The list begins at the east with the great Parthian kingdom, which was still, as it had been in the days of the defeated Roman general Crassus a century before, the chief enemy of the Roman government. It lay south of the Caspian Sea, from the Tigris to the Indus. The language was Persian, as was probably also the language of the Medes.

Medes. The country of the Medes lay southwest of the Caspian Sea, east of the region of Assyria. It was to Media that some of the ten tribes had been carried captive (2 Kings 17:6). See on Gen. 10:2; Dan. 2:39.

Elamites. These people lived in a kingdom bounded by Parthia on the east, Media on the north, and Babylonia on the west. The Persian Gulf lay to the south. See on Gen. 10:22; Esther 1:2; Dan. 8:2. The people of Elam are called “Persians” in the LXX, but the Elamite language was different from that of Persia.

Dwellers in Mesopotamia. Mesopotamia lay “between the rivers,” that is, between the Tigris and the Euphrates (see on Gen. 24:10). The “dwellers” would include several linguistic groups that would speak variants of Aramaic (see Vol. I, p. 30; see on Dan. 2:4).

Judaea. It has puzzled Bible students that Luke should have named Judea here, rather than leaving it to be taken for granted. Some have supposed it to be a mistake for India or Idumaea. But it would be natural for the Gentile Luke to mention Judea, the focal point of his history. Its presence makes the list the more complete. “Judea” may also be taken in a wider sense to include all Palestine.

Cappadocia. As he moves in his record from east to west, Luke names next the province lying northwest of Mesopotamia. Cappadocia lay in the eastern part of what is now Turkey, bounded by Armenia on the east, with the Black (Euxine) Sea and the province of Pontus on the north, Galatia on the west and Cilicia, the country of Paul (ch. 21:39), to the south. It is not known what language was spoken. Perhaps it was similar to the “speech of Lycaonia” (ch. 14:11).

Pontus. This region lay on the southern shore of the Black Sea, north of Cappadocia. Like its neighbor it was under Roman administration. Its native language is not known.

Asia. This is not the modern Asia, but a Roman province lying in the western end of Asia Minor, embracing much of the western part of modern Turkey. Ephesus was its chief city. The Holy Spirit prevented Paul on his Second Missionary Journey from entering this region. It was frequently called Ionia, and was markedly Greek in population. The seven letters of Rev. 1:2, 3 are addressed to cities in the province of Asia. Although Greek was understood by the majority in this and the following regions, the common people doubtless used their own local tongues.

10. Phrygia, and Pamphylia. Two small districts southeast of Roman “Asia.”

Egypt. For more than a millennium and a half there had been a tie between Egypt and the Hebrews. Witness the sojourn there of Jacob and his family, the enslavement of the Hebrew tribes, and the later Egyptian invasions of Palestine (see on 1 Kings 14:25). There was a strong pro-Egyptian party in Judea in the time of Jeremiah, and many, including Jeremiah himself, were taken there while Judea was falling into the hands of the Babylonians (Jer. 42:13 to 43:7). Thousands of Jews were taken to Egypt by Ptolemy, and others went there during the struggles of the Maccabees against the Seleucid kings. Jews constituted about one third of the population of Alexandria in Luke’s day, and were ruled by an ethnarch of their own (Josephus *Antiquities* xiv. 7. 2 [117]). The country was Hellenized, but the local language was Coptic, a development of ancient Egyptian largely written in the Greek alphabet, and modified by Demotic (simplified Egyptian writing) influences.

Libya. A name anciently used for all known Africa, with the possible exception of Egypt, but to be understood here as indicating approximately the same territory as

modern Libya, Cyrene being its chief city on the Mediterranean coast. Its culture was highly Hellenistic, but it possessed a large Jewish colony, the result of a deportation from Palestine under Ptolemy I (Josephus *Against Apion* ii. 4 [44]). From Cyrene came Simon, who had borne Jesus' cross (Matt. 27:32), and it was from there that missionary-minded men were to evangelize Antioch of Syria, having such success that Barnabas and Saul of Tarsus went to help them (Acts 11:19–26). See on Gen. 10:13.

Strangers of Rome. Gr. *epidēmountes Rhōmaioi*, “sojourning Romans.” *Rhōmaioi*, usually means “Roman citizens” rather than “inhabitants of Rome.” The phrase “strangers of Rome” would therefore refer to Jews who lived at Rome as sojourners, or to Roman Jews temporarily sojourning in Jerusalem. Jews were so numerous in Rome that when Varus sanctioned their sending an embassy to Augustus, the 50 ambassadors were joined by more than 8,000 of their countrymen resident in the city (Josephus *Antiquities* xvii. 11. 1). Jews had been banished from Italy by Tiberius in A.D. 19. That edict must have sent several thousands seeking asylum, and naturally numbers of them would return to Palestine. Tiberius revoked this edict, but many Roman Jews might well have lingered in Jerusalem (see Vol. V, pp. 65, 66).

Jews and proselytes. The words may be applied to the whole preceding list, or they may be read like a note, especially emphasizing the prominence of the Roman proselytes in that cosmopolitan multitude of worshipers.

It is natural that the Gentile Luke (see Vol. V, p. 664), writing to the Gentile Theophilus (see on Luke 1:3), should mention visitors from the capital of the Roman Empire. For “proselytes” see on Matt. 23:15.

11. Cretes and Arabians. The two names appear to have been added to the preceding list, and this has been cited as an illustration of the genuine nature of Luke's account, as though Luke were reporting what an eyewitness had informally told him. The island of Crete, south of Greece, held a large Jewish population. Arabia, bordering on Palestine, was the home of many thousands of Jews.

A study of the countries mentioned in vs. 9–11 reveals that many names that might have been expected are missing, and some minor ones are included. This may be taken as further evidence that Luke did not invent the list, but received it from those who had actually witnessed the miracle at Pentecost. The list should not be regarded as an exact inventory of all who were in Jerusalem, however. It is rather an attempt to describe the cosmopolitan nature of those to whom the disciples spoke, and the many different languages thus employed.

The wonderful works. Rather, “the great things,” or “the majesty.” The term would cover God's providences that were manifested throughout the life and work of Jesus.

12. Amazed. See on v. 7.

Doubt. Gr. *diaporeō*, “to be perplexed.” Luke is the only NT writer to use the word.

What meaneth this? The hearers were genuinely puzzled at the phenomenon, and were excitedly discussing its import.

13. Others. Gr. *heteroi*, “others of a different kind,” not *alloi*, “others of the same kind.” This suggests a different class of speakers from those mentioned in vs. 5–12.

Perhaps these *heteroi* were native residents of Jerusalem or Palestine who did not understand any of the languages the disciples were using. They had probably been influenced by many slanderous things that had been said about Christ. The Jews had

attributed some of our Lord's miracles to the power of the chief of devils (Luke 11:15), and Festus pronounced Paul mad (Acts 26:24). The priests had mocked Christ on the cross (Matt. 27:41–43), and were capable of instigating base rumors to account for this miracle of tongues lest it weaken their priestly hold on the people (cf. AA 40).

New wine. Gr. *gleukos*, “sweet wine,” not “new wine,” since Pentecost fell in June, and fresh grapes were not ripe till August. Apparently, an intoxicating beverage is meant here. The accusation of the mockers would suggest that there was an element of excitement in the manner and tone of the disciples. It would have been strange, indeed, if they had spoken in an altogether calm, or casual, manner. The great power of God was upon them, and their theme one of vast import.

14. Peter. A remarkable change has come over the apostle during the few weeks since his denial. He has been converted. His mind has been opened by the Lord's instruction so that he can understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45). He has been endued with insight and power by the Holy Spirit. As a result, he stands forth as a sanctified leader of men. Instead of uncertainty, there is conviction; instead of fear, boldness; instead of hasty words, as in the Gospels, there is a detailed, well-reasoned discourse. The prophecies concerning Christ are unfolded with method and clarity. Here is an unstudied proof of genuineness. An inventor of tales would hardly have dared to show such a change in character as Luke shows in Peter.

With the eleven. Peter is not speaking in isolation. He stands as a representative of his brethren. They have been individually addressing the different national groups, but Peter addresses the multitude and binds off this great evangelistic meeting. “The eleven” reveals that Matthias is included among the apostles, and thus has rapidly taken to his responsibilities.

Lifted up. Although this expression is found in the LXX and in classical Greek, it is also a Hebraism (Gen. 21:16; 27:38), and suggests a raising of the voice, a crying out aloud. This was necessary in order for Peter to make himself heard by the large crowd.

Said. Gr. *apophthegomai*, “to speak forth” (cf. on v. 4). The use of this word adds color to the fact that Peter was speaking with the Spirit's gift. The apostle was not just “saying”; he was “speaking forth” that which the Spirit gave him.

Men of Judaea. This part of v. 14 reads literally, “Men, Jews, and inhabitants of Jerusalem.” It would appear that Peter was first speaking to local Jews (see v. 13), as distinct from the Jews of vs. 5–11, who were of the Desperation.

Dwell at Jerusalem. This phrase may also be taken in the local sense, as referring to those whose home was in the capital. Peter's words, however, would reach the whole assembly, and it is clear from v. 22 that the apostle is eventually addressing the wider company.

Hearken. Literally, “give ear to.” This is another Hebraism, and may possibly indicate that Peter was speaking in Aramaic. Opinion on this matter is divided, for many Hebraisms are carried over into the Greek of the LXX, and the scriptural quotations are from the LXX.

15. These are not drunken. Peter appeals to the common sense of his listeners. Were the disciples likely to be drunk on the morning of the Feast of Pentecost, after a night spent in devotion, and when all decent Jews were fasting? Drunkenness belonged to the night (1 Thess. 5:7). It was a mark of extreme grossness for men to “rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink” (Isa. 5:11; cf. Eccl. 10:16, 17). Basing their

traditional practice on Ex. 16:8, the Jews ate bread in the morning and flesh in the evening; and no wine was drunk by the Jew of good habits until late in the day.

As ye suppose. The apostle deals tactfully with the unfounded accusation of drunkenness, and assumes they have made a mistake rather than a malicious charge.

Third hour. That is, about 9:00 A.M. For NT reckoning of time see Vol. V, p. 50; see on Matt. 27:45. The third hour was the time of morning prayer.

16. This is that. Peter makes no timid approach to his subject. He boldly identifies the preaching as a fulfillment of prophecy. He can afford to do this, since he has been taught by the Lord and is inspired by the Spirit. Under this twofold guidance he begins the first public exposition of the life and works of the Messiah since His ascension. The verses that follow amply testify to the apostle's new-found ability.

Joel. Peter does not plunge into controversy about Jesus. He first uses the OT Scriptures, which they believed, to sanction the phenomenon they are even then witnessing. This gains their attention, helps them accept his reasoning, and prepares them for his later references to Christ. The prophecy of Joel is thought by some to be the oldest prophetic book of the Bible (see Vol. IV, pp. 20, 21). Under the theme of the coming "day of the Lord" Joel calls Israel to repentance, and promises an outpouring of the Spirit at some future time, identified only as "afterward" (see on Joel 2:28–32; see Vol. IV, pp. 937, 938). The expectation of such an outpouring of the Holy Spirit was strong among devout men of the OT (see on Acts 2:3). Verses 17–21 are quoted from Joel 2:28–32, following quite closely the LXX.

17. Come to pass. The inference is that what was future to Joel is now present. The hearers are having prophecy fulfilled before their very eyes.

In the last days. See on Joel 2:28; cf. on Isa. 2:2.

Saith God. This does not appear in the text in Joel. It is an insertion by Peter for permissible sermonic purposes, and identifies the Giver of the promise that follows.

Of my Spirit. See on ch. 3:19.

Upon all flesh. That is, upon all men, enduing weak humanity with divine ability. The gift is not concentrated upon the Jews or upon any class or sex, although Peter's mind would doubtless limit it to his own people at this stage.

Shall prophesy. Peter's application of Joel's prophecy to the present experience at Pentecost seems to link the gift of prophecy with the gift of tongues (see on Joel 2:28). The prophecy also states that women as well as men are to have the gift. Luke records fulfillments of this promise in Acts 9:10–16; 11:27, 28; 13:1–3; 16:6, 7; 18:9, 10; 21:9–11; 22:17, 18; 27:10, 22–25. See also on Luke 2:36. The gifts of the Spirit have always revealed themselves in the activities of God's successful servants, particularly in crucial times.

Your young men. It has been shown again and again that men still in their younger years have both the ideals and the energy to see ahead and attempt the seemingly impossible. It seems that most, perhaps all, of Jesus' disciples were young. Most religious movements, and many political and civic enterprises, have been set afoot by young men.

See visions. For a discussion of "visions" and "dreams" see on Num. 12:6; 1 Sam. 3:1. The young men are to see Spirit-given visions containing stimulation and instruction for the present and the future.

Old men. In Joel, these are mentioned before the "young men."

Dreams. That is, revelations received in sleep, as contrasted with “visions,” which refer to visual revelations in general.

18. My servants. The passage from which this is quoted (Joel 2:29) says simply “servants” or “slaves,” both in the Hebrew and the LXX. It gives assurance that God’s Spirit is not reserved for the high and the mighty, but is to be received also by men and women on the lowest levels of society (see on Joel 2:28). But in the present context, Peter seems to make an extended application of these words. In v. 17 he speaks of “*your* sons,” “*your* daughters,” “*your* young men,” “*your* old men.” Then at the beginning of v. 18 he makes a subtle change from OT. His declaration, translated literally, is, “and indeed upon *my* servants and upon *my* handmaidens.” This addition of the words “indeed” and “my” to the OT text would seem to imply that Peter considers “servants” and “handmaidens” not as a further category of those who would receive the Spirit, but rather as a summary of all those who already had been mentioned. *Your* sons, daughters, young men, and old men, indeed all of Israel (see on v. 17), were to be *My* servants and handmaidens, true servants of God.

In those days. That is, “in the last days” (v. 17).

Of my Spirit. See on ch. 3:19.

Shall prophesy. See on v. 17. The words here do not appear in the corresponding passage in Joel 2:29.

19. I will shew. Literally, “I will give.”

Wonders. Gr. *terata*, “portents,” “miracles” (see Vol. V, p. 208).

In heaven. In Peter’s mind the immediate application of this prophecy may have been the gift of the Spirit from heaven. But the quotation also is significant for the last days (see on v. 20).

Signs. Gr. *sēmeia*, “signs,” “prodigies.” This word or its equivalent does not appear in the Hebrew or the LXX of Joel, but is frequently used with *terata* (see above on “wonders”) in the NT and always in the plural (John 4:48; Acts 4:30; Rom. 15:19; etc.).

In the earth. This may well refer, immediately, to the speaking with other tongues, but, as succeeding phrases show, its real significance belongs to the last days. Neither “above” nor “beneath” are in Joel; they are words added by Peter to sharpen the contrast between “heaven” and “earth.”

Blood. “Blood,” “fire,” and “smoke,” the terrible companions of war.

Vapour. This follows the LXX. Joel’s Hebrew has “pillars,” or “columns.”

20. The Sun. For specific fulfillment of the signs mentioned in this verse see on Joel 2:10; Matt. 24:29.

Before. Intimating that the wonders and signs precede the “day of the Lord” and are not themselves a part of it.

Notable. Gr. *epiphanēs*, “manifest,” “illustrious,” or “glorious.” The Hebrew of Joel 2:31, however, literally means “terrible,” “bright,” “glorious.”

The phrase “great and notable day” agrees with the LXX, but the final part of Acts 2:20 may be rendered “before the day of the Lord comes, the great and manifest day” (RSV).

Day of the Lord. See on Isa. 13:6; Joel 1:15; 2:1. The day will be terrible to the enemies of God (Joel 2:1, 2; Amos 5:18–20; Rev. 6:15–17; etc.), but welcome to those who accept the Lord’s call (Isa. 25:9; Joel 2:32).

21. Whosoever. This would first apply to Peter's listeners, but in its wider sense it embraces all mankind and stresses the universality of the gospel appeal.

Call. To "call on the name of the Lord" was a common Hebrew phrase connected with those who worshiped God see Gen. 12:8; see on ch. 4:26. Luke and Paul both use the construction (Acts 7:59; 9:14; 22:16; Rom. 10:12; 1 Cor. 1:2). In Acts it is also used in the sense of appealing from a lower to a higher tribunal (ch. 11, 12, 21, 25).

The prayer of faith will result in a spirit of calm assurance amid the terrors of the day of the Lord. It is also true that those who, at any time, sincerely call on the Lord's name thereby find the way of salvation ch. 4:12.

Peter broaches the great conclusion to which he is working, that Jesus is the Lord and Christ ch. 2:36. He has taken an OT prophecy that speaks of *Yahweh*, Jehovah (see Vol. I, pp. 172, 173), and applied it to Jesus. The title *Kurios*, "Lord," used in the LXX for *Yahweh*, is given to the ascended Master. It is a bold step. It shows how the conviction of Christ's deity was the keystone in Peter's thinking and doctrine.

So frequently does the word "name" occur in connection with the Lord in the book of Acts that it constitutes a theme. The name of the Lord became a symbol to the disciples of the glorious character and unlimited power of Him with whom they had walked in Palestine.

Shall be saved. This has a twofold application—saved from sin and from the judgments of God upon the earth. As to judgments, the 1st-century Christians, by obeying the counsel of Jesus as given in Matt. 24:15–20, were saved from the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans (Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* iii. 5. 3; see on Matt. 24:16). At the close of time, true Christians, by following the counsels of the Lord as Saviour and coming King, will be saved from the catastrophes of the last days. However, the chief application of the words of this verse is to salvation from sin.

22. Men of Israel. Literally, "men, Israelites." The term "Israel" implies the covenant relationship (see on Gen. 32:28).

Hear these words. An arresting phrase, marking a division in Peter's argument. Peter has given the prophetic background, and now launches into his main theme, the divinity of Jesus.

Jesus of Nazareth. The first part of the title affixed to the cross (cf. John 19:19). Seven weeks later the name is used to introduce Him whom Peter demonstrates to be "both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). The use of the name could hardly have been casual.

A man. Peter begins his argument with the *human* Jesus, the Man who had lived and moved among them, openly and publicly, and proved by His life and works to be all that Peter is now going to claim for Him.

Approved of God. That is, acknowledged by God.

Among you. Rather, "unto you."

Miracles and wonders and signs. For "miracles" read, literally, "powers," or "mighty works." "Wonders" and "signs" may hark back to Joel's words quoted in v. 19. The three words are synonyms, expressing different aspects of the same fact rather than a meticulous classification of Christ's deeds.

God did. Peter postulates God's authority and approval for Jesus' miracles.

Ye yourselves. The audience could hardly quarrel with Peter's statements, for they knew them to be true, based on deeds done in their midst.

23. Him. Literally, “this one,” that is, Jesus of Nazareth (v. 22).

Delivered. That is, betrayed, by Judas. In order to afford Satan the opportunity to demonstrate the evils of his government, God permits many things to happen, contrary to His ultimate purpose. However, in His divine wisdom, He overrules all to His glory.

Determine counsel. Peter has so developed his spiritual insight that he now can see the working out of God’s purpose, in harmony with God’s foreknowledge, in the tragic events associated with Christ’s death (cf. ch. 1:16). See on Isa. 53:10; cf. Luke 22:22.

Ye have taken. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of these words.

By wicked hands. Literally, “by the hand of lawless [men].”

Crucified and slain. Literally, “fastening [to the cross] ye did slay.” Peter here includes his hearers among those guilty of his Master’s death. This is a terrible indictment in view of his conclusion (v. 36).

24. Whom God hath raised. It is probable that an account of the resurrection of Jesus had found its way among the people, and had been met by the false story recorded in Matt. 28:11–15. But this is the first public witness to that event borne by one of the followers of Jesus.

Pains. Literally, “travail pangs.” The word for “pains” is the same as that for “sorrows” in Matt. 24:8.

Not possible. Peter’s conviction rests, in part, upon the sure words of prophecy quoted in vs. 25–28, which foretell Messiah’s triumph over death. But there are other reasons: (1) Christ’s sinlessness (John 8:46; 1 Peter 2:22; see on Matt. 4:1–11; see Additional Note on John 1)—death could not hold the Innocent One; (2) the Life-giver could not be held by death (John 5:26; 10:17, 18).

25. Concerning him. Without this explanation Ps. 16 might seem to present hope only of David’s own deliverance from his enemies. The fact of the resurrection gave a new meaning to prophecies that would not of themselves have suggested it, but that were incomplete without it.

I foresaw. This may also be translated, “I saw in front of myself.”

The Lord. God the Father.

On my right hand. The reference may be to a battle scene, in which a soldier, standing by his friend’s right hand, protects him from attack. It may also represent an advocate by the side of his client. The quotation emphasizes the Father’s unfailing support of the Son.

26. Heart rejoice. Oneness with God is the greatest source of happiness.

My tongue. See on Ps. 16:9.

My flesh. That is, “my body.”

Shall rest. Literally, “shall tabernacle,” or “shall dwell as in a tabernacle” (see on 2 Peter 1:13, 14). The Hebrew of Ps. 16 speaks of David’s security in this life, but Peter applies the psalmist’s words to the resurrection.

27. Soul. See on Ps. 16:10; Matt. 10:28.

Hell. Gr. *hadēs*, “the grave” (see on Ps. 16:10; Matt. 11:23). The death of Christ was an actual death, but His resurrection provided victory over it, a death He had tasted for every man (Heb. 2:9).

Holy One. Gr. *hosios*, “pure,” “pious,” “holy.” This word conveys the idea of personal piety and godliness (Heb. 7:26; Rev. 15:4), and thereby differs from *hagios*,

which refers to consecration or dedication (see Mark 1:24). See Additional Note on Psalm 36.

Corruption. In the Hebrew text of the verse quoted the word is *shachath*, “pit,” that is, “grave” (see on Ps. 16:10). Luke was doubtless following the LXX of Ps. 16:10, which reads “corruption.”

28. Ways of life. This agrees with the LXX, which is a very free rendering of the Hebrew (see on Ps. 16:11).

Joy. Gr. *euphrosunē*, “well-mindedness,” “cheerfulness,” “gladness.”

With thy countenance. God’s countenance, that is, His presence, is the source of cheer and gladness.

29. Men and brethren. Literally, “men, brethren.” Peter maintains his persuasive forms of address.

Let me freely speak. Rather, “it is permissible for me to speak with freedom.” Those to whom the apostle spoke could not contradict the facts of David’s death and burial. The prophecy just quoted must therefore have another application.

Patriarch. Used in its primary sense, of the founder of a family or dynasty. In the NT it is also used of the 12 sons of Jacob (ch. 7:8) and of Abraham (Heb. 7:4).

His sepulchre. King David was buried in Jerusalem, “in the city of David” (see on 1 Kings 2:10; 3:1).

30. Being a prophet. An unusual description of King David, but justified because Ps. 16 goes beyond David’s personal experience and becomes Messianic.

God had sworn. See on 2 Sam. 7:12–14, 16. The oath is suggested in Ps. 132:11, which Peter quotes.

According to the flesh. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of the words “according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ,” so that the passage would read, “God swore to him with an oath to place upon his throne one, of the fruit of his loins.” This would agree more closely with Ps. 132:11.

31. Seeing this before. This ascribes prophetic vision to David, but does not mean that he personally understood that the prophecy referred to the resurrection of the Messiah (see 1 Peter 1:11).

Soul. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading, “he was not left unto hades,” rather than “his soul was not left in hell.” See on v. 27 for comment on “hell,” and “corruption”; for “soul” see on Ps. 16:10; Matt. 10:28.

32. This Jesus. Jesus of Nazareth, the Crucified One, of vs. 22, 23.

God raised up. Christ arose at the call of God the Father, who commissioned angels to call upon His Son to come forth from the dead (Matt. 28:2–6; Rom. 8:11; DA 785).

Witnesses. See on ch. 1:8, 22.

33. By the right hand. Or, “at the right hand.” Such a position was one of honor (see Matt. 20:21; 25:33), and is portrayed as that taken by Christ upon His glorification (Matt. 26:64; Heb. 1:3; cf. Acts 2:34).

Exalted. See on John 1:1–3, 14; see Additional Note on John 1.

Promise of the Holy Ghost. See on John 14:16, 26; 15:26.

Shed forth. Rather, “poured out.”

Now. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of this word.

34. Is not ascended. Rather, “ascended not.” Peter’s argument is clear. David had died and been buried (see on v. 29). Therefore the statement of Ps. 16:10, “Thou wilt not

leave my soul in hell” (see on Acts 2:27), could not refer to him. Here is clear evidence that Peter believed that man does not ascend to heaven at death (cf. 1 Thess. 4:14–17; see on 2 Sam. 12:23; 22:6; Job 7:9).

He saith. Peter quotes Ps. 110:1. This psalm is most quoted in the NT (see Matt. 22:44; 1 Cor. 15:25; Heb. 1:13; 5:6; Heb. 7:17, 21; Heb. 10:13). This psalm was regarded as Messianic by the Jews, and was so interpreted by Jesus (Matt. 22:41–46). See on Ps. 110:1.

The Lord. In terms of the present context this title refers to God the Father (see on Ps. 110:1).

My Lord. In terms of the present context this refers to Christ (see Ps. 110:1).

Sit thou. These words suggest the recognition of Christ as holding a unique position (see Eph. 1:20; cf. Phil. 2:10, 11).

35. Thy foes. Christ is victor in the great controversy with Satan and his hosts. In the ultimate triumph over evil, “the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Cor. 15:26).

Footstool. The king seated in power on a secure throne has his foot upon a footstool (see on Ps. 99:5). To put an enemy in the ignominious place of the footstool is a sign of complete triumph (see on Joshua 10:24). Christ will one day completely conquer all His foes, and His kingdom will be established in everlasting glory (Rev. 11:15). At that time of triumph the Son will turn over the universal kingdom to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24–28).

36. House of Israel. Peter intends his words to go beyond the immediate circle of his hearers to “all” Israel. Nevertheless, his vision thus far is evidently limited to the Jewish race, as was true of the other disciples. This is evident from Peter’s experience with Cornelius see chs. 10:9–16; 11:1–18.

That same Jesus. Rather, “this very Jesus” (cf. vs. 22, 23).

Ye have crucified. The pronoun “ye” (*humeis*), not ordinarily given in the Greek, emphasizes the contrast between the Jews’ treatment of Jesus and the recognition He had received from the Father. In the Greek the word “crucified” comes at the end of the sentence, and makes a most solemn conclusion. Peter boldly lays the crime at the Jews’ door. He unflinchingly presses home their guilt and thus prepares the way for the effects described in v. 37.

Lord and Christ. The word “Lord” reflects the thought of the psalm cited in v. 34. “Christ” identifies Jesus as the Messiah (see on Ps. 2:2; Matt. 1:1). The original word order possesses a force which the English cannot give: “Both Lord and Christ hath God made this Jesus.”

37. When they heard. God has ordained that the preaching of His word should be one of the most effective means of bringing conviction—and faith—to man (see Rom. 10:17; 1 Cor. 1:21).

Pricked. Gr. *katanussomai*, “to pierce,” and metaphorically, “to pain mentally.” Here is the deep inner sorrow that should accompany true repentance (2 Cor. 7:9–11).

Apostles. They must have been nearby, supporting Peter in his dynamic ministry.

Men and brethren. The very term the disciples used with one another (ch. 1:16), and with which Peter addressed the multitude in ch. 2:29. The Spirit-prompted sermon brought the people into sympathy with the apostles.

What shall we do? The genuine cry of contrite hearts (cf. chs. 16:30; 22:10).

38. Repent. For a discussion of the import of this word see on Matt. 3:2; 4:17. This is the message that Christ commanded to be preached (Luke 24:47).

Be baptized. See on Matt. 3:6; Mark 16:16. This was to be an integral part of the apostles' ministry (Matt. 28:19).

Every one. Peter allows no exemption from baptism. Although it is not a saving act, it is the outward sign of the death of the old life and the beginning of the new, and is required of all.

In the name. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 10) between this and the reading "upon the name," that is, upon confession of the name of Jesus. Such an interpretation would suit the context, which deals with Jesus as "Lord and Christ" (v. 36).

The question arises, Why in this instance, and in chs. 10:48; 19:5, is only the name of Jesus mentioned in connection with baptism, and not the threefold name given in Matt. 28:19? Various explanations have been given. The most satisfactory solution seems to be that Luke is not recording the baptismal formula, but Peter's exhortation to those who are willing to confess Jesus as the Christ. It was only logical that Christian baptism sometimes might be spoken of as if only in the single name, since of the persons of the Godhead, it is Christ particularly to whom baptism points. This is illustrated in early Christian literature, both in the NT and later. Thus the Didache, or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (7; 9), uses both the single name and the three names in connection with baptism. This early attitude is demonstrated by Ambrose (d. A.D. 397), who declared concerning the baptismal formula: "He who says the one signifies the Trinity. If you say Christ, you have designated also God the Father from whom the Son was anointed, and also the Son, the very One who was anointed, and the Holy Spirit by whom He was anointed" (*De Spiritu Sancto* i. 3; J. P. Migne, ed., *Patrologia Latina*, vol. XVI, col. 743). Peter's hearers already believed in God the Father; the real test, so far as they were concerned, was whether they would accept Jesus as the Messiah.

As Christ had instructed, baptism was now given "in the name," in vital connection with the person of Jesus Christ. Only by recognizing Him could the convert now come to baptism. The disciples had just experienced the gift of the Holy Spirit, and thus they were in a position to recognize the meaning of John the Baptist's prophecy that Christ would baptize them "with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" (Matt. 3:11). The mystical union between the believer and his Lord, made real by the Spirit, is signalized in the rite of baptism.

Sins. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading "your sins." This makes forgiveness a very personal matter (see on Matt. 1:21; 3:6; 26:28; Luke 3:3).

Gift of the Holy Ghost. These words may be understood as identifying the gift, and so may be read, "gift which is the Holy Ghost." The Greek *dōrea*, "gift," is a general term, and differs from *charisma*, a term applied to the more specific gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:4). The apostle promises the presence of the Spirit of God as a personal possession for each believer. He is not here concerned with the bestowal of miraculous powers.

Note the steps in the blessed experience of becoming a Christian, as outlined in this verse: (1) repentance, (2) baptism, (3) remission of sin, (4) reception of the Holy Spirit.

39. Promise. See on ch. 1:4.

Unto you. The very ones who had participated in the crucifixion of the Lord. Their children were also free to benefit from the promise (cf. Matt. 27:25).

Afar off. The Jews of the Dispersion (see Vol. V, pp. 59–61), to whom the apostle afterward wrote (1 Peter 1:1, 2), and possibly also the heathen nations among whom the dispersed Jews lived (cf. Eph. 2:13, 17). By inspiration Peter may here be forecasting the entry of Gentiles into the church (see Matt. 28:19).

Lord our God. God, the Father, whom the Jews professed to serve.

Shall call. Rather, “may call unto Him.” The call of God is to everyone. Everyone has an opportunity to be saved. In the sense of invitation, the “called” are many; the “chosen” are those who respond to the call (see on Matt. 22:14); these are the “called” in the ultimate sense. For further comment see on Rom. 8:28–30.

40. Many other words. Now Luke summarizes the remainder of Peter’s address, quoting only his final appeal (cf. on John 21:25).

Did ... testify and exhort. Rather, “protested solemnly and kept on exhorting.”

Save yourselves. Literally, “be ye saved.” Men cannot save themselves; they can only accept or reject God’s provisions for salvation.

Untoward. Rather, “crooked,” as in Luke 3:5; Phil. 2:15. Compare on Deut. 32:5.

41. Gladly. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of this word.

Added. To those who already confessed Christ (see on ch. 1:15).

Three thousand. Because of the largeness of this number it has been urged that the baptism was by pouring or sprinkling, not immersion. Such an assumption is not necessary (see on Matt. 3:6). There were adequate supplies of water in and near Jerusalem to provide for the baptism of large numbers of persons, such as the pools at Bethesda (see on John 5:2) and Siloam (see on John 9:7), and the pools of Solomon. Furthermore, it need not be thought that the administration of the rite was necessarily confined to the Twelve. Succeeding chapters show that many converts were made from among the Hellenistic Jews who were present at the feast (Acts 6:1) and that few if any of the converts were yet of the local ruling class (ch. 4:1). Some of these converts went back to the cities whence they had come, and may have been the now unknown founders of the churches in such places as Damascus, Alexandria, or Rome itself.

Souls. Gr. *psuchai*, “souls,” used here in the sense of “persons,” as in Acts 2:43; 3:23; Rom. 13:1; etc.; see on Matt. 10:28.

42. Continued stedfastly. Gr. *proskartereō*, “to persevere,” “to give constant attention to.” This takes the story beyond the day of Pentecost and includes the believers’ conduct in the days that followed (see on ch. 3:1).

Doctrine. That is, “teaching.” The newly baptized Christians had heard Peter’s sermon, and separate groups had benefited from the messages given in many tongues. In succeeding days that first instruction would be supplemented by further lessons concerning Christ. All such instruction may be included in the term “teaching.” It is difficult to believe that the apostles had already formulated anything like a “creed.”

Fellowship. Gr. *koinōnia*; although this word is translated most often as “fellowship” (1 Cor. 1:9; Phil. 1:5; 3:10; John 1:3, 6, 7; etc.), in 1 Cor. 10:16; 2 Cor. 13:14 it is rendered “communion,” and in Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 9:13; Heb. 13:16 it refers to charitable contributions. It seems clear that in the present instance the word refers to the brotherhood that developed between the apostles and their converts.

Breaking of bread. Probably this included both the Lord's Supper (see 1 Cor. 10:16) and ordinary communal meals (see p. 45; Acts 2:44, 46).

The expression "breaking of bread," or one similar to it, occurs in Matt. 14:19; 15:36; Mark 8:6, 19; Luke 24:30, 35, of meals that were clearly not celebrations of the Lord's Supper. "To break bread" was a common Jewish idiom meaning "to eat." In Matt. 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:24 it is used specifically of the Lord's Supper. In Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7, 11 either might be indicated. That the cup is not mentioned in connection with the bread does not necessarily exclude the possibility that the Lord's Supper is here referred to. Although the context does not justify a dogmatic conclusion, it may be noted that the expression "breaking of bread" appears in a series descriptive of religious activities. Verse 41 speaks of believers receiving the "word," of being "baptized," and of being "added" to the church. Accordingly, it may be reasonable to conclude that the "breaking of bread" here referred to likewise had specific religious significance. See on Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:20, 21.

Prayers. See on ch. 1:14. Here were four basic elements in the life of the new Christian society: (1) The believers grew in knowledge of the truth through the teaching of the apostles. (2) They were conscious of fellowship with Christ, and with one another in acts of common worship and mutual kindness and benevolence. (3) They participated in the "breaking of bread," probably including the Lord's Supper. (4) They engaged in prayer, both private and corporate.

43. Fear. That is, reverential awe.

Came. Rather, "kept on coming."

Every soul. Awe must have fallen upon believers and unbelievers alike. During the previous two months Jerusalem had been through trying times. There had been the climax to the work of Jesus, with public attention focused upon Him. He had been crucified, and had risen from the dead. The disciples had boldly proclaimed His resurrection and ascension. Then had come the remarkable events of the day of Pentecost. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit was presented as proof of Christ's acceptance in heaven. The impact of the Christian community upon the nonbelievers had resulted in the conversion and baptism of thousands. Here was ample cause for awe in the hearts of the people of Jerusalem.

Many wonders and signs. Here was further cause for awe. The Spirit manifested Himself in giving to the apostles great power not only in preaching but in working miracles, even as Jesus had promised them (see on Mark 16:14–18).

Done. Rather, "kept on being done."

44. Together. This may refer either to the physical gathering together of the believers or to their unity of spirit.

All things common. To have things in common was not unusual in Jewish life of the time. Visitors to the yearly feasts often had their needs supplied by their friends in Jerusalem. It is clear, however, that something more than this is implied in Luke's statement. The Christians were thrown back upon themselves, and a new, a Christian, economy was set up. However, this does not mean the institution of what is called Christian socialism. It was probably a continuation and enlargement of the "bag," or common purse, of John 12:6; 13:29. The new converts would be the more ready to share their material possessions because of their new-found love for Christ and for one another, and their earnest expectations of the Lord's soon return (Acts 1:11). There was nothing

compulsory about the sharing (ch. 5:4). It was a literal fulfillment of our Lord's words (Luke 12:33), and a very natural act for a society founded, not on the law of self-interest and competition, but on the law of sympathy and self-denial. The Spirit of God was showing His power, not only in the specific gifts, but in the way of love.

There is no evidence that this way of life continued in the church for any length of time, except in the gracious benevolence that the church doubtless showed at every opportunity. At the same time, however, the church learned to discriminate in its economy (2 Thess. 3:10; 1 Tim. 5:8, 16). The church at Jerusalem became repeatedly dependent upon the bounty of the Gentile churches, as seen in Acts 11:29. It need not be thought, however, that the Jerusalem church came to be thus in need because of the extravagance of its benevolence in the earlier years, but rather because of the severe persecution and famine it endured (see on Acts 11:27–30; Rom 15:26; 1 Cor. 16:1–3).

45. Sold. Rather, “were selling,” or “used to sell.” The sales took place as special occasions of distress called for expenditure of funds to assist those in need.

Possessions. Gr. *ktēmata*, “possessions,” in the sense of fixed property, such as land.

Goods. Gr. *huparxeis*, “possessions,” in the sense of movable property, personal possessions.

Parted. That is, “divided up,” “distributed.” They distributed the proceeds of the sale of their possessions.

To all. That is, to all the believers.

As every man had need. Rather, “according as anyone had need.” The words imply judicious discrimination. Help was dependent upon the degree of need. The was soon prepared for systematic aid (see on ch. 6:1–6).

46. Continuing daily. The new believers were constant in their public devotions.

With one accord. Compare on ch. 1:14.

In the temple. It might be thought that followers of the One the rulers had condemned to death would avoid the Temple. But they were frequenting it even before the day of Pentecost (Luke 24:53). It would be more precious to them than in the days before they knew their Lord as the Messiah. Through Him they had learned truly to know the God of the Temple. It might seem strange, too, that they should be allowed to worship and teach in the Temple. Later on, indeed, they were forbidden to do so. But it must be remembered that the Temple courts were open to all Israelites who did not disturb its peace, partly, perhaps, because there were those in the Sanhedrin, such as Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathaea, and Gamaliel, who were on the borderline of belief. Then, too, the church may have acquired a certain popularity by its holiness of life and its liberal alms giving. As for the disciples, they did not think of their religion as a defection from Judaism, but rather as the fulfillment of it. The Christians therefore worshiped with their Jewish blood brothers (Acts 3:1), not only from habit and desire, but also in the hope of seeing them won to the gospel. See also on ch. 3:1.

Breaking bread. See on v. 42.

From house to house. Or, “at home.” The Christians worshiped in the Temple, but the particular features of their communal life, the breaking of bread and the sharing of their food with one another took place in one another's homes.

Did eat their meat. Rather, “were eating food.” It is evident that the breaking of bread was closely connected with the daily life of the Christians (see on Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 11:20–22).

Gladness. Gr. *agalliasis*, “exultation,” “extreme joy.” They rejoiced at the privilege of being Christians.

Singleness. Gr. *aphelotēs*, literally, “free from stones,” referring to smooth soil, but here meaning simplicity of character, unalloyed benevolence, generosity. These emotions would naturally be evident in the early Christians.

47. Praising God. A phrase often used by Luke (cf. Luke 2:13, 20; 19:37; Acts 3:8, 9). Joy in their new-found faith naturally led them to praise the Father. The true child of God always finds sufficient cause to praise the Lord.

Favour. Jesus had been popular with the people; the church now enjoyed a similar favor, possibly because they praised God and were benevolent.

The Lord. The church recognized that the great accessions to the faith were due to the Lord and not to themselves.

Added. Rather, “was adding,” or “kept adding,” giving the idea of continuity beyond the day of Pentecost. This is strengthened by the use of the word “daily.”

To the church. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of these words.

Such as should be saved. Gr. *hoi sōzomenoi*, “those that were being saved.” The rendering “should be saved” probably reflected unconsciously the theological belief of the translators, but has no support in the Greek.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1 DA 827; Ed 95; ML 58; MM 201; 8T 191
- 1, 2 AA 37, 39; COL 120; Ed 95; Ev 697; TM 170; 5T 252
- 1–4GC ix; SR 242; TM 66; 7T 31
- 1–47AA 35–46; SR 241–247; 9T 196
- 2 7T 213
- 2–4ML 60; 8T 15
- 3–5AA 39
- 4 DA 821; EW 24; 7T 213; 8T 26
- 5 AA 87
- 5–8SR 243
- 6–8, 13AA 40
- 13–16TM 66
- 14–18AA 41
- 17 EW 78; GC 611
- 19 PP 110
- 21 GC 611; ML 62
- 22–25AA 41
- 23 FE 535
- 25–27SR 244
- 26, 27, 29 AA 42
- 29 GC 546
- 30 1T 203
- 31, 32 AA 42
- 34 GC 546
- 36 AA 165
- 37, 38 SR 245

37–39AA 43
38 SC 23
38, 39 GC ix
39 8T 57
41 AA 22, 44; COL 120; DA 275, 770, 827; Ev 35, 699; ML 61; SR 245; 8T 15, 21, 26
41–47WM 271
43 Ev 35
46 AA 45
46, 47 MB 137; 5T 239
47 COL 121; EW 174; GC 379; 7T 32

CHAPTER 3

1 *Peter preaching to the people that came to see a lame man restored to his feet, 12 professeth the cure not to have been wrought by his or John's own power, or holiness, but by God, and his Son Jesus, and through faith in his name: 13 withal reprehending them for crucifying Jesus. 17 Which because they did it through ignorance, and that thereby were fulfilled God's determinate counsel, and the scriptures: 19 he exhorteth them by repentance and faith to seek remission of their sins, and salvation in the same Jesus.*

I. Now. Gr. *de*, a word implying a logical connection with the preceding, rather than a time element. No account is given as to the interval of time that had passed since the day of Pentecost. Presumably ch. 2:42–47 summarizes a gradual progress without any striking incident, and may cover a period of several months. It is remarkable that Luke, who lays such stress on chronological data in the Gospel (Luke 3:1; 6:1), gives so few in Acts. Evidently, the Holy Spirit, who guided his pen, did not see fit to enlighten his mind on these questions of dates.

Peter and John. This coupling of the two apostles brings the narrative of the Gospels into an interesting connection with that of the Acts. These two men had long been closely associated. They had been partners as fishermen on the Sea of Galilee (see Luke 5:10). Peter with John and James had enjoyed a confidential relationships with the Lord (see Mark 5:37; 9:2; 13:3; 14:33). Peter and John had been sent together to prepare for the Passover that Jesus wished to eat with His disciples (Luke 22:8). The night of Jesus' trial John, being known to the household of the high priest, took Peter into the high priest's palace (John 18:15, 16). At a later time John and Peter were to be sent to help Philip in the mission to Samaria (Acts 8:14), and with James they were to approve the work done by Paul and Barnabas among the Gentiles (Gal. 2:9). Thus their appearance here is typical of the characteristic comradeship of the two apostles, Peter and John.

Went up. Rather, "were going up." The incident to be related occurred as the two apostles were on their way into the Temple to worship.

Into the temple. Gr. *hieron*, which included not only the sanctuary, but also the court and the whole complex of buildings connected with the Temple (see on Matt. 4:5). The apostles were "continually in the temple, praising and blessing God" (Luke 24:53; see Acts 2:46). The Jews converted to Christianity had no church buildings in which to meet, and it had not yet occurred to them that the services of the Temple no longer had special spiritual significance for Christians.

The hour of prayer. That is, the ninth hour, about three o'clock in the afternoon (see on ch. 2:15; see Vol. V, p. 50). This was the time of the evening sacrifice (see Josephus *Antiquities* xiv. 4. 3 [65]). It was known both as "the hour of prayer" and as "the time of incense" (see Luke 1:9, 10). The morning and evening sacrifices were offered with incense at the third and the ninth hours of the day (about 9:00 A.M. and 3:00 P.M.), at which times the pious prayed in the courts of the Temple. A prayer at noon seems also to have been customary, at least with some (see Ps. 55:17; see on Dan. 6:10; Acts 10:9). It is known that in the 2d century A.D. a third daily prayer took place about sunset, and this may have been customary earlier. Rabbinical writings indicate that some leeway was allowed in the exact time of these prayers. The practice of praying three times a day appears in the Christian church certainly as early as the 2d century, a practice probably carried over directly from the Jewish synagogue (Didache 8). During the early 3d century three hours of prayer were observed apparently by many Christians (see Clement of Alexandria *The Stromata* vii. 7).

2. From his mother's womb. The careful record of the duration of the man's suffering is rather characteristic of Luke (see chs. 9:33; 14:8). The cripple was about 40 years old at the time of his healing (see on ch. 4:22).

Was carried. Better, "was being carried," or "used to be carried." The Greek may be understood here as indicating either that the lame man was being carried to his place of begging when he accosted the apostles or that he was already sitting there when Peter and John appeared. In those days there were neither hospitals nor poorhouses; so to be helped, the lame man must be placed where well-disposed folk could see his condition (see Mark 10:46; Luke 16:20; 18:35). The crowds going to the Temple would be inclined to help by the religious feeling of the moment.

Gate ... called Beautiful. No gate by this name is known elsewhere in the Bible or in Jewish literature. The opinion of scholars is divided generally as to whether this gate is to be identified with the Shushan Gate in the outermost wall on the east side of the Temple area, or with the Nicanor Gate, which probably led from the Court of the Gentiles into the Court of the Women. Some have placed this latter gate between the Court of the Women and that of the Men. Whether the Beautiful Gate constituted a part of the outer wall or was between the courts seems to depend largely on the route the apostles are thought to have taken in the present narrative. Luke records that they came to the gate, healed the man, entered the Temple, and apparently after they had offered their prayers, met a crowd of persons in Solomon's Porch who had been attracted by the miracle. Inasmuch as Solomon's Porch appears to have been just inside the eastern outer wall (see on v. 11), the Beautiful Gate may have been the outer, Shushan, gate, for if it were an inner gate between the courts, it would have been necessary for the apostles to go out through it again in order to reach Solomon's Porch. However, it seems rather difficult to account for Peter's and John's having used such a gate in the beginning, for it led from the Mount of Olives and would scarcely have been in the direction from which they would have entered the Temple, living in the city as they were. Compared with other gates leading directly from the city into the Temple, it must have been little used, and would hardly be a place for a beggar habitually to sit. Because of these apparent difficulties, many scholars prefer to suppose that the apostles did go out again through the Beautiful Gate before meeting the crowd in Solomon's Porch, and that this gate is to be identified with the Nicanor Gate, situated probably between the Court of the Gentiles and the Court of

the Women. Josephus describes this gate thus: "One, that outside the sanctuary, was of Corinthian bronze, and far exceeded in value those plated with silver and set in gold" (*War* v. 5. 3 [201]). Concerning this same gate the Mishnah declares: "All the original gates were changed for gates of gold except the gates of Nicanor, because a miracle was wrought to them; some say, however, it was because the copper of them gleamed [like gold]" (Mishnah *Middoth* 2. 3, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, pp. 7, 8). Taking all the evidence together, it seems probable that the Beautiful Gate is to be identified with the Nicanor Gate.

To ask alms. The approaches of the Temple, like those of a modern mosque and some of the great cathedrals of Europe, doubtless were thronged with the blind, the lame, the deformed, and mendicants of all sorts.

3. Go into the temple. The fact that the apostles were about to enter the Temple, presumably to worship, doubtless recommended them to the lame man's mind as pious men from whom he might expect an alms.

Asked an alms. In his need the lame man could not see beyond visible needs and means. Even the most devout man, which the lame man, when healed, proved to be (v. 8), may not recognize divine sources because of his immediate physical needs. Peter and John had no outward evidence that they were vehicles of divine power. On the other hand, this lame man, a daily witness of the Temple services, and perhaps a purveyor of its gossip, could scarcely have been ignorant of the stirring events accompanying the recent crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

4. Fastening his eyes. Or, "after he gazed upon" (see on Acts 1:10; Luke 4:20).

Look on us. Peter and John did not mean to imply that the lame man should think them to have power in themselves to heal him (see v. 6). But they sought to focus his attention on themselves, that they then might direct him to Christ.

5. Expecting. The man's hope rose no further than the temporary meeting of a physical need that a little money might supply.

6. Silver and gold. The accounts in chs. 2:45; 5:2 show that the apostles were the custodians of the funds committed to the leadership of the church by the generosity of the Christian community. One could understand that Peter and John had no money of their own, but why did they not give to the lame man from the treasury of the church? Either they had none of these funds with them at the moment, or for some reason felt that such money must be reserved for the benefit of members of the Christian society. But they had more than money to give, a gift of which the church in its later wealth has not shown itself possessed. A remarkable anecdote is related of Thomas Aquinas, who called on Pope Innocent IV when he had a very large sum of money on the table before him. Said the Pope to him: "You see, Thomas, that the Church cannot now say as the primitive Church could, 'Silver and gold have I none.'" "Yes, Holy Father," Aquinas replied, "but neither can she say, as did Peter to a crippled man, 'Arise, and walk.'"

Such as I have. Rather, "what I have." Luke already has referred to "wonders and signs" performed by the apostles prior to this incident (ch. 2:43); so this may not have been Peter's first miracle since Pentecost. This passage shows him speaking with firm assurance. In the presence of this great incident every Christian must ask himself, What have I to give? One cannot give what he has not received, nor can he truly give from an ungenerous heart. He cannot give of Christ when he does not possess Christ. But when he has Christ, he knows it, and cannot too quickly share his precious gift with others.

In the name. The name Jesus Christ, the anointed Saviour, contains the description of the personality and character of its divine bearer. The reverent invocation of the name resulted in a demonstration of His power. The recognition and invocation of the power of this name is frequent in the book of Acts (see chs. 4:10, 12; 9:14; 16:18; 19:5, 13; 22:16). The full trust with which the name was spoken by Peter in the healing act was an expression of simple faith in his Master's promise (Mark 16:18). See on Acts 3:16.

Jesus Christ of Nazareth. The name was probably not new to the cripple. There had once been a blind man who received his sight at the Pool of Siloam (John 9:7, 8). Perhaps the healing of the cripple at Bethesda (John 5:2–9) was known also to this sufferer from a like infirmity.

Nazareth was a place of low reputation (see John 1:46). According to John's account, Nazareth was named on the superscription of the cross (ch. 19:19). Not only the Galilean background of Jesus (ch. 7:40–42), but the fact that He came from Nazareth, was a stumbling block to the Jews. It must have been a great test of faith for the lame man to respond to Peter's call. Only a few weeks before, the One who bore this name had come to shame and death upon the cross, as one who had deceived the people. But the utterance of the name in faith opened the way for the operation of the power of God. "No sooner is the name of Jesus mentioned in love and tenderness than angels of God draw near, to soften and subdue the heart" (CM 112).

Rise up and walk. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 10) as to whether this passage should read as here, or simply, "Walk!" This man had never walked, or if at all, most haltingly, for he had been crippled from birth (v. 2). Peter's command was to be obeyed in the power of God, without regard to conditions. Obedience in faith meant health.

7. Lifted him up. Peter's gesture came as a kindly aid to the childlike and perhaps only now dawning faith of the lame man. It was a transitional aid, spanning the momentary gulf between the last moment of the man's helplessness and the first moment of his acceptance by faith of the fact that a miracle had been performed upon him. As did Peter, so are the children of God to do: "Strengthen ... the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees" (Isa. 35:3).

Ankle bones. Rather, "ankles." Luke was a physician (Col. 4:14), and thus it is here a writer with medical experience who describes precisely what happened to the lame man.

Received strength. Rather, "were made firm." The weak and flabby tendons and muscles were made strong and active.

8. Leaping up stood, and walked. "Walked" probably is better translated "began walking." As power came to the man there was the upward leap; then he found himself able to stand for the first time in his life. He walked step by step, and alternated the steps with leaps of joy.

Into the temple. How this man must have longed, during the years, for the physical freedom to walk into the Temple to worship as others did. Now, able to do so, he entered at once. At this, the hour of prayer, the courts of the Temple were filled with worshipers. What must have been the amazement of the multitude as they saw him "walking, and leaping, and praising God."

9. People saw him. This miracle was not done "in a corner." Witnesses to the reality of the cure were numerous, and among them must have been many who for years had known this man as a cripple. This the Jewish authorities admitted among themselves (ch. 4:16).

The detailed and circumstantial account that Luke gives here brings conviction as one reads it. It was based doubtless on the stories of eyewitnesses whom he interviewed, and authenticated by Inspiration. The God who created can re-create, and He does so at will.

10. They knew. Rather, “they recognized.” The people knew that the man really had been lame, and was no impostor. They knew that now he was healed. They could see that he had entered the Temple, leaping and rejoicing in health and praising God.

At the Beautiful gate. See on v. 2.

11. Held Peter and John. There is some textual evidence (cf. p. 10) for the reading, “As Peter and John went out, he went along holding them; and those who were astonished stood in the porch called Solomon’s.” Such a reading helps to solve the problem of the location of the Beautiful Gate, and though probably not original, seems to be an early evidence in favor of its being identified as the Nicanor Gate (see on v. 2).

Porch. Gr. *stoa*, “portico,” “cloister.” No mention of a porch “that is called Solomon’s” is found in the original account of the building of the first Temple. Josephus (*Antiquities* xx. 9. 7) locates this porch on the east side of the Temple area. He says (*War* v. 5. 2 [190]) that it was distinguished by two rows of columns approximately 37 ft. (10.6 m.) high. This portico was named for Solomon probably because it included traces of the older building from Zerubbabel’s day. When Herod Agrippa I was completing his grandfather’s work the people sought to persuade him to raze this porch and to rebuild it, but he refused to do so.

Greatly wondering. It was from Solomon’s Porch, only a few months before, at the Feast of Dedication (John 10:22, 23), that Jesus had preached to the people on the works of God. The memory of what He had then said must have remained in the minds of the two disciples. The people had complained because Jesus did not frankly state whether He was the Christ (John 10:24–26), yet they were ready to stone Him when He claimed to be one with the Father (John 10:30–33). Now they hear Him proclaimed as “the Holy One and the Just,” as the “Prince of life,” as the very Christ, the Messiah of prophecy (Acts 3:14, 15, 18).

12. Why marvel ye? This is similar to the angel’s question, “Why stand ye gazing?” (ch. 1:11). In both places the idea is that the witnesses of the miracle should not be so amazed at the event as they obviously were.

Why look ye so earnestly on us? Literally, “on us why do you gaze?” (see on ch. 1:10). No common men like Peter and John, but only a divine power, should be credited with the miracle.

Holiness. Rather, “piety,” or “devotion.” Peter’s words bring to mind the popular theory that if a man is sufficiently devout, God will hear him, and great results will follow (see John 9:31). Here the apostle rejects any such idea. No purity of his own would have availed Peter; only the power of God manifested in the name of Jesus of Nazareth could do the work.

13. The God of Abraham. Here is an echo of our Lord’s own teaching and phraseology (see Matt. 22:32), though the phrase is from the OT (Ex. 3:6, 15). By asserting that Jesus was the Son of the God of Abraham, Peter reassured his Jewish hearers that he was not preaching a new God but that he was connecting Jesus with the God of their fathers.

Son. Gr. *pais*, a word that may mean either “child” or “servant.” In the latter sense it is used in the LXX in the later chapters of Isaiah for “the servant of Jehovah.” In fact, the

present passage is strongly reminiscent of Isa. 52:13. In the NT *pais* is applied to Christ in Matt. 12:18; Acts 3:26; 4:27, 30. These passages suggest that Matthew and Luke understood the suffering Servant of Isaiah to be a figure applicable to Christ. See on Isa. 41:8.

Ye delivered up. Or, “handed over.” Peter is frank and bold in placing the blame for Jesus’ death on the Jews, as the apostles always did from this time on.

Denied him. See John 19:15.

Determined. Or, “decided.” Pilate had rightly decided to release Jesus as innocent (John 19:4), but the Jews, to their greater shame and blame, persuaded him to condemn Christ to death.

14. The Holy One. This is a striking designation, probably not new to Peter’s hearers, for it appears in the intertestamental Jewish literature (see on John 6:69). The demoniac had used it of Christ (Mark 1:24). At His trial Jesus had been found innocent of all charges (Mark 15:10; Luke 23:4). Both Pilate and his wife had borne emphatic testimony to the innocence of Jesus (Matt. 27:19, 24). So did the repentant thief (Luke 23:41) and the centurion (v. 47). See on Acts 2:27.

Just. Or, “righteous” (see 1 Peter 3:18; 1 John 2:1; see on Acts 7:52).

Desired a murderer. That is, Barabbas (see Mark 15:7; Luke 23:19).

15. Prince of life. Gr. *archēgos tēs zōēs*, which is better translated “author of life” (cf. Heb. 12:2; in ch. 2:10 *archēgos* is translated “captain”). Christ is the originator of life. “In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived” (DA 530). The “Prince of life,” the “captain of ... salvation” (Heb. 2:10), is accordingly the One from whom life and salvation flow. Christ is clearly set forth as the Author of all life. He Himself repeatedly made the same emphatic claim (see John 3:14, 15; 5:26, 40; 6:48, 51). The Jews had chosen to keep alive a murderer, a taker of life, and to put to death the Author and Giver of life.

God hath raised. That it was the Father who raised Christ from the dead is repeatedly stated in the New Testament (Acts 2:24; Rom. 6:4; 8:11). At the same time Jesus declared that He Himself had power to lay down His life and to take it again (John 10:18). These two declarations regarding the resurrection are not contradictory. Though Christ had life in Himself, yet as the incarnate Son who “took upon him the form of a servant” (Phil. 2:7), He could “do nothing of himself” (John 5:19). Jesus exercised His divine power only at the command of the Father. Thus although “the Saviour came forth from the grave by the life that was in Himself” (DA 785), He did so at the call of God His Father.

Whereof. That is, “of whom.” Peter attests again the one central fact that the apostles knew of what they were talking. They had known the Lord, they had seen Him die, and they had seen Him risen.

16. His name. Repeatedly in the NT, and especially in the Acts, the name of Jesus is set forth as the means by which miracles are worked and salvation is gained (Acts 3:6; 4:10, 12, 17, 18; 16:18; Mark 9:38; Luke 10:17). The use of the word “name” in this connection is to be understood in terms of the rich connotation it carries in the NT. See on Acts 2:21.

Scholars have pointed out that in ancient times certain names were thought to have special holiness and particular efficacy. Thus among the Jews of the postexilic period, the

divine name *Yahweh* (Jehovah) was kept as a secret known only to the high priest, and its true pronunciation was finally lost altogether. The declaration of other names was thought to be particularly potent in working miracles. Josephus (*Antiquities* viii. 2. 5 [46–49]) recounts seeing a man named Eleazar allegedly cast out demons by the use of the name of Solomon. The use of the name of Jesus for the same purpose was attempted by the seven sons of Sceva at Ephesus (ch. 19:13, 14). They thought there was magical power simply in the use of the name. Doubtless many of those who observed the miracles that Jesus' disciples worked in His name thought that the efficacy of these miracles lay merely in the employment of a magic name. See Vol. I, pp. 170–173.

However, it is clear beyond question, that the disciples, in working miracles, did not use Christ's name with any idea that magical power resided in the utterance of it. In the OT the Hebrew word *shem*, "name," is sometimes used in the sense of "character" (see Jer. 14:7, 21), and may be almost synonymous with the person himself (see Ps. 18:49). This close connection between name and character is illustrated by the wealth of names in the OT that indicate the character of their bearers or the anticipation that parents expressed for the personalities of their children. This same idea of "character" is probably the meaning of the word "name" in the apocryphal work, Enoch (ch. 48:7), where of the Son of man it is said: "For in his name they [the righteous] are saved."

A further aspect of this development is seen in NT times when the Greek word for "name" (*onoma*) might mean "person." Thus in an Egyptian papyrus of A.D. 13 occurs the phrase, "from the name written below," meaning, of course, "from the undersigned person." A similar usage occurs in Acts 1:15; Rev. 3:4; 11:18.

All this indicates that in using the name of Jesus in working miracles and in proclaiming salvation, the apostles were declaring that healing and saving power were exercised in vital connection with the person and character of Jesus Christ. Peter's declaration in the present passage that "his name ... hath made this man strong" was an assertion that it was Christ Himself who had wrought the miracle, not a magical incantation working mechanically upon the lame man. The power of Christ is available to all, but it must be accepted by vital faith in Him.

Ye see and know. There was no obscurity here, no chance of trickery. There was no substitution of a well man, under pretense that a lame man had been healed. Everyone knew the man had been lame, and now they saw him healed.

By him. Or, "through him," that is, Christ. See 1 Peter 1:21. The faith that was both in the healer Peter and in the man healed, was itself wrought in each of them by the power of Christ. Peter was a recipient of the power of God by faith; the man also received faith, which made him capable of accepting bodily healing. Healing faith is itself a gift (Rom. 12:3; 1 Cor. 12:9).

Perfect soundness. Or, "completeness."

17. I wot. An archaic expression meaning, "I know."

Through ignorance. Ignorance is dangerous in spiritual as well as in other matters. Men may sin through ignorance, as in the present instance, but ignorance is not a valid plea in extenuation of sin. Even in human government, ignorance of a law does not excuse its transgression. Sins of ignorance must be repented of as sincerely as any other sins. Particularly guilty are men who are ignorant because they allow prejudice and

feeling to prevent them from knowing those things to which reason and conscience give witness. Compare Luke 23:34.

18. Prophets. See Luke 24:25–27. As in Acts 1:16; 2:23, here also Peter stresses the fact that OT prophets foretold Christ's work. The purpose of all Scripture is to set forth the plan for the salvation of men through Christ's redemptive suffering. From the first gospel promise (Gen. 3:15) there has been a continuing thread of testimony through the OT pointing to the vicarious atonement through Jesus Christ. Particularly significant among Messianic OT scriptures are Ps. 22:18 (see Matt. 27:35); Dan. 9:26; Zech. 11:13 (see Matt. 27:9, 10); Isa. 53.

That Christ should suffer. As far as is known the Jews never applied Isaiah's prophecy of the suffering servant to the Messiah. The doctrine of a suffering Messiah was quite at variance with the views of the Jews current in the apostolic age, and was hardly understood even by Christ's disciples until after His resurrection. Peter himself protested when Christ laid starkly before His disciples the sufferings He would endure, and was severely rebuked for his reluctance to accept the prospect (Matt. 16:21–23). The present passage reveals a remarkable change in Peter's understanding. Now he affirms that Christ's sufferings had been in accord with the divine plan. Doubtless this illumination had come to the apostles through Jesus' teaching after the resurrection (see Luke 24:44–48) and through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Peter later demonstrated again his understanding of this fundamental doctrine as he wrote of the sin-bearing Saviour (1 Peter 2:23, 24).

So fulfilled. These words mark the climax of Peter's argument and the basis for his appeal to repentance. The force of his logic lay in the fact that he was preaching fulfilled prophecy.

19. Repent. Gr. *metanoēō*, "to change the mind," and in a spiritual sense, "to repent" (see on Matt. 3:2). This call to repentance is the logical climax to Peter's stern reproof of his challengers. There would be no point to such reproof if it were not intended to produce repentance. So it is, indeed, with all gospel preaching.

Be converted. Gr. *epistrephō*, "to turn about." In the LXX this word is used frequently to translate the Heb. *shub*, "to return," a word that often has the spiritual sense of returning to God (see on Eze. 18:30). *Epistrephō* is a peculiarly appropriate word for the change that takes place when one accepts Christ as Saviour and King, and Luke uses it repeatedly in this sense (see Acts 9:35; 11:21; 26:20). Conversion is the basis of a genuine Christian experience. It is distinguished from the new birth (John 3:3, 5) only in that it may be considered as the act of man in turning away from his old life of sin, while the new birth, or regeneration, is the work of the Holy Spirit acting upon man simultaneously with his turning. Neither phase of the experience can be a reality without the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit cannot do His work until a man is willing to let God take hold of his life (see Rev. 3:20).

Blotted out. Or, "wiped away." Repeatedly in Scripture the forgiveness of sin is portrayed as a washing (see John 13:10; Rev. 1:5; see on Rev. 22:14). The thought of wiping away sin is a similar one. The image that may underlie the words here is that of an indictment that catalogues the sins of the penitent, which the pardoning love of the Father cancels (see Isa. 43:25; Col. 2:14; see on Matt. 1:21; 3:6; 26:28; Luke 3:3).

The immediate result to those who accepted Peter's call to repentance was the forgiveness of their sins. In this sense the blotting out of their sins may be regarded as having occurred immediately. In the ultimate sense, however, the final blotting out of sin takes place just before the second advent of Christ in connection with the close of Christ's work as High Priest (see below under "when"). Guilt for specific sins is canceled when they are confessed and forgiven; they are expunged from the record in the day of judgment (cf. Eze. 3:20; 18:24; 33:13; GC 485).

When. Gr. *hopōs an*, "so that." Lexicographers and grammarians are unanimous that *hopōs an* indicates purpose rather than time. *Hopōs*, with or without *an* (the meaning is not distinguished), occurs 56 times in the NT, and only here is it translated "when." Elsewhere it is translated "how" (Matt. 22:15; Luke 24:20), "so that" (Luke 16:26), "because" (Acts 20:16), but most frequently it is translated "that," or by some other expression of purpose (Acts 8:15; 9:12, 17, 24; Rom. 3:4; etc.). Nowhere do the translators of the KJV introduce a time element except in Acts 3:19. Thus the present passage should read "so that," rather than "when." The reading of the KJV seems to have arisen in the following way: The earliest Latin versions appear to have translated *hopōs an* correctly as *ut*, which in Latin, when used as a conjunction, often means "so that." However, *ut* is somewhat ambiguous because, in a temporal clause, it may mean "when." Later scribes, reading this passage, apparently were in doubt as to which meaning *ut* should be given here. Some, thinking that the adverbial meaning was intended, either changed the word to *cum*, "when," or inserted *cum* in the margin to guide the reader in interpreting the verse. Thus some Latin texts read *cum*, "when," instead of *ut*. Others, including the common editions of the Vulgate, have a conflated reading, *ut cum*, "so that when," which probably arose from incorporating the marginal gloss, *cum*, into the text without dropping *ut*. Such a reading, however, does not make good grammatical sense. Nevertheless it is found in most of the later medieval Latin texts, and from these was taken into the earliest English Bible. Thus Wyclif's translation (1382), made from the Vulgate, reads, "That youre synnes be don away, that whanne the tymes of refreischynge shculn come fro the sight of the Lord." This awkward rendering is also reflected in the Douay-Rheims Version (1582), "That your synnes may be put out, that vwhen the times shal come of refreshing by the sight of our Lord." Tyndale (1534) made good grammar of the passage, but he produced a wrong translation. "That your synnes may be done awaye, when the tyme of refresshinge commeth which we shall have of the presence of the Lord." This rendering of *hopōs an* as "when," went into the KJV. However, the Greek should be translated, "that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (RSV).

The conversion of sinners will have a power to accelerate the fulfillment of God's purposes, and accordingly, to hasten the coming of His kingdom in its completeness.

While it is true that the Greek of this passage does not contain the temporal quality that the KJV rendering suggests, nevertheless a study of related scriptures reveals that a certain time sequence is here set forth by Peter. He called on his hearers to "repent" and

“be converted.” These acts, said he, would be followed by (1) the blotting out of their sins, (2) the coming of the “times of refreshing,” and (3) the glorious advent of Jesus Christ.

In any discussion of the time sequence in Peter’s words, two points should be kept in mind: (1) In common with the other disciples, Peter did not know “the times or the seasons” (Acts 1:7; cf. John 21:20–23). He had a foreshortened view of the future, and joyously hoped for the very early return of his Lord (see Additional Note on Rom. 13). (2) By divine illumination Peter saw that certain prophecies of “the last days” were meeting a fulfillment in his day. Indeed, his illumination may have enabled him to see only this immediate and what proved to be a limited fulfillment, though that point is not vital to this discussion. For example, on the day of Pentecost he declared that Joel’s prophecy that in “the last days” God would pour out of His Spirit on all flesh, was then meeting fulfillment (Acts 2:14–18). Truly there *was* a limited fulfillment of the prophecy of a divine outpouring. It was also true, as already stated, that in one sense of the word the sins of converted men were then blotted out, for they were covered by the saving blood of Jesus Christ.

But in the perspective of God’s unfolding plans, particularly fulfilling prophecy, we can now see that in the most literal and complete sense “the last days” are our present days and that it is now we may rightly expect the coming of Christ. Likewise, we see that the great outpouring of God’s spirit, the mighty “times of refreshing,” belong most particularly to our days, the days of “the latter rain” (see on Joel 2:23). With equal propriety we may—and indeed, should—view the blotting out of sins as belonging to our time. Why separate it widely from the other two events that Peter said would take place? Indeed, when we study this subject of the blotting out of sins in the setting of Christ’s work in the heavenly sanctuary (see on Dan. 8:14), we discover that the actual blotting out of sins takes place in the last days of earth’s history, immediately preceding Christ’s coming (see PP 357, 358; GC 421, 422; see on Eze. 18:24). That these three events are tied together is made more evident by the RSV: “Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ” (Acts 3:19, 20).

Thus it becomes evident that Peter’s statement (v. 19), taken as a whole, contains a most definite temporal element. Evidently, Peter, speaking by inspiration, and thus beyond his own finite understanding, is referring, tersely, to two great events of earth’s last days—(1) the mighty outpouring of God’s Spirit, and (2) the final blotting out of the sins of the righteous—which are tied to a third climactic event, the second advent of Christ.

From the presence. Literally, “from the face.” The “refreshing” comes directly from the throne of God.

20. He shall send. The dominant theme of the NT writers is the return of Christ. See on v. 19.

Before was preached. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading “was appointed” rather than “before was preached.” Thus the passage would read “who was appointed for you.” In the mind of God the plan of redemption was set from eternity (see Matt. 25:34; Eph. 1:4; Rev. 13:8), and was executed in the very face of the resistance of Satan and sinful men. It remains for those concerned in the plan to fulfill its conditions by obedience (cf. Luke 22:42; Heb. 10:7).

21. Heaven must receive. The disciples had witnessed Christ's ascension (ch. 1:9, 10), and they realized He must remain in heaven until His second advent. Jesus had told His disciples that it was necessary for Him to leave them (John 14:1–6), but even they did not understand until they saw Him ascend, and learned that they must look for His return.

Restitution. Or, "restoration." Christ died as the world's Redeemer, and therefore the promised restoration was made possible by His crucifixion.

Here Peter gives in embryo the idea that he develops fully and in a most forthright manner in 2 Peter 3:7–13. The new heavens and the new earth of the latter passage are a recovery, a restoration from the sin and degradation that, as a result of man's fall into sin, destroyed the beauty and perfection of the original creation (see on Isa. 65:17–25; Micah 4:8).

This passage does not teach, as some have thought, that all men ultimately will be saved. That is not promised in Scripture. But it does express the idea of an ultimate state in which righteousness, and not sin, will have dominion over a redeemed and re-created world. It presents a supremely worth-while goal for Christian experience resulting from true repentance and conversion, and offers even a wider hope for the possibilities of growth in wisdom and holiness in the world to come than Christendom sometimes has been willing to emphasize.

Which God hath spoken. This clause may be understood to refer either to the "times of restitution," that is, the divine act of restoration foretold prophetically, or to "all things," in which case it points to the fact of the fulfillment of God's promises through the prophets. Here is a clear assertion that the utterances of the prophets are the messages of God. It was God who spoke through the prophets (see 2 Peter 1:21). The present passage is virtually identical with Luke 1:70.

All. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of this word.

Since the world began. Or, "from of old." These words take in the many unchanging promises exhibited in the prophets that have brightened the hopes of the people of God through the ages. Zacharias saw a beginning of the fulfillment of these promises with the birth of his son John (Luke 1:70). The plan of salvation has been set since before "the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8).

22. Moses truly said. Or, "Moses said indeed." The line of true prophets suggested here and in v. 24 reveals the expectation of the coming of some one great prophet who should excel all others, as illustrated in the question put to John the Baptist, "Art thou that prophet?" (John 1:21). None of the leaders following Moses had been altogether "like unto" him (see Deut. 18:15; see below under "like unto me"). His work marked a new epoch, the manifestation of the glory of God through a theocracy, with its divinely ordained law and service of worship. Jesus' coming marked the opening of another new epoch, with His kingdom established in the "new" hearts of individual men (see Jer. 31:31–34; Heb. 8:8–12).

Unto the fathers. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of these words.

2

²Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Ac 2:4). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

Like unto me. Moses quoted the Lord's promise to him that the prophet to come should be "like unto thee" (Deut. 18:18). But the parallel stops short because Moses was neither the only-begotten Son of God nor the vicariously suffering Atoner, both of which Jesus was.

Him shall ye hear. That is, Him shall ye obey (see on John 6:60).

He shall say. Here Peter changes his quotation of Deut. 18:18 slightly to make it a command to his hearers.

23. Soul. Gr. *psuchē* (see on Matt. 10:28; cf. Acts 2:41).

Shall be destroyed. The OT passage (Deut. 18:19) that Peter quotes loosely reads at this point, "I will require it of him." The words Peter substitutes echo the familiar OT phrase, "that man shall be cut off from among his people" (see Lev. 17:4, 9; cf. Ex. 12:15, 19).

24. From Samuel. Samuel is named here probably because with him the prophets of Israel first appear as a group, particularly in connection with the schools of the prophets. In the 3d century A.D. Judah ha-Nasi, the compiler of the Mishnah, referred to Samuel as "the teacher of the prophets" (see Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 2, p. 627), and this may well represent a view current in Peter's day.

These days. It is not clear whether Peter refers here to the "times of restitution" (v. 21) or to the remarkable times in which he and his hearers were then living. He may, indeed, have coalesced the two in his thinking, believing that the events he was witnessing would finally usher in the closing scenes (cf. ch. 2:17).

25. Children of the prophets. The prophets, with their messages, were sent especially to the Israelites (see Rom. 3:2).

Of the covenant. Here Peter identifies the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 12:3) with the covenant of salvation in the same way as does Paul (Gal. 3:8). In spite of the spiritual light and privileges the Jews enjoyed, they failed to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. In every age, and particularly now, those who enjoy special spiritual privileges may be guilty of the same failure.

In thy seed. Referring to Gen. 12:3, Paul makes Christ the "seed," and all the faithful in Christ heirs of Abraham (Gal. 3:16, 29). Peter's use of the passage is not so explicit, but in quoting it he plainly refers it to Christ.

26. Unto you first. This precedence of the Jew as recipient of the gospel is noteworthy. Peter did not as yet know the conditions under which the gospel was to be preached to the heathen, but his words imply a distinct understanding that the message was to go first to the Jews. This sequence was also used by Paul: "To the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16; cf. ch. 2:9, 10). He followed it so frequently in his gospel preaching that it became a formula (Acts 13:46; see chs. 9:19, 20; 14:1; 17:1-3). Compare Vol. IV, pp. 29, 30.

Son. Gr. *pais* (see on v. 13).

Jesus. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of this word.

To bless you. The blessing referred to here follows the resurrection and involves the power of Christ that enables a man to turn from sin to the new life that is in Him. This new life of the believer is made possible by the resurrection (see Eph. 2:4-6; Col. 2:12, 13).

Turning away. The Greek verb here, *apostrephō*, like the related verb *epistrephō*, is used frequently in the LXX to translate the Heb. *shub* (see on v. 19). This passage is ambiguous. It may be understood either as meaning that Jesus turns away men from iniquity or that He blesses them when they turn away from iniquity. In a sense both of these are true. The blessings of salvation can come only through the restoring power of the Holy Spirit, following upon the necessary turning away from sin, with repentance and conversion.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1, 2 AA 57
 1–6SR 248
 1–26AA 57–60; SR 248–250
 2 EW 192
 4–11AA 58
 7–10SR 249
 8, 9 EW 192
 12 AA 59; SR 249
 12–16EW 192
 14, 15 TM 268
 14–19AA 59
 15 AA 61
 16–18SR 249
 19 Ev 702; EW 71, 86, 271; GC 613; ML 58; MYP 74; PP 358; SC 23; 1T 183, 619; 4T 40; 8T 103; 9T 155, 216, 268
 19, 20 GC 485, 612
 21 DA 769; GC 301
 22 DA 34, 52, 193
 22, 23 FE 405
 25, 26 AA 60

CHAPTER 4

1 *The rulers of the Jews offended with Peter's sermon, 4 (though thousands of the people were converted that heard the word,) imprison him and John. 5 After, upon examination Peter boldly avouching the lame man to be healed by the name of Jesus, and that by the same Jesus only we must be eternally saved, 13 they command him and John to preach no more in that name, adding also threatening, 23 whereupon the church fleeth to prayer. 31 And God, by moving the place where they were assembled, testified that he heard their prayer: confirming the church with the gift of the Holy Ghost, and with mutual love and charity.*

1. As they spake. By this time, and ever afterward, the activities of the apostles were a matter of deep and unfriendly interest to the Jewish authorities. Apparently, news of the healing of the lame man had now spread rapidly through the city, and for the first time since the crucifixion the leaders of the Sanhedrin, who condemned the Lord, had come again in contact with Christianity. Only a few weeks had passed since the crucifixion. During this time the Jewish leaders doubtless had congratulated themselves on having got rid of Jesus for the safety of the nation, as Caiaphas had advised (John 11:49, 50). They knew that Jesus' grave had been found empty, and, refusing to believe in the resurrection,

they had busily spread the report that the disciples had stolen His body (Matt. 28:13–15). Whether some of the Jewish leaders had been present during the experience of the day of Pentecost is not known, but certainly they must have heard of the happenings of that day, and of the growth of the new church. Now two main spokesmen of the Christians were found teaching openly in the very portals of the Temple itself.

Priests. In charge, as a class, of the Temple services (see 1 Chron. 24:1–19), and naturally the first to take offense at the multitudes who in astonishment had witnessed the healing of the lame man.

Captain. Apparently one of the same officers present at the arrest of Jesus (see Luke 22:52): The OT mentions an officer whose title was “the ruler of the house of God” (1 Chron. 9:11; 2 Chron. 31:13; Neh. 11:11). A Benjamite is mentioned in 2 Maccabees 3:4 as being “governor of the temple.” Luke repeatedly mentions the “captain” of the temple (Luke 22:52; Acts 5:24, 26), and Josephus also refers to this official (*War* ii. 17. 2 [409]; *Antiquities* xx. 9. 3). The official mentioned by Josephus is quite evidently the one mentioned by Luke, and may be identical with the ones mentioned in the OT and 2 Maccabees. In later Jewish writings several officials are mentioned who might answer to the “captain of the temple” in the present passage. One of these was the *ish har*

habbayith, the “officer of the temple mount” (Mishnah *Middoth* 1. 2, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 1). This man was not of the soldiery, but had supervision of the guard of priests and Levites who had custody of the Temple, especially at night. As an inspector he made his nightly rounds, visiting all the gates and rousing any slumberers. He seems to have had particular charge of the outer court, the area in which Peter had just made his address. Another official who more probably is to be identified with the “captain” in the present passage, was the *seگان hakkohanim*, the “prefect of the priests.” He ranked next to the high priest, assisted him in his official functions, and had general responsibility for the Temple services and the maintenance of order throughout the Temple area.

Sadducees. See Vol. V, pp. 52, 53. The Sadducees are not mentioned frequently in the gospel story. In ch. 23:8 they are described as saying “that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit.” It was when the doctrine of the resurrection and the future life was emphasized by Jesus and His apostles that the Sadducees appeared as opponents, as in Matt. 22:23–33 and in the present instance.

When they now found His disciples preaching the resurrection, the Sadducees reacted to them as they had to the Lord Himself and became persecutors of the church. There is no record in the NT of any Sadducee accepting the gospel. Not so with the Pharisees, some of whom professed themselves believers see (Acts 15:5; cf. ch. 23:6).

Came upon them. That is, to arrest them.

2. Being grieved. Or, “being annoyed,” “being worked up.” This verb is used to describe Paul’s feeling when the young woman came crying after him in Philippi (ch. 16:18). The Jewish leaders were annoyed not only because the disciples taught the doctrine of the resurrection, so opposed to the thinking of the chief priests, who were Sadducees, but also because they taught when they were not trained or authorized to do so, even as Jesus had done (John 7:14, 15). It has been no infrequent thing for men in ecclesiastical authority to take exception to the ministry of those who have not been commissioned by themselves. Men with some power in their hands may easily fancy that only they can instruct others how to perform publicly.

That they taught. One of the objections the authorities brought against the apostles was doubtless that they were “unlearned and ignorant men” (v. 13), and so not fit to teach the people.

Preached through Jesus the resurrection. Rather, “proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection.” The apostles preached the doctrine of the resurrection “in Jesus,” that is, in terms of His resurrection, which served as proof of the general resurrection of the dead, a doctrine the Sadducees rejected. See ch. 23:8. Paul later emphasized that Christ’s resurrection was a pledge that all the righteous would rise from the dead (1 Cor. 15:16–23; Phil. 3:10, 11).

3. In hold. Or, “in custody.” This experience introduces the first persecution of the apostles.

Eventide. It will be recalled that the story of the healing of the lame man begins at about 3:00 o’clock in the afternoon (see on ch. 3:1). After the healing of this man Peter made his address, and then he and John were arrested. By then it was “eventide,” which doubtless began about sunset, or the 12th hour. Since it was forbidden for the Jews to pass judgment in a night session, and their day closed with the 12th hour, it was now too late for a judicial proceeding (see Additional Notes on Matt 26, Note 2). The rabbis placed this restriction on night trials because of Jer. 21:12, “O house of David, thus saith the Lord; Execute judgment in the morning.” They applied this even to deliberations concerning the declaration of the newmoon festival (Mishnah *Rosh Hashanah* 3. 1, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 113).

4. Howbeit. Or, “but.” The new believers were not deterred by the arrest of the apostles.

Many ... believed. That is, on Jesus, whom Peter had set forth as the prophet concerning whom Moses had spoken. Each individual who believed, thus made himself part of a growing host of converts moving into the church.

Men. Gr. *anēr*, “a male,” “a man” as contrasted with a woman. Apparently only the men were counted (see on Matt. 14:21).

Was about five thousand. Or, “became about five thousand.” Luke probably means here that this was the aggregate number of the disciples, not just those converted on the day of the healing of the lame man. Three thousand had been converted at Pentecost, and since that time more believers had been added to the church daily (ch. 2:47).

5. On the morrow. This was the first opportunity for the Jewish leaders to hold a judicial investigation (see on v. 3).

Rulers. This is probably a reference to the “priests,” or “high priests,” mentioned in v. 1.

Elders. The group here mentioned were doubtless those known in Hebrew as *zeqenim*. They represented the lay element of the Sanhedrin, as contrasted with the scribes and priests.

Scribes. The third constituent group in the Sanhedrin was composed of scribes, who were professional jurists and recognized interpreters of the law (see Vol. V, pp. 55, 56). It is understandable that they would be resentful toward a new teaching presented by seemingly unqualified men (cf. Matt. 7:29).

6. Annas. This man (called Ananus by Josephus), son of Seth, became high priest about A.D. 6 by appointment of the Roman governor Quirinius (Cyrenius), and was

deposed about A.D. 14 (Josephus *Antiquities* xviii. 2. 1, 2). Christ had been brought first before Annas (John 18:13), and was afterward sent by him to the current high priest, Caiaphas. This would indicate that although then not actually high priest, Annas held a place of high influence among the Jews. This is particularly understandable in view of the fact that Caiaphas was Anna's son-in-law. It is probably impossible now to ascertain exactly the functions of the two men Annas and Caiaphas. Apparently it was customary for those who once had held the office of high priest to continue to carry the title after they had ceased to officiate. By the time of Annas' death five of his sons had been high priests (*ibid.* xx. 9. 1). But his old age was clouded by the atrocities committed in the Temple by insurgents during the war of A.D. 66–73 (see Josephus *War* iv. 3. 78 [151–157]).

Caiaphas. Caiaphas had been appointed about A.D. 18 or 19, and was deposed about A.D. 36. He is pictured in the Gospels as a man of policy and expediency (John 18:14. See above under "Annas.")

John. This may have been Johanan (that is, John) ben Zakkai, a Jewish leader who is said to have been at the height of his influence 40 years before the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70. After the Jewish-Roman war he was founder and president of the Council at Jamnia (see Vol. V, p. 78). However, the identification is very uncertain. Another possibility, suggested by one ancient manuscript that reads "Jonathan," is that this man was Annas' son Jonathan, who became high priest for a short time after Caiaphas, and again in the days of Felix (c. A.D. 52–c. 60).

Alexander. No certain identification of this man is possible.

Kindred of the high priest. The Talmud (*Pesahim* 57a, Soncino ed., p. 285) mentions several prominent families from which the high priests at this time were commonly drawn. The current high priest, Caiaphas, had several relatives who were highly placed (see above under "Annas"), and probably several of these men were present at the trial of Peter and John recorded here. See on Matt. 2:4.

Were gathered. Evidently the meeting had been summoned, like that of Matt. 26:3, 4, to study what course should be followed in view of the new crisis. This meeting would of course include Pharisees as well as Sadducees, but the Sadducees controlled the Sanhedrin at this time.

7. In the midst. The Sanhedrin sat in a semicircle (see Mishnah *Sanhedrin* 4. 3, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 230). Apparently Peter and John were placed in the center.

By what power? Gr. *en poia dunamei*, "in what kind of power?" The word *dunamis*, "power," used here, is often applied to Christ's miracles, and frequently is rendered "mighty works" (see Matt. 11:20; Mark 6:14; Luke 19:37). The Jewish leaders admitted that the lame man had been healed by a marvelous manifestation of power; that was too obvious to deny (see on Acts 4:16). But their question implied a suspicion that it was the result of a power from below, an implication similar to the accusation once leveled against Jesus (see Luke 11:15; cf. John 8:48).

By what name? Or, "in what kind of name?" See on ch. 3:16. The Jewish leaders doubtless knew that it was in the name of Jesus that Peter and John had healed the lame man. To them, Jesus was a man who had recently been crucified as a criminal. Hence their disdainful question.

8. Peter. A few weeks before this, Peter had trembled before the servants and soldiers in the courtyard of the high priest's house, and had denied his Lord. But since then the Spirit of God had come upon him and had changed him "into another man" (see on 1 Sam. 10:6; cf. Matt. 10:19, 20). Standing now before the highest tribunal of the Jews, he speaks, in a language of respect indeed, but also of unflinching boldness. With bitter weeping Peter had repented his denial of his Lord (Luke 22:54–62). One evidence of true repentance is to seek to repair the evil resulting from the offense repented of. Peter had brought dishonor upon his Master and His cause, in the presence of the Jews. Now, in the same city, in the presence of the same people who had been involved in the condemnation of Jesus, Peter joyfully bore his testimony to the divine mission of the Savior whom he had once denied. Here he demonstrated the validity of his later admonition, "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15).

Ye rulers of the people. Compare this respectful salutation with Paul's more familiar "Men and brethren" (ch. 23:1, 6). Undoubtedly Paul knew personally several members of the court, and stood therefore in less awe of them (see on ch. 9:1). Respect for men of authority is required of the Christian (Matt. 22:21; Rom. 13:7; 1 Peter 2:13–17).

Elders of Israel. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 10) between this and reading simply "elders." See on v. 5.

9. Examined. Gr. *anakrinō*. This word often has the technical sense of a judicial interrogation, as in Luke 23:14. It is used in the NT only by Paul and Luke (Acts 12:19; 24:8; 1 Cor. 2:14, 15; 4:3, 4).

The good deed. This passage may be read, "a good deed done to an impotent man." Both nouns are without articles. Peter emphasized the unquestionably "good deed" the Lord had accomplished through John and him. By so doing he made obvious the unreasonableness of the trial he and John were now undergoing. His words may imply that he anticipated the possibility that some other charge might also be brought against them, arising from his sermon (ch. 3:12–26), as in the case of Stephen, who was accused of blasphemy "against this holy place [the Temple], and the law" (ch. 6:13).

He. Or, "this [man]." The wording implies that the man who had been healed also was present before the Sanhedrin (see v. 14).

Made whole. Gr. *sōzō*, "to save" either physically or spiritually. This word has a strong underlying meaning suggesting spiritual as well as bodily restoration (see Mark 10:52; Luke 7:50).

10. To all the people. Peter would have all men know the important witness he is about to bear to both the leaders and the people (see ch. 2:14).

By the name. Or, "in the name." See on ch. 3:16.

Whom ye crucified. There is a striking boldness in this declaration. Peter does not hesitate to press home the fact that although Pilate had given the formal sentence, it was they, the very men who were examining him, who had crucified their King. He does not shrink now from confessing the Nazarene as the Messiah. Peter proclaims that Christ has been raised from the dead, and continues to heal as when He was on earth.

11. The stone. This verse is a free quotation of Ps. 118:22. Some of the members of the Sanhedrin, to whom Peter was speaking, had heard Christ quote and apply these words to the skeptical Jews (Matt. 21:42–44). In their blindness they had then thought that they could defy Christ's challenge and warning. Although by their calling they were

builders of the church of Israel (see on Acts 7:38), they rejected the stone that God had chosen to be the chief Cornerstone (see Eph. 2:20). This same thought is a dominant note in one of Peter's epistles, that the church is built of living stones upon the foundation of Jesus Christ as the "head of the corner" (1 Peter 2:6–8).

12. Neither is there salvation. Peter intimates that the physical cure of the lame man is an outward indication of Jesus' power of salvation for the soul, which the lame man had also received. The eyewitnesses were to conclude from the results produced by the injunction, "Arise, and walk," that the same power could just as surely bring the greater blessing of spiritual salvation (see Matt. 9:5). The salvation of which Peter was speaking was the very thing the rulers were professing to seek. Peter's claim that Christ is the *only* Saviour is exactly in line with the claims Jesus Himself made as to His uniqueness (see John 3:16; 14:6).

None other name. See on ch. 3:16. Peter had learned to attach to the thought of the name the full personality and power of the possessor of the name. To those who had known and accepted Him, the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth was the one true source of deliverance and salvation.

We must be saved. Christ is the one way through whom we must of necessity seek salvation if we would be saved (see John 14:6; 17:3). The plan of salvation offered through Jesus Christ (1) glorifies God as moral ruler, (2) upholds God's law as the rule of government, (3) shows the mark of its source in divine revelation, (4) provides, through the vicarious atonement, for the needs of men as sinners, who are otherwise under God's condemnation. Christ is the one mediator between man and God (1 Tim. 2:5).

13. When they saw. The Greek implies "considering" as well as "beholding."

Boldness. Gr. *parrēsia*, from the words *pan*, "all," and *rhēsis*, "speech"; thus the word means "freedom of speech," and so, "boldness." The word implies a freedom and readiness of speech such as would not be expected from one untrained in teaching.

Parrēsia had been characteristic of the Lord's teaching, which was done "openly" (Mark 8:32). From now on it was also to be a distinctive feature of the work of the apostles, as with Peter here, and with Paul (see Acts 28:31; 2 Cor. 7:4). *Parrēsia* was a characteristic of John in the confidence he showed in approaching God (1 John 4:17; 1 John 5:14).

Peter and John. As far as is recorded, John had not spoken, but doubtless by look and bearing, and perhaps by words not recorded, he obviously revealed similar courage.

Unlearned. Gr. *agrammatos*, "unlettered," that is, "uneducated," from the standpoint of the letters and traditions of the Jews. The scribes, on the other hand, were known as *grammateis*, "letter men." The Jewish leaders, noting that Peter and John had not been educated as scribes, would naturally conclude that such ignorant men were not qualified to be religious teachers.

Ignorant. Gr. *idiōtēs*, from *idios*, one's "own." The word here refers to a common man, a private person, in contrast with one in an official position. The disciples held no recognized rank as religious teachers. They were without a particular office or calling, or the culture required for such calling. The word *idiōtēs* has a curious later history. Latin reproduced *idiōtēs*, with scarcely an alteration in spelling, as *idiotia*. It passed from this into modern European languages as a term to describe ignorance and the incapacity

attached to it. Hence our present word “idiot.” As used by Luke, this word did not mean that Peter and John were men devoid of intellect, but rather that they were not public men. That was why the members of the Sanhedrin felt outraged that the apostles attempted to do the work of religious teachers.

Took knowledge. Rather, “recognized,” “began to realize.” Peter already had made clear to the Sanhedrin that his power came from Jesus of Nazareth. Now, as the Jewish leaders sought to account for the apostles’ boldness in teaching in spite of their lack of formal training, they came to realize that Peter’s way of speaking was also that of Jesus. Not only his power to heal, but his message and the mode of its presentation, were all derived from Christ. To the Sanhedrin it must have been as though Jesus were again living before their eyes, in the persons of His two disciples. So should it ever be with all those who truly follow the Christ. To the Christian who speaks for his Master today, the most telling conviction and power come from his having been with Jesus in prayer, in meditation, and in companionship in all the activities of life. This sort of fellowship with the divine Lord brings an inestimable privilege, a transforming power, and a grave responsibility in Christ’s service.

14. They could say nothing. Literally, “they had nothing to gainsay.” The evidence could not be disputed. The leaders of the Jews could not charge deception, as they had tried to do in the matter of the Lord’s resurrection, for the very man in question stood before them healed (see v. 16). Judging from subsequent events, probably there were men in that august company who indeed thought that God was working through the apostles. Not long after this event Gamaliel suggested that possibility (see ch. 5:34–39). It is not unlikely that there were others who, though silent, feared lest they also might “be found even to fight against God” (v. 39; cf. v. 40).

15. The council. That is, the Sanhedrin. The two disciples, and probably the lame man, were taken from the council chamber while the members of the Sanhedrin discussed what they ought to do.

16. What shall we do? The question need never have been debated. The Sanhedrin was sitting as a court of justice, and the verdict should have been given for or against the accused, according to the evidence. The lame man had been healed. They had seen him. The two men who had been the human instruments in the healing had stood before them, and were awaiting their decision. The members of the Sanhedrin abandoned their judicial office, and began to discuss what course to pursue, on the basis of expediency. This whole proceeding is eminently characteristic of Caiaphas (see John 11:49, 50).

Miracle. Gr. *sēmeion*, “a sign,” and by extension, “a miracle” (see Vol. V, p. 208; see on Isa. 7:14). The Jewish authorities admitted that a remarkable sign had appeared in their midst.

Manifest to all. Because the crippled beggar at the Temple gate was so widely known, there could be only two bases on which the apostles might have been considered worthy of punishment: (1) if the miracle were an imposture, but this no one in the council believed or dared to insinuate; or (2) if the miracle had been performed by some sort of magic, or other unlawful means (Deut. 13:1–5). The question of the Sanhedrin “By what power ... have ye done this?” might suggest the latter. But from the very beginning (Acts 3:13) Peter had attributed what had happened to the “God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob,” and insisted that God through Jesus Christ had made the man whole. Consequently no charge could be brought against them.

We cannot deny it. The very form of the statement betrays not only the desire to deny but also an admission of the lack of any power under the circumstances to do so. They had the evidence, but refused to follow it to its logical conclusion and accept the Christ who had shown the power. Such refusal is worse than never having known the truth.

17. That is spread. The Jewish leaders feared that the story of the miracle would go throughout the city and the countryside, with the result that men might accept Jesus Christ as the Messiah and the divine Son of God. This would be the logical result, and doubtless many were led thereby to faith in Jesus.

Straitly threaten. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of the word “straitly.”

In this name. Or, “about this name,” or “on the basis of this name” (see on ch. 3:16). The disciples were no longer to preach about Jesus or upon His authority.

18. They called them. Peter and John were summoned again into the council chamber to learn the results of the deliberation.

Not to speak at all. Or, “absolutely not to speak.” The very name of Jesus was not to pass their lips.

In the name. See on v. 17.

19. Peter and John. Both the apostles now joined in expressing their determination that they would announce the word of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. It is possible that each was appealed to separately by the council to desist, and each pledged his determination to continue in spite of the admonition of the council. For a like firmness compare the experience of faithful Jews in 2 Maccabees 7:30.

Whether it be right. Here an important principle is suggested. These words introduce an assertion of the right of conscience to resist human authority when it conflicts with divine authority. The apostles’ appeal, “Judge ye,” shows that they claimed this right as axiomatic. In practice, however, a difficulty often arises in establishing whether a man who claims such divine authority really has it. In cases like the present one, where the question is one of testimony to facts, if men believe themselves commissioned of God to declare those facts, they dare not tamper with the truth, even under fear of offending men.

In a dispute with civil authority the man of religious conviction must accept the burden of proof that his convictions arise from divine authority. If he wishes his case to hold, he must convince his hearers that his convictions are sound. Peter and John knew they had the authority of the Holy Spirit, already demonstrated by miracles, and by conversions; and theirs was an abiding conviction of truth, demonstrated in their preaching and its results. In this situation they could not consent to obey man rather than God (see ch. 5:29). The apostles had a command to preach, a command from the Christ who was giving them their power. No other consideration could be valid in such a situation. See AA 68, 69.

Whenever a man faces such a choice between his honest conviction regarding God’s will for him, and the commandments of men, he can afford only to follow what he believes to be God’s will. If he attempts to serve two masters, he will succeed in satisfying neither and will sell his soul for the sake of expediency. But if he steadfastly recognizes God’s prior claim to his full allegiance, no man can call him dishonest, and his soul is safe.

Judge ye. In the face of such indubitable evidence of their innocence, the apostles boldly challenged the Jewish leaders to recognize the facts. That the Sanhedrin released Peter and John without punishing them was tacit recognition that they were guiltless.

20. We cannot but speak. The Greek emphasizes the pronoun “we.” They, as Jesus’ apostles, had been especially commissioned to bear witness to Him (Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 1:8).

Have seen and heard. The apostles’ testimony was grounded on their personal experiences with Jesus. Many years later, in their epistles, both Peter and John emphasized the importance of their having been eyewitnesses to the truths they taught (2 Peter 1:16–18; 1 John 1:1–3). For the Christian today personal experience with the presence of Christ in his life constitutes one of the most convincing evidences of the practical reality of Christian truth.

21. Further threatened. More than this the Sanhedrin did not dare to venture, because everyone knew the lame man had been healed and that no charge worthy of punishment could be maintained against the apostles. With the healed man known to all, they could not assert that the story of the miracle was untrue. And since it was a good deed unshakably attested, it could not be punished. Neither could they justifiably punish the apostles for claiming that their healing was done in the name of Jesus.

They might punish. Although some of the Jewish leaders doubtless were inclined to favor the apostles (see on v. 14), in general the feeling was one of disappointment that they could find no pretext for administering punishment without enraging the people. Here again expediency seems to have been an important factor in their reasoning and decision (see John 11:49, 50).

Glorified God. Or, “were glorifying God,” portraying the current reaction of the people to the miracle. Peter’s speech in the Temple had made clear the source of the power by which the man had been healed (ch. 3:12–16).

22. Above forty years old. Comparison with ch. 3:2 shows that the man had been crippled all this time. Such a long-standing incapacity made the miracle all the more remarkable. Repeatedly Luke notes the duration of a disease or of a crippling malady healed miraculously (see Luke 8:42, 43; 13:11; Acts 9:33; 14:8). It is too much to say that all these allusions are attributable to the fact that he was a physician (Col. 4:14), though some may have been, for this same practice was common among other, nonmedical, writers, when recounting miraculous healings (Mark 5:25; 9:21; John 5:5; 9:1). Probably NT writers gave this information chiefly because it helped to show the magnitude of the miracle performed.

This miracle of healing was shewed. Rather, “this sign [*sēmeion*] of healing had come to pass.” For the meaning of *sēmeion*, here translated “miracle,” see on v. 16. The KJV has endeavored to represent the idea of a miracle as a sign by using the word “shewed.”

23. Their own company. Gr. *hoi idioi*, “their own.” Jewish authors writing in Greek use this expression for fellow soldiers and fellow countrymen; Paul employs it of relatives (see 1 Tim. 5:8; cf. Acts 24:23), a use that is also attested by the papyri; and John uses this expression for Jesus’ disciples (John 13:1). In the present passage, “their own” doubtless refers to the apostles’ fellow believers. Apparently they had no permanent place of meeting; at Pentecost they were probably in the upper room (see Acts

1:13; 2:1). As the church grew, they met daily in the Temple and also in one another's houses (chs. 2:46; 12:12). Thus it was not difficult for Peter and John to find their fellow apostles and believers in a group.

Reported all. The report was made for the glory of God, and not for that of the apostles who related the account (see ch. 15:3, 4).

Chief priests and elders. See on v. 1.

24. Lifted up their voice. Upon hearing the apostles' report the assembled Christians raised their voices in praise and adoration to the God who had intervened so remarkably. Phrases that follow suggest a chant of praise, different from ordinary speech. This was probably a hymn, and may have been uttered by Peter while the others joined in saying "Amen," or they may have repeated it phrase by phrase after him. It appears doubtful that the Christian community already would have composed and memorized such a hymn as this as part of their liturgy. This passage has the distinction of being the first recorded utterance of corporate worship in Christian history.

Lord. Gr. *despotēs*, a "master," as contrasted with a servant. This word is used but rarely of the Lord in the NT, appearing with such a reference only six times. It is interesting to note that two of these are in the writings of Peter and John (2 Peter 2:1; Rev. 6:10), the disciples who doubtless led out in the present act of praise and worship.

Art God. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of these words. However, the thought of the passage remains the same. The fact that God is Creator is an eternal basis for the praise and obedience of His creatures (see Isa. 44:23–27; Heb. 1:1–5).

Heaven, and earth, and the sea. As do so many of the psalms, this ascription of praise begins by setting forth the glory of God as Creator.

25. By the mouth. The earliest manuscripts of this passage present a difficult Greek text that appears to have been garbled. Later manuscripts contain a number of variants that apparently were attempts by scribes to repair the text. The earliest extant text is probably best translated, "Who through the mouth of our father David, thy servant, through the Holy Spirit, said ...," or perhaps, "Who through our father David, thy servant, the mouth of the Holy Spirit, said ..."

The heathen rage. The quotation in vs. 25, 26 is from Ps. 2:1, 2, which doubtless had its primary application to some revolt against a king of Israel. During David's reign mention is made of such conflicts with Syrians, Moabites, Ammonites, and others engaging in vain revolt (2 Sam. 8). Here the psalm is presented as a parallel to the Jewish leaders' fighting against the Lord of the church. An ancient Jewish application of Ps. 2:1, probably at least from the 2d century A.D., interprets the "heathen" as Gog and Magog, who in Jewish thinking were to oppose the Messiah when He should come (Talmud 'Abodah Zarah 3b, Soncino ed., pp. 8, 9). If such an application of this verse was current in the apostles' day, as it well may have been, it is understandable that Ps. 2:1 might appropriately be applied by the apostles to those who already were opposing the Messiah.

26. The kings. In this instance the Romans (see on v. 27).

Christ. Gr. *Christos*, properly, "anointed [one]." The LXX used this word to translate the Heb. *mashiach*, "anointed [one]," which was applied in the OT to kings (Ps. 18:50; Isa. 45:1), priests (Lev. 4:3), and pre-eminently to the coming Saviour. Consequently He is known by the anglicized form of the word, the Messiah. Those who followed Jesus

recognized Him to be this Saviour and consequently called Him *Christos*, “Christ.”

Inasmuch as the present passage is a quotation from the LXX, *Christos* here is probably best translated in its OT sense, “anointed one.”

In its primary application in Ps. 2:2, *mashiach* doubtless refers to the king of Israel. But the fact that the word also might be used of the Messiah made this passage a striking one for the apostles to apply to Christ. That they consciously made this application is indicated by Acts 4:27, where they speak of Christ as the One “whom thou hast anointed.”

27. Of a truth. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) adding the words “in this city.” Such a statement would be most natural inasmuch as the apostle here applies the language of the psalmist to the events preceding the crucifixion.

Child. Gr. *pais*, a word that may mean either “child” or “servant” (see on ch. 3:13). The word is the same as that used of David in v. 25, and as it unquestionably means “servant” there, it is probably best taken in that sense here. So understood, it is reminiscent of the servant of the Lord in Isa. 52:13.

Herod. The two civil rulers before whom Jesus was tried, Herod the king and Pilate the governor, are mentioned as noteworthy examples of the “kings” and “rulers” of v. 26 (from Ps. 2:2). For a further discussion of Herod Antipas see Vol. V, pp. 64, 65. It is interesting to note that Luke, the author of the present account, is also the only gospel writer to record the role of Herod in Jesus’ trial (Luke 23:7–15).

Pontius Pilate. For a discussion of this Roman governor see Vol. V, pp. 67, 68.

Gentiles. This doubtless refers to the Romans who shared with the Jews the burden of guilt for the crime of the crucifixion.

People of Israel. The sequence Herod, Pontius Pilate, Gentiles, Israel, completes a parallelism with the previous sequence of heathen, people, kings, and rulers (vs. 25, 26). This is an inverted parallelism, a characteristic Hebrew poetic form (see Vol. III, pp. 23–27).

28. Whatsoever thy hand. The apostles had quoted from the second psalm and had applied it to the crucifixion of Christ. Now they recognized that even in their sin against the Son of God, the Jews and Romans had helped to fulfill God’s purpose for Christ in His work of salvation. A divine will manifests itself in the government of the world, and the salvation of individual souls. This does not rule out man’s free will. History, particularly sacred history, testifies that the will of each agent is free, and that each man stands or falls by the part he has taken in the unfolding plan of redemption. See on Dan. 4:17.

The man who is surrendered to God works to accomplish His divine will. He who is not so surrendered finds himself working against a God, who, in spite of man’s disobedience, works out His own divine, ultimate will. Rebellious, evil, and disobedient men play into God’s hands. “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee” (Ps. 76:10).

29. Lord, behold. The context shows that the prayer of the church is addressed to God the Father. Under the threatenings of the Jewish leaders the apostles were not disheartened, but drew nearer to the God who could aid them in whatever danger they faced. The threats of the Jews were ultimately directed against God (see on ch. 9:4, 5).

Servants. Gr. *douloi*, “slaves.”

Boldness. Gr. *parrēsia* (see on v. 13). The apostles had shown “boldness of speech” before the Sanhedrin (v. 13), and now their prayer, as though showing consciousness of natural weakness, is for a yet further bestowal of that gift of courage (see Luke 21:15). They realized it was now needed more than ever, for both themselves and the entire church.

Speak thy word. It is not enough that the godly life be lived by the Christian, as a testimony to the power of Christ. The doctrine of salvation in Jesus Christ must also be given utterance (see Rom. 10:13–17).

30. By stretching forth. Rather, “while thou stretchest forth.” It was God who did the mighty works of which the present miracle was an instance. Nicodemus, himself a member of the Sanhedrin, had said that no one could do such works except “God be with him” (John 3:2).

Signs and wonders. For a discussion of these words see Vol. V, p. 208; see on Acts 4:16; 2 Cor. 12:12.

By the name. See on ch. 3:16.

Child. Rather, “servant.” See on chs. 3:13; 4:27.

31. They had prayed. A constantly repeated exercise in the church (see chs. 1:14, 24; 2:42; 6:4).

The place was shaken. In view of further remarkable manifestations of the powerful presence of the Spirit of God, it may be concluded that this shaking was not an earthquake, but a supernatural experience. It was a renewal of the wonder of the day of Pentecost, but apparently without the appearance of the tongues of fire. Thus the Christians knew at once that the God of all nature to whom they had appealed (v. 24) was among them. In view of their direct need God gave them an immediate answer as a token that He had heard their prayers.

They were all filled. See on ch. 2:4. As on the day of Pentecost, the disciples knew again an infilling of the power of the Spirit. It gave them an assurance that they could speak with boldness the words they were commissioned to proclaim. The fact that the disciples had received the Spirit at Pentecost did not mean that further unction in times of special need might not be given. In fact, the primary bestowal of the Spirit had prepared them for such further outpourings. So also with the Christian today; the life begun in the Spirit, as signified by baptism, is dependent for its continuance upon constant communion and continually renewed supplies of spiritual grace.

They spake ... with boldness. Endowed with boldness by the power of the Spirit, for which they had prayed, from now on the apostles proclaimed the gospel whenever and wherever they found opportunity, refusing to be stopped by threats of any kind.

32. Of one heart. Textual evidence may also be cited (cf. p. 10) for the interesting addition, “And there was no discrimination among them whatever.” As with similar pairs of expressions, “heart” and “soul” often overlap in meaning and should be taken here to express a totality of character rather than any minute distinctions. Oneness of heart in Hebrew thought indicated complete accord (see Jer. 32:39; cf. 1 Chron. 12:38). It was not only Peter and John and the other apostles, but the entire multitude of believers, who participated in this accord.

Neither said any of them. Each individual felt that his possessions were held by him as though a trust from God, to be given up upon request. This could only be the result of a deep love for one another, foretold by Christ as a mark of His disciples (John 13:35).

Idealists who have endeavored to picture in theory a perfect society, as Plato in his *Republic* and Sir Thomas More in his *Utopia*, have proposed, as a condition of their perfect commonwealth, a community of goods similar to that practiced in the early church. To succeed, such a commonwealth requires perfection in its participants. Undoubtedly the believers' expectation of their Lord's soon return, together with their unity of thought and feeling, made them willing to part with their material possessions. However, as shown in the case of Ananias (see Acts 5:4), they were under no compulsion to do so.

All things common. This statement is parallel to ch. 2:44, as indeed vs. 32–35 of the present chapter restate generally what has been recorded in ch. 2:43–45. This restatement is probably made by Luke to supply a setting for his story of Barnabas' liberality (vs. 36, 37) and Ananias' selfishness (ch. 5:1–11). Luke is pleased to dwell upon this community of goods as an ideal expression of the equality and fraternity manifested in the early church. The rights of property were voluntarily suspended by the spontaneous conduct of the members of the Christian community, under the operation of the law of love. Their benevolence was free and full, without hope of material reward. They thought of themselves, not as possessors for self, but as stewards for the good of others.

33. With great power. The witness of the apostles was presented, not in their own strength, but in a power they could never have engendered within themselves. Theirs was the energizing of the Divine Spirit.

Gave. Gr. *apodidōmi*, "to deliver [that which is due]." The form of the verb used here may be understood to mean that the apostles "continued to deliver" the witness they had already given on Pentecost and in the Temple. The apostles felt themselves under an inner compulsion to bear witness. They had seen the wonderful works of Jesus. They had seen Him die. They had seen what they had not believed could happen—the Lord had risen from the dead. This crowning miracle constituted the climactic point of the apostolic preaching. The apostles could tell the story as eyewitnesses to a resurrected Lord, and tell it they did "with great power."

Grace. Gr. *charis* (see on Rom. 3:24). *Charis* here may be taken in the sense of "favour" (as in Luke 2:52), and so indicate that the favor of the people toward the Christians still continued. However, in view of the context, which emphasizes the spiritual gift of power that they received, it is probably better to understand *charis* in its more technical sense of divine grace (as in Luke 2:40).

34. That lacked. Rather, "that was in need." The Greek seems to connect this verse with the previous one by the conjunction *gar*, "for," which is not translated in the KJV.

Gar suggests the close relationship that existed between the Christians' liberality and the grace they enjoyed (see on v. 33).

Possessorsof lands. Some of the new Christians were persons of substantial means. The genuineness of their brotherly love manifested itself in self-sacrifice for the welfare of their less fortunately situated brethren.

Sold ... brought. The forms of the verbs used here suggest that this was an occurrence that happened repeatedly as one after another the believers parted with their possessions for the common good of the church. In doing this, their motives were love, and the impulses of benevolence. Although Luke makes no mention of it, the

possibility also exists that the Christians were impressed by their Lord's warnings of wars and coming troubles (Matt. 24:5–12), and thus with the fact that earthly possessions are unstable. Certainly land and property in Palestine must often have been valueless when the troubles the Lord prophesied became fact. Just as Jeremiah had shown his faith in the future restoration of his people to Palestine by his purchase of a field at Anathoth (Jer. 32:6–15), so the Christians showed by a reverse process in the sale of their property a proof of their faith in the certainty of the message to which they witnessed.

35. *Laid them down.* Laying the results of the sales at the disciples' feet was a significant act, showing that they gave the apostles entire control over the proceeds. For a similar use of this expression see Ps. 8:6. Cicero uses the same figure when he speaks of gifts being placed "before the feet of the praetor" (*Pro Flacco* xxvii. 68). The words apparently reflect the custom that when gifts or offerings were made to a king, or priest, or teacher, they were not placed in his hands, but at his feet.

As he had need. Or, "as any had need." No doubt many of the Christians were not in need and took care of themselves. The beneficiaries would be those who were unable to earn a livelihood because of sickness and perhaps because of loss of employment owing to their change of religious faith (see John 9:22, where those who accepted Christ were threatened with excommunication), widows, and newcomers who had not yet become established in the city. There may also have been those to whom the apostles felt justified in rendering material support because of their spiritual activity in propagating the faith, although Luke makes no specific mention of this. Here was a as wise, planned material ministry to bodily needs, which has ever been a credit to the church whenever it has been thus conducted (see 1 Tim. 5:5–16, 21).

36. *Joses.* Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the reading "Joseph."

Barnabas. This is the first reference to Barnabas, the man who was to travel with the apostle Paul on his First Missionary Journey. The name Barnabas is interpreted by Luke as meaning in Greek *huios paraklēseōs*, which may be translated, "son of consolation," or "son of exhortation." Scholars are not agreed as to the Hebrew or Aramaic words represented by this name. They may have been *bar nebu'ah*, "son of prophecy." In any case his surname would imply that Barnabas was characterized by his gift of exhortation (see ch. 11:23). When Barnabas became a Christian is not known. Since he was a Levite, he may have taken part in the service of the Temple, and may have heard the Lord or the apostles preaching there. He was a relative of John Mark (Col. 4:10) who lived in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12). A tradition recorded by Clement of Alexandria (*The Stromata* ii. 20) lists Barnabas as one of the Seventy sent forth by Jesus (Luke 10:1; see also on Acts 9:27).

Extant is an epistle bearing the name of Barnabas, which the 3d-century Christian writers Clement of Alexandria and Origen believed was written by this apostle. However, the contents of the epistle show this to be untrue. It consists mainly of anti-Judaistic, allegorical interpretations of OT narratives. The epistle takes a position against the seventh-day Sabbath and in favor of the observance of the "eighth-day," Sunday. It was probably written by a now-unknown hand about the middle of the 2d century A.D.

Cyprus. The island still so called, in the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea. Jews were settled there at least as early as the Maccabean period (1 Maccabees 15:23).

Christian teachers were driven there from Jerusalem by the persecution that accompanied the death of Stephen (Acts 11:19). On their First Missionary Journey Paul and Barnabas visited Cyprus, probably at the request of Barnabas.

37. Land. Or, “a field.” In the early Hebrew polity the Levites held no private property, but lived in cities and on land held in common and were supported by tithes paid by the people (Num. 18:20, 21). But the case of Jeremiah (Jer. 32:7–12) shows that there was nothing to hinder a priest or a Levite from acquiring land by purchase or inheritance. Also, Barnabas may have held land by marriage. We are not informed as to the location of the field that Barnabas sold. Barnabas’ aunt Mary also had property, and although she did not sell her house, she made it available for the use of the Christian community (Acts 12:12).

Barnabas afterward seems to have worked for his livelihood, as Paul also did (1 Cor. 9:6). Barnabas may have been chosen as an example of the liberality of the early Christian body because of something out of the ordinary in the kind of gift or in the nature of the sacrifice which he made.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1, 2 AA 60
- 1–3SR 250
- 1–37AA 60–71; SR 250–253
- 3 AA 61
- 3–6EW 193
- 5, 6 AA 62
- 5–7SR 250
- 7 AA 63
- 8 SR 251
- 10–12AA 63; EW 193; SR 251
- 11 AA 64
- 12 AA 594; COL 264; CT 62; DA 175, 806; GC 74; MB 149; MH 179; PP 73, 431; SC 19
- 13 AA 45, 64, 208, 579; COL 130; CT 478, 509; DA 250, 354; Ed 95; EW 194; FE 242, 456, 514; MB 28; MH 512; SC 75; IT 132; 2T 343; 4T 378, 634; 5T 225, 487; 6T 47, 70, 401, 421; 8T 174, 191; 9T 146
- 13–16SR 252
- 16 EW 194
- 18–20SL 61; 5T 713
- 18–21SR 253
- 19 AA 68, 69
- 19, 20 AA 66; EW 194; 6T 395
- 21 AA 67
- 22 AA 57
- 24–30AA 67
- 29–31EW 24
- 31 AA 71
- 31, 32 GC 379; 6T 140
- 32 AA 45, 70; Ed 95; Ev 698; WM 271
- 32, 33 COL 121; 8T 20
- 32–34DA 551; MB 137

33 AA 48, 68; ML 61; TM 67

34, 35 AA 70

36 AA 166

CHAPTER 5

1 *After that Ananians and Sapphira his wife for their hypocrisy at Peter's rebuke had fallen down dead, 12 and that the rest of the apostles had wrought many miracles, 14 to the increase of the faith: 17 the apostles are again imprisoned, 19 but delivered by an angel bidding them to preach openly to all: 21 when, after their teaching accordingly in the temple, 29 and before the council, 33 they are in danger to be killed, through the advice of Gamaliel, a great counsellor among the Jews, they be kept alive, 40 and are but beaten: for which they glorify God, and cease no day from preaching.*

1. But. There is a sharp contrast between the kindly generosity of Barnabas (ch. 4:36, 37) and the cupidity of Ananias and Sapphira (ch. 5:1–11).

A certain man. Only a truthful narrator would tell the story of Ananias and Sapphira at this point. But just as there had been a Judas among the twelve disciples, so in the infant church, pure and zealous though it was, there were found two who preferred meanness to generosity and hypocrisy to honesty. Yet the story is told calmly and dispassionately, and the reader is instructed and moved by a recital of the plain facts.

Ananias. Meaning, "Jehovah is gracious." This is a common name, belonging also to the man who befriended Saul of Tarsus when he was first converted (ch. 23:2; 24:1). It corresponds to the Hebrew Hananiah in Jer. 28:1; Dan. 1:6, 7.

Sapphira. This name probably represents the Aramaic *shappira*, "beautiful," although some derive it from the Greek *sappheiros*, "a sapphire."

Possession. See on ch. 2:45. The property was land (see ch. 5:3).

2. Kept back. Gr. *nosphizō*, in the form here used, "set apart for himself." In Titus 2:10 this verb is translated "purloining." It is used in the LXX (Joshua 7:1) for the sin of Achan. The mere retention by Ananias of part of the selling price of the land was not in itself a sin. Actually, he was under no compulsion to give anything. He had professed a willingness to give, but he was not obliged to give any fixed amount. The money was his own, to give in whole or in part. But the part was brought as though it were the whole. This was the deception. It was an acted lie.

The approval with which Luke tells the story of the self-sacrifice of Barnabas must have reflected the approval of the church. Ananias apparently thought that he could gain the same approval, but with less sacrifice on his part. The desire to please was strong enough to gain a partial victory over greed. But greed was strong enough to triumph over honesty. The impulse to sell came from the Spirit of God; the impulse to retain part of the price was evil. The act was an attempt to serve both God and mammon. The sin was in some respects like that of Gehazi (see on 2 Kings 5:20–27), but seen against the background of the miracles of Pentecost and the extraordinary progress of the church under the Spirit's guidance, it was more heinous and was visited with severer punishment.

His wife. Sapphira was evidently a willing accomplice. Theirs was a planned offense.

3. Peter. The spokesman for the church.

Why? If Ananias had wished, he could have resisted the temptation. Had he resisted, the tempter would have fled from him (James 4:7).

Satan filled thine heart. Peter traced evil to its source. His knowledge of what Ananias and Sapphira were doing came from the gift of discernment (1 Cor. 2:14; 12:10). In sad contrast to this, Ananias had opened his heart to Satan until his mind was full of covetous and deceitful thoughts.

Holy Ghost. The Spirit had been given to guide the believers into all truth (John 16:13), but Ananias was trying, vainly, to deceive the Spirit of truth (see on John 14:17, 26; 16:13).

4. Remained. Ananias was not compelled to sell the land; it was expected only that he would honestly bring from the proceeds what he had pledged. The implication is that the church compelled no one to give to the common fund, but if a man did promise to give, he should give what he had promised. At every stage Ananias was free to act as he thought best. The part he tried to retain might not have been large; he could have retained much more, had he done so honestly. But this attempt to obtain a reputation for generosity without the reality of sacrifice made him guilty of sacrilege.

Conceived this thing. Literally, “put this deed.” This implies a thought-out plan on the part of Ananias. It was not a matter of yielding to a sudden temptation, but of accepting into his heart a plan which, never right, developed into an evil act. Satan had entered his heart in terms of the scheme, and had not been cast out.

Lied ... unto God. This does not mean that Ananias had not lied at all to men, but that his offense lay primarily in the fact that he had presumed to deceive God. All sin is ultimately against God, although it also gravely affects men. David had recognized this, for he said, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned” (Ps. 51:4). Ananias had either ignored God or thought he could deceive Him as he had hoped to deceive his fellows. On either count he was sinning against God, and Peter rightly gives this prominence.

The use of the word “God” throws light on the Biblical teaching regarding the Holy Spirit. In Acts 5:3 Ananias’ sin is identified as lying “to the Holy Ghost,” and here it is described as lying “unto God.” This suggests the unity that exists between the Spirit and the Father, and serves to warn the Christian of the heinousness of sanctimonious falsehood (see on Matt. 12:31).

5. Gave up the ghost. Gr. *ekpsucho*’, “to expire,” a term that is found in medical literature. Death was not a coincidence. There was a close connection between Peter’s denunciation of the sin and the death of the sinner. Any doubt on this point is removed by considering the death of Sapphira (vs. 7–10), which was foretold by Peter after his exposure of the deceit. Compare the judgment on Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:2), and on Achan (Joshua 7:20–26); see on 2 Chron. 22:8. Compare on Matt. 27:50.

This was a terrible judgment, but we need not wonder at it. Ananias and Sapphira were members of the infant church. They had drawn near to God. They had undoubtedly tasted some of the heavenly gifts of salvation. Perhaps they had received some of the gifts of the Spirit. But by a false spirit they had committed an act of sacrilege. If not strikingly and visibly met in these early days of the church, such acts of deception might have undermined the work of the apostles. God interposed here to save His church from greater dangers and evils. The experience holds a lesson for us: “If a man attend a convention or a religious service and sing with fervor, ‘My all is on the altar’ when it is not, he is committing the sin of Ananias and Sapphira.”—G. CAMPBELL MORGAN.

Great fear. Luke often associates miracles with fear in the hearts of the beholders (see Luke 1:12, 65; 5:26; 7:16; 8:37; Acts 2:43; 19:17). But here it is evidently more than

the reverential awe of Acts 2:43. In a large company there could well have been other dishonest individuals, upon whom a sort of terror might well have fallen. To the rest must have come a deeper reverence for the God who would thus vindicate His own righteousness. The fear was immediate. It reached out among the believers before Sapphira had heard of her husband's death. Fear of this sort would be a deterrent upon any who were not completely sincere in their profession of Christianity.

These things. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of these words.

6. Young men. Literally, "younger men."

Wound him up. Or, "wrapped him up," probably in the robe he was wearing at the moment. It was customary to wrap the body in a winding sheet, followed by immediate burial outside the walls of a city. Among the Jews contact with a corpse resulted in ceremonial defilement (see on Num. 19:11). This, coupled with the desire to avoid costly embalming methods, required a prompt burial.

Buried him. As is seen from the burials of Lazarus (see on John 11:38) and Jesus (see on Matt. 27:60), the dead were deposited in caves or tombs, which were closed by large stones. Thus little time would be needed for the burial of Ananias. For Jewish attention to funeral rites see on Acts 8:2.

7. Space of three hours. Literally, "an interval of about three hours," possibly until the next hour for prayer. This was time enough for the disposal of Ananias' body, but the news had not yet reached Sapphira.

Came in. To the room where Peter and the rest of the congregation had just witnessed the death and removal of her husband.

8. Answered unto her. Possibly, "addressed her." Peter's question was not to trap a conspirator, but to give Sapphira an opportunity to show repentance. She could have prevented her husband's trespass, but had failed to do so. She now had the chance to clear her own conscience by confession. She had misused the previous opportunity; now she failed again.

Tell me. Peter's forthright question might have warned Sapphira that their scheme was known, but she maintained the lie upon which she and her husband had agreed. She answered glibly, "Yea, for so much." Peter may have mentioned the sum that Ananias had brought in.

9. Agreed together. The offense was particularly heinous because it involved premeditated deception.

Tempt the Spirit. That is, to "try," or to "test," whether the Holy Spirit was really a discernor of the secrets of men's hearts. The expression "Spirit of the Lord" is probably used in its OT sense, as the Spirit of Jehovah (cf. 2 Kings 2:16; Isa. 61:1; etc.). The combination is rare in the NT, occurring only here and in 2 Cor. 3:17.

Shall carry thee out. Peter is speaking not as a judge but as a prophet. The Holy Spirit had already condemned them. In this instance the coming judgment is foretold, and the announcement barely preceded its execution. To Peter his gift of discernment showed that the young men whose footsteps he heard returning from the burial of Ananias would very soon have another task of like nature.

10. Straightway. Her death was as immediate as that of her husband.

Yielded up the ghost. See on v. 5.

Found her dead. In fulfillment of Peter's prophecy.

Buried her. There was no funeral ceremony on the occasion of this double tragedy, whatever care may have been given to the dead at other times (cf. Luke 23:55, 56).

11. Great fear. See on v. 5.

The church. With the exception of the doubtful reading in ch. 2:47, this is the first occurrence of the word in Acts. Its presence indicates a development in organization. See on Matt. 18:17. The startling death of Ananias and Sapphira would give a new significance to the society and its leaders.

As many as heard. These were outside of the church, but they heard of the power being exercised among its members.

12. By the hands. This may be only the Hebrew way of expressing agency (cf. Ex. 35:29; Lev. 8:36; etc.). But in the NT Christ's hands are often shown as the instrument of His miracles (see Mark 6:2, 5; Luke 4:40; etc.). The promise to Christ's followers was: "They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark 16:18). Therefore, the expression here may well be literal, although Acts 5:15 shows that the people believed that cures could also be wrought without the use of the apostles' hands.

Signs and wonders. See on Mark 16:17, 18; John 14:12; Acts 2:22. The early church was born, even as Christ's ministry was conducted, in the setting of the miraculous. The tragedy of Ananias and Sapphira was followed by miracles of healing and blessing.

Wrought. Rather, "were being wrought," in other words, time after time, upon repeated occasions.

With one accord. See on chs. 1:14; 4:24. Luke takes great satisfaction in emphasizing the unity of the disciples. Since Solomon's Porch is mentioned, this description may refer to meetings conducted by the apostles at the usual hours of prayer, about 9:00 A.M. and 3:00 P.M.

Solomon's porch. See on John 10:23 and Acts 3:2; 11. This was a favorite place for teachers to gather with their listeners. There is no evidence, however, that the Christians had taken over this portico as a regular place for their exclusive worship (cf. ch. 3:11).

13. And. Or, "but," stressing the contrast between the believers in v. 12 and those who did not believe, in v. 13.

The rest. Commentators have suggested several explanations of this passage. The seeming contrast with "the people" in the last part of the verse suggests that the upper, ruling classes may be meant.

Durst no man. Fear of sharing the fate of Ananias and Sapphira deterred those who were not willing wholeheartedly to follow Christ.

Join. Gr. *kollaō*, "to glue," "to fasten firmly together." Compare on ch. 9:26.

But. That is, on the other hand, emphasizing the favorable reaction of "the people."

Magnified them. More exactly translated, "esteemed them [that is, the apostles] highly."

14. Added. Rather, "kept being added." Conversions occurred almost daily.

To the Lord. Grammatically, in the Greek, these words can be attached to "kept being added," or to "believers," giving "believers in the Lord."

Men and women. The specific mention of women suggests that there were large numbers of them coming into the church. For the prominence of women in Luke's narratives see on Luke 8:2. Luke also mentions women as suffering under the persecution that arose after the death of Stephen (Acts 8:3).

15. *Insomuch that.* The thought is continued from the first part of v. 12, the intervening sentences being parenthetical.

Brought forth the sick. Compare Mark 1:32–34. It was not enough for the disciples to heal in public places and in the homes; relatives of the sick brought them out into the streets, that they might have attention the more quickly. The whole amazing work of healing was carried on in the most public fashion possible. Not only throughout the city of Jerusalem, but also to the surrounding towns (Acts 5:16) did the news of the extraordinary activities of the apostles and their fellow believers spread, and great was the harvest of souls.

Shadow of Peter. Peter alone is mentioned here, and perhaps he did the major part of the healing work. In v. 12, however, all the apostles are distinctly credited with a share in performing the miracles. The people healed had faith, not in Peter and his companions, but in the Lord, whom the apostles represented.

16. *Unto Jerusalem.* Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of “unto.” The inhabitants of the surrounding towns brought out their sick, but did not necessarily carry them into Jerusalem. The verse may cover a fairly long period of time, during which the apostles could have visited a considerable number of “the cities round about” Jerusalem.

Vexed. The Greek verb here translated “vexed” is found in the NT only here and in Luke 6:18, but is used frequently in the works of Greek medical writers. It is therefore just such a word as one would expect Luke the physician to use.

Unclean spirits. See on Matt. 12:43, 44. Christ gave His disciples power to cast out such evil spirits (see Matt. 10:1). The Seventy had already exercised that power (Luke 10:17), and the Twelve had doubtless performed similar miracles. But now, in the full power of the Holy Spirit, they were doing the “greater works” that Jesus had promised (John 14:12; Mark 16:17).

Healed every one. Compare Matt. 8:16; 12:15; DA 241 concerning the similar results arising from Christ’s medical ministry. How extraordinary it must have been to see whole families, and possibly whole communities, free from sickness. The fame of the church and its leaders spread far and wide.

17. *Then.* Rather, “but,” pointing out the contrast between the multitudes flocking to the disciples for healing and the high priest preparing to subject the disciples to a second persecution.

High priest. Annas (see on ch. 4:6).

They that were with him. Perhaps a more comprehensive expression than that used in ch. 4:6: “as many as were of the kindred of the high priest” (see on ch. 4:6). The opposition had had time to gather larger forces.

Sect. Gr. *hairesis*, “choice,” hence, “opinion,” by extension, “party,” or “faction.” The word found its way into English as “heresy,” but did not originally possess the undesirable meaning soon attributed to it by ecclesiastical authorities. In chs. 15:5; 26:5 *hairesis* is applied, in a nonderogatory way, to the Pharisees. In chs. 24:5; 28:22 it is applied to the Nazarenes (Christians) in derogation of them.

The Sadducees. See on ch. 4:1.

Indignation. Gr. *zēlos*, “zeal,” and in a bad sense, as here, “jealousy,” or “envy.” Either of these meanings could be applied here. Here was an intense outbreak of strong party feeling. There was anxiety as to what the followers of the Nazarene might do. Both

Pharisees and Sadducees might experience this feeling. There was resentment because the untutored apostles were presuming to teach the people. Both Pharisees and Sadducees experienced this resentment. But the Sadducees felt a special antagonism because the apostles were teaching that there was a future life—a belief that the Sadducees rejected. The fact that the Pharisees agreed with the apostles on this point did not please the Sadducees (see Vol. V, pp. 51–53).

18. Laid their hands on. the Sadducean authorities were thoroughly aroused, and the apostles—possibly all the Twelve—were seized. This makes it clear that although Luke has been generally mentioning only the speeches of Peter, with some slight notice of the activities of John, the rest of the apostles had been publicly active.

In the common prison. Gr. *en tērēsei dēmosia*, which may be translated either “in prison publicly” or “in the public prison.” Later, rabbinic use of the word *dēmosia* as “prison” favors the latter translation.

19. But. Emphasizing the contrast with v. 18. The authorities imprisoned the apostles, the angel released them. It would seem as though this was a divine protest against the actions of the Sadducees, who taught that there was “neither angel, nor spirit” (ch. 23:8).

Angel. Luke is obviously recording what he considers a supernatural occurrence. Those who do not accept that view, and who yet wish to maintain the historicity of the narrative, are driven to suggest that the “angel” was some zealous and courageous disciple; and that the apostles, in the darkness of the night and the excitement of their liberation, mistakenly ascribed their rescue to the intervention of an angel. But there is no possibility of adequately explaining Luke’s words in any other terms than a miraculous deliverance. The human aid of Gamaliel, at a later hour, is freely and openly recorded (vs. 34–39). But here the aid is frankly described as supernatural. Although the apostles were arrested again only a few hours later (v. 26), God had demonstrated His power, the apostles had the comfort of heavenly intervention on their behalf, and the Sadducees had been given an opportunity to know that they were fighting against supernatural powers. Surely the angels are “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Heb. 1:14).

By night. Rather, “during the night.”

Opened the prison doors. Doors, even the firmly fastened doors of prisons, are no problem to the angels of God. The apostles were taken out from under the very eyes of the keepers, either under the cover of deep darkness or because the eyes of the guards were “holden” (cf. ch. 12:6, 7). The doors were left secured, or were locked again, leaving everything as it had been before the angel came (cf. ch. 5:23).

Brought them forth. Compare ch. 12:10.

20. Stand. The thought is that they were to present themselves publicly and boldly, for the Temple was the most public of places. There they had first been arrested (chs. 3:1, 11; 4:1–3).

Words of this life. The adjective “this” is significant. It refers to the life the apostles were advocating—life in Christ. This life begins in the present world, and continues into eternity (cf. John 17:3). This teaching was especially unacceptable to the Sadducees because of their disbelief in an afterlife. See Vol. V, p. 53.

21. When they heard. Note the immediate obedience of the apostles.

Early in the morning. Rather, “about dawn.” The Mishnah indicates that the sacrifices began to be offered in the Temple in the morning as soon as the sky was light

(*Yoma*, 3. 1, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 131; *Tamid*, 3. 2, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 18).

Taught. This is what the Sadducees in council had forbidden the apostles to do (ch. 4:17, 18). These haughty rulers were enraged by the fact that the untrained and unauthorized Galileans were teaching, that they taught the resurrection, and that they witnessed to Jesus Christ as the One who, having been crucified, had risen from the dead. But the apostles were under divine orders. The church has a teaching mission to perform, the mission of presenting the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to a sin-sick world. That task it must never neglect.

High priest came. That is, into the council chamber, to decide what should be done with the imprisoned apostles. The council had not yet learned of their mysterious release.

They that. For comment see on v. 17.

Council. That is, the Sanhedrin (see Vol. V, p. 67). Evidently the case before them was considered so important that no effort was spared to gather together as full a membership as possible. Gamaliel's presence indicates that not only Sadducees but also Pharisees and others were called to this meeting (see v. 34).

Senate. Gr. *gerousia*, the name of Sparta's assembly of old men, or elders. The word was used for the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem (see Vol. V, p. 67). Here it is an official group of elders, qualified by age and experience to give counsel on special occasions. It may have been a gathering corresponding to "all the estate of the elders" of ch. 22:5.

Prison. Gr. *desmōtērion*, "a place where bound men are kept." This is a different word from that used in v. 18, possibly suggesting that the apostles had been bound soon after their arrest.

22. Officers. Gr. *hupēretai*, literally, "underrowers" on a galley; later "servants," and then "officers" serving under the Sanhedrin. See also on Luke 4:20; Acts 4:1.

Found them not. There was no external evidence of their escape from the prison (see on vs. 19, 23).

23. Found we shut. If the angel had unlocked the doors, he locked them after freeing the apostles. The guards at the gates seem not to have been aware that the prisoners had escaped. Compare release of Peter (ch. 12:6–10), but contrast the furor and drama of Paul and Silas' experience in Philippi (ch. 16:25–30).

24. High priest. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of this expression.

Captain. See on Luke 22:4; Acts 4:1.

Chief priests. Probably the heads of the 24 priestly courses, and not to be confused with the high priest.

These things. Rather, "these words," referring to the report that the police had brought back.

Doubted. Rather, "perplexed," "at a loss," and not without reason. The Jewish leaders' repressive efforts had failed, a miracle had liberated their victims, and the Christian way was gaining ground.

25. Then came one. By this time the morning must have been well advanced. The Sanhedrin had been called, and was assembled, yet was still ignorant of the apostles' whereabouts. In the meantime the news of the apostles' activities had spread abroad, and was now reported to the Sanhedrin.

Ye put in prison. This came almost as a taunt to the Jewish leaders: You put them in prison, but they are busy doing in the Temple what you have forbidden them to do anywhere.

Standing. The clause reads literally, “In the temple standing and teaching,” referring to the command of the angel (v. 20). They were acting like men who knew what work they must do, a work that had been temporarily interfered with, but to which they came back as quickly as possible. Their teaching of the people was the offense that so much incensed the Sadducees. Had the apostles simply worshiped, keeping their new-found faith to themselves, they might have been left undisturbed. But they had received a commission, and were impelled to carry it out. They must propagate their faith. To suffer persecution for sharing the treasure of faith is far better than to suffer a guilty conscience for hiding it “under a bushel” (Matt. 5:15).

26. The captain with the officers. See on chs. 4:1; 5:22.

Without violence. The apostles set an example of unresisting acquiescence, even though with the tide of feeling evidently in their favor they might easily have raised a popular tumult. The miracles recently wrought through them, and their ideal communal life, had helped to win favor for the new faith. In their attitude of nonresistance they followed the example of their Master. In coming peacefully before the Sanhedrin they had the best opportunity to proclaim the gospel to ears that otherwise might never have heard the saving message.

Fear'd the people. Compare on Matt. 21:26, 46. There was abundant evidence of the favor in which the people held the believers at this time.

Stoned. Apparently the people were as ready to stone the officers as the priests were to stone the apostles.

27. High priest asked. As far as the record shows, the Sanhedrin avoided the topic of the apostles’ release. They either did not believe there was supernatural intervention in this case or demurred referring to it. Their attitude is not surprising, for they had already refused to believe in a greater miracle—the resurrection of the One whom they had crucified.

28. Straitly command you. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading, “we commanded you with a command.” This expression is an echo of a common Hebrew idiom, and suggests that Luke may be giving a literal translation of a question originally put in Aramaic. The charge had been given to Peter and John only (ch. 4:18), but word of it had gone to all the Twelve. The apostles had declared that they would not abide by the command, and had continued to preach with boldness (ch. 4:19, 20, 31). They were obeying a higher authority, their Lord (Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 1:8).

Not teach in this name. Compare on chs. 3:16; 4:17. This was the apostles’ great offense. The Jews had commanded that the name should not even be mentioned. It was the name of Him whom they knew they had crucified, who was now being proclaimed as alive, and whose followers were doing mighty works that could not be denied. This name, and the activity centering on it, was the point of the Sadducees’ attack.

Filled Jerusalem. Here was an unconscious testimony from their enemies themselves that the apostles had worked faithfully and successfully to fulfill the first part of Christ’s command (cf. ch. 1:8), by proclaiming the gospel in Jerusalem.

Doctrine. Rather, “teaching,” the same word in the original that is translated “doctrine” in Matt. 7:28. But the “teaching” in general was rapidly taking on the quality and meaning of doctrine in the modern sense, as illustrated in 1 Tim. 4:16.

Intend. Rather, “ye want.” This was not true. Peter wanted their salvation, not their condemnation.

This man’s blood. They avoided mentioning the name of Jesus. This may have been through scorn, because they despised the crucified Galilean, or through guilt, because they knew their responsibility for His death, or through fear, because they knew how powerful the name had proved to be. Peter had previously and without hesitation charged them with crucifying this Jesus (chs. 2:36; 3:13–15; 4:10), making their scorn empty and their fear reasonable. Had their position been just, these priestly judges would have been dealing out penalties; but they found themselves in the position of culprits who were anticipating accusation. In their ears must have rung the terrible cry they uttered in Pilate’s judgment hall, “His blood be on us, and on our children” (Matt. 27:25). They had already brought “this man’s blood” upon themselves.

29. Peter and the other apostles. Literally, “Peter and the apostles.” The wording “Peter and the apostles” does not imply either that Peter was excluded from the apostles or that he was superior to them. Undoubtedly, he was the most active in all the foregoing scenes, and his name and personality are naturally prominent in the narrative.

We ought to obey God. Rather, “We must,” with a sense of moral compulsion (cf. ch. 1:16). This is an even plainer statement of the argument previously used by Peter and John (ch. 4:19), with a yet greater stress upon the fact that they could not do other than choose to obey God, regardless of consequences. They had the command of Jesus in the Great Commission, and the challenge to be witnesses for Him (ch. 1:8), and more lately, the explicit command of the angel (ch. 5:20). Jesus had laid down the principle that both Caesar and God were to be obeyed. Caesar must be obeyed in respect to what is his due, and God in respect to what is His due (Matt. 22:21). But the Christian cannot serve two masters (Matt. 6:24; Luke 16:13). Since only one master can receive ultimate allegiance, that master must be God. This basic principle Peter is making very clear. Just as the leaders of the Sanhedrin had not deigned to mention the name of Jesus, so Peter does not set their names in the wording of this principle. He simply says “men,” even such men of authority as those before whom he is standing. He regards the members of the Sanhedrin as men who once were agents of God, but who have now lost sight of their duty to God.

Luther declared at the council of Worms, “My conscience has been taken captive by the word of God, and I am neither able nor willing to recant, since it is neither safe nor right to act against conscience. God help me. Amen” (quoted in E. G. Schwiebert, *Luther and His Times*, p. 505). These are noble words, illustrating a noble principle, revealing a noble experience. May presentday Christians emulate it.

30. God of our fathers. The apostles did not disassociate themselves from Israel. They were serving the same God as the Sanhedrin claimed to serve (cf. ch. 3:13).

³Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Ac 3:23). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

Raised up. There are two possible interpretations of these words. They may refer to God's gift of Christ in the Incarnation (cf. ch. 3:22), or they may refer to God's act in raising Christ from the dead (cf. chs. 10:40; 13:37). Both interpretations are admissible.

Ye slew. In the Greek, "ye" is emphatic, contrasting their action with what the Lord had done. The word "slew" intimates that the guilt of the crucifixion was as strongly upon the Jews as if they themselves had performed the act.

Hanged. The phrase reads literally, "ye slew, having hanged upon a tree." The expression describes the Roman mode of execution, not the Jewish. This wording is found in the LXX of Deut. 21:23, where it is used in a wider sense, including such forms of punishment as hanging or impaling. However, the Jews hanged only those who were already dead (Deut. 21:22, 23; Joshua 10:26). The phrase "hanged on a tree," used once more by Peter (Acts 10:39), does not occur again in the NT. However, in his description of the vicarious atonement (1 Peter 2:24), Peter uses the word "tree" for "cross": "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." See on Acts 16:24; cf. Gal. 3:13.

But the sinner, seeking his Lord, knows that the blame cannot be fastened on Jew or Roman, but rather that it was his own sins that slew his Lord. Christ, who knew no sin, became sin for us, that by a pricelessly gracious exchange we might receive the righteousness of God through Him (2 Cor. 5:21).

31. Exalted. Gr. *hupsoō*, a word used in John 3:14; 12:32 in the sense of "lifted up," and in Phil 2:9 and the LXX of Isa. 52:13, with the meaning "exalted." Peter has referred to these two definitions (cf. Acts 2:33), and now he proceeds to deal with the second.

With his right hand. Or, "at his right hand" (see on ch. 2:33). The right hand is a common Biblical figure for authority and might (cf. Ex. 15:6).

Prince. See on ch. 3:15. The title of sovereignty is closely united with the title that pledges salvation. Christ desires to rule over men that He might be their Saviour. We cannot have Him as our Saviour unless He rules over us, and if He governs our lives He will save us. His two offices are inseparable.

Saviour. For the meaning of this title see on Matt. 1:21.

To give repentance. Note the basic unity of the teaching of the apostles with that of John the Baptist and of Jesus (see on Matt. 3:2; 4:17). The record of apostolic teaching presents a more complete revelation of the way in which forgiveness had been provided—through the vicarious death of the Saviour.

Forgiveness of sins. Rather, "the taking away of sins" (see on ch. 2:38). Repentance is a necessary prelude to forgiveness. Forgiveness is a joint gift from the Father and the Son (see on Mark 2:7–11). A righteous and just God cannot accept a sinner into His presence except as the sinner by faith knows Jesus Christ as the sin bearer (1 Peter 2:24) and accepts Him as his personal Saviour (Rom. 3:23–26). Through His work as sin bearer the sins of the repentant one are remitted, or taken away (see on John 1:29), and he stands justified in His sight.

32. His witnesses. Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for omitting "his," and also for the addition of "in him" or "to him." See on ch. 1:8. "These things" refers to the great facts of salvation—the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus—as mentioned in ch. 5:30, 31.

Also the Holy Ghost. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) omitting "also." Christ had declared while on earth that the Holy Ghost "shall testify of me" (John 15:26; see on John 16:13, 14). The Holy Spirit did this for the apostles by bringing "all things" to their

“remembrance” (John 14:26), and by giving them enlightenment as to how Christ’s experience on earth had fulfilled the prophecies. However, the Holy Spirit was also witnessing for Christ through the powers that had possessed the apostles since the outpouring at Pentecost. The Spirit also gave inward witness to the resurrection, in the believers’ hearts. See on Acts 4:33.

God hath given. The apostles understood that the Spirit came from the Father (see on John 14:26; 15:26; Acts 1:4).

To them that obey him. Not only to the apostles but to all who sincerely follow God’s guidance, and therefore obey Him. The obedience of the creature to the Creator is the foundation and essence of right relations with God. The angels obey God (Ps. 103:20, 21), but in love, not in cold, legal formality (MB 109). Men are to obey (Ps. 103:17, 18; Eccl. 12:13), but in love (John 14:15). Obedience is better than any sacrifice (1 Sam. 15:22). Truth (Rom. 2:8), right doctrine (Rom. 6:17), and the gospel (2 Thess. 1:8; 1 Peter 4:17) are to be obeyed. Eternal salvation, offered by grace and received by faith (Eph. 2:5, 8), is available to those who obey, who are submissive to the will of God (Heb. 5:9). Compare on Acts 5:29. True obedience is revealed by loving obedience to God’s holy commandments (1 John 5:3).

33. Cut to the heart. Gr. *diariō*, “to saw asunder,” that is, with rage, as in ch. 7:54, the only other place in the NT where this verb is found. Their rage bore eloquent testimony to the truth of the apostles’ bold accusations.

Took counsel. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 10) between this and the reading “wished.” Already responsible for the blood of Jesus, they now wished to take the lives of His twelve chief followers.

To slay. They wished to put the apostles to death for disobeying the Sanhedrin and for accusing it of Christ’s death.

34. Then. Rather, “but” (cf. on v. 13).

Pharisee. In contrast with the high priest’s party, which was Sadducean (v. 17). The two religious groups were opposed to each other.

Gamaliel. Derived from the Heb. *Gamli’el*, “my reward is God.” Gamaliel was the grandson of the famous Hillel (see Vol. V, p. 97), and a renowned teacher and prominent Pharisee in his own right. The mantle of Hillel appears to have fallen upon his shoulders, and he exercised leadership in his party from about A.D. 25 to 50. There seems little basis for the claim that he was one of four presidents of the Great Sanhedrin at Jerusalem, since the supreme office was always held by the high priest in the times prior to A.D. 70 (see v. 27). But there is no doubt that he was an influential man and greatly honored by the Jews. He was the first to receive the title of Rabban. This indicates the esteem in which his countrymen held him. Jewish tradition reveals him as the ideal Pharisee, a worthy representative of Hillel’s school, which was more tolerant and less legalistic than the opposing school of Shammai. Paul was privileged to study under him (ch. 22:3). The teacher’s influence may possibly be traced in the development of his famous pupil. This Gamaliel was known as *Haz-Zaqen*, “the Older,” to distinguish him from his grandson, “the Younger,” who flourished about A.D. 90.

Doctor. That is, teacher.

Apostles. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 10) between this and the reading “men,” which would accord more exactly with Gamaliel’s words. Gamaliel wished them to be

out of the council room while he and his colleagues discussed freely what should be done. The practice of thus deliberating in the absence of the accused seems to have been common (cf. ch. 4:15). The report of what occurred while the apostles were out of the room may have come to Luke from some member of the council, such as Nicodemus (AA 104, 105), or directly by inspiration.

35. *Men of Israel.* A familiar and persuasive form of address, used in speaking to equals (cf. ch. 2:22). Contrast Peter's approach when addressing the same body of men (ch. 4:8).

Take heed to yourselves. Or, "be careful." Not to warn of impending danger, but to indicate the need for thought before action. But compare the Lord's use of the same formula (Matt. 6:1; 7:15; 10:17), and Paul's (1 Tim. 1:4; 4:13; Titus 1:14).

36. *Theudas.* Possibly a contraction of the Greek name *Theodorus*, "gift of God." The only known non-Biblical reference to a man of this name comes from Josephus. He tells of an insurrection led by a Theudas who, claiming to be a prophet, persuaded "a great part of the people" to follow him. He promised to divide the Jordan and give them an easy passage. The procurator, Cuspius Fadus (A.D. 44 or 45), quickly suppressed the rising, captured and executed its leader, and sent his head to Jerusalem (*Antiquities* xx. 5. 1).

Now, according to Gamaliel, who is quoted by Luke, Theudas came before Judas of Galilee (v. 37), who rebelled "in the days of the taxing," that is, in A.D. 6 or 7. It is not possible, therefore, to make the accounts of Luke and Josephus refer to the same event. Few scholars would attribute error to Josephus at this point, and there is no valid reason to accuse Luke of a factual error here. Luke, quoting Gamaliel, speaks of 400 men joining themselves to Theudas, whereas Josephus distinctly mentions that "a great part of the people" followed the false prophet. Some have seen in this a suggestion that the two writers refer to different events.

37. *After this man.* That is, after the rebellion of Theudas.

Judas of Galilee. There was such a rebel, whom Josephus (*Antiquities* xviii. 1. 1) calls a Gaulonite, that is, of the country east of Galilee. But in other passages (*ibid.* xx. 5. 2; *War* ii. 8. 1 [118]) he is called a Galilean, so there is no conflict between Luke and Josephus here. The insurrection of Judas, which aimed at the complete independence of Israel from Rome, was a serious one. The movement forbade any payment of taxes to Caesar. Any weapons might be used in the cause of freedom. The war was described as a religious war. Judas and his followers were affiliated with the Pharisees, and his movement, although defeated, and the leader killed, gave origin to the sect, or party, of the Zealots (see Vol. V, pp. 54, 55).

Taxing. Rather, "enrollment," or "census." See on Luke 2:1. This was not the one mentioned in Luke 2:2. The revolt of Judas came about seven years later (Josephus *Antiquities* xviii. 1. 1; cf. Vol. V, p. 241). Judas declared that this taxation was the beginning of slavery, and called on the whole nation to assert its liberty.

Much people. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 10) among "much people," "many people," and simply "people."

Perished. Josephus does not record the fate of Judas and his party, but Gamaliel could have known his end, and was qualified to give the details preserved in this verse.

38. Refrain. Literally, “stand off.” Gamaliel’s argument was logical enough. Resistance to the movement represented by the apostles was either needless or hopeless. If needless, why waste the energy? If hopeless, why face the risk?

Come to nought. Rather, “be overthrown.” This also serves to emphasize the repetition of the same verb in the succeeding clause in v. 39.

39. Of God. Gamaliel’s typically rabbinic advice at least leaves room for the divine origin of the apostles’ work.

Fight against God. Gr. *theomachoi*, “God fighters.”

40. They agreed. The Sadducees would probably have preferred a more vigorous course, but there were many Pharisees in the Sanhedrin, and the middle course, which Gamaliel had recommended, was adopted.

Called the apostles. That is, back into the judgment hall.

Beaten them. Probably with 39 stripes (see on Deut. 25:1–3; 2 Cor. 11:24), a painful ordeal. The Sanhedrin evidently judged the apostles worthy of punishment, either for disobeying the command of Acts 4:18, or for disturbing the peace by preaching in the Temple (ch. 5:25), or for having escaped from prison—or on all counts. This appears to be the first taste of physical suffering endured by the church.

Should not speak. The same prohibition as in ch. 4:18, with the added sting of the lash to emphasize it.

In the name. See on chs. 2:38; 3:6, 16; 4:12. The Jewish leaders were learning to dread the power that accompanied this name.

41. Departed. Not back to prison, but to freedom.

Rejoicing. Thus exhibiting the spirit of the final beatitude, Matt. 5:11, 12. In contradiction of the usual emotions, they were glad to suffer; indeed, they felt honored to suffer in Christ’s cause. This spirit animated countless martyrs who followed them. The Twelve were not unprepared for such treatment. They must have remembered their Master’s warning recorded in Matt. 10:17–20.

His name. Rather, “the name” (see on ch. 4:12).

42. Daily. Literally, “Every day.”

In the temple. Note their boldness. They returned to the place in which they had been arrested on two occasions (chs. 3:11; 4:3; 5:26).

In every house. Gr. *kat’ oikon*, “house by house,” or “at home,” “privately.” This probably refers to the Christian assemblies held in private homes.

Ceased not. They needed no urging in their work of witness.

Teach and preach. Rather, “teaching and preaching,” with an emphasis on continuity. The word for “preach” is, literally, “evangelizing,” as in Acts 8:4, 12, 25; Rom. 10:15.

Jesus Christ. Literally, “the Christ Jesus.” They taught and preached that the Messiah had come in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. This was the constant content of the message given by the early church.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1, 2 2T 128; 4T 462

1–3GC 44

1–4AA 72

1–11CS 312; SR 255; 1T 529

1–42AA 71–86
 3 4T 470; 5T 103
 3, 4 4T 463
 4, 5, 7–11AA 73
 8 1T 221
 12 AA 78
 14 TM 68
 14–18AA 78
 16 MH 139
 17, 18 TM 68
 17–205T 713
 18 SL 62
 18, 19 EW 194
 19 AA 79
 19, 20 TM 69
 19–21SR 255
 20 SL 62; TM 268; 6T 434
 20, 21 AA 80
 20–23EW 195
 20–26TM 71
 22, 23 AA 81
 25–28AA 81; EW 195; SR 256
 27–34TM 72
 28 DA 672; GW 284
 28–33TM 268
 29 AH 293; GC 204, 594; 1T 201, 361
 29–32EW 195; SR 257
 29–34AA 82
 31 COL 120, 264; DA 175; SC 26; TM 20
 35–39SR 257
 35–41AA 83
 38–40TM 72
 38–42EW 196
 40–42SR 258; TM 73
 41 DA 508; 3T 406; 5T 87, 213

CHAPTER 6

1 *The apostles, desirous to have the poor regarded for their bodily sustenance, as also careful themselves to dispense the word of God, the food of the soul, 3 appoint the office of deaconship to seven chosen men. 5 Of whom Stephen, a man full of faith, and of the Holy Ghost, is one. 12 Who is taken of those, whom he confounded in disputing, 13 and after falsely accused of blasphemy against the law and the temple.*

1. And. Rather, “but,” for the verse points a contrast to ch. 5:42.

In those days. That is, the days of ch. 5:41, 42. Luke handles his historical materials with notable smoothness. He has shown the growth of the church under the power of the Holy Spirit, and the great influx of new believers. He has shown how the economy of the church, for a time at least, took on a communal form. Chapter 6 shows some of the

difficulties arising out of that arrangement, but is in turn an introduction to the experience of Stephen, which itself is introductory to the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, and his subsequent missionary activities. The narrative is clearly historical. The account of ch. 6 is closely related to that of ch. 5:14, but the length of the interval between the two events is uncertain.

Disciples. The first time this name is used of Christians in the Acts. The disciples of the Gospels have become apostles, and the term “disciples” has passed to the ordinary believer.

Multiplied. The phrase may be better translated, “when the disciples were increasing in number,” that is, by almost daily additions. Such increase naturally would bring new problems. It had been a simple thing to care for the needs of the apostolic family from the purse that Judas carried. It was more complicated, though not impossible, to care for the early group of believers at Pentecost. But the membership in the Christian society had now so increased that the care of the needy took all the time of the apostles, to the exclusion of higher duties.

Murmuring. Not merely a petty complaining, but a protest sufficiently vocal to warrant serious concern. The record places no blame upon the apostles, for they deserved none. The sudden growth in membership had outstripped their resources and precipitated the difficulty.

Grecians. Gr. *Hellēnistai*, “Hellenists,” that is, Greek-speaking Jews, or “Grecian Jews” (RV). NT usage distinguishes carefully between them and *Hellēnes*, who were Greeks by race (John 12:20). The Hellenists were Jews of the Dispersion (see Vol. V, pp. 59, 60; see on John 7:35; Acts 2:8) who not only spoke Greek but had absorbed Greek culture. They could have been Jews who had been born in lands where Greek was the common language, and so did not know Hebrew or Aramaic, and instead of joining in the Hebrew services in Palestine, had their own synagogues in Jerusalem. They could have been Greek-speaking proselytes. In either case they were converts from Judaism, for up to this time the gospel had not been presented to the Gentiles. Many of the converts of the day of Pentecost must have belonged to this group, as did Barnabas (ch. 4:36) and others whose names are specifically mentioned in the narrative (ch. 6:5).

These Hellenistic Jews read the LXX version of the OT, the version most frequently quoted in the NT. They were usually most zealous, in contrast with many of the local Jews. They came at great sacrifice to worship at the sacred places of Jerusalem, whereas to the Palestinian Jews the Temple precincts too often became commonplace (cf. ch. 21:27, 28). Jewish rabbinical tradition made provision for the saying of the *Shema*, the Hebrew confession of Jehovah (Deut. 6:4), in Hellenistic Greek. See Vol. V, p. 57.

Hebrews. These were Jews who, in contrast with the Hellenists, had been born in Palestine, and who lived there and spoke the language (Aramaic) that the NT calls Hebrew (see ch. 22:2). See Vol. I, p. 30.

Their widows. That is, of the Hellenists. Since Palestinian Jews were in the majority in the infant church, the needy among the Hellenists might without any ill intent have been left unassisted, because of differences in language and customs. The care of widows is stressed in Scripture (see on Ex. 22:22; Deut. 14:29; Isa. 1:17; Luke 18:3). Here the reference may be to the care of all poor and dependent persons. Obviously the communal economy in the church required some sort of organized supervision of the common fund

that had been created (Acts 4:32). Later, the church formulated rules for the care of its widows (1 Tim. 5:3–16).

Ministration. Gr. *diakonia*, “service,” “ministering,” translated “distribution” in RSV, and “relief” in ch. 11:29. The word is related to *diakonos*, “ministrant,” or “deacon.” This help was given daily. Because of pressing needs and perhaps lack of storage space, it was doubtless necessary to distribute the aid every day, and possibly from various points in the city. Probably there was a continuous stream of gifts coming in and of donations being passed out. The drain upon the apostles’ time must have been great. But there is no hint that the apostles were guilty of favoritism or neglect, nor that any resentment was felt against them.

2. The twelve. Matthias was obviously the twelfth apostle (see on ch. 1:24–26).

Called the multitude. When the apostles heard the complaints, and realized their seriousness, they did not pause, apparently, to vindicate themselves. They acted promptly. They may have remembered the precedent set by Moses (Ex. 18:25), and like him, they resolved to delegate authority. By “the multitude of the disciples” it is not to be supposed that every individual Christian in Jerusalem and its environs had to be gathered to a meeting, but that a special meeting was called, to which all came who could, and at which the apostles presented the problem and their plan. The fund concerning whose distribution complaint had arisen, had been contributed to by many, and therefore the many were rightly consulted. From this procedure in a single central place there naturally arose the representative form of church government (AA 96).

Reason. Gr. *areston*, “pleasing,” conveying the idea that it was not “proper” that the apostles should spend so much of their time dealing with material and business matters.

Leave. Gr. *kataleipo*, “to forsake,” “to abandon.” The Greek word is an emphatic one, and suggests that much time of the apostles had been taken up in caring for the needy.

The word. The Twelve recognized their prime responsibility—to minister the word of God through preaching and teaching.

Serve tables. In the Jewish synagogues three men were appointed to care for the poor.

3. Wherefore. Rather, “but.”

Look ye out. The Twelve placed the responsibility squarely upon the shoulders of the believers, who were to make a choice from among their own number.

Seven men. It was reasonable for the apostles to think of the number seven. There was a general reverence for that number among the Jews. In later times, at least, seven was the number of persons called upon to manage public business in Jewish towns (Talmud *Megillah* 26a, Soncino ed., p. 157). More simply, it may have been that only seven men were needed at that time.

The men thus appointed are not called “deacons” in the NT. When referred to again, it is as “the seven” (ch. 21:8), almost as though they were a distinct body. But they were the origin of the class called “deacons” (AA 89, 90), and their functions were clearly analogous to those of the deacons later described by Paul (see 1 Tim. 3:8–13). In some churches, as at Rome, the number of deacons was later fixed at seven (Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* vi. 43. 11). The council of Neo-Caesarea (A.D. 314; Canon 14) calls for seven deacons in a locality. Many commentators think that the seven men here

chosen correspond to the “elders” mentioned in Acts 11:30; 14:23 and onward. See p. 25; AA 89, 90.

Of honest report. Literally, “attested,” or “having witness borne them,” that is, well reported among their fellows (cf. 1 Tim. 5:10). The word is rendered “of good report” in Acts 10:22. The situation would be in no way bettered, unless men of unimpeachable standing were called to the task of a more equitable distribution. They must be men of honesty and efficiency, and acceptable to their fellows. For the inspired list of qualifications of deacons as well as of elders (bishops) see 1 Tim. 3:1–14; Titus 1:5–11.

Full of the Holy Ghost. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading “full of spirit.” However, v. 5 declares that one of the seven, Stephen, was full of the Holy Spirit, so the expression here may also be taken as referring to the Holy Spirit. It was most important that for this first expansion in the organization of the church beyond the apostolate, the right men should be chosen. Next to a good reputation, each was expected to have the infilling of the Holy Spirit. Obviously the apostles conceived of the Spirit’s working as being wider than simply the gift of prophecy and of tongues.

Wisdom. Not only must the men be able to look after the spiritual wants of the poor; they were to show prudence, discretion, economy, wisdom in their work. Paul rated wisdom as a gift of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:8). James stressed it as a gift of God (James 1:5), to be accompanied by good conduct or “conversation” (James 3:13). In Acts, apart from this verse, the word “wisdom” is used only of (Acts 6:10) or by Stephen (ch. 7:10, 22). He is also specifically said to be “full of faith” (ch. 6:5).

Whom we may appoint. Literally, “whom we shall set over.” The apostles were willing to appoint the men chosen by the “brethren.” Such an attitude promoted mutual confidence between leaders and people.

4. But we. In marked contrast with the seven.

Give ourselves continually. Or, “persevere.” The same word is used several times in describing earnest conduct on the part of the early Christians (cf. ch. 1:14; 2:42, 46).

To prayer. These godly men, with the memory of Christ’s prayer life still fresh in their minds, placed the need for prayer first on their list. But it should be remembered that prayer includes the public worship of the church, as well as private devotion.

Ministry. Gr. *diakonia*, the same word as used in v. 1. The seven were to minister material blessings while the Twelve were to be left free to minister the spiritual benefits derived from the Word of God. This they would do through preaching and various forms of teaching. This clearly explains what is meant by “leave the word of God” (v. 2).

5. Pleased. There had obviously been no intent to deprive or neglect anyone, and there is now general rejoicing that the problem is recognized and an acceptable remedy suggested.

They chose. See on v. 3. The names of the chosen seven were Hellenistic, and it is possible that the bearers of the names were Hellenists (see on v. 1). However, many Jews bore Greek names, even among the apostles, such as Andrew and Philip (see on Mark 3:18). Furthermore, there is no evidence that the seven limited their ministry to the Hellenistic believers. As to their later work, we hear again only of Stephen and Philip.

Stephen. Gr. *Stephanos*, “chaplet,” “coronet,” “wreath of victory.” This name was not uncommon, and appears on ancient inscriptions.

Tradition has it that Stephen and Philip were both of the Seventy, sent into every city and village to announce that the Messiah had come (Luke 10:1–11). It is possible that

Samaria was the scene of their ministry (see on Luke 10:1). Hellenistic Jews were probably better received in Samaria than were Palestinian Jews, and this might account for the sending of Philip as an evangelist to the Samaritans (Acts 8:5).

Philip. Gr. *Philippos*, “lover of horses” (see on Mark 3:18). The name was also that of one of the Twelve and of two of Herod the Great’s sons. It was frequent in the ruling house of Macedonia in previous centuries. Nothing is known of Philip’s previous history, there being only the tradition that he had belonged to the Seventy (see above, under “Stephen”). Paul visited him in Caesarea (Acts 21:8), and he was probably long a leader of the church there. That Philip had four grown daughters at the time of Paul’s visit suggests that he was already married at the time of his appointment.

Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas. Of these four nothing is known, nor is there anything upon which to build a conjecture.

Nicolas. Gr. *Nikolaos*, “master of the people.” The first non-Jewish Christian whose name is recorded.

Proselyte. Doubtless Nicolas was a “proselyte of righteousness,” one who had completely accepted Judaism. As such he would be well grounded in the Jewish religion. See Vol. V, p. 62. Regarding the tradition that this Nicolas was a founder of the sect of the Nicolaitans see Vol. VI, p. 58; see on Rev. 2:15.

Antioch. This Syrian city, with its many Jews, had close ties with Palestine. Herod the Great had built a splendid colonnade along the whole length of its main street. Special interest attaches to the fact that Nicolas came from Antioch, since it is the place where Christians received their name (ch. 11:26). The city later became the headquarters for the early missionary work of the church (see on ch. 11:19).

6. Whom they set. Probably for examination, instruction, and of course for ordination.

Prayed. The Greek makes clear that it was the apostles who prayed before laying their hands on the seven chosen men. The early church took no major step without first praying (see on ch. 1:14, 24; 2:42).

Laid their hands. This is the first mention of the act in the NT. In the OT, however, it had already been used for the act of blessing (see on Gen. 48:13, 14), in the consecration of the priests (see on Num. 8:10), and in the dedication of Joshua to leadership (see on Num. 27:18, 23). The significance of the act was therefore not unknown to the faithful Jew. To the Christian there was added import in that the Master often healed the sick by laying His hands on them (Mark 6:5; Luke 4:40; 13:13; cf. Mark 16:18). Similarly, He blessed the children (Matt. 19:15). The apostles, then, had good precedent for blessing and dedicating the seven by the laying on of hands. They continued to use this method in similar situations, as may be seen in Acts 8:17; 13:3; 19:6. In the apostolic church hands were laid on men in ordination to the ministry (1 Tim. 4:14; 5:22; 2 Tim. 1:6). It appears from Heb. 6:2 that the practice crystallized into an accepted procedure in church polity. It should signify a close spiritual connection between the Lord and the one on whom the hands are laid (AA 161, 162).

7. Increased. Rather, “kept increasing,” indicating gradual but continuous growth. The statement implies more than the numerical increase mentioned in the next clause. It was the word of God that increased. The “word of God” here refers to the teachings of Christ as set forth by the apostles. Subsequent verses show that the seven were active in the work of teaching. The work of the deacons, and especially Stephen, marks a definite expansion and development of the Christian proclamation (see ch. 6:8; 8:5).

Number of the disciples. The growth of the church had been extraordinary: “These were added ... about three thousand souls” (ch. 2:41); “the Lord added to the church daily” (v. 47); “many of them ... believed; ... about five thousand” (ch. 4:4); “believers were the more added” (ch. 5:14). Now the number of church members is “multiplied in Jerusalem greatly.”

Company of the priests. The fact here stated is significant. As far as is known, none of Christ’s immediate followers was a priest, and no priest is named among the early converts. One would have expected that some of the plain speaking of the apostles and deacons would have aroused the bitter enmity of all the priests. And doubtless many of them did become hostile. But under the power of the Holy Spirit, such preaching drew “a great company” of them to Christ.

Obedient. Rather, “kept being obedient,” suggesting a continual flow of priestly converts. For the obedience necessary see on ch. 5:32.

Faith. Opinion is divided about the correct interpretation of the phrase “obedient to the faith.” The objective view holds that “faith” refers to the body of Christian doctrine to which the priests gave their assent and by which they ordered their lives (cf. Acts 13:8; 14:22; 16:5; Gal. 1:23). Many commentators, however, believe that “faith” is here used in its subjective sense, and that Luke is speaking of the priests displaying “faith in Jesus Christ.” This harmonizes with general NT usage (cf. Acts 24:24; Rom. 1:5; 16:26; Gal. 3:2). Such faith embraces Christian doctrine, for it is such doctrine that enables men to display an intelligent faith in Jesus. Compare on Rom. 1:5.

8. Full of faith and power. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading “full of grace and power,” although v. 5 states that Stephen was “full of faith.” The “grace” was not only the divine attribute (cf. on John 1:14, 16) but the grace and beauty of spirit with which he presented the gospel message (cf. Luke 4:22). The “power” was that of working miracles. It appears that Stephen had as full a possession of the gifts of the Spirit as had the Twelve.

Wonders and miracles. Or, “wonders and signs” (see on ch. 2:19). These miracles demonstrated the power with which Stephen was filled. There is no way of knowing how long a time passed between Stephen’s ordination as a deacon, and his martyrdom, but it could not have been long.

9. Arose. See on ch. 5:17.

Synagogue. See Vol. V, pp. 56, 57. A synagogue could be founded by ten adults. At a later time there were 12 synagogues in Tiberias, and tradition, with great exaggeration, assigned 480 to Jerusalem. Unreliable as this last figure may be, it at least suggests the great number in the capital city.

Libertines. The present passage is ambiguous in regard to the origin of the Jews who made up “the synagogue of the Libertines.” The passage may be translated: “the synagogue called [the synagogue] of the Libertines and of the Cyrenians and of the Alexandrians.” This may imply that there was only one synagogue, some of whose worshipers were freedmen, the others from Cyrene and Alexandria. However, this translation may be understood to mean that the synagogue was composed only of Libertines, and that the others mentioned were groups of Jews not organized as synagogues but classified by their places of origin. If either interpretation of this translation is correct, the Libertines may have been the children of Jews who had been

carried captive from Palestine to Rome by Pompey in 63 B.C., and who had later been made freedmen (*libertini*) by their captors.

However, another translation of this passage is possible: “the synagogue called [the synagogue] of the Libertines, both of Cyrenians and of Alexandrians.” This would identify the Libertines who made up this synagogue as coming from Cyrene and Alexandria, both localities in which there was an unusually large Jewish population.

Archeological evidence indicates that there was at least one synagogue in Jerusalem before A.D. 70 that was specifically for the use of Hellenistic Jews. A Greek inscription has been discovered in Jerusalem telling of the construction of a synagogue by a certain Theodotus, which was intended particularly for the use of Jews from the Dispersion. The inscription reads as follows:

“Theodotus, [son of] Vettenu, priest and ruler of the synagogue, son of a ruler of the synagogue, grandson of a ruler of the synagogue, built the synagogue for reading of the Law and for teaching of the commandments, and the guest-chamber, and the rooms, and the water supplies, for a lodging for those who have need from foreign lands, which [synagogue] his fathers and the elders and Simonides founded” (see Adolf Deissmann, *Light From the Ancient East*, pp. 439–441).

Although it cannot be proved, it is possible that this synagogue was that of the Libertines mentioned in the present passage. Whether this is true or not, the inscription witnesses to the existence of such a Hellenistic synagogue in Jerusalem as the one with whose members Stephen came into conflict.

Cyrenians. Rather, “of the Cyrenians.” There was a large Jewish population at Cyrene, on the north coast of Africa, between Egypt and Carthage. Josephus (*Antiquities* xiv. 7. 2 [115]) quotes Strabo, the classical geographer, as stating that there were four classes of citizens in the state of Cyrene, of which the Jews were one. The Cyrenian Jews had been noted for the generous gifts they sent to the Temple in Jerusalem, and had appealed to Augustus Caesar for protection against irregularities in the taxes imposed by governors of the province who had tried to intercept their gifts (*ibid.* xvi. 6. 5). Simon of Cyrene, who carried Christ’s cross, apparently was such a Jew (see on Matt. 27:32). Cyrenian Jews were present at Pentecost (Acts 2:10), and such Jews are mentioned as preaching the gospel to Gentiles in Antioch in Syria (ch. 11:20).

Alexandrians. Rather, “of the Alexandrians.” Probably in no city of the empire, except Jerusalem and perhaps Rome, were the Jews more numerous and influential than in the city of Alexandria (see Vol. V, p. 59). The Jewish population there at the time of the apostles is estimated at 100,000. They had their own quarter, made up of one of the five districts into which the city of Alexandria was divided. They were governed by an ethnarch of their own (Josephus *Antiquities* xiv. 7. 2 [117]), as though they constituted an autonomous republic. Their Roman rulers recognized them as citizens (*ibid.* 10. 1 [188]). It was in Alexandria that the OT had been translated into the Greek language (see Vol. I, p. 39). Philo, the Jewish philosopher and writer, lived there during the first Christian century, and the city was also the birthplace of Apollos (ch 18:24).

Cilicia. At the southeast corner of Asia Minor, with Tarsus as one of its principal towns, Cilicia was the land of Paul’s birth. Here lived many Jews, descendants of 2,000 families whom Antiochus the Great had brought into Asia Minor (Josephus *Antiquities* xii. 3. 4 [149, 150]) to secure the allegiance of the province for him, and perhaps to aid in its defense. It is obvious from ch. 7:58–60 that Saul of Tarsus was in Jerusalem at this time, and he seems to have been one of those who disputed with Stephen. Doubtless the

strong arguments of Stephen led Saul to bitter opposition, although there is evidence that he was unconsciously drawn by them (AA 101).

Asia. In the NT this refers to the Roman province located in what is now Asia Minor. It included areas that had formerly been known as Lydia and Ionia, with Ephesus as the chief city. Jews of Asia had been present at Pentecost (ch. 2:9). These Jews later demonstrated their zeal in defense of the sacredness of the Temple (ch. 21:27).

Disputing. Literally, “seeking together,” “questioning,” “disputing.” The dispute was initiated by the Jews of the Dispersion. These were men who had come to Jerusalem in an intense spirit of devotion, for the farther men are from the center of their devotion, the more zealous they sometimes are. There must have been something in the teachings of Stephen that made them feel that he was lessening, if not supplanting, the singular spiritual importance of the Temple in Jerusalem (see on ch. 6:13; 7:1). The disputants, coming from their synagogues, would be well equipped to discuss theological matters with the Christians.

10. Not able to resist. Literally, “were not strong to stand against.” This experience fulfilled Christ’s promise to His followers (Luke 21:15).

Wisdom. Compare on v. 3. In the Gospels, wisdom is ascribed to the Lord (Matt. 13:54; Luke 2:40, 52), and Matt. 12:42 speaks of “the wisdom of Solomon.” But Stephen was the first teacher in the new society to whom wisdom was thus particularly ascribed. With such a careful writer as Luke, the word must have specific significance. It suggests that Stephen possessed a singularly clear vision of truth, and an ability to bring out truths not previously perceived.

Spirit. The primary reference here is to the inspired energy with which Stephen spoke. Compare with John the Baptist, who worked “in the spirit and power of Elias” (Luke 1:17).

11. Suborned. Gr. *hupoballō*, “to put under.” The word was sometimes used for the act of employing, instigating, or instructing a secret agent. Compare RSV, “they secretly instigated.”

Blasphemous words. See on Matt. 12:31. The charge is made more explicit in Acts 6:13. The charge was built on a distortion of truth, as had been that against Jesus. Christ was accused of blasphemy (see on Matt. 26:65) because He called Himself the Son of God, made Himself equal with God (Matt. 26:63, 64; John 5:18), and allegedly threatened to “destroy the temple” (Matt. 26:61). Each of these counts in the indictment was constructed from words that Jesus had actually spoken. Stephen may have said things that seemed to give foundation for the accusations. He may have taught that the need for a temple had ceased (cf. Acts 7:48), even as Jesus had inferred in talking with the woman of Samaria (John 4:21). This would assail the very foundations of Judaism, and would naturally arouse strong opposition. In the face of such a teaching, Sadducees and Pharisees would unite in opposition. Punishment for blasphemy was death by stoning (Lev. 24:16).

Moses. That is, the systems that Moses instituted, as recorded in the Pentateuch. Note that Moses is mentioned before God. The legalists were more concerned with their ceremonies than with their God.

12. Stirred up. Literally, “they threw into commotion.” By means of these false charges they provoked the people among whom Stephen had performed miracles (cf. v. 8).

Elders. These had already been incensed against the apostles (ch. 4:5–7), and would need but little encouragement to turn on Stephen.

Came upon him. Unexpectedly, suddenly, as the scribes and Pharisees came upon Jesus in the Temple (Luke 20:1).

Caught him. Or, “seized him.”

Council. As with Jesus, the hearing before the council preceded a violent end (ch. 7:57). Note how closely Stephen’s experience of martyrdom parallels that of his Master.

13. False witnesses. See on v. 11.

This man. Spoken contemptuously, probably with a sneer.

Blasphemous words. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of “blasphemous.”

Against this holy place. That is, the Temple and its immediate vicinity (see on ch. 3:1).

The law. Stephen must have insisted, as had Jesus (Matt. 5:17–19), and as Paul later did (Acts 24:14–16; 25:8), that Christianity would introduce no change in the basic moral principles of the law that the Jews so loved. Nevertheless, it was clear that the proclamation concerning the Lamb of God implied the end of the sacrificial system as outlined in the law. Such preaching would be interpreted as being destructive of practically everything that the Jews held dear.

14. Have heard him say. Stephen’s teachings may have been misunderstood by the honest, and were evidently misapplied by the dishonest. This is not infrequently the case in matters that lead to religious dispute.

This Jesus. Again, a contemptuous reference, though on Christian lips the name must have sounded beautiful (cf. ch. 2:22). Note how the false witnesses credit Stephen with continuing Christ’s own preaching.

Shall destroy this place. Compare on Matt. 24:2; 26:61; 27:40. Christ’s words, possibly repeated by Stephen, had obviously made a lasting impression on the accusers’ minds. Furthermore, although they thought Christ to be dead, they were concerned about His destroying the Temple and changing the customs at some time in the future.

Change the customs. This accusation was probably pressed by the Pharisees, since it deals with “customs” (see Vol. V, pp. 51, 52). The charge, though made against Stephen, is still linked with Jesus of Nazareth and His teachings. They had already accused Stephen concerning the Temple and the law (v. 13). Now they accuse him concerning the “customs” that had gathered around the Temple and the law. They claim that these had been given them by Moses, but such a claim was not true. Irksome restrictions had been loaded on the people, mainly since the return in 536 B.C., nearly a thousand years after Moses’ time (see on Mark 7:1–23, particularly on v. 3). It was these traditions that Jesus had scathingly condemned (Matt. 15:1–13).

15. Stedfastly. The word is characteristic of Luke (see on Acts 1:10). Stephen’s accusers would naturally gaze intently at him, wondering what he would say in his own defense. The members of the council were surprised at what they saw and heard.

Face of an angel. It is not enough to say that the look on Stephen’s face was because of a natural dignity of expression, or even because Stephen was astonishingly tranquil and undisturbed in the presence of grave danger to himself. It must have been that his face was lighted up with a divine brightness. The brightness of angelic messengers is described again and again in Scripture, as with the angelic “young man” of Mark 16:5.

Moses' face shone as he came down from Mt. Sinai, where he had been in the very presence of God (Ex. 34:28–35). Even so, Stephen's face was illuminated because of his nearness to Christ and by the light of the vision he was about to have of Jesus standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:56).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1 AA 87, 88
- 1–4SR 259
- 1–6WM 275
- 1–15AA, 87–99; SR 259–264; 7T 252
- 2 4T 356
- 2–7AA 89
- 3 AA 91
- 4 Ev 91
- 7 DA 266
- 7, 8 EW 197; SR 260
- 8–10AA 97; SR 262
- 11 SR 263
- 12, 13 EW 197
- 13 AA 98
- 14, 15 AA 99; EW 198
- 15 AA 116, 495; COL 218; MB 33; PP 329; SL 91; SR 263

CHAPTER 7

1 *Stephen, permitted to answer to the accusation of blasphemy, 2 sheweth that Abraham worshipped God rightly, and how God chose the fathers 20 before Moses was born, and before the tabernacle and temple were built: 37 that Moses himself witnessed of Christ: 44 and that all outward ceremonies were ordained according to the heavenly pattern, to last but for a time: 51 reprehending their rebellion, and murdering of Christ, the Just One, whom the prophets foretold should come into the world. 54 Whereupon they stone him to death, who commendeth his soul to Jesus, and humbly prayeth for them.*

1. Are these things so? The high priest's question served to interrupt the astonishment of the onlookers as they beheld Stephen's countenance, but it was normal to the opening of a formal trial, and analogous to the question put to the Lord (Matt. 26:62). The accused was called upon to plead guilty or not guilty, and Stephen's defense follows.

2. He said. Stephen's reply was a declaration of faith. It was also an indictment of his accusers. See Additional Notes at end of chapter, Note 1.

Men, brethren, and fathers. Stephen's address is dignified, yet on a more familiar basis than Peter's (cf. ch. 4:8). The accused man addresses the Jewish leaders as brethren, and pays respect to the elders. Paul used the same words when he addressed the throng from the castle stairs (ch. 22:1).

God of glory. Literally, "God of the glory," that is, the God manifested to Israel in the glory of the pillars of cloud and fire and of the Shekinah (Ex. 13:21, 22; Ex. 40:34, 35). The glory of God is His character (see on Ex. 34:6). This was impressively revealed in the life and work of Jesus Christ (see on Isa. 40:5; John 1:14; cf. James 2:1). The phrase "God of glory" forms a wise opening to Stephen's speech. It rebuts the charge of blasphemy and prepares the way for a fresh concept of the God whom the Jews claimed to worship.

Appeared. Showing that God manifested Himself before the Temple existed. Genesis lists five manifestations to Abraham, aside from those connected with the calls to leave his family and homeland (chs. 12:1–3; 15:7): the promise (ch. 12:7), the covenant (ch. 13:14–17), the covenant sealed (ch. 15), the covenant of circumcision (ch. 17:10), the covenant renewed at Mamre (ch. 18:1).

Mesopotamia. Literally, “between the rivers,” the name used for the country lying between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers (cf. on Gen. 24:10). Stephen seems to limit the name to the southern area, above the Persian Gulf. The ancestral home of Abraham is called “Ur of the Chaldees” (Gen. 11:31; see Acts 7:4), and is spoken of as “on the other side of the flood” (Joshua 24:2, 3), that is, beyond the Euphrates. The site of Ur has not yet been identified with certainty.

Charran. The Greek form of the OT Haran (see on Gen. 11:31). Stephen appears to separate Haran from Mesopotamia, although the city was actually in the northwestern part of what is loosely called Mesopotamia.

3. Get thee out. Stephen quotes from Gen. 12:1, but omits “from thy father’s house,” probably because he applies the passage to Abraham’s departure with his father’s household from Ur, whereas Genesis refers it to Abraham’s leaving his relatives at Haran.

4. Land of the Chaldeans. Approximately the land of Babylonia (see on Gen. 10:22).

When his father was dead. For a discussion of the relationship between this statement and Gen. 11:26, 32; 12:1 see on Gen. 11:26. Terah died at the age of 205 years; Abraham was then 75 years old.

He removed him. That is, God removed Abraham, or caused him to migrate. The Greek is less vague than the English. The change of subject (cf. ch. 6:6) may be noted as more natural in a speaker than a writer. This supports the view that ch. 7 is an actual report of Stephen’s speech.

5. None inheritance. This fact is confirmed rather than challenged by Abraham’s purchase of a burial site in Machpelah (Gen. 23), for the possession of a grave site can hardly be called an inheritance. Indeed, if he had acquired a possession, he would not have needed to buy a grave site. He made use of the largely unoccupied grazing lands of central and southern Canaan for his large herds of cattle, but such land was not exclusively his, and was certainly not an inheritance.

His foot. The phrase literally reads, “not even a foot’s breadth.”

Yet he promised. Rather, “but he promised.” See Gen. 12:7; 13:15, 16.

For a possession. Rather, “in possession.”

No child. Abraham was 75 years old when he left Haran (Gen. 12:4), and was 100 years old when Isaac was born (Gen. 21:5).

6. God spake. The words are substantially as in the LXX of Gen. 15:13, 14.

In a strange land. Referring to both Canaan and Egypt (see on Gen. 15:13).

Four hundred years. See on Gen. 15:13; Ex. 12:40.

7. Shall they come forth. With the natural freedom of narrative Stephen combines the promise to Abraham with a free rendering of the promise given to Moses (Ex. 3:12).

8. The covenant of circumcision. That is, a covenant of which circumcision was the sign (see on Gen. 17:10–14).

Begat Isaac. The birth of Isaac constituted objective evidence that God indeed would fulfill His covenant with Abraham. By circumcising Isaac, Abraham continued to fulfill his responsibilities under the same covenant.

Patriarchs. For the term, see on ch. 2:29. Here the expression is applied to the twelve sons of Jacob, each of whom was the founder of a family.

9. Moved with envy. The record is that his brethren “hated him” (Gen. 37:4, 5) and “envied him” (v. 11). This is the first step in Stephen’s argument that the messengers of God have always been opposed by those who were for a given time representatives of the Hebrew nation.

Sold Joseph into Egypt. Actually Joseph was sold to the Midianites and Ishmaelites (Gen. 37:25, 28), but since the result was Joseph’s enslavement in Egypt, objection to Stephen’s phrasing is trivial. Joseph himself said to his brethren, “Ye sold me hither” (Gen. 45:5).

But God. Rather, “and God.” This reflects the account in Gen. 39:2, 21, 23. God’s presence is not limited, for the Lord was with Joseph even in heathen Egypt. Remembrance of this fact must have brought comfort to Stephen during his trial.

10. Delivered. Gr. *exaireō*, “to pluck out,” “to choose out,” “to rescue.” The deliverance of Joseph was not out of Egypt, but out of his afflictions in Egypt. Thus it is with God’s deliverance of His people. God gives them strength to triumph over their troubles and afflictions.

Governor. See Gen. 41:38–45.

11. Found no sustenance. Rather, “could not find sustenance.” The word translated “sustenance” is generally used for “fodder” for cattle (see LXX of Gen. 24:25, 32). But more than food for cattle was affected by the famine, and therefore the term must be taken as applying to food for both man and beast.

12. Corn. Gr. *sitia*, “food,” “provisions.” “Corn,” or a small hard grain such as wheat, is *sitos*. This is not the “corn” of North America, which is properly called “maize.”

Our fathers. That is, the ten sons whom Jacob first sent into Egypt (Gen. 42:1–3). If Stephen is doing more here than developing a historical sequence, he is seeking to show that the very ones who afflicted Joseph came to be dependent upon the bounty resulting from his wisdom. And so the Jews of Stephen’s day must needs turn for their spiritual sustenance to Jesus Christ, whom they have afflicted.

13. Second time. See Gen. 45:1–4.

Was made known. This phrase appears twice in this verse in the KJV. In the second instance, the Greek original is different and should be translated “became manifest.”

Kindred. Gr. *genos*, “race.” Joseph had not sought to conceal his Hebrew origin (Gen. 41:12), but until this crisis it was not generally known. Now Pharaoh himself was aware of it (Gen. 45:16).

14. Kindred. Gr. *suggeneia*, “kindred,” or “family,” used also in v. 3 and Luke 1:61.

Threescore and fifteen souls. See on Gen. 47:26, 27. There are many Jewish traditions as to the number who went down into Egypt (see Talmud *Baba Bathra* 123a, 123b, Soncino ed., pp. 511, 512).

15. Jacob went down. Now begins the 215-year sojourn (see on Gen. 15:13; Ex. 12:40) of the Hebrews in Egypt, away from the Land of Promise.

Died. Rather, “and he died, himself.” Some commentators take this as referring to Joseph rather than to Jacob.

16. Were carried. Apart from the burial of the bones of Joseph in Shechem (Gen. 50:25; Ex. 13:19; Joshua 24:32) there is no record in Scripture of the carrying of the bodies of the patriarchs to Canaan. Josephus says, “Their bodies were carried some time afterwards by their descendants [and their sons] to Hebron and buried there” (*Antiquities* ii. 8. 2 [199]; Loeb ed., vol. 4, p. 251). An ancient Jewish tradition has the bodies of the patriarchs carried out from the land of Egypt with the departing Israelites.

Into Sychem. This Sychem is the Shechem of the OT (see on Gen. 12:6).

Abraham bought. Abraham’s purchase of the cave of Machpelah, to the east of Mamre, near Hebron, is the only recorded transaction of this kind (see on Gen. 23:3–20). Here Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebecca, and Leah were buried. However, the region of Shechem was the place of Abraham’s first settlement upon his entrance into Canaan, and there he built an altar (Gen. 12:6, 7). It may be that he bought land for that purpose, although there is no record of the purchase.

Jacob’s purchase of the field at Shechem is the only recorded transaction in which the sons of Hamor appear as sellers (Gen. 33:19). Here an altar was erected (Gen. 33:20), and Joseph’s bones were buried, but there is no record of its being a burial place for his brothers (“our fathers,” Acts 7:15). Jerome, a Christian writer of the 4th century, states (86th Epistle, Benedictine ed.) that the tombs of the 12 patriarchs were shown at Shechem in his day, and this corresponds to a Samaritan tradition preserved for many centuries. This may coincide with information available to Stephen but unknown to us today.

Emmor. The Greek form of the OT Hamor.

Father of Sychem. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading “in Sychem [Shechem].”

17. But when. Rather, “but as,” suggesting that the time was approaching rather than that it had arrived.

Time of the promise. That is, the time of its fulfillment, in the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt (see on Gen. 15:13, 14; Ex. 12:40; see Vol. I, pp. 188–195). The fathers “all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off” (Heb. 11:13).

Drew nigh. Rather, “was drawing nigh,” harmonizing with “but as.”

God had sworn. Rather, “had vouch-safed.”

Grew and multiplied. See on Ex. 1:7; 12:37.

18. Another king arose. Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for adding the words “over Egypt.” Not simply an additional king, but a different kind of king (see on Ex. 1:8), and certainly having a different attitude toward the Hebrews.

Knew not. Rather, “had not known.” This may mean that the new ruler was ignorant of Joseph’s great services to Egypt, or that he deliberately ignored them (cf. the use of “to know” in Matt. 7:23; 25:12).

19. Subtily. Or, “craftily” (see on Ex. 1:10).

Evil entreated. An archaic expression for “treated badly.” Josephus (*Antiquities* ii. 9. 1 [203]) says that the Egyptians made the Israelites cut channels and dikes for the Nile.

They cast out. Rather, “in causing their young children to be cast out.” The phrase refers to what Pharaoh did to the hated Hebrews (see on Ex. 1:22).

20. In which time. While infants were being exposed.

Exceeding fair. Literally, “fair to God” (see on Ex. 2:2). Josephus (*ibid.* 9. 6 [231]) describes the beauty of the infant Moses as such that those who met him turned to look upon him in admiration.

21. Cast out. Jochebed, the mother of Moses, fulfilled the king’s command and, at the same time, executed her own plan (see on Ex. 2:3).

Took him up. Literally, “lifted him up,” referring either to Moses’ being taken out of the Nile, or more likely, to his being adopted by Pharaoh’s daughter. The root form of the verb means “to choose,” and is so used in Phil. 1:22. Its force is made clear in the next phrase.

Her own son. See on Ex. 2:5, 10. Josephus (*ibid.* ii. 9. 7 [232–237]) declares that according to Jewish tradition the then-ruling Pharaoh had no son, and Moses was selected to be the heir.

22. Learned. Rather, “trained,” or “instructed.” The OT does not plainly state this, but it is implied in Moses’ relationship to the household of Pharaoh.

Wisdom of the Egyptians. See on Ex. 2:11; 1 Kings 4:30. There are many legends about the first 40 years of Moses’ life. Philo (*Life of Moses* i. 5) claims to give details concerning the curriculum Moses followed, but the Bible is silent on the subject.

Mighty in words. This primarily applies to Moses’ speech while the great leader was in the Egyptian court, and involves no conflict with his later statement, “I am not eloquent, ... I am slow of speech” (see on Ex. 4:10), which was uttered after his 40-year sojourn in Midian.

In deeds. There is no Biblical record of his deeds, but it would be strange if one who proved so able in later life had not also shown great gifts during early manhood (see on Ex. 2:11).

23. Full forty years old. Literally, “when a time of forty years was being fulfilled for him,” that is, when he was about forty years old. The OT gives no information about his age at this juncture. It indicates that Moses was 80 years old when he was sent to Pharaoh (Ex. 7:7), and that he was 120 when he died (Deut. 34:7). Ancient Jewish tradition divides Moses’ life into three 40-year periods (Midrash Rabbah, on Gen. 50:22, Soncino ed., p. 1001), and Stephen follows a similar division: (1) the 40 years in Egypt, (2) the 40 years as a shepherd in the wilderness, (3) the 40 years in which he led his people from Egypt to the borders of Canaan.

To visit. Gr. *episkeptomai*, “to look upon,” in order to see how a person fares, “to inspect” (cf. Ex. 4:31; Luke 7:16; James 1:27). Moses was bent on helping his compatriots (see on Ex. 2:11).

24. Suffer wrong. By smiting or blows (cf. Ex. 2:11).

Avenged him. Literally, “wrought an avenging,” and thereby undertook what should have been left to the Lord.

Smote the Egyptian. That is, killed him (see on Ex. 2:12).

25. For he supposed. Rather, “but he was supposing,” even as he slew the Egyptian. He took for granted that the Hebrews would understand his deed and its motives. He was quickly disillusioned. This insight into the mind of Moses is not drawn from the OT, but could have been given to Stephen by the Holy Spirit. The speaker may also be suggesting a comparison between Moses and Jesus, who were both rejected by the people whom they sought to help.

By his hand. Apparently it had been revealed to Moses that he was to deliver Israel, but he was under the misapprehension that the work was to be accomplished by the same sort of means the Egyptians commonly used to enforce their power.

They understood not. A terse but effective phrase, highlighting the obtuseness of the chosen people. God's people too often do not understand, and are unready for, God's acts of deliverance (cf. the Jewish attitude toward Christ, John 1:11).

26. As they strove. That is, two men of the Hebrews (Ex. 2:13).

Set them at one. Literally, "was bringing them into peace," that is, was reconciling them.

Sirs. Rather, "men." His newly awakened fraternal feeling is so strong that Moses seems unable to tolerate anything less than a brotherly unity among the Hebrews as they suffer together.

27. Who made thee a ruler? As shown in v. 35, Stephen stresses this early challenge of Moses' authority to show that the whole history of Israel had been marked by the rejection of God's messengers, who had been sent for the good of the nation. The rejection of Jesus was the climatic rejection.

28. Wilt thou? Compare on Ex. 2:14.

29. Then fled Moses. Stephen's quick survey passed over the fact that Pharaoh became aware of what had happened, and was searching for Moses. Josephus (*Antiquities* ii. 11. 1 [254–256]) assigns the flight of Moses to the jealousy of the Egyptians, who feared that he would lead a revolt.

Was a stranger. Literally, "became a sojourner," that is, an alien.

Madian. Gr. *Madian*, for Heb. *Midyan*, "Midian" (see on Ex. 2:15, 16).

He begat two sons. Gershom and Eliezer. The mother was Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro (see on Ex. 4:20; 18:2–4).

30. Forty years. With the 40 years mentioned in v. 23, this makes Moses 80 years of age when he was called to deliver Israel (see on Ex. 7:7).

Mount Sina. The OT form is "Sinai," which is often called "Horeb" (see on Ex. 3:1).

An angel of the Lord. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of the words "of the Lord." Stephen's reference to Moses' experience at the burning bush was indirectly an answer to the charge that he spoke against Moses, for he is here giving him full honor as one who had personal experience with his God. For the identification of the angel as the Lord see on Ex. 3:2.

A flame of fire. See on Ex. 3:2.

Bush. Gr. *batos*, "a thornbush," or "bramblebush." It is not possible to identify this bush accurately.

31. To behold. Compare Ex. 3:3.

Voice of the Lord. See on Ex. 3:2.

32. God of Abraham. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of "the God of" before the names Isaac and Jacob. If, as tradition declares, Stephen had been one of the Seventy (see on ch. 6:5), he doubtless had heard these words cited by the Lord as witnessing against the unbelief of the Sadducees concerning the resurrection (Matt. 22:32). If any of those Sadducees were in the council, they would have been reminded of the citation as Stephen addressed them. The majestic words would bring to their minds the promise of the resurrection, and its demonstration in the raising of Jesus from the dead.

33. Put off thy shoes. In Ex. 3 this command quite logically comes before God identifies Himself to Moses, who would hardly have needed instruction when once he recognized God's presence. Stephen's use of this experience would emphasize his true respect for holy places, and show that God's presence was not limited to the precincts of the Jerusalem Temple (see on Ex. 3:5).

34. I have seen. The repetition of this phrase is a reflection, in Greek, of an emphatic Hebrew construction, and is well rendered "I have surely seen" in Ex. 3:7. This verse is an abbreviated and composite quotation taken from Ex. 3:7, 8, 10.

I will send thee. Stephen may have used the present verse to suggest to his hearers the way in which Christ, like Moses, had been sent in answer to prayer to relieve affliction and to deliver His people (see on v. 35).

35. This Moses. This passage is phrased to emphasize that it was Moses who was the honored one to whom the Lord had appeared.

Whom they refused. Here again is emphasis upon the rejection of Moses by the Hebrew people, although he was so well attested as a messenger of God. Perhaps Stephen implied that his hearers were acting similarly in rejecting Jesus Christ.

Deliverer. Gr. *lutrōtēs*, "liberator," "redeemer." This word is not found elsewhere in the NT, but it appears in the LXX as a translation of the Hebrew term *go'el* (see on Ps. 19:14; cf. on Ruth 2:20). Thus, while it has the basic sense of "liberator," in Biblical usage it carries the overtones of meaning associated with the Hebrew idea of the kinsman-redeemer. Moses liberated, and so redeemed, his people from Egypt, but Christ liberates, redeems, His people from sin and death.

By the hand of the angel. Literally, "with the hand of an angel." The word "with" stresses that Moses' work was done in cooperation with the heavenly powers. For the identity of the angel see on Ex. 3:2; cf. on Acts 7:30.

36. Brought them out. Moses was able to do this, having God's power with him (see on Ex. 3:12).

Wonders and signs. See on chs. 2:19, 22; 6:8; cf. Vol. V, p. 208.

Red sea. This is the name given by the Greeks to the water the Hebrews called the Sea of Reeds (see on Ex. 10:19). The reason for either name cannot be definitely ascertained.

Forty years. See Num. 14:33; Deut. 29:5.

37. A prophet. Stephen, like Peter (see on ch. 3:22), refers to the prophecy given in Deut. 18:15–18. Like Peter, he sees it fulfilled in Jesus. He is now intent on confronting the Sanhedrin with this Prophet in the person of the Jesus whom they had crucified.

Him shall ye hear. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of these words. However, they are well attested in the quotation of the same passage in ch. 3:22.

38. This is he. The reference is still to Moses.

The church. Gr. *ekklēsia*, "assembly," or "congregation" (see on Matt. 18:17).

In the wilderness. Stephen has in mind the assembling of the Hebrew nation at Mt. Sinai prior to the giving of the law (Ex. 19).

With the angel. As in v. 35, the angel is the Lord Himself, even as in v. 31 the voice that spoke is called "the voice of the Lord."

Who received. That is, Moses.

Lively oracles. Gr. *logia zōnta*, “living oracles.” *Logia* is the diminutive of *logos*, “word.” In the LXX it is used for the words of God (Num. 24:4, 16), and in Philo (see Vol. V, p. 93) for the Decalogue. In the KJV, *logia* is translated “oracle” (Rom. 3:2; Heb. 5:12; 1 Peter 4:11). Here, the reference is to the law received by Moses and passed on to succeeding generations. These oracles are described as “lively,” that is, living, in the sense that they abide and endure from generation to generation (cf. Heb. 4:12; 1 Peter 1:23).

39. Would not obey. Literally, “were not willing to become obedient.” This rebellion by the children of Israel broke out one month after their deliverance at the Red Sea, and before they reached Sinai (Ex. 16:2, 3). While Moses was in the mount their discontent led to apostasy (Ex. 32:1), as outlined by Stephen in succeeding verses. By inference, he is presenting a parallel between the Israelites’ attitude toward Moses, and the Jews’ attitude toward Christ. The people of both eras were disobedient to their would-be redeemer. For obedience see on Acts 5:32.

In their hearts. They did not actually return, but longed for the so-called good things they had enjoyed in the country of their captivity (see on Ex. 16:3; cf. on Num. 11:4–6). So Lot’s wife looked back to Sodom and died (Gen. 19:26). The Lord condemns the man, who, having put his hand to the plow, looks back (Luke 9:62).

Turned back again. Or, simply, “turned.” The immediate reference of Stephen’s words is to the experiences recorded in Ex. 16:2, 3; 32:1–6, but there were many others (Ex. 17:1–3; Num. 11:1–5; 14:1–4; etc.).

40. Make us gods. See on Ex. 32:1. Stephen shows how their lack of faith in Moses’ leadership led the Israelites to one of the worst forms of sin—idolatry.

41. They made a calf. See on Ex. 32:4, 5. The Hebrews had probably seen the Egyptians worshipping the bull Mnevis at Heliopolis or the bull Apis at Memphis, and desired a similar beast-image to represent the great God of the universe.

Idol. The Hebrews claimed that the golden calf was a god (see Ex. 32:4), but Stephen rightly calls it an “idol.”

Rejoiced. Rather, “were rejoicing,” that is, they continued in their idol worship and its accompanying orgies. The verb especially expresses the joy of a feast, as in Luke 15:23, 24, 29 (cf. on Ex. 32:5, 6). Moses heard, not the cries of conflict, but “the noise of them that sing” (Ex. 32:18).

Works of their own hands. Not only is the worship of an image a denial of God, but, what is worse, it sets up a man-made object in His place. The idolater turns his back upon his Maker, and bows down, instead, to that which he himself has made. See Hosea 6:6.

42. Then God turned. Rather, “But God turned.” Israel had turned from Moses, God’s representative, and now God turns from them (cf. Joshua 24:20). Men have come to a fearful state when God must give them up (see on Hosea 4:17; 5:6). It is this appalling condition that Paul describes in Rom. 1:24, 26, 28.

To worship. Gr. *latreuō*, “to serve for hire,” and, by extension, “to render religious service,” “to worship.”

The host of heaven. See on Deut. 4:19; Zeph. 1:5. Israel had been warned against such worship as being a form of idolatry (Deut. 4:19; 17:3). But both historians (2 Kings 17:16; 23:5; 2 Chron. 33:3, 5) and prophets (Jer. 8:2; 19:3; Zeph. 1:5) record that the

warning was in vain. This worship of the heavenly bodies is known as Sabaism. It is alluded to in such NT references to astrology as this.

The book of the prophets. That is, the prophets of the OT (see on Luke 24:44). The Jews generally considered the writings of the twelve so-called minor prophets one book. Stephen, following the general custom, does not identify the author of his quotation.

Have ye offered? Rather, with the emphasis of the Greek word order, “Did ye offer unto me slain beasts and sacrifices forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?” The quotation is, with minor changes, from the LXX of Amos 5:25, 26. In terms of historical fact, the question is to be answered in the affirmative, for sacrifices were offered to God during the wilderness wanderings. But spiritually, the answer is in the negative, for many of the people, though making the sacrifices, were also worshipping false gods, and the Lord rejected their divided worship.

43. Ye took up. Rather, “and ye took up.” This verse is a quotation, with a few variations, from Amos 5:26 as it appears in the LXX, which at this point is quite different from the Masoretic Hebrew text. The passage connects Israel’s unacceptable worship and their devotion to idols. In their wanderings Israel should have “taken up” only the tabernacle of the Lord, but too often they also “took up” the tabernacle, or tent, housing a heathen image.

Moloch. The Greek form of the name of the god variously known in the OT as Molech, Milcom, Malcham (see on Lev. 18:21; 20:2; Jer. 7:31). In these texts the worship of Molech is sternly prohibited. But the prohibition was in vain (see 2 Kings 16:2, 3; 23:10; Jer. 7:31; 32:35; Eze. 23:37; etc.).

Remphan. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 10) among the readings Rhemphan, Rhempham, Rhempha, Rhompha, Rhaiphan, and Rhephan. The LXX of Amos 5:26, from which this verse is taken, has Rhaiphan, which appears to have been taken as equivalent to the Hebrew *Kywn*, or *Kîyyûn* (KJV, “Chiun”), supposed by many scholars to be a Hebrew term for the planet Saturn of which Rhaiphan was the Coptic, or Egyptian, name. But no Egyptian word similar to the Greek term is known. However, Amos, whom Stephen quotes, clearly condemns star worship. Hence Stephen stands fully justified in condemning the ancient Jews as idolaters.

Beyond Babylon. In Amos 5:26, from which the present verse is quoted, both the Hebrew and the LXX give “Damascus.” Up to the time of Amos, Syria, represented by Damascus, had been a serious enemy of both Israel and Judah. The Babylonian captivity had not then taken place, but as Stephen looks back, it is Babylon that stands out as the archenemy of the Jews, and doubtless for that reason he, by inspiration, substituted “Babylon” for “Damascus.” In vs. 37–43 Stephen has pointed out the apostasies of the Hebrews, who turned against God by turning against Moses, and in Stephen’s own day turned against God by turning against Jesus.

44. Tabernacle of witness. See on Ex. 25:8; Num. 9:15.

Appointed. The clause reads literally, “even as he appointed who spake unto Moses.” See on Ex. 25:8, 9.

According to the fashion. Rather, “according to the pattern,” as in Heb. 8:5 (see on Ex. 25:9). Stephen’s argument implies that the heavenly sanctuary is the important and central institution, and thus emphasizes the temporary nature of the tabernacle as the focal point in the worship of God.

45. That came after. Gr. *diadechomai*, “to receive in turn,” that is, they inherited the tabernacle from their fathers. It was the generation following that of the Exodus that took the tabernacle into Canaan, for all who came out of Egypt, except Caleb and Joshua, died in the wilderness.

Jesus. Gr. *Iēsous*, equivalent to the Heb. *Yehoshua*‘, “Joshua” (see on Matt 1:1). Here the reference is obviously to Joshua, who brought the Israelites and the tabernacle into Canaan.

Into the possession. Literally, “in the taking possession.”

Gentiles. That is, “nations,” or “heathen,” with particular reference to the Canaanites.

Whom God drove out. See on Deut. 9:3; Ps. 44:2.

Days of David. This phrase may have two applications: (1) the original Canaanite population of Palestine was not wholly conquered until David’s day; (2) the tabernacle was the focal point of Israelitish worship up to and including the reign of David. After his time the Temple took the place of the tabernacle.

46. Found favour. David, favored of God, wished to build the Temple, but God would not permit him to do so (see on 2 Sam. 7:1–17; 1 Chron. 22:6–10).

Desired. Rather, “requested.”

Find a tabernacle. These words, which appear unusual in the present context, are drawn from the LXX of Ps. 132:5. Here the Greek word translated “tabernacle”

(*skēnōma*) is perhaps better rendered “habitation,” as the tabernacle (*skēnē*) had existed since the days of Moses, and David wished to build a permanent temple.

God of Jacob. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 10) between the readings “God of Jacob” and “house of Jacob,” but the context favors the text as it stands in the KJV. The LXX of Ps. 132:5, from which these words are drawn, reads “God of Jacob.”

47. Solomon built. See on 1 Kings 6:1.

48. Howbeit. That is, but, on the other hand. This points the contrast between the immediately preceding verses, which speak of the tabernacle and Temple as God’s meeting places with men, and verses 48, 49, which emphasize that God does not dwell in man-made buildings.

The most High. Since, apart from the article, the title is but one word in Greek, the word “most” should be capitalized. For comment on the title see on Gen. 14:18.

Dwelleth not. The clause may be translated, “does not dwell in handmade things” (cf. on Heb. 9:11, 24), for there is no word for “temple” in the original. The Jews should not have needed this reminder about the omnipresence of God, for they had been well instructed concerning this aspect of His nature (see on 1 Kings 8:27; Ps. 139:7–13). But they had concentrated on the truth that He had promised to grace the Temple with His presence until their thought confined Him to its precincts. Even worse, they came to have a greater reverence for the building than for the One for whom the building was erected. In so doing they unfitted themselves to recognize and receive God “manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16) when He became incarnate and lived among them.

Paul, who had heard Stephen’s defense, used a similar argument in talking to the philosophers of Athens (Acts 17:24, 25).

Saith the prophet. The quotation is from the gospel prophet, Isaiah (ch. 66:1, 2), who saw God in His heavenly temple (ch. 6:1–7).

49. *Heaven is my throne.* Stephen quotes the LXX almost verbatim. For comment on vs. 49, 50 see on Isa. 66:1, 2. Isaiah points out that the Most High cannot be confined within human limitations, but will dwell with those who are “poor and of a contrite spirit.” These words were a rebuke to the Jews who heard them. With their worship centered upon the earthly Temple, they were far from being “poor and of a contrite spirit.” Stephen’s unspoken appeal is to accept the Divine One, who had walked among them so humbly, and had shown them their heavenly Father’s lovely character. Many of the priests had already accepted the gospel (see Acts 6:7); more would do so. These converts from the old typical system were building a spiritual temple in the hearts of men.

51. *Ye stiffnecked.* The sudden change in the tenor of Stephen’s address doubtless is to be accounted for by the growing excitement of the Sanhedrin, and the resentment aroused by his words (cf. AA 100; Matt. 26:65). Apparently realizing that his end was near, and that no further discussion would affect the issue, Stephen broke forth in a stern rebuke. The adjectives he used had been applied to the sins of ancient Israel: “stiffnecked” in Ex. 33:3, 5; 34:9, and “uncircumcised” in Lev. 26:41. “Stiffnecked” is applied to stubborn oxen (see on Ex. 32:8). The actual phrase “uncircumcised in heart” had been used by Ezekiel (ch. 44:7) of “strangers.” Now at the very moment when Stephen had been telling them that their veneration of the Temple was excessive and futile, he put them in the class of the Gentiles. No worse insult could have been directed against these furious people.

Always resist the Holy Ghost. An accurate historical summary, for from the days of Moses, whom their fathers had disobeyed, down to the days of Jesus Christ, whom they had crucified, the people of Israel had resisted the Holy Spirit. The Greek word for “resist” (*antiptō*) implies active, strenuous opposition.

52. *Which of the prophets?* Here is an echo of Christ’s own words (Matt. 5:12; Luke 11:47; 13:34). For comment on the history of such persecution of prophets see on Matt. 5:12; 23:37 (cf. 1 Thess. 2:15; cf. on 2 Chron. 36:16).

Shewed. Rather “announced.”

The Just One. Or, “Righteous One.” This high title is also used of the Lord in chs. 3:14; 22:14. The name had already been applied in Jewish literature to the expected Messiah (Enoch 38:2), and may have been suggested by Isa. 11:4, 5. Pilate’s wife used the description in referring to Jesus (Matt. 27:19). The early church seems to have accepted it, and an example of its application may be seen in 1 John 2:1, where the Greek word for “righteous” is the same as that used here for “Just One.” The Christ who had been condemned as a malefactor was distinguished from all men as the “Righteous One,” the “Just One.” By an impartation of this same righteousness, Stephen stood out in contrast with the men who were about to execute him in wicked fury.

Have been. Rather, “have become.”

Betrayers and murderers. Reading in the faces of his tormentors the fate that is soon to be his own, Stephen reminds them of their former actions with respect to Christ.

53. *Who have received.* An emphatic form, “Ye who received.”

By the disposition of angels. More literally, “as ordinances of angels.” It was Christ, the Son of God, who gave the law on Mt. Sinai (see on Ex. 20:2). He was also the Angel of the covenant (see on Ex. 23:20). But a host of angels were with the Lord on Mt. Sinai (cf. on Deut. 33:2; Ps. 68:17; Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2). The LXX of Deut. 33:2 reads, “on his

right hand angels were with him,” and Josephus (*Antiquities* xv. 5. 3) presents the same idea.

Have not kept it. Rather, “Ye did not keep it.” This is said in dramatic contrast with the earlier phrase “received the law,” and must have dealt a telling blow to those who heard it. They had kept neither the letter of the law nor its intent. The law, given by angels, could have been their glory; its perversion was precipitating their shame and destruction.

54. When they heard. Rather, “Now while they were hearing.”

Cut to the heart. See on ch. 5:33. The word used describes a keener pang than the “pricked” of ch. 2:37, and it produced now, not repentance, but furious wrath.

Gnashed on him. Literally, “gnashed their teeth at him.” The figurative expression is not infrequent (Matt. 8:12; 13:42; etc.). Here, however, it is a literal manifestation of wrath. The Jews had allowed their rage to pass beyond control. Speechless with anger, they wanted to rend him as brute beasts would tear their prey with their teeth.

55. But he. Pointing the simple, stark contrast to his raving opponents.

Being full. Implying not a sudden inspiration, but a continuing experience. As at the beginning (ch. 6:5), so at the end, Stephen is “full of the Holy Ghost.”

Looked up stedfastly. See on ch. 1:10.

Into heaven. Stephen saw “the heavens opened” (Acts 7:56; cf. on Isa. 6:1). None of the onlookers saw the glory of the heavens thus opened, and the statement that Stephen saw this glory seemed to them to aggravate his guilt. But only the prophets can tell us whether what they see is with the inward spiritual eye or through an extension of the physical sense (cf. Matt. 3:16; 2 Cor. 12:1–6).

Saw the glory of God. Compare on Gen. 3:24; Ex. 13:21; John 1:14; Acts 7:2.

Stephen’s speech begins with a reference to “the God of glory,” and ends by reporting a vision of divine glory that shines upon his mind. With what a rapt expression he must have gazed into that glory. He forgot the deadly peril of the moment, and gave himself entirely to the heavenly vision.

Jesus standing. Christ is usually spoken of as sitting at the right hand of God.

Right hand of God. See on Matt. 26:64. This sight of the Father and the Son fortified their faithful suffering servant.

56. Son of man. In the NT outside the Gospels only here and in Rev. 1:13; 14:14.

Stephen may have heard it from the Lord’s own lips, or he may have learned it from the early church, since his speech was made before any of the Gospels were written. The members of the Sanhedrin probably remembered that Christ Himself had used this phrase at the time of His trial before them (Matt. 26:64). They had then condemned the Lord’s claims as blasphemous. For comment on the title see on Mark 2:10; cf. Vol. V, p. 917.

57. Then they cried out. Rather, “But they cried out,” that is, in an attempt to silence Stephen, instead of listening and becoming convicted in the presence of the glory of God.

Stopped. Gr. *sunechō*, “to compress,” “to hold together.” They regarded Stephen’s words as blasphemous, and did not wish to hear more. They thus proved that they deserved the description given in v. 51. They, and not Stephen, were the blasphemers.

Ran upon him. Rather, “rushed upon him with one accord.” Satan had brought into the Sanhedrin the kind of unity required by the Law (Deut. 13:9, 10) when a man was to be executed. There was no waiting for an official verdict; they were unanimous in their

desire and decision. For the judicial aspects of such summary proceedings compare on Matt. 26:59.

58. Cast him out. According to Lev. 24:14 the one to be stoned must be taken outside the camp, which, in the time of Stephen, meant outside the walls of Jerusalem.

Stoned him. Literally, “were stoning him,” as though the act of execution went on while the martyr was praying (vs. 59, 60). Stoning was the penalty for blasphemy under the Mosaic law (Lev. 24:14–16; see on John 8:7). But however closely the Sanhedrin may have been following this law, under the Romans they had no right to take life, particularly if Stephen was a Roman citizen (see on Acts 6:5). But Roman officials could be bribed into convenient silence (AA 98, 101). Pilate, who was still procurator (see Vol. V, pp. 67, 68), may have been out of the city at the time, but would be unlikely to interfere with the attack on Stephen after his humiliating experience at the trial of Jesus.

Laid down their clothes. The Law required that the accuser should be the first to use the deadly stones (Deut. 17:7; cf. on John 8:7). The loose flowing cloaks worn as outer garments would have impeded the free action of the arms of the executors, and hence were laid aside (cf. Acts 22:20).

Young man’s. Gr. *neanias*, “youth,” is used with great latitude for men between 20 and 40 years of age. The term, therefore, gives no help in determining the chronology of Paul’s life (cf. on Philemon 9:1). For a possible dating of Stephen’s martyrdom see p. 99.

Saul. For the meaning of the name see on 1 Sam. 9:2. For comment on Saul’s previous history, his presence at the martyrdom of Stephen, and subsequent change of name to Paul see Additional Note 2 at end of chapter.

59. They stoned. Rather, “as they were stoning.” Stephen prayed while he was being stoned.

Calling upon God. As indicated by italics in the KJV, the word “God” is not in the original. The prayer itself shows that Stephen called upon the Lord Jesus, whom he had just seen standing at the right hand of God (v. 56).

Receive my spirit. See on Matt. 27:50; Luke 8:55; Acts 7:60. Note how Luke also records a similar prayer on the part of Jesus as He died (Luke 23:46).

60. Kneeled down. In prayer to and adoration of the One whom he had seen on the right hand of God, though he was doubtless forced to his knees by the stoning.

Lay not this sin. Literally, “do not reckon to them this sin.” Stephen could do little with respect to his persecutors’ past sins, but he had a personal right to request forgiveness for their present transgression. In pleading for them he revealed how fully he had acquired the forgiving spirit that had characterized his Master (cf. Luke 23:34).

Fell asleep. See on Mark 5:39; John 11:11. Throughout his defense Stephen’s conduct is in marked contrast with that of his accusers. They are filled with vindictive fury, but he maintains a calm such as possessed Christ in the judgment hall. Now Luke, in closing his account of the martyr’s ministry, preserves that hallowed atmosphere in his final phrase, “he fell asleep.” The battle is over, the victory is won; God’s faithful warrior leaves the tumult and quietly sleeps until the resurrection day. Succeeding chapters show that his death was not in vain.

ADDITIONAL NOTES ON CHAPTER 7

Note 1

The speech of Stephen presents some difficulties as to its purpose, the matters it presents, and its questions of fact. In approaching these problems certain considerations

should be borne in mind: (1) The speech is reported, not as Luke might have understood its matter and import 30 years later, when he wrote Acts, but probably as it was reported to him by one or more of the hearers, such as Saul (Paul) or one of the converted priests (ch. 6:7). Of course, it must be remembered that God could have given a knowledge of the sermon directly to Luke. (2) The speech was never finished, because his hearers rushed upon him in fury, dragged him outside the city, and stoned him to death. (3) Stephen's speech was historical, as had been Peter's speeches before him (chs. 2; 3), and Paul's afterward (chs. 13; 22; 26), and to that extent records little of his theological thinking. Stephen's theology, as it had developed up to this time, must be seen in the implications of the history he traced, and in the accusations of his enemies. (4) His discourse was doubtless a continuation of the evangelistic message given by the seven following their ordination (ch. 6:7–10), and of the presentation of the gospel Stephen had been making in the synagogues of the Hellenists (see on v. 9). Therefore his defense took for granted much that would be of help to the present-day student in analyzing and evaluating it. (5) Some of the historical and exegetical difficulties that his discourse appears to present—such as the matter of Abraham's not leaving Haran until after Terah's death (ch. 7:4); the 75 persons as the total of the Hebrew clan with Joseph in Egypt (v. 14); the parcel of ground said to have been purchased in Shechem by Abraham (v. 16); the burial of Jacob in that plot of ground (vs. 15, 16); the citation from Amos 5:26, 27, in which Stephen substitutes "Babylon" for "Damascus"; and the names of the pagan deities mentioned (Acts 7:43)—can be viewed as arising, in part or in whole, from our lack of information that may have been known to Stephen.

Three fairly obvious objectives can be inferred for Stephen's speech:

1. To win approval, or rather to temper disapproval, by showing the Sanhedrin that he had familiarity with Hebrew history, and to provide ground for proving his orthodoxy.
2. To show historically how God had sought to lead the Hebrews, and how persistently they had rejected that leadership as given through Moses, the prophets, and the long-foretold Messiah.
3. To show the nature and meaning of the worship that God had prescribed for the patriarchs and for His chosen people, in relation, as must be recognized, to Christ's newly inaugurated work at the right hand of God. This may be considered the most important, but least clearly stated, objective. Four facts are to be observed in connection with it:
 - a. When the deacons, of whom Stephen emerges as the leading evangelist, began their public ministry, "a great company of the priests," it is noted for the first time, "were obedient to the faith" (ch. 6:7). This result may have arisen from a particular emphasis in the presentation of the gospel by Stephen and the other deacons.
 - b. The serious accusation was brought against Stephen that he taught what was contrary to "this holy place," that is, the Temple; to "the law"; and to the "customs" (ch. 6:13, 14).
 - c. Stephen stressed the call of Abraham and God's providential care of Jacob and his descendants (ch. 7:2–17); the liberation of the Hebrews from Egypt under the leadership of Moses (vs. 18–36); Moses' witness to a future prophet for the church in the wilderness (vs. 37, 38); the false worship and unconsecrated sacrifices of the Hebrews (vs. 39–43); the wilderness tabernacle built according to the pattern shown to Moses (vs. 44, 45); Solomon's Temple (vs. 46, 47); and the fact that God is in no need of man-made temples (vs. 48–50). This emphasis upon worship would suggest that Stephen was leading to the subject of Christ's ministry in heaven.

- d. Stephen's experience bears a recognizable relationship to the prophecy of the 70 weeks (Dan. 9:24–27), which began in 457 B.C., in the last week of which Messiah was to be cut off, "not for himself," and the typical, earthly sacrificial system was to end as an effective means of intercession, which result would mean also the end of the earthly priesthood. This commentary accepts the view that the crucifixion took place in A.D. 31 (see Vol. V, pp. 251–265), "in the midst of the week." Therefore the last of the 70 prophetic weeks must end in A.D. 34. Thus Stephen's ministry can be viewed as dramatically symbolizing God's appeal to His chosen people during the last prophetic week, before the gospel is offered to the Gentiles. Accordingly, it seems reasonable to date Stephen's martyrdom in A.D. 34, for the killing of Stephen may be viewed as a final act of rejection of the gospel by the Jews as a nation.

When Stephen's speech is viewed against this background, it is seen to be a dramatic, vital episode in a critical period of early church history.

Note 2

The young man, Saul, introduced in ch. 7:58, plays so important a part in the NT scene as to warrant close attention from the first mention of his name. Direct biographical details are scanty, but indirect references permit a reasonably certain reconstruction of his early life.

Apart from an oblique mention of his mother (Gal. 1:15), and general references to his Hebrew ancestors (Acts 24:14; Gal. 1:14; 2 Tim. 1:3), the Scriptures give no clue to Saul's parentage. That he was not an only child is clear from Acts 23:16, where "Paul's sister's son" is introduced. It is possible that his family, regarding him as an apostate when he became a Christian, was alienated, and severed all connections with him (see Phil. 3:8), and that this made mention of them painful to him, although Rom. 16:7 may be understood to mean that some of his relatives were Christians.

A tradition of the 2d century, first recorded by Jerome, states that Saul's parents originally lived in Gischala, of Galilee. About 4 B.C. they are supposed to have been captured and taken as slaves to Tarsus, the chief city of Cilicia, in Asia Minor, where they eventually gained their freedom, prospered, and became Roman citizens. Later, a son, Saul, was born to them there.

Saul's life began at Tarsus (Acts 22:3), where, on the eighth day, he was circumcised (Phil. 3:5) and, in accordance with custom, named (see on Luke 1:59). Since he was of the tribe of Benjamin (Rom. 11:1; Phil. 3:5), he may have been named after the first king of Israel, who came from the same house.

From birth he possessed certain enviable privileges. He was born a Roman citizen (Acts 22:28). In the 1st century A.D., Roman citizenship was still jealously guarded, and it is probable that Saul's family was one of some distinction and of more than average wealth. The holder of such citizenship had every reason to be proud, and would naturally be favorably inclined toward imperial Rome. But, in addition, Saul had a local loyalty to his own distinguished city. He was a citizen of Tarsus (ch. 21:39). This means that he was not merely resident there, but possessed citizen rights. This privilege he probably enjoyed because of services rendered to the city by his family.

Over and above these social privileges, however, Saul valued his racial and religious heritage. He gloried in the description, "an Hebrew of the Hebrews" (Phil. 3:5; cf. 2 Cor. 11:22), and was jealous of his ancestral traditions. This was quite compatible with his pride in Roman and Tarsian citizenship, for until A.D. 70, when Vespasian abolished their

legal rights, the Jews were allowed to preserve their distinctive nationality, even in the pagan Roman setting. To this satisfaction with his religious background he added a special pride in his Pharisaism. He “lived a Pharisee” “after the most straitest [Jewish] sect” of his religion (Acts 26:5; cf. ch. 23:6; Phil. 3:5). Some commentators suggest that this Pharisaism was inherited from his father, but it is just as possible that he became a Pharisee because of his training under Gamaliel (cf. on Acts 5:34).

At an early age, probably when he was 12, Saul was sent to Jerusalem (ch. 26:4), where he was educated by the famous Gamaliel I (ch. 22:3; see on ch. 5:34). He was trained in “the perfect manner of the law,” “believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets,” growing to be “zealous toward God” and “more exceedingly zealous of the traditions” of his fathers (Acts 22:3; 24:14; Gal. 1:14). It seems that he became a more fanatical supporter of his sect than did his master (cf. on Acts 5:34). He thus laid the foundation for his future energetic crusade against the Christian church (chs. 8:1, 3; 22:4, 5; 26:9–12). With this background, and in this setting, Saul enters the narrative of the book of Acts (ch. 7:58). As a zealous member of the strictest section of Judaism, he lends the weight and assent of his presence to the death of Stephen who seems to be a critic of Judaism. His presence suggests that he had continued to live in Jerusalem. He would therefore be well aware of Christ’s ministry and death, and the increasingly powerful apostolic witness that followed. But since he mentions only his supernatural encounter with Jesus on the Damascus road (Acts 22:7, 8; 26:14, 15; 1 Cor. 15:8), it is unlikely that he ever met Him in the flesh. Nevertheless, Saul was well equipped as an anti-Christian persecutor, and there is nothing anomalous in his participation in the first martyr’s death.

Considerable discussion has centered on the change of name that occurs about halfway through the book of Acts. Chapter 13:9 speaks of “Saul (who also is called Paul),” or, to give a variant translation, “Saul, otherwise Paul.” Why should a second name be here introduced when “Saul” has already been used 18 times between chs. 7:58 and 13:9? From the days of Jerome the newly introduced name has been connected with that of Sergius Paulus, the deputy (proconsul) of Cyprus. It has been suggested that Saul took the name Paul at this juncture to honor the deputy’s conversion to the Christian faith. Such an explanation seems improbable, for there are weighty reasons for concluding that Saul must have had more than one name from his earliest years.

Saul was born into a multilingual world. A heterogeneous population spoke an amazing babel of differing tongues, but each group had its own native speech. Superimposed on this base were Greek, the lingua franca of the civilized world (see Vol. V, p. 103), and Latin, the official language of the Roman Empire. As a result, many men of the day spoke not only their native tongue but also Greek and Latin. Because of this, many of them came to have more than one name, or differing forms of the same name according to the language or society in which it was being used. In other cases they bore names that had no linguistic connections with each other—that is, were not translations from one language to another. In Saul’s case the process may have worked as follows: At circumcision he was given a Jewish name, Saul, but since he lived in a Gentile community, he also bore a not uncommon Latin name, Paulus. Many examples of double names may be quoted: Belteshazzar-Daniel, Esther-Hadassah, John Mark (cf. Acts 1:23; 13:1; Col. 4:11). Luke shows his awareness of the apostle’s two names, Saul and Paul. Prior to Acts 13:9, he has portrayed him in a predominantly Hebrew environment, and

has therefore used his Hebrew name, Saul. Now, in ch. 13:9, Luke sees him face to face with a Roman official, who would naturally ask him such questions as, “What is your name?” “Where is your home?” To such queries the Roman citizen would not reply, “Saul, a Pharisee of Jerusalem,” but “Paul, a Roman citizen of Tarsus.” Thus it appears that Luke’s revelation of his hero’s other name is particularly felicitous—it is true to circumstance, and scarcely needs any other explanation. From this point on, Luke uses the Gentile name, apart from three reminiscent references to “Saul” (chs. 22:7, 13; 26:14), which show how accurately Luke reported Paul’s speeches. This is entirely appropriate, for Paul’s ministry during the second half of Acts is almost entirely for non-Jews. The name Paul is thus interwoven with his service to the Gentiles. This receives the strongest possible support from the apostle’s own invariable use of “Paul” in his epistles (Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:12; 2 Cor. 10:1; Gal. 5:2; Col. 4:18; etc.).

One other interpretation merits consideration. The Latin word *paulus* (its Greek equivalent is *pauros*) means “little,” or “small,” and has been taken as a description of Saul’s stature. The idea receives some support from the apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla, which dates from A.D. 160–180, and though not wholly reliable, may possibly reflect a genuine tradition concerning the personal appearance of the great apostle. The relevant passage says: “A man small in size, bald-headed, bandy-legged, well-built, with eyebrows meeting, rather long-nosed, full of grace. For sometimes he seemed like a man, and sometimes he had the countenance of an angel” (*ANF*, vol. 8, p. 487). It must be recognized, however, that such an explanation involves acceptance of a later date for the name Paul, since it could not have been given until physical characteristics were pronounced.

Whatever the origin of Saul’s alternative name, the name itself was Roman and was eminently appropriate to the apostle’s ultimate aim of taking the gospel to the imperial capital (cf. on Acts 19:21; Rom. 1:15). Furthermore, as Luke enters upon the main topic of his book, the Gentile ministry of Paul, he consistently uses only the apostle’s Roman name.

For a tentative chronology of the life of Saul, otherwise and more commonly known as Paul, see pp. 97–102.

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1–60AA 99–102; SR 264–267

4 PP 127

5 PP 169

6 8T 207

22 CT 406, 417; Ed 62; FE 342, 360, 393; MH 474; PP 245; SR 108; 4T 343

23–25CT 407

25 PP 246

29, 30 FE 360, 423; MH 508

37 AA 99

44 PP 357

48 EW 198

48–50AA 99; SR 264

51, 52 EW 198

51–55AA 100

51–56SR 265

55 AA 115
 55, 56 EW 198, 208; SL 91
 56 AA 116; ML 67; MYP 113; SR 270
 56–60AA 101
 57, 58 EW 199
 58–60PK 699
 59 AA 575, 597; 4T 525
 59, 60 ML 67; SR 206
 60 EW 199; MB 33

CHAPTER 8

1 *By occasion of the persecution in Jerusalem, the church being planted in Samaria, 5 by Philip the deacon, who preached, did miracles, and baptized many, among the rest Simon the sorcerer, a great seducer of the people: 14 Peter and John come to confirm and enlarge the church: where, by prayer and imposition of hands giving the Holy Ghost, 18 when Simon would have bought the like power of them, 20 Peter sharply reproveth his hypocrisy, and covetousness, and exhorting him to repentance, together with John preaching the word of the Lord, return to Jerusalem. 26 But the angel sendeth Philip to teach, and baptize the Ethiopian eunuch.*

1. Saul was consenting. Many authorities place this first sentence at the end of ch. 7, to bind off the account of Stephen's martyrdom with a record of Saul's attitude toward it. Saul was in agreement with what was done, although he did not himself take part in the stoning. Doubtless, Stephen's fearless witness stirred Saul's mind more deeply than he realized. This resulted in an inner conflict between his own Pharisaic fanaticism, and conviction of the rightness of Stephen's cause. The consequence of this conflict was increased bitterness against the Christians, and intensified persecution (AA 101, 102, 112, 113). At the time, he was rewarded for his part in the martyrdom by being made a member of the Sanhedrin (AA 102; see on 1 Cor. 7:7). In later days he contritely confessed the part he had played in the death of Stephen (cf. Acts 22:20).

At that time. Literally, "on that day." The stoning of Stephen marked the beginning of an organized persecution against the church. Having gone to such lengths as to kill Stephen, the Jewish leadership turned its rage upon all the Christians.

Great persecution. Once again the church is persecuted by the Jewish authorities, as it already had been on a lesser scale after the healing of the lame man, (ch. 4:1–7), and after the death of Ananias and Sapphira (ch. 5:17, 18). This persecution is distinguished from its predecessors by being termed "great"—great in extent and severity. See Ministry of Philip.

It is clear from this, from v. 3, and from Paul's later descriptions (cf. chs. 22:4; 26:10, 11), that the persecution involved much suffering, with imprisonment.

The church. That is, the congregation that had grown up in the capital city since Pentecost (see on Matt. 18:17). This suggests that there were other branches of the church outside Jerusalem, which indicates encouraging growth.

Scattered abroad Gr. *diaspeirō*, "to scatter like grain," "to disperse." Thus the rage of enemies succeeded only in causing the church to fulfill what Christ had foretold (ch. 1:8). The "all" need not include the totality of membership (see on ch. 1:1), but only the more fearful, or the more active, or those known personally to the persecutors. But believers, both men and women, were still left in the city (see ch. 8:3).

Judæa and Samaria. Cities and towns such as Hebron, Gaza, Lydda, and Joppa may have become cities of refuge to the Christians. To this influx of Christians and to the preaching of Philip (see v. 40) may be attributed the early existence of Christian communities in some of these places (cf. ch. 9:32, 36). Some fled to Samaria, doubtless because of the hatred of that people toward the Jews—a person fleeing from the priests and rulers of Jerusalem would probably be welcome there. The second region mentioned in ch. 1:8 was being reached. This may have served as the first step in breaking down antipathy toward the Samaritans and, eventually, the Gentiles.

Except the apostles. Three possible reasons have been adduced for the apostles' remaining: (1) The Twelve had learned from their Master that "the hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling" (John 10:13), and refused to desert their responsibilities. (2) The Twelve wished to remain in Jerusalem in spite of all persecution, because the city was looked upon as the headquarters of the Christians, and fugitives would look there for guidance and help. (3) This persecution was apparently directed, in particular, against those who, like Stephen, taught the transitory nature of the customs (see on Acts 6:14) which the Pharisees stressed. The apostles apparently continued as worshipers in the Temple, keeping themselves in ritual cleanness (ch. 10:14), and held aloof from fellowship with Gentiles (v. 28). The large body of the common people probably looked upon them with considerable favor and respect. Therefore the persecution may have been directed more at the Hellenistic disciples. It was certainly this class who were most active in taking the next great step in the expansion of the church. No dogmatic decision can be made in favor of any one of these three reasons offered by commentators and church historians.

2. Devout. Gr. *eulabēs*, "taking hold well," and, by extension, "cautions," "pious" (see on ch. 2:5). Ananias, who led Paul to baptism, is characterized by this adjective (ch. 22:21). Because persons inclined toward Judaism are described as "devout" (chs. 13:50; 17:4, 17), some have concluded that these men were proselytes. However, the Greek word translated "devout" in these references is not *eulabēs*, but *sebomenos*. The suggestion has also been made that these "devout" were a group who honored the dead Stephen, without defending fully the truth he had presented when alive, even as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea had done in the case of Christ after the crucifixion. This verse really forms a conclusion to ch. 7.

Carried. Rather, "buried," since the word covers the whole interment ceremony.

Great lamentation. Compare on Gen. 23:2; Job 1:20; 2:12; Mark 5:38, 39.

Considerable courage must have been required to perform the funeral rites for Stephen, who had fallen before the rage of the Sanhedrin. Indeed, anyone who had been stoned to death on a charge of blasphemy would ordinarily have no funeral honors (Mishnah *Sanhedrin* 6. 5, 6, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 305). Public lamentation on the part of the "devout" may have been in the nature of a protest against those who had brought about Stephen's death.

3. As for. Rather, "but." This verse continues the narrative begun in v. 1.

Made havock. Gr. *lumainō*, "to ravage," "to devastate," "to ruin." The word is used in the LXX of Ps. 80:13 of the ravages of a wild boar. The tense used here may imply continued persecution. Paul states that he "persecuted this way unto the death" (Acts

22:4; cf. ch. 26:10). There seemed, as he afterward confessed (ch. 26:11), a kind of insane ferocity in his violence.

Church. In Jerusalem. See on v. 1; cf. ch. 26:10.

Every house. It appears from ch. 26:11 that Saul first entered the synagogues in search of victims, and then pursued the Christians from house to house. These houses may also have been their meeting places.

Haling. That is, hauling, or dragging, them into court.

Men and women. The fact that women were also among the sufferers suggests that they were prominent in the church (cf. on Luke 8:2, 3; Acts 1:14). Throughout the history of the church they have proved steadfast under persecution.

Prison. That is, to await judicial action. The numbers were too great for all to be brought to an immediate trial.

4. Went every where. Gr. *dierchomai*, “to go through,” a favorite word with Luke for missionary labor (cf. Luke 9:6; Acts 8:40; 9:32; 11:19; 13:6). In this case the attempt to stamp out the new faith gave it wider scope of action, as the Lord had desired (Acts 1:8), and forced it beyond limits to which it might otherwise have been confined for a much longer waiting period. Then, as later, the blood of martyrs was the seed of the church.

Preaching. Gr. *euaggelizomai*, for which a very literal and picturesque translation is “to gospelize.” This graphically represents the work done by these persecuted Christians—they carried the gospel, or good news (see on Mark 1:1), to the many places to which they were scattered.

Word. This should be understood in its broadest sense as referring to all teaching concerning Christ. Much of this would come from the OT, but a great part of “the word” was not yet committed to writing and was dependent on the spoken messages of the voluntary evangelists.

5. Philip. This cannot refer to Philip the apostle, since v. 1 specifically states that the apostles remained in Jerusalem. The reference must therefore be to the deacon by that name (see on ch. 6:5). Because he was conspicuous in this early evangelism, he was afterward known as Philip the evangelist (ch. 21:8).

City of Samaria. Opinion is divided as to whether this refers to Sebaste (previously known as Samaria), the capital of Samaria, or to an unidentified city (cf. on v. 9). Whatever the precise location may have been, the seed had already been sown in Samaria (see on John 4:4–42). As a result the fields were “white already to harvest” (John 4:35).

Ministry of Philip

4

⁴Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Ac 5:30). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.



Preached. Gr. *kēRussō*, a different word from that used in v. 4, and meaning, “to proclaim [as a herald],” implying a more formal, deliberate preaching than that of the unordained believers. The word is used of the preaching of both John the Baptist and Christ (Matt. 3:1; 4:17). The tense of the verb implies that Philip continued to preach.

Christ. Rather, “the Christ,” the Anointed One, or Messiah. John 4:25 implies that the expectation of the Messiah was strong among the Samaritans, as among the Jews, and Philip’s work therefore was to proclaim that the long-expected One had come, that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, the Son of God.

6. People. Rather, “multitudes,” giving a picture of large congregations.

One accord. See on ch. 1:14.

Gave heed. Gr. *prosechō*, “to hold to,” “to apply [the mind] to,” hence, “to give credence to” (Acts 8:10, 11; 16:14; 1 Tim. 1:4; 3:8; 4:1, 13; 2 Peter 1:19). The text implies that crowds of people accepted the new teaching. The readiness with which they did so shows that, in spite of the adverse influence of Simon Magus (Acts 8:9–11), which had come in since our Lord had taught there, His work had not been in vain.

Hearing. Literally, “hearing them,” that is, Philip’s words. The Samaritans had first believed simply as a result of hearing Christ preach (John 4:39–42), without the “signs” (cf. Matt. 12:38–42). The miracles now performed were not a foundation for, but a strengthening of, their faith. The signs removed all doubt concerning the power working through Philip. Undoubtedly also they were a corrective against the influence of Simon Magus (Acts 8:9–11).

7. Unclean spirits. Opinion is divided as to the best translation of the first half of this verse. It may be rendered: "For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of those possessed." Note how Luke, the physician, differentiates the demon-possessed from those with other diseases. Concerning "unclean spirits" see on ch. 5:16; see Additional Note on Mark 1.

8. Great joy. The joy in this Samaritan city illustrates how very favorably the work of the Christian emissaries was received by the people of Samaria.

9. Simon. See on John 1:42. This man is usually spoken of as Simon Magus, from the Gr. *magos*, "sorcerer," or "magician." According to Justin Martyr (*First Apology* 26) he was born at Gitto, a village of Samaria. Later accounts in the Fathers describe him as persistently at enmity with Peter, whom he followed to Rome to oppose his teaching there. Most of the legends are of extremely doubtful authority. Simon was typical of a class of Jews who traded on the prestige of their race and the credulity of the heathen. Such were Elymas at Cyprus (Acts 13:8); the vagabond Jewish exorcists at Ephesus (ch. 19:13); and Simon of Cyprus, unless he was the same man as the Samaritan (Josephus *Antiquities* xx. 7. 2). See Vol. V, p. 912; Vol. VI, p. 34.

Same city. Referred to in v. 5. The separate mention of "Samaria" in v. 9 suggests that the term refers to the province and not the capital city.

Used sorcery. Rather, "who formerly was practicing magic in the city." "Magic" refers to the arts practiced by the Magi of the East, who claimed to be enchanters, astrologers, diviners, and interpreters of dreams. Simon may have had no more than an elementary knowledge of chemistry, by use of which he first attracted attention, and then traded on the credulity of those who came to consult with him. The Jews had known of such things from the time of their sojourn in Egypt, and in their traditional literature some of the "wisdom" of Moses is falsely described as of this character (cf. Acts 7:22; cf. on Dan. 1:20).

Bewitched the people. Rather, "amazed the nation," that is, the population of Samaria were superstitiously impressed by the so-called miracles of this vaunted "great one," Simon Magus.

Some great one. Verse 10 more clearly defines the nature of the claim. The cry of the people that Simon was "the great power of God" was doubtless the echo of his own pretensions. In some undefined way he claimed to be an incarnation of divine power. He possibly linked himself with the Messiah. Jewish Messianic hopes set a pattern for impostors, and helped them to secure a following. Contrast Philip (v. 5), who preached Christ, not himself.

10. All gave heed. See on v. 6. His deceptions met with great success, for every class of people believed in him. The sorcerer appears as one of the earliest of those who come with lying signs and wonders so as to deceive, if it were possible, the very elect (cf. Matt. 24:24; 2 Thess. 2:9).

Great power of God. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading "the power of God that is called Great." Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* i. 23; *ANF*, Vol. 1 p. 348) says of Simon Magus that "he was glorified by many as if he were a god. ... He represented himself, in a word, as being the loftiest of all powers."

11. Had regard. Gr. *prosechō* (see on v. 6).

Bewitched. See on v. 9. The “long time” during which this evil fascination had been exercised would bring the beginning of Simon’s sorceries close to the time of our Lord’s ministry in Samaria some six or seven years before.

12. Preaching. See on v. 5. Then, as now, men were saved by preaching (see on 1 Cor. 1:21). The power of Philip’s message proved stronger than the fascination of Simon’s magic.

Kingdom of God. See on Matt. 4:17; Luke 17:20, 21; Acts 1:6. As the field of gospel labor widened, the message of the disciples became clearer. It was comprehensive and specific; it led to the baptism of its hearers.

Name of Jesus Christ. See on chs. 2:21; 3:16.

Were baptized. See on Matt. 3:6. The tense of the Greek verb here implies not one great baptism but a succession of converts, both men and women, who were thus admitted to the church.

13. Then Simon himself. Rather, conveying the emphasis of the Greek, “even Simon himself.”

Believed. Doubtless he was impressed by the miracles that Philip wrought (v. 6); he felt himself to be in the presence of a Power infinitely higher than his own. But he accepted Philip’s statements as to the death and resurrection of Christ, without developing a personal faith. His was the sort of faith of which James speaks (James 2:14, 19). A similar imperfect belief is described in John 8:31 where certain Jews are described as believing on Jesus while the remainder of the chapter shows that their belief was not a saving one. Yet Simon understood enough to be baptized, although, as his later attitude showed, his baptism could have represented no new birth to a higher life. He remained still in “iniquity” (Acts 8:23). Luke draws a distinction between the belief of the Samaritans and that of Simon: the people were won by Philip’s preaching, but Simon was attracted by the wonders that he saw. Nevertheless, God did not reject this imperfect faith. He accepted it as the base on which to build a more acceptable belief. When Simon fell away, Peter called upon him (v. 22) to repent and to pray for forgiveness.

Wondered, beholding. Rather, the clause should read, “beholding signs and great miracles coming to pass, he was amazed” (see on v. 9). The tables were now turned. The magician, who had been wondered at, yielded to a spell mightier than his own, and was in turn astonished as he beheld the power that attended the proclamation of the gospel.

14. The apostles. They had remained in Jerusalem (v. 1), directing the activities of the church. The Lord had once placed a geographic limit upon the preaching of the message of the kingdom (Matt. 10:5). He had canceled those limits by the gospel commission (Matt. 28:19, 20) and by the instruction in Acts 1:8. Word of Philip’s success in Samaria came to the Twelve as proof that the removal of limitations was a fact. The time had now come to witness for Christ in Samaria.

Heard. In spite of persecution, communication between the scattered workers and headquarters appears to have been faithfully maintained.

Samaria. Philip’s message was carried throughout the district by his enthusiastic converts.

Word of God. The expression is here used by Luke, as in his Gospel, for the whole sum and substance of the gospel of Christ (cf. Luke 5:1; 8:11, 21).

Peter and John. Evidently there was no particular pre-eminence assigned to any one of the Twelve in those early days. By the decision of the whole apostolate, Peter and John

were sent on their Samaritan mission. It was logical to choose these two, for they had been most active in the beginning work of the church (cf. chs. 1:15; 2:14; 3:1; 4:8; etc.). There is no evidence here of the supremacy of Peter; he was under the direction of the body of the apostles, who “sent” him and John on this mission. John, who had once sought to call down fire upon the Samaritans (Luke 9:54), was now, in love, to bring them the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire (Matt. 3:11). The suggestion that the John here mentioned might have been John Mark (see on Acts 13:5, 13) is hardly tenable. Had John Mark already gone through the experiences described in the following verses, he would scarcely have turned back from Paul and Barnabas (ch. 13:13).

15. *Prayed.* This was the first act of the two apostles. They did not confer the Holy Spirit upon the newly baptized Samaritan believers, but besought the Lord to bestow the Spirit upon them as a sequel to their baptism (cf. ch. 2:38), and as evidence of their being accepted by God.

16. *He was fallen.* This verse makes a clear distinction between the water baptism administered by Philip, and the reception of the Holy Spirit through the ministry of Peter and John. The verb translated “fallen” is used of the gift of the Spirit in chs. 10:44; 11:15, and of Peter’s trance in ch. 10:10.

Only they were baptized. Rather, “they had *only* been baptized.” The water baptism had been administered by Philip, but the gifts of the Spirit did not fall until Peter and John arrived.

In the name. Or, “into the name.” This indicates the close tie with which the new converts to the faith were bound to Christ by baptism.

17. *Hands on them.* See on ch. 6:6.

Received. Note the three steps that enabled the Samaritans to receive the Holy Spirit: (1) Their own confession of faith by baptism (v. 12), (2) the apostles’ prayer (v. 15), and (3) the apostles’ laying on of hands (v. 17).

18. *Simon saw.* He had been baptized by Philip even as the other Samaritans had been, but the apostles’ hands had not been laid upon him, and he had not received the Spirit, who had been graciously given to the other believers. There must have been a reason for this; perhaps his true nature had already been clearly perceived. The distinction made between him and his fellow countrymen, however, aroused his desire. He saw evidence of their reception of the Spirit. The men were changed; they may have begun speaking with tongues and prophesying; at least it was obvious that the Holy Spirit had entered their lives.

Offered them money. He saw that his fellows were being endowed with abilities far greater than his own, and although he did not possess the Holy Spirit, he desired the power that such possession would bring. He therefore offered money to Peter and John, hoping that he would be able to purchase what he had not freely received. Such conduct reveals the faulty character of his faith and uncovers the motives that controlled him. His offer of money has given its name to a large class of ecclesiastical offenses. Any attempt to purchase spiritual powers or offices is labeled “simony.”

19. *Give me.* The character of the man was now fully revealed. He did not desire the Holy Spirit for himself as a spiritual gift to seal his baptism, but that he might use the power to dominate others. He wanted the external power without having undergone the inward change that would justify such a gift. It is possible that he intended to make money out of this hoped-for ability to impart the Holy Spirit to others, as he might wish.

20. Thy money perish with thee. Literally, “Thy silver be together with thee, for perdition.” So Peter expressed his disgust at Simon’s offer. He realized that if the man did not change he would be destroyed. But he did not regard Simon’s state as hopeless, for in v. 22 he urged him to repent and be forgiven.

Gift of God. The clause may be translated, “because thou thoughtest to acquire the gift of God by money.” Simon’s attitude betrayed a fundamental misapprehension of God’s character and the gifts of the Spirit. He had yet to learn that the most precious things in life cannot be bought with money.

21. Neither part nor lot. This is no arbitrary pronouncement, but a judgment based on the known state of Simon’s heart. He did not truly belong to God’s family, so was not eligible to share in its privileges and responsibilities. For comment on “lot” see on ch. 1:26.

This matter. Or, “this word.” This phrase most obviously refers to the topic under discussion, that is, the power to impart the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands (v. 19). But if the literal rendering “this word” be adopted, the reference is to v. 14, where it is said, “Samaria had received the *word* of God.”

Right. Gr. *euthus*, “straight,” and by extension, in a moral sense, “straightforward,” “upright,” “true,” “sincere.” The word is rare in the NT, but like so many of the spoken words of Peter, is found again in an epistle of his (2 Peter 2:15).

22. Repent. See on Matt. 3:2. This is the first condition for obtaining forgiveness and averting merited punishment. Note that although Simon’s attitude is described as “wickedness,” Peter’s appeal shows that salvation was still available for him.

Pray God. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading “Lord” instead of “God.” This would be a special reference to the Lord Jesus, against whom Simon’s offense was committed.

If perhaps. This implies a doubt, not of God’s willingness to forgive, but of Simon’s readiness to repent. Peter may also have thought that Simon’s sin approximated the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost (see on Matt. 12:31). In this case the use of such words by Peter, after Christ had given to the apostles great disciplinary power (John 20:23), would be most serious indeed.

Thought. Gr. *epinoia*, “purpose,” “intent,” giving the idea of a ripened scheme. This makes the offense all the more serious. The apostle sees how the mind of Simon has been fully occupied with his plan, and while he will not declare that there is no hope for him, his covetousness, bordering upon idolatry, makes repentance almost impossible. God is ever ready to forgive, but man is often not ready for forgiveness (see on Ps. 32:1; 130:4).

23. I perceive. With true insight, Peter gauged the contents of Simon’s heart.

Gall of bitterness. That is, “the gall which is bitterness,” and in the next phrase, “the bond which is iniquity.” Peter sees the man as immersed in bitterness and chained in iniquity. Simon had allowed envy and covetousness to embitter his soul, and wickedness to become a fixed habit, until he was a prisoner to these evils.

24. Pray ... for me. Simon shows by the nature of his plea that he is not moved by genuine repentance. He shows no sorrow. He sees no need of character. He asks only that he be relieved of the threat of punishment. His entreaty may be compared to the oft-repeated plea of Pharaoh to Moses, “Intreat the Lord” (Ex. 8:8, 28; 9:28; 10:17), which reflected simply his fear, and resulted in no change of conduct. There is no record of a

subsequent repentance on Simon's part, and it may therefore be assumed that he remained unconverted.

This is the end of the record of Simon in the book of Acts, but early church history preserves many legends about him. These legends represent him as a self-appointed leader of a debased form of Christianity that constantly warred against orthodox belief. The unedifying story may be followed in Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* ii. 18–39, *Recognitions* ii. 5–16; Justin Martyr *First Apology* 26, 56; Irenaeus *Against Heresies* i. 23; Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* ii. 13. 13–18; 14. 1–6; 15. 1. These writings portray Simon as a forerunner of the Gnostic heretics, a teacher whose system was largely based on astrology, angelology, and an overwhelming belief in his own divine powers. See Vol. V, p. 912; Vol. VI, p. 34.

25. And they. This certainly indicates the apostles Peter and John. Some commentators think it includes Philip. However, see AA 107.

Testified. Gr. *diamarturomai*, “to testify earnestly.”

Preached. Gr. *laleō*, “to speak,” “to say.”

Returned. The form of the verb in Greek here may be translated, “began to return.” They continued to preach the gospel as they made their way back to Jerusalem.

This closes the inspired record of Christianity in Samaria, except for a passing reference in ch. 15:3.

26. The angel. Rather, “an angel.” Luke is observant of angel ministry (cf. Luke 1:38 and Acts 10:7; Luke 2:9 and Acts 12:7; Luke 24:4 and Acts 1:10; 10:30). The Greek construction suggests that an angel spoke to Philip while Peter and John were doing their work of evangelism. The supernatural call may well have come in a vision (cf. Cornelius, Acts 10:3).

South. Gr. *mesēmbria*, generally rendered “midday” or “noon.” However, in the Northern Hemisphere, the sun is in the south when it reaches its meridian; hence the word also came to signify locality, that is, “the south.” Some authorities prefer the translation “noon.”

Unto the way. Rather, “on the way,” or “along the road.”

Gaza. This name is the Greek transliteration of the Heb. *ʿAzzah*, which means “strong.” Gaza (also called Azzah in Deut. 2:23; 1 Kings 4:24; Jer. 25:20) was a southern border city of the early Canaanites (Gen. 10:19). It was occupied first by the Avim, and then by the Caphtorim (Deut. 2:23). Joshua failed to subdue it (Joshua 10:41; 11:22). Judah held it for a brief period (Judges 1:18), but soon lost it to the Philistines (Joshua 13:3; Judges 3:3), who made it the southernmost of their five great cities. The city was the scene of Samson's humiliation and death (Judges 16), and continued to be held by the Philistines during the time of Samuel and onward (1 Sam. 6:17). Solomon (1 Kings 4:21, 24), and later Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:8), attacked it. It resisted Alexander the Great for five months, but was eventually captured and became an important military post during the struggles between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids, and in the wars of the Maccabees (1 Maccabees 11:61).

About 96 B.C. Gaza was destroyed and its people massacred by Alexander Jannaeus (Josephus *Antiquities* xiii. 13. 3 [358–364]), but it was rebuilt by the proconsul Gabinius (*ibid.* xiv. 5. 3 [88]), though it is said that the restored city was nearer the sea than the ancient one. There was more than one road from Jerusalem to Gaza, some 50 mi. to the

southwest. A northern route passed near Lydda, then ran parallel with the coast southward through Azotus to Gaza. Another went southward to Hebron, then due west through desert country to the city of Gaza. The latter is the more likely route of the narrative, especially if *mesēmbria* is translated “south.”

Desert. The clause literally reads, as if a separate sentence, “This is desert.” There is nothing to show whether these were the angel’s words or an explanatory note added by Luke. Neither is it clear whether “this” refers to the “way” or to the “city,” although it is unlikely that Luke would name a city and then describe it as “desert.” The RSV translates it, “This is a desert road.” In simple faith Philip was to go to the less frequented, less promising route from Jerusalem to Gaza, and without knowing that on the road he would meet a traveler whose conversion was to become so memorable.

27. He arose and went. His instant obedience reveals absence of any doubt of the authenticity of the message he had received.

Ethiopia. Ethiopia, like Cush in the OT, is a general name given to the country south of the first cataract of the Nile, and extending into modern Ethiopia. Its northern portion was the great kingdom of Meroe in the upper valley of the Nile, which was ruled over by queens for a long period, and it is most probably from this kingdom that the eunuch had come. Its connection with the Jewish people presents many points of interest. According to the *Letter of Aristeas* 13, during the reign of one of the Pharaohs named Psamtik (perhaps Psamtik II, 594–588 B.C.) a body of Jews were sent to Egypt to aid in a campaign against Ethiopia. Jewish influences had certainly been at work in that region for centuries. This may be reflected in the courageous work of an early Ethiopian eunuch Ebed-melech, in the time of Jeremiah (chs. 38:7–13; 39:15–18). Even earlier the Hebrews had expected and seen the admission of Ethiopians into their commonwealth (Ps. 68:31; 87:4).

Eunuch. See on Esther 1:10; 2:3; Matt. 19:12.

Great authority. Gr. *dunastēs*, “a prince,” “a potentate,” “a high officer.” The letter of the Deuteronomic law (see on Deut. 23:1) was explicit concerning the exclusion of eunuchs from the sanctuary of God, but this was doubtless modified in practice. The admission of Sabbathkeeping eunuchs into the ranks of God’s people is promised by Isaiah (ch. 56:4). Rank, race, and physical condition are not factors in admission to the family of our heavenly Father (Gal. 3:28, 29; Col 3:10, 11).

Candace. This appears to have been a dynastic name or title, like Pharaoh or Ptolemy in Egypt, and Caesar among the Romans, rather than the personal name of an individual queen. The name occurs in Strabo *Geography* xvii. 1. 54; and Dio Cassius *History* liv. 5. 4–6. According to Eusebius (c. A.D. 325) Ethiopia was still under the rule of a queen in his time (*Ecclesiastical History* ii. 1. 13). See Vol. VIII, “Candace.”

Treasure. Gr. *gaza*, “royal treasury,” “treasure,” a word of Persian origin that was coming into use about this time among Greek and Latin writers (Cicero *De Officiis* ii. 22 [76]). The LXX translators employed it in Ezra 5:17; 6:1; 7:21; Isa. 39:2. It is not found elsewhere in the NT, but a compound form is used for the treasury of the Temple (Luke 21:1). Philip meets a man who has charge of *gaza*, the treasure. The evangelist helps him to find a treasure, even as the man in the parable of Matt. 13:44 found a treasure by diligently seeking for it.

To worship. It appears that this eunuch was a circumcised proselyte of righteousness (see Vol. V, p. 63) who was visiting Jerusalem to worship at the Temple. Proselytes, as well as Jews, came to Jerusalem for this purpose, as may be observed from the enumeration of those present at Pentecost (Acts 2:10). According to John 12:20, Greeks also came up to the feasts at Jerusalem. The eunuch had come to Jerusalem in search of a blessing, but before he reaches home he is to receive one that surpasses all his expectations. See Vol. IV, pp. 27–30.

28. Was returning. That is, from Jerusalem to Ethiopia, at the termination of his recent visit to worship at the Temple.

Read. Rather, “was reading.” Apparently he was reading aloud (see v. 30), as this was a common practice among Orientals. It may be that the man had just bought the scroll of Isaiah while he was in Jerusalem, and if so, the wonderful utterances of the gospel prophet must have seemed fresh and rich to him. It is clear, from vs. 32, 33, that he was reading from the 53d chapter of Isaiah in the LXX version.

29. The Spirit said. Compare on v. 26. Here the Spirit speaks, and gives explicit instructions to the evangelist, by an inward prompting or an audible voice.

Join thyself. This royal official doubtless had a large retinue, to which it would be natural for a single traveler on a desert road to attach himself. Philip would be able to approach and hear what was read without being considered intrusive.

30. Philip ran. That is, ran up to the chariot, in immediate obedience to the Spirit’s command. Christians should emulate this ready response. Those who do so will find more people ready to listen to sincere, Christ-centered conversation than they would ordinarily expect.

Understandest thou? Note the skillful opening of the conversation: Philip began just where he found the man, and suited his approach to his prospect’s interests. In this he provides an example for every Christian worker to follow. Philip’s question referred to the meaning rather than the words. Its form in Greek implies that he expected a negative answer. The eunuch might have heard some of the Jewish expositions of the passage, but he probably had no inkling of the fact that the words referred to Jesus Christ. But Philip knew their meaning, and was led by the Spirit to explain their import.

31. How can I? The question implies lack of ability, for he was not trained to interpret the Scriptures.

Guide. Gr. *hodēgeō*, “to lead on one’s way,” “to guide.” The same word is used by Jesus of the guidance of the Holy Spirit (John 16:13). The eunuch, returning to Ethiopia, where he will be separated from those who have hitherto guided him in Jerusalem, feels that he needs skilled instruction for this difficult scripture. His question suggests that he is noticing the passage for the first time, or is having it pressed upon him by the Spirit with renewed emphasis.

Desired. Rather, “besought.” The word implies an earnest request, and indicates the eunuch’s eagerness to have more instruction. Note how smoothly the Spirit’s injunction (v. 29) is fulfilled. Philip draws near, and the eunuch himself invites the evangelist to enter his chariot and ride with him.

32. The place. Gr. *periochē*, “content.” This word was used as an equivalent for the Hebrew terms *parashah*, or *haphtarah*, the passages of Scripture appointed for public reading in the synagogue (see Vol. V, p. 57). The word was in common use among the

Greeks, and was adopted by Cicero (*Letters to Atticus* xiii. 25). It signified the whole context of the passage. "The scripture" (singular, here and in the Greek) refers to a passage of Scripture, and not to the whole body of Scriptures. The clause may therefore be translated, "The content of the passage of Scripture." The verses quoted are from Isaiah 53:7, 8, and are given word for word from the LXX.

He was led. For general comment on the passage quoted see on Isa. 53:7, 8, remembering that the NT quotation is a translation of the LXX, not the Hebrew, text.

33. His humiliation. The clause may be literally translated, "In the humiliation His judgment was removed," but the reading is capable of several interpretations. It might mean that "His condemnation was taken away," or "canceled"; that is, because He humbled Himself, He was afterward exalted; or, alternatively, "Justice was denied Him in His humiliation," as it undoubtedly was during His trial. The Hebrew of Isa. 53:8 suggests, "He was taken away by oppression and judgment"; that is, He was the victim of a judicial murder.

His generation. This expression has had various interpretations: (1) "Who shall declare the number of those who shared His life, and are, as it were, sprung from Him"; that is, who can count His faithful disciples? (2) "Who, as far as His generation went, were wise enough to consider?" (3) "Who shall declare the wickedness of the crooked and perverse generation in which He lived?" See also on Isa. 53:8.

His life is taken. The Hebrew of Isa. 53:8 suggests that the Saviour was hurried to a violent death. The LXX version expresses the same thought, and makes no reference to Christ's departure from earth at the ascension.

34. I pray thee. The eunuch's brief encounter with this man of God must have made a very favorable impression upon him, for he shows immediate confidence in Philip's ability to answer his question. This presents Philip with the opportunity he is seeking. The Christian will often be surprised at the way in which opportunities arise when he is ready and willing to utilize them.

Of whom? The eunuch was keen enough to ask the most important question concerning the passage he was reading, namely, to whom did Isaiah's words refer? The question was not settled in his day, and is still much discussed in ours (see on Isa. 41:8; 42:1; 52:13; 53:1). Philip, however, has no doubts upon the subject—nor should we. The question provides him with his text for preaching Jesus to the Ethiopian.

35. Opened his mouth. The phrase, wherever it occurs in the NT, implies something like a set discourse rather than the mere act of speaking (cf. Matt. 5:2; 13:35; Acts 10:34).

The same scripture. Philip met the eunuch on his own ground, at the passage he was studying. There was no better place for Philip to begin. Nor is there for the preacher today.

Preached unto him Jesus. During his sojourn in Jerusalem the eunuch had probably heard of Jesus' teaching. The work of the disciples had attracted the attention of the entire city (chs. 2:41; 4:33; 5:12–14; 6:7, 8). But many of the discussions he had heard undoubtedly classified Jesus as an impostor, and it is very unlikely that he would have seen Isa. 53 in the light of the apostle's preaching. But this prophecy is one of the clearest OT portrayals of the sacrificial and substitutionary death of Jesus Christ as the only avenue of salvation from the experience, the condemnation, and the destructive power of sin. The sequel indicates that Philip's teaching included not only an application of the prophecy to Jesus Christ, but instruction as to what it meant to join the fellowship of His

disciples. It is clear from the NT that such instruction was given before baptismal candidates were immersed.

To preach Jesus is the work, not only of every preacher of the gospel, but of every Christian, whether the preaching is done by word or by the witness of the daily life.

Whatever the announced subject of a sermon, its burden should be Jesus Christ.

36. *As they went.* Philip and the eunuch must have traveled for some time together, for he not only presented to him the facts of salvation through Jesus Christ in terms of Isa. 53, but carried the instruction to the point where the eunuch understood the meaning of baptism, and desired it for himself.

A certain water. In the 4th century this was identified with Bethsura, the Bethzur of 2 Chron. 11:7, 20 mi. (32 km. from Jerusalem, and 4 mi. (6.4 km. from Hebron. A spring here still retains the old name in the Arabic form, *Beit-Šūr*. Others think the spring was in the *Wādī-el-Ḥesī*, between Eleutheropolis and Gaza, not far from the old cities of Lachish and Eglon. This better agrees with the proximity of the event to Gaza and with the information that the way of travel led through the desert.

What doth hinder? The eagerness of the eunuch to complete his preparation for membership in the church of his new-found Lord is exemplary. The initiative was his; he needed no urging from Philip. He had learned of a Saviour, and had forsaken his sins. He had been instructed in the Name and the Way (cf. Acts 4:12; John 14:6). What reason could be advanced to deny him the rite of baptism?

37. *If thou believers.* Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of this verse. It is possible that a marginal explanation, drawn from an early baptismal confession, has crept into the text at this point. It should be noted, however, that the truth expressed in v. 37 is set forth in variant forms elsewhere in the Bible (cf. John 3:16; Acts 2:38; 16:30, 31).

38. *He commanded.* This brought the whole retinue to a standstill. Its members must have been interested witnesses of the baptism, and some of them possibly formed the nucleus of the first Christian congregation in Ethiopia. Tradition asserts that the eunuch proclaimed the gospel to his countrymen.

Went down both into. Gr. *katabainō eis*, “to go down unto,” or “to go down into.” If this phrase appeared by itself, there would be no way to decide whether Philip and the eunuch went down *unto* the brink of the water or whether they actually went *into* it. But the complementary phrase in v. 39 settles the matter satisfactorily.

39. *Come up out.* Gr. *anabainō ek*, “to come up out of.” This shows that both men went down *into* the water, otherwise they could not have come up *out of* the water. This was certainly for the purpose of baptism by immersion. See on Matt. 3:6; Mark 16:16; Rom. 6:3–6. Here, then, we have a clear illustration of the method of baptism employed in the early church, even on such an unexpected, rather informal occasion as this.

The Spirit. The Spirit had initiated Philip’s meeting with the eunuch, and now that it had reached a successful result, the Spirit again opened new possibilities for service to him.

Caught away. Gr. *harpazō*, “to seize,” “to carry off by force,” “to snatch away.” The same verb is used in a comparable way in 1 Thess 4:17; Rev. 12:5. Human feeling would naturally have led the evangelist to remain, to complete his work with the eunuch

and to instruct him more fully. But by means of a supernatural power, Philip was literally snatched away from his companion. Compare 1 Kings 18:12; 2 Kings 2:16; Eze. 3:12, 14.

And he went. Literally, “for he went.” This explains more clearly why the eunuch “saw him no more.” It also suggests that the eunuch accepted Philip’s disappearance as a supernatural act, that he spent no time in fruitless search for his teacher and baptizer, but rather went on his own way, that is, continued his interrupted journey.

Rejoicing. The position of this word at the end of a phrase is typically Lukan (cf. Luke. 15:5; 19:6). Believing that Philip was in the hands of God, the eunuch felt no anxiety about him, but could afford to go on his way rejoicing in the new light he had received. Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* ii. 1. 13; Loeb ed., vol. 1, pp. 110, 111) speaks of the eunuch as returning to his native country, and there preaching “the knowledge of the God of the universe and the sojourn of our Saviour which gives life to men,” and so fulfilling the words “Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God” (Ps. 68:31). It is significant that the Ethiopian church has had elements similar to Judaism throughout its history. It was early separated from the remainder of Christendom, and retained the simplicity of the life and teachings of the early church for some time. Ethiopian Christians long kept the seventh-day Sabbath, together with the observance of the first day of the week.

40. Was found at. The Greek preposition *eis* may be literally translated “into,” suggesting that Philip was found *inside* the city. Not that a search party was sent out for him, but that there his presence was made known.

Azotus. The Ashdod of the OT (1 Sam. 5:1–7), one of the five chief cities of the Philistines, about 3 mi. (c. 5 km.) from the sea and halfway between Gaza and Joppa. Like Gaza, its history was marked by successive sieges: by the Assyrians (Isa. 20:1), by the Egyptians (*Herodotus* ii. 159; see on Jer. 47:1), by the Maccabees (1 Maccabees 5:68; 10:84). It was restored by the Roman general Gabinius in 55 B.C. The old name lingers in the modern *Esdūd*. The Israelis have built a large port city adjacent to the ancient site. Philip did not stay there, but “passed through,” or “passed on” (see on Acts 8:4) Luke’s narrative suggests that Philip continued his work as an evangelist. The psalmist names Philistia as joining with Ethiopia in providing a company of converts for the city of God (Ps. 87:4).

He preached. Rather, “he was preaching,” or “he continued to preach.” Philip’s remarkable experience with the eunuch hardly interrupted his other activities as a preacher of the gospel.

In all the cities. His route probably led through Lydda and Joppa, and we may doubtless see the effects of his labors in the flourishing Christian communities later found in both these towns (ch. 9:32, 36).

Caesarea. Caesarea lay on the road from Tyre to Egypt, and was of great historical importance. It dates from the Roman period. In the writings of Strabo the geographer (*Geography* xvi. 2. 27; c. A.D. 20) it was known only as Strato’s Tower, and was merely a landing place for ships. Herod the Great transformed it into a flourishing port with a harbor as large as that of Piraeus, at Athens. He named the city for his imperial patron Augustus, calling it Caesarea Sebaste, the latter word being equivalent to the Latin title *Augusta* (see Josephus *Antiquities* xvi. 5. 1; *War* i. 21. 5–7). After the expulsion of Archelaus from Judea, it became the official residence of the Roman procurator (cf. ch.

23:23, 24). Tacitus (*Histories* ii. 78) speaks of Caesarea as the chief city, the *caput*, of Judea. Its population was largely heathen, with an admixture of Jews, making it a fruitful center for missionary labor. As the following chapters of Acts show (the city is mentioned 15 times), it was prominent in the early history of the church. It may be inferred from ch. 21:8 that Philip made it the headquarters of his evangelistic work. Caesarea later became the scene of the labors of the Church Father Origen. Possibly it was the birthplace of the historian-bishop Eusebius. There are now only a few scattered ruins on the site of the ancient city.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1 AA 101, 103, 129; COL 308; EW 199; 6T 330
- 1–40AA 103–111
- 3 AA 103, 113; EW 199
- 4 AA 105, 113, 166; CM 58; DA 233; GC 219; PK 699; 3T 413; 6T 330, 403, 478; 8T 57
- 4, 5 GC 328
- 5–8AA 106; MH 139
- 9 GC 516
- 9, 10 GC 625
- 14 8T 57
- 17 EW 101
- 18, 19 9T 217
- 20 GC 128
- 23 2T 563
- 26–28AA 107
- 26–408T 57
- 29 MH 473
- 29–40AA 108

CHAPTER 9

1 *Saul, going towards Damascus, 4 is stricken down to the earth, 10 is called to the apostleship, 18 and is baptized by Ananias. 20 He preacheth Christ boldly. 23 The Jews lay wait to kill him: 29 so do the Grecians, but he escapeth both. 31 The church having rest, Peter healeth Aeneas of the palsy, 36 and restoreth Tabitha to life.*

1. Saul. See Additional Note 2 on ch. 7.

Yet. Gr. *eti*, “still,” connecting the narrative of ch. 9 with ch. 8:3. While the church has been expanding outside Jerusalem (ch. 8:4–40) Saul has continued to persecute it inside and around the capital.

Breathing out. Gr. *empneō*, “to breathe in,” or “on.” The arrest and slaughter of Christians were, figuratively speaking, the very air Saul breathed. Semitic peoples often associated the emotion of anger with breath.

Threatenings and slaughter. Rather, “threatening and murder.” The persecutor’s zeal has intensified; he is willing to go to extreme limits to stamp out the hated teaching. He himself acknowledges this in chs. 22:4; 26:9–11. He does not try to minimize the terrible part he played in ravaging the church. The early Church Fathers saw a half-prophetic parallelism between the language of Jacob, “Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil” (Gen. 49:27), and

the conduct of one who gloried in being of the tribe of Benjamin (Phil. 3:5), and who bore the name of the tribe's great hero-king.

Against the disciples. The names of the victims of this continued persecution are not given, but Paul's later confession, "When they were put to death, I gave my voice [vote] against them" (ch. 26:10), indicates that Stephen was not the only one killed at this time. The zeal Saul showed at the time of Stephen's death led to his election to the Sanhedrin (AA 102), and he was soon armed with authority from the chief priests to hunt down Christians in Jerusalem. If it was known in Jerusalem that Samaritans had been admitted to the church (see on ch. 8:1), the hatred of the Jews doubtless was intensified.

High priest. Annas or Caiaphas (see on ch. 4:6), both of whom were Sadducees, whereas Saul gloried in being a strict Pharisee (ch. 26:5). But the strangeness of this alliance (see Vol. V, pp. 51, 52) did not deter the stern persecutor. The coalition of Sadducees and Pharisees that had earlier been formed against Jesus Christ (Matt. 26:3) was renewed against His followers.

2. Desired. Preferably, "requested," or "asked," on his own behalf, possibly to justify his elevation to the Sanhedrin.

Early Life of Paul

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⁵Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Ac 8:6). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.



From Birth at Tarsus to Call to Antioch

Letters. These were the papers that constituted Saul's "authority and commission" (ch. 26:12). It appears that Rome cooperated with the Jewish authorities by giving the high priest powers of extradition over fugitive Jews. This authority probably dates from about 56 B.C. (Josephus *Antiquities* xiv. 8. 5 [146–148]; cf. 1 Maccabees 15:15–24).

Damascus. The city is accounted one of the oldest in the world. Its site was traditionally the scene of the murder of Abel. Josephus (*Antiquities* i. 6. 4 [145]) attributes the founding of the town to Uz, the grandson of Shem (Vol. I, p. 270). It figures in the history of Abraham as the birthplace of his steward (Gen. 15:2). David placed garrisons there (2 Sam. 8:6), but under Rezon the city became a center of opposition to Solomon (1 Kings 11:23–25). Its rivers, Abana and Pharpar, were, in the eyes of the leprous Syrian general, Naaman, better than any rivers of Israel (2 Kings 5:12). It was the center of the Syrian kingdom in its alliances and wars with Israel and Judea (2 Kings 14:28; 16:9, 10; Amos 1:3, 5). It carried on trade in wares with Tyre, and in wine and white wool, as noted by Ezekiel (ch. 27:16, 18). In 333 B.C. the Macedonian general Parmenion took the city for Alexander the Great. It was taken again by the Roman Pompey in 64 B.C. At the time of Saul's conversion it was under the jurisdiction of Vitellius, then Roman governor of Syria. When Tiberius died in 37 A.D., Vitellius hastened to Rome, and Aretas IV, king of the Nabataeans, seized control of Damascus and governed it by a deputy. Thus matters stood at the time when Saul escaped from the city (2 Cor. 11:32).

Damascus formed an oasis in the Syrian desert. The river Abana, fed by the snows of the Anti-Lebanon Mts., watered the terrain and made it very productive. The city was

well described as “a predestined capital.” Its population was predominantly Aramaic, but the city possessed a large Jewish colony. The narrative (Acts 9:2, 14) implies that there were many “disciples of the Lord” (v. 1) among them. Of these, many may have been refugees from the persecution in and around Jerusalem, and the local synagogues were doubtless called upon to enforce the decree of the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. Luke does not explain why Saul selected this place for his further vindictive work against the church. Reasons, however, can be offered: (1) As noted, Christians had taken refuge there, at some considerable distance from Judea. (2) There were Christian converts who were citizens of the place. (3) Damascus may have become an outlying center of the expanding church. (4) Saul may have been well acquainted with the Jewish authorities, and could count on their cooperation against the Christians.

Synagogues. The city was cosmopolitan, and Jews from many nations probably lived there. As in Jerusalem (cf. on ch. 6:9), national groups would establish their own synagogues. It is estimated that there may have been 30 or 40 synagogues in the city of Damascus at this time. Doubtless, Christians were still devoutly attending the synagogues, and it was against them that Saul planned to proceed.

Of this way. That is, “any who were belonging to the way.” The word “way” appears as an early synonym for Christianity (cf. chs. 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). Compare Luke’s use of “the name” (ch. 5:41, RSV), “the word” (chs. 4:4; 8:4; 14:25), “the way of salvation” (ch. 16:17), and “the way of the Lord” (ch. 18:25). The term may have originated in Christ’s declaration that He is the “way” (John 14:6), or in His reference to the narrow “way” (Matt. 7:14).

Men or women. The inclusion of women among his prospective victims emphasizes the fury with which Saul moved against the Christians (cf. ch. 22:4).

Bound unto Jerusalem. Saul’s mission implies that the offense of the Christians was beyond the jurisdiction of local tribunals (see on Matt. 10:17), and had to be referred to the Sanhedrin (Vol. V, p. 67) in Jerusalem. So great was the priestly power (see above under “letters”) that Jewish authorities were allowed to arrest those whom they desired, even on foreign soil.

3. Journeyed. There is now no way to know by which road Saul and his companions went, but they had the choice of at least two roads. One of these was the main caravan route from Egypt to Damascus, which ran parallel with the Palestinian coast line until it struck east to cross the Jordan River above the Lake of Galilee. The other way led through Samaria and crossed the Jordan south of the Lake of Galilee, and after passing through Gadara, went northeastward to Damascus. The 150 mi. might be covered in one week.

Near Damascus. The site of Saul’s vision is unknown. Conflicting and unfounded traditions point out four different places. It must have been relatively close to the city, however, for his companions “led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus” (v. 8; cf. AA 117).

The book of Acts records three accounts of what now took place near Damascus. Concerning minor variations in parallel Bible accounts, see Additional Note on Matt. 3. The table below compares the chief points in the three accounts.

Shined. Better, “flashed.” Chapters 22:6; 26:13 identify the time of day as noon. Bright as is the midday glare of the Eastern sun, Paul later says the light he saw from heaven was “above the brightness of the sun” (ch. 26:13). In the midst of this effulgence

he so clearly saw the glorified Christ that he includes himself among those who were privileged to behold the Lord after His resurrection (Acts 9:17; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8; AA 115). As to the manner of the

THE THREE ACCOUNTS OF PAUL'S CONVERSION

<i>Luke's Historical Account</i>	<i>Paul's Speech Before the People</i>	<i>Paul's Speech Before Agrippa</i>
<i>Acts 9:1-9</i>	<i>Acts 22:4-11</i>	<i>Acts 26:9-18</i>
v. 1. Saul persecuted the disciples.	v. 4. Persecuted this way.	vs. 9-11. Persecuted the saints.
v. 2. Desired letters from the high priest to the synagogues in Damascus. To bring Christians, both men and women, to Jerusalem.	v. 5. Received letters from the high priest and elders. To bring Christians to Jerusalem to be punished	v. 12. Received commission from the chief priests.
v. 3. Near Damascus a light from heaven suddenly shone about him.	v. 6. Near Damascus, about noon, a great light from heaven suddenly shone about him.	v. 13. At midday he saw a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun, which shone about the group.
v. 4. He fell to the earth. He heard a voice: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"	v. 7. He fell to the ground. He heard a voice: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"	v. 14. All fell to the ground. He heard a voice, in the Hebrew tongue: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"
v. 5. He said, "Who art thou, Lord?" The Lord said, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."	v. 8. He answered, "Who art thou, Lord?" The Lord said, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest."	v. 15. He said, "Who art thou, Lord?" The Lord said, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."
v. 6. He said,	v. 10. Saul said, "What shall	-----

“Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”	I do Lord?”	
The Lord said, “Arise, and go into the city”—for instructions.	The Lord said, “Arise, and go into Damascus”—for instructions.	-----
v. 7. His companions stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.	v. 9. His companions saw the light, but heard not the voice.	-----
v. 8. He arose, but saw no man. Companions led him by the hand into Damascus.	v. 11. He could not see for the glory of that light. Was led by the hand of companions into Damascus.	vs. 16-18. The Lord bade him rise. -----

appearance, it is natural to think of it as being such as had met the gaze of Stephen (see on Acts 7:55, 56). The martyr’s words, “I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God,” had then seemed like blasphemy to the fiery zeal of Saul, the Pharisee. Now Saul himself sees the Son of man in the glory of the Father. Saul’s companions heard a voice but did not distinguish the words (see [ch. 22:9](#); cf. on [ch. 9:7](#)). They saw the light ([ch. 22:9](#)), but did not perceive the form of Him that spoke (cf. on [John 12:29](#)). These details prove the reality of the experience.

4. Fell. The light from heaven so overwhelmed the travelers that all fell to the ground ([ch. 26:14](#)), although Luke here mentions only Saul. There is no evidence that any of them were on horseback.

Heard a voice. Comparison with [chs. 9:7](#) and [22:9](#) suggests that Saul heard and understood the voice that spoke to him, whereas his companions heard the sound without understanding what was said (see on [ch. 9:7](#)).

Saul. Up to this point the narrative has given Saul’s name in its Greek form, *Saulos*. Here, and in [chs. 9:17](#); [22:7](#), [13](#); [26:14](#), however, the Hebrew form of the name, *Saoul*, is used. This probably reflects the actual words spoken: (1) by Jesus, who, according to [ch. 26:14](#), spoke in the Hebrew (Aramaic) tongue (see Vol. I, p. 30); (2) by Ananias, who was probably a Jew and therefore spoke Hebrew (Aramaic). For the reiteration of a person’s name in divine communications, cf. [Gen. 22:11](#); [1 Sam. 3:10](#); [Matt. 23:37](#); [Luke 10:41](#); [22:31](#).

Why persecutest thou me? It is a searching question that Christ asked of the persecutor; it challenged the basis of his conduct, and showed that he had not known the One whom he was so relentlessly persecuting. Note that Christ so identifies Himself with

His disciples that their sufferings become His (AA 117). “In all their affliction he was afflicted” (Isa. 63:9), and “he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye” (Zech. 2:8). What was done to the disciples the Lord counted as done to Himself (Matt. 10:40).

5. *Who art thou, Lord?* Saul would scarcely yet be using the word “Lord” in all the fullness NT meaning. It was the natural utterance of awe and respect (see on John 1:38). But Saul was dimly sensible of the divine presence, and showed this by his use of “Lord.”

Jesus. There is some textual evidence (cf. p. 10) for the reading “Jesus of Nazareth,” or “Jesus the Nazarene.” It is probable, however, that this was inserted from ch. 22:8, where it occurs in Paul’s own narrative. Jesus of Nazareth is the name that was scornfully used by Stephen’s accusers (ch. 6:14), the very name that Saul had been compelling men and women to blaspheme (ch. 26:11; cf. v. 9). By using this name for Himself, the heavenly Being who appears to Saul identifies Himself unequivocally as Christ. The persecutor capitulates. The realization that Jesus is the Christ marks the point of Saul’s conversion, and the end of his persecuting rage. He is made to see what his master, Gamaliel, had before suggested (ch. 5:39), that to persecute Jesus was to “fight against God.” See on chs. 22:8; 26:15.

Whom thou persecutest. The pronoun “thou” is expressed emphatically in the Greek, as is also the preceding pronoun, “I.” This sets Christ, in love and might and glory, in marked contrast with Saul, persecuting, yet now prostrate and fearful.

It is hard. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of the words, “it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.” There is, however, sound textual basis for these words in ch. 26:14. Though the words are found in many Latin texts of ch. 9:5, they appear in no Greek manuscripts. Their presence in the printed Greek Bible from which the KJV was translated was translated in due to the fact that Erasmus (see Vol. V, pp. 141, 142), in preparing his printed edition of the Greek NT, translated them into Greek from the Latin and inserted them in his text. For comment on these words see on ch. 26:14.

6. *And he trembling.* Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of the words, “and he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him.” However, Saul’s question, “What shall I do, Lord?” appears with unqualified textual support in ch. 22:10. Like the latter part of v. 5 (see above under “It is hard”), the present passage is found in no Greek manuscript, and apparently came into the KJV through an insertion made by Erasmus from the Latin Vulgate.

Arise. Saul had continued prostrate where he had fallen.

Go into the city. This suggests that Saul and those accompanying him were near Damascus (cf. v. 3).

It shall be told thee. In ch. 26:16–18 Paul gives a fuller report of Christ’s instructions to him. Luke’s account is here more brief. Further instruction is given, through Ananias, in vs. 15–17.

7. *The men.* Saul had been furnished not only with authority for his persecuting work but also with a number of assistants. Apparently it was the plan to root out Christianity completely from the city of Damascus.

Stood. They were stricken down (ch. 26:14). Probably they had risen before Saul.

Speechless. Although the experience was less intense for them than for their leader, it had left them mute.

Hearing a voice. Gr. *akouontes* ... *tēs phōnēs*. On first sight this statement seems to contradict what is said in ch. 22:9, where Paul declares that his companions “heard not

the voice” (*tēn ... phōnēn ouk ēkousan*). However, a careful study of the two accounts helps to explain this seeming discrepancy. The verb *akouō*, “to hear,” may refer either to the ability of the ears to hear sound (see Matt. 11:15; 13:15) or to the ability of the mind to understand what is heard (see Mark 4:33; 1 Cor. 14:2). In the present passage, the word translated “voice” (*phōnēs*) is in the genitive case. In the Greek, this indicates that Saul’s companions heard only the sound of the voice but could not understand what was said. In ch. 22:9 the word translated “voice” (*phōnēn*) is in the accusative, and this, with the negative “not,” signifies that they did not hear the voice distinctly enough to understand what was said (cf. ch. 9:4, where in speaking of Saul, who understood, Luke uses the accusative in saying that he “heard a voice” [*ēkousen phōnēn*]). This explanation may be further supported by the fact that ch. 22:9 also declares that the men “saw indeed the light,” while the present verse says that they “stood speechless ... seeing no man.” They saw the dazzling light, but their sight was not distinct enough to discern the One revealed to Saul in the light. Similarly, it is reasonable to understand that they heard the sound of the voice, but not distinctly enough to comprehend the words that were spoken.

Seeing no man. They saw the heavenly light (ch. 22:9) but did not perceive the divine form that Saul saw enshrouded in that light.

8. Eyes were opened. But they were sightless.

Saw no man. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading “saw nothing.” He had been blinded by the dazzling glory of the heavenly light (cf. ch. 22:11). His blindness proved that what he had seen was no mere hallucination. For Saul himself, the blindness may well have had a spiritual significance. He had looked on himself as a “guide of the blind,” boasting that he saw clearly (cf. Rom. 2:19). Now for a time, till inward and outward light should shine upon him, he had to accept his blindness. The new-born soul had to be as—

“An infant crying for the light,
And with no language but a cry.”

Some commentators find evidence of the permanent effect of this experience on his power of sight in the fact that he generally dictated his letters (see 2 Thess. 3:17), that he used large characters as he wrote (see on Gal. 6:11), and that he did not recognize the high priest who commanded him to be struck (see Acts 23:2–5). The most reasonable of the many theories concerning his “thorn in the flesh” is that it was an affliction of the eyes, perhaps involving attacks of agonizing pain (see on 2 Cor. 12:7). On this assumption, the eager wish of the Galatians to pluck out their eyes, if possible, and give them to him, takes on special significance (see on Gal. 4:15).

They led him. His companions’ eyesight was relatively unaffected. Perhaps they had not gazed so directly at the blazing glory, or the full radiance had not shone upon them. In any case they were able to guide Saul, leading by the hand him who had started forth as their leader. Saul’s pride was now changed to humiliation. His mission was already known at Damascus, and his arrival had been eagerly anticipated by the priestly faction and dreaded by the Christians. Now he had come, but the mission had collapsed. The letters to the synagogues were never delivered.

9. Three days. The conflict in Saul’s conscientious soul must have been terrible, and all of the three days were needed before peace was attained. The Spirit of God, moreover,

used these three sightless days for illuminating the mind of the stricken man. In the quiet darkness Saul was able to recall the Messianic prophecies, to apply them to Jesus of Nazareth, and to judge his own past in the light of his new convictions. How great must have been his anguish, how fervent his prayers for pardon, how sweet the gift of Christ's own forgiveness! See AA 118–120.

Eat nor drink. The abstinence was not entirely a penitential act. His mental anguish temporarily overpowered the normal craving for food. The three days of blindness were a period of soul searching and repentance.

10. Ananias. For the meaning of the name see on ch. 5:1. Ananias was a common name among the Jews. There is no other mention of this particular disciple in Scripture, except in ch. 22:12, where Paul describes him as “a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt” in Damascus. It is possible that these qualities made him the leader of the Christian community and prepared him to be the Lord's messenger to Saul. How he became a Christian is not known. He may have followed the Saviour during the earthly life of Christ, or have been among the Jewish converts on the day of Pentecost or at some subsequent time. He then may have been forced to flee from Jerusalem by the persecution that followed the death of Stephen. These, however, are only conjectures. But it is clear from the words that Ananias employed in expressing his reluctance to visit Saul (ch. 9:13, 14) that he still had trustworthy communication with Jerusalem, for he knew of the havoc the persecutor had caused, and of the purpose of his mission to Damascus.

In a vision. As Ananias was prepared by a vision to visit Saul, so Saul was prepared for a visit from Ananias (v. 12). On this preparation through vision, and its similarity to the preparation of Peter and Cornelius (ch. 10:1–8), Conybeare and Howson remark: “The simultaneous preparation of the hearts of Ananias and Saul, and the simultaneous preparation of those of Peter and Cornelius—the questioning and hesitation of Peter, and the questioning and hesitation of Ananias,—the one doubting whether he might make friendship with the Gentiles, the other doubting whether he might approach the enemy of the Church,—the unhesitating obedience of each, when the divine will was made clearly known,—the state of mind in which both the Pharisee and the centurion were found, each waiting to see what the Lord would say unto them—this close analogy will not be forgotten by those who reverently read the two consecutive chapters [9 and 10], in which the baptism of Saul and the baptism of Cornelius are narrated in the Acts of the Apostles” (*The Life and Epistles of the Apostle Paul*, p. 94).

Behold, I am here, Lord. These words express Ananias' readiness to execute the Lord's instructions. Compare the examples of Samuel (1 Sam. 3:1–10) and Isaiah (Isa. 6:8).

11. Street. Gr. *rhumē*, a narrow passage between rows of houses. The name was eventually applied to broader thoroughfares. Even so, the “street” would be narrow by Western standards.

Straight. A long straight street, now known by the name *Sultaniyeh*, still runs through the old city of Damascus from east to west, and is possibly the same along which Ananias walked to meet Saul in the house of Judas. The present street level is some 30 steps above that of Saul's time, so it is not possible to identify the house where Saul stayed.

Judas. The record gives no information concerning this Judas, or why Saul had been led to his house. This whole account shows how detailed are both the Lord's knowledge and His planning.

Saul, of Tarsus. This passage is noteworthy as the first mention in Scripture of the apostle's birthplace (cf. Additional Note 2 on ch. 7). Its physical position guaranteed the importance of Tarsus. Although it stood 10 mi. inland, a safe harbor lay between the city and the sea, and small craft could reach the town. Beyond the city's limits there towered the Taurus Mts., through which the narrow gorge known as the Cilician Gates gave access to the interior of Asia Minor. But the ancient city was noted for more than its strategic site. It was famous as a university town, and was sometimes known as the Athens of Asia Minor. Its scholars were respected for their skill in the sciences, and its philosophers included many noted Stoics, who may have had some influence on Saul's own outlook. In the realm of trades, it is significant that tent-making, Saul's trade (ch. 18:3), held a prominent position.

Prayeth. Rather, "is praying," denoting continuity in prayer (cf. 1 Thess. 5:17). Here is indeed a contrast between the threatening and slaughter the persecutor breathed out as he drew near to Damascus, and the prayerfulness of humble repentance in which he now was living. Saul's prayers would include a petition for pardon for the past, light and wisdom for the future, strength for the work to which he was now called, and intercession for those whom he had before been persecuting.

12. In a vision. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 10) between retaining and omitting these words, yet Saul was probably informed thus. It is not strange that the Lord who revealed Himself on the Damascus road should now ensure the success of His plans by giving almost simultaneous visions to those whom He is planning to bring together.

A man. Although Jesus is speaking to Ananias, He is reporting Saul's viewpoint. It seems clear from this description of Ananias that he was unknown to Saul at this time.

Coming in. Note the indirect way in which the Lord here gives Ananias his instructions: He recounts the vision and expects Ananias to make it an actuality by finding Saul and restoring his sight.

13. Heard by many. Rather, "heard from many." Ananias recoils from the implied command. His obedient but human spirit balks at the thought of ministering to one with Saul's dreadful reputation. He respectfully remonstrates with the Lord. The words show that Ananias had been living in Damascus, and had not just arrived from Jerusalem (cf. on v. 10). They also indicate how widespread among the Christians was the knowledge of the fury of Saul's attacks upon the church. The reports were sadly confirmed by the refugees who had come to the city from Jerusalem.

How much evil. See on chs. 8:1, 3; 9:1.

Saints. For the Hebrew background of the term see on Ps. 16:3. For its significance among Christians see on Rom. 1:7. It is interesting that this early use of the word in the NT (cf. Matt. 27:52) should be by Ananias, sent to be Saul's instructor, and that it should afterward have been employed so frequently by the apostle himself (Rom. 1:7; 15:25; 16:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; etc.).

14. Authority. This was formal authority expressed in writing, which Saul had sought personally (see vs. 1, 2).

All that call. To call on Christ is to believe in Him. See on ch. 2:21; cf. Acts 9:21; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Tim. 2:22.

15. Go. The words “thy way” appear in no Greek text. The perplexity of Ananias arose from his ignorance of the true state of affairs. But the Lord knew every circumstance in this situation, and directed His servant accordingly.

Vessel. Gr. *skeuos*, “vessel,” “implement,” is used with a wide range of meaning in the NT (cf. Matt. 13:48; Luke 8:16; John 19:29; Acts 10:11; Rom. 9:21; 2 Cor. 4:7; 1 Thess. 4:4). It was employed by classical writers concerning useful and trustworthy slaves. It is in this sense that the Lord applies *skeuos* to Saul as the instrument with which He would work out His gracious will for the Gentiles. The word for “chosen” (*eklogē*), which occurs here for the first time in the NT, is translated “election” in all other cases.

Bear my name. This explains the Lord’s purpose in the election of Saul; he was to carry Christ’s name, or exhibit His character (see on ch. 3:16).

Gentiles. The Gentiles are placed first on the list, because Saul’s field of labor was to be especially among them (see on Rom. 1:13, 14; 11:13). This must have been a startling revelation to Ananias, who, as a devout Jew, had not yet realized that the whole world was to hear of Christ. But he now sees, in the man of whom he had only heard as the great persecutor, one who has been chosen and trained, and made more fit than all others for the work of spreading the gospel throughout the world.

Kings. The words find sufficient, but perhaps not exclusive, fulfillment in Paul’s speech before Agrippa (ch. 26:1, 2), and possibly before Nero (see on 2 Tim. 4:16).

Children of Israel. Although an apostle to the Gentiles, Paul preached to the Jews at every opportunity (see chs. 13:5; 14:1; 17:1, 10; 18:4, 19; 19:8).

16. I will shew. This suggests special instruction given by Christ to Saul, possibly through a vision (cf. ch. 20:23). The prospect of suffering tends to deter some persons from embarking on an enterprise. To Saul of Tarsus, however, such a prospect would be a challenge. It would enable him, if not to atone for the past, at least to bring forth fruits worthy of his repentance. The fulfillment of the forecast of suffering is recorded in 2 Cor. 11:23–28, and, in less detail, in 2 Cor. 6:4, 5. See also on Matt. 5:10–12; Acts 14:22; Rom. 8:17; 2 Tim. 2:12.

17. Ananias went. He accepts the Lord’s assurances, and renders instant obedience.

Putting his hands. This act had a twofold purpose: (1) to heal (see Mark 16:18), and (2) to bestow the Holy Spirit (cf. on Acts 6:6). The act served to confirm Saul’s vision (ch. 9:12) and to identify his Heaven-sent visitor.

Brother Saul. The erstwhile persecutor had cut himself off from the Jewish authorities and had seemingly small prospects of being accepted by the Christians. Ananias’ use of the title “Brother” would therefore reassure him and set his fears at rest. Ananias uses the same Hebrew (Aramaic) form of the name (*Saoul*) as Jesus had already employed in the vision on the way to Damascus (see on v. 4).

The Lord, even Jesus. This composite title combines the title Saul already had used for his heavenly interlocutor (v. 5) and Christ’s own identification of Himself as “Jesus” (v. 5). This also would reassure the stricken man.

That appeared. The fact that Ananias, hitherto unknown to Saul, already knew of the revelation on the Damascus road, must have confirmed to Saul the reality of what he had seen and heard.

Hath sent me. This links Paul's vision along the way and the visit of Ananias. Saul could now expect the promised instruction (v. 6), of which a fuller report is given in ch. 22:14–16.

Receive thy sight. Literally, “look up,” meaning, regain thy sight. There is here a close relationship between the laying on of hands, the recovery of sight, and being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Be filled. Compare on Acts 2:4; 4:31; Eph. 5:18.

18. Scales. Gr. *lepides*, used by Hippocrates as a technical term for a disease of the eye. Inasmuch as Saul's blindness was the result of a supernatural manifestation, it is fruitless to attempt to identify his affliction precisely in modern medical terminology. However, it is understandable that Luke would use a medical term to describe Saul's condition.

He received sight. Literally, “he looked up,” meaning, he recovered his sight.

Forthwith. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of this word. That the cure was instantaneous, however, is clear from the word “immediately.”

Baptized. The fuller account in ch. 22:16 shows that Ananias exhorted Saul to engage in the rite. It is clear that baptism was regarded as a condition for admission into the church (see on Matt. 3:6; Acts 22:16). No visions and revelations of the Lord, no intensity of personal conviction, exempted Saul from it. The baptism would probably be conducted in either the Abana or the Pharpar river, mentioned in the narrative of Naaman (2 Kings 5:8–14). The rite was administered by Ananias, as Christ's representative (AA 122).

19. Received meat. The first sentence of this verse seems to fit better at the close of v. 18. For the use of “meat,” meaning “food,” see on Matt. 3:4. Saul's three-day fast must have left him weak.

Strengthened. As Calvin says, “He refreshed not his body with meat until his soul had received strength.” Then, both body and soul were made strong for the work that lay before them.

Was Saul. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading “he was,” referring, of course, to Saul.

Certain days. Gr. *hēmerai tines* is also used by Luke in Acts 10:48; 15:36; 16:12; 24:24; 25:13, and in every case indicates a brief period of time. It describes the time Peter stayed with Cornelius, the short time spent by Paul and Barnabas at Antioch, Paul's short stay at Philippi, the brief time Paul was detained at Caesarea before he was heard by Felix, and a like period between the arrival of Festus and the visit Agrippa made to greet him as the new governor. Here it stands in contrast with the expression “many days” in ch. 9:23, which seems to indicate in the writer's mind a somewhat longer period. It is probable, from the way in which “disciples” are here mentioned, that there were many Christians in Damascus, even at this early period. Saul was now received by them, not as an enemy, but as a brother. The work of faithful Ananias is now done, and he appears in no other scenes in the book of Acts.

20. Straightway. Christ healed Saul “immediately” (v. 18); Saul began his witness “straightway.” The two adverbs are from the same Greek word.

Preached Christ. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading “Jesus” in preference to “Christ,” which was not yet generally used. The preaching that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, their long-expected Messiah, was ever the main content of the apostle's

message to the Jews. Saul's preaching, like that of Peter (see on ch. 2:16), would certainly have a strong prophetic background (AA 123, 125).

In the synagogues. Saul went, even as Christ had (see on Luke. 4:16), into the synagogues as the places most likely to furnish audiences for his gospel proclamation. As a Sabbathkeeper, he would be in the synagogues on the Sabbath. As an apostle, he would proclaim there the gospel. Instead of delivering to the presidents of the synagogues the letters he had received from the leaders in Jerusalem (Acts 9:2), he heralded to them the gospel from a far higher Authority than the chief priests. For Paul's practice of preaching to the "children of Israel" in the synagogues see on v. 15.

The Son of God. For the significance of the title see on Luke 1:35. This is the only instance where the title is used of Jesus in Acts. What Paul proclaimed was (1) that Christ was verily the Son of God no less than the son of David, (2) that Jesus of Nazareth had been shown to be the Christ. Not only was this a perplexity to the Jews (cf. on Matt. 22:41–46), but it seemed to them a blasphemous claim. It required much grace for the Jews to accept the message of the unique Sonship of Jesus.

21. Amazed. See on ch. 2:7. This amazement is understandable in the light of Saul's reputation as a persecutor of Christians. The synagogue authorities may have been instructed to give Saul their cooperation in the work he was to do. It is clear from what follows that his fame was well known to the Jews of Damascus.

Destroyed them. Or, "made havoc of them." Paul makes use of the same verb to describe his own conduct (Gal. 1:13, 23). From the strong expression used here it is evident that the slaughter of Christians in Jerusalem was not limited to the stoning of Stephen.

Called on this name. See on chs. 2:21; 3:16; 4:12.

Came hither. Rather, "had come hither," implying that Saul's purpose in coming to Damascus had been abandoned.

22. Saul increased. He increased in experience and effectiveness. The Holy Ghost was giving him more and more power as time went by.

Strength. In later years this word played a prominent part in Paul's thinking. "I can do all things through Christ which *strengtheneth* me" (Phil. 4:13). He realized that it was Christ whose "*strength*" was "made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9); it was Christ who "*enabled*" him, or *made him strong* for the ministry (1 Tim. 1:12); and it was Christ who "*strengthened*" him in the closing trials of his life (2 Tim. 4:17).

Confounded. Gr. *sugchunō*, "to pour together," "to bewilder," "to confound." Saul's training under Gamaliel stood him in good stead. He could now use his thorough knowledge of Jewish learning for the support of his new-found convictions. His methods commended his faith to those Jews who were sincerely looking for the Hope of Israel; but these, unfortunately, would not be a large proportion of his listeners. The rest of the Jews were "confounded." They heard their Scriptures applied to the life of Jesus by a trained mind. They continued their rejection of the Saviour, but had not yet moved far enough to attack Saul.

Proving. Gr. *sumbibazō*, "to join together," "to cause a person to unite with one in a conclusion"; hence, "to demonstrate," "to prove." With consummate skill Saul set forth the prophecies of the Messiah as fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth.

This is very Christ. Or, "this is the Anointed One [the Messiah]."

23. Many days. Gr. *hēmerai hikanai*, an expression that refers in v. 43 to the time Peter spent in Joppa; in ch. 18:18 (translated, “a good while”) to the time Paul tarried in Corinth after his hearing before Gallio; and in ch. 27:7 (translated, “many days”) to the extended period of Paul’s slow sailing on his voyage to Rome. It appears, therefore, that the expression covers a fairly long but indefinite period of time. In contrast, “certain days” denotes a shorter period (see on ch. 9:19).

This distinction is of great value in any attempt to reconstruct this period in the apostle’s career. The “certain days” of v. 19, and the “many days” of this present verse, appear to distinguish two periods of residence in Damascus. The first was brief, and ended with Saul’s confounding the Jews (v. 22). The second was longer, and came to an end with his flight from Damascus (vs. 23–25). The visit to Arabia (Gal. 1:15–18) can best be placed between these two periods (AA 125–128). Luke makes no mention of such a visit, but Paul states that he went to Arabia soon after his conversion, prior to his return to Damascus, and before he went back to Jerusalem (Gal. 1:15–18). After the crisis on the Damascus road, rest and seclusion were desirable, and quiet communion with God was needed to prepare him for the years of strenuous labor that lay ahead. If the “three years” of Gal. 1:18 is reckoned from Saul’s conversion, then both visits to Damascus would be included in that period, and the stay in Arabia and the residence of “many days” in the city need not be unduly extended.

The precise location of the “Arabia” to which Saul went is unknown. However, the fact that Damascus at that time was occupied by the troops of Aretas IV, king of Arabia Petraea, or Nabataea (see Palestine During the Ministry of Jesus), makes it probable that Saul went into that region. This was so large an area, stretching from the borders of Egypt to the environs of Damascus, that it gives no specific idea of where Saul went. Neither are there any certain data for fixing the time of his visit. For relevant chronological facts see p. 100.

The period of Saul’s absence probably witnessed a large growth in the Christian society at Damascus, with a type of discipline and worship similar to that at Jerusalem. So far as is known, no Gentile converts had yet been admitted to the church, and the preaching of the gospel was still restricted to the Jews. With intense affection for his brethren according to the flesh (Rom. 10:1), Saul entered vigorously upon the work of evangelization among them, until their bitter antagonism drove him from Damascus. Saul himself was now tasting the hatred that had been poured out against Stephen.

Took counsel. The authorities were provoked to plot against Christ because of the success of His ministry (see on Matt. 15:21; 19:3; John 5:16). Even so did Saul’s work lead the Jews to murderous opposition. Their evaluation of the new apostle’s witness may be estimated by the drastic steps they took in their attempt to destroy Saul.

24. Laying await. Gr. *epiboulē*, “a plan against one,” hence, “a plot.” The same word is used in chs. 20:3, 19; 23:30, but is peculiar to Acts. It implies a carefully planned opposition, with the death of Saul as its goal. Saul came to hear of the plot, perhaps through one of his own disciples (see on ch. 9:25). The fact that he was warned shows that he had made friends in the city, and that these were willing to aid him in the emergency that now developed.

Watched. Rather, “were watching,” secretly, by day and by night. For details of this incident in the apostle’s life see 2 Cor. 11:32, 33. An active part in the plot against Saul was taken by the ethnarch (governor) of the city. This ethnarch represented the Nabataean

Aretas, king of Arabia Petraea, who had Petra in ancient Edom as his capital, and who was the father of the woman whom Herod Antipas divorced in order to marry Herodias (see Vol. V, pp. 40, 64). For a suggestion as to how Aretas had come into possession of Damascus see on Acts 9:2. Damascene coins have been found bearing the names of Augustus and Tiberius, but none has been found for the reigns of Tiberius' successors, Caligula and Claudius. Tiberius had been a friend and supporter of Herod Antipas against Aretas, but it is possible that Caligula reversed this policy and created a new ethnarchy, in favor of Aretas, to whose predecessors Damascus had belonged (Josephus *Antiquities* xiii. 15. 2 [392]). The ethnarch apparently wished to court favor with the large Jewish population, and looking upon Saul as a disturber of the public peace, took measures for his arrest and condemnation. From Luke's account it appears that the Jews assumed a large part of the responsibility for Saul's capture. Paul's own story (2 Cor. 11:32) does not conflict with this, but shows that they had the ethnarch's support. Sentinels were evidently stationed at each gate of the city, through which a fugitive might attempt to pass, in order to prevent Saul's escape.

25. The disciples. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading "his disciples." This well-supported reading is in agreement with the implications of the phrase "many days" in v. 23. On his second visit to Damascus Saul remained long enough to gather around him a group of followers who accepted him as their teacher, and were now willing to risk their lives for his safety.

Basket. Gr. *spuris*, "basket," probably a hand basket, as in Matt. 15:37. But in 2 Cor. 11:33 Paul describes it by another word, *sarganē*, "a wicker or ropework hamper," which would be large enough to hold a man. This experience is mentioned by Paul in connection with his "infirmities" (in which he may have included his traditional smallness of stature) of which he was content to boast (2 Cor. 11:30). The escape was made through an opening or "window" in the town wall (2 Cor. 11:33; cf. the escape of the spies from Rahab's house, Joshua 2:15, and of David from his own house, 1 Sam. 19:12). Saul seems to have been conscious of the incongruity of the situation: he was being saved, in a rather ignominious manner, by the very people whom he had come to extirpate!

26. Jerusalem. This flight from Damascus to Jerusalem comes after the three-year period of residence in Arabia (see Gal. 1:17, 18). Thus it would be Saul's first visit to the capital since the day he set out for Damascus, and he was probably still known to the Christians in Jerusalem only as their determined enemy.

Assayed to join. That is, "attempted [or "tried"] to join." The verb translated "join" (*kollaō*) is used of close and intimate fellowship, such as that of husband and wife; of brothers; and of friends (cf. on Matt. 19:5; Luke 15:15). Saul was seeking full brotherhood with the disciples. Had Saul gone as a Jew to Alexandria or some other city where Jews were numerous, his first thought would have been to search out his co-religionists. He did so in Jerusalem: he sought to join the Christian community. But the church was suspicious of him. Its members knew Saul only from his terrible persecutions. Might he not still be bent on their destruction? They would be cautious until they were sure of his sincerity. Their ignorance concerning the genuine nature of his conversion can be explained on at least two grounds: (1) The "three year" absence (see on Acts 9:23) gave little basis for reliable news about his attitude toward Christianity; (2) political

changes in the city of Damascus may have (see on v. 24) interrupted communications between the Christians there and those in Jerusalem.

Afraid of him. This clause should be introduced by “and” instead of “but.” This makes less sharp the contrast between Saul’s desire to join the brethren and their consequent behavior. The phrase may then read, “and all [the disciples] were fearing him.” They had justifiably feared him in the past, and knowing no reason to change, continued to fear him. They may have wondered whether he was merely disguising his true nature in order to spy on them and provoke further trouble.

Believed not. This shows that someone informed the disciples about Saul’s conversion, but that they were not ready to accept news of such a miracle. They wanted trustworthy evidence of his change before accepting him into their community. Under the circumstances, their caution was natural and even commendable.

27. *Barnabas.* Why did Barnabas receive Saul, when the other disciples feared him? The answer may be found in his character, which appears to have been of a kindly, generous nature (see on ch. 4:36, 37). Many commentators suggest that Barnabas championed Saul because of previous acquaintance. If this is true, we can see Barnabas, on the strength of his trust in Saul’s sterling character, believing the miracle of his conversion, and gladly recommending him to the apostles. The kindly act also testifies to the influential position held by Barnabas in the church.

To the apostles. That is, he brought him to such of the apostles as happened to be then in Jerusalem. In the more specific account in Gal. 1:18, 19, Saul himself states that he went to Jerusalem “to see Peter,” and that the only other leading teacher whom he saw was “James the Lord’s brother.” Although he had received his commission directly from Jesus, he wished to hear about his Lord from those who were eyewitnesses of His earthly life and ministry. Since only Peter and James are mentioned, it is possible that the other apostles were absent from Jerusalem at the time. It is also possible that, after feeling the pulse of the church, he made no effort to force his presence upon them. He records that he “was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea” (Gal. 1:22). This expression, however, may simply mean that he was unknown to the provincial churches in Judea, although he was personally known to the members in Jerusalem. In view of his vigorous evangelistic activity in Jerusalem (Acts 9:28, 29), it is hardly possible that he remained unknown to the church in the capital city. On the other hand, his visit lasted only 15 days (Gal. 1:18), and was cut short by attempts on his life (Acts 9:29, 30).

Declared. Gr. *diēgeomai*, “to declare fully,” “to declare in detail.” This, as the Greek text more clearly states, was done by Barnabas on Saul’s behalf. This presupposes a full recital of his conversion experience by Saul to Barnabas, who then recounted the wonderful story.

Seen the Lord. In none of the other records of Saul’s encounter on the Damascus road (chs. 9:3–9; 22:6–11; 26:12–18) is it specifically stated that he *saw* the Lord Jesus. However, in chs. 9:17; 26:16 the Lord is said to have *appeared* unto Saul, and in ch. 22:14 Ananias speaks of his having seen “that Just One.” Now Barnabas says clearly that Saul “had seen the Lord in the way.” This agrees with Paul’s later claims—“Have I not seen Jesus Christ?” and “he [the Lord] was seen of me also” (1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8).

Spoken to him. It was important for the apostles to know that Christ had actually spoken to the one whom Barnabas was sponsoring. They had received their commissions directly from the Lord (see on Mark 3:14; Matt. 28:19, 20; etc.). They would be

impressed on learning that Saul had also been personally commissioned by the same Master.

Preached boldly. Gr. *parrēsiazomai*, “to speak plainly,” or “freely”; hence, “to grow confident,” “to have boldness” (cf. 9:29; 14:3; 18:26; etc.). Here was proof of the genuine nature of the conversion of Saul. He boldly championed the cause he had originally set out to destroy. Barnabas well knew that news of Saul’s bold ministry would make a deep impression on the minds of the apostles and lead them to receive him as one of their own.

Name of Jesus. See on ch. 3:6, 16.

28. Was with them. This implies intimacy of fellowship.

Coming in and going out. This does not mean that Saul was constantly leaving and re-entering the city, but that he was freely moving about *within* Jerusalem (see on ch. 1:21).

29. Spoke boldly. See on v. 27. The first clause of v. 29 should be taken with v. 28. It reads literally, “speaking boldly in the name of the Lord.” The second clause reads literally, “he was both speaking and disputing against the Grecians.”

Name. See on chs. 2:21; 3:6, 16.

Disputed. The Greek word thus translated is used by Luke to describe Stephen’s encounter with the Greeks (see on ch. 6:9). There is a notable difference, however. The “Grecians” had disputed with Stephen; now Saul disputes with them. He, as a Tarsian Jew, was well equipped for such discussion (see on ch. 9:11). They were aroused to a passionate frenzy. Twice within a few weeks the apostle’s life was endangered, first in Damascus (v. 24), now in Jerusalem.

Grecians. That is, Hellenistic Jews (see on ch. 6:1).

Went about. Gr. *epicheireō*, “to put the hand to,” “to try” (see Acts 19:13; cf. on Luke 1:1; Acts 9:23, 24).

To slay. Saul was willing to face the death that had been dealt to Stephen, but the Lord had other plans for His courageous servant. It is at this juncture that the vision of warning and instruction can best be placed (see on ch. 22:17–21; cf. AA 130).

30. Brethren knew. They now know Saul, and the plot that is being laid against him. Their knowledge spurs them to immediate action. They take him down to the seacoast, whence he can flee the country.

Caesarea. Not Caesarea Philippi (at the foot of Mt. Hermon), but the seaport that lay about 64 mi. northwest of Jerusalem. This was a place from which Tarsus could easily be reached either by sea or by the road that ran northward along the coast of Syria. At Caesarea he would probably find Philip. The two men, one the friend and the other the erstwhile opponent of Stephen, would thus come face to face as brethren. See on ch. 8:40.

Sent him forth. Gr. *exapostellō*, literally, “to send away out of.” This seems to imply that the disciples sent Saul away by ship to Tarsus. There is no irreconcilable conflict between this and Paul’s own statement: “Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia” (Gal. 1:21). Syria and Cilicia together formed one Roman province at that time, and by going to Tarsus, Saul entered that district. Alternative interpretations are that (1) his boat called at Syrian ports on its way to Tarsus in Cilicia, (2) Saul went first to Tarsus and then made missionary trips into nearby territories in Cilicia and Syria. This last suggestion may account for the presence of Christian churches in that area, which must

have been established independently of Paul's First Missionary Journey (see on Acts 15:36, 41).

Tarsus. This, Saul's home town (see on v. 11), may not have been the most comfortable refuge for the apostle. Christ's saying that "a prophet hath no honour in his own country" (John 4:44) was likely to be painfully true in Saul's case. Not only was he returning to his birthplace; he was returning to his birthplace; he was going back as a renegade Jew, an apostate from the faith of his fathers, a leader of the despised and persecuted sect of the Christians. His reception may be imagined, and may help to account for his silence on the subject of his family. At this point the narrative leaves Saul until Barnabas seeks him out for a more extensive ministry (Acts 11:25).

31. Then. Rather, "therefore." The pattern of events in vs. 29–32 is similar to that of ch. 8:3–5. At the earlier time Saul persecuted the church, therefore the believers were scattered and preached the word, and the way opened for Philip to take the gospel to Samaria. In the present instance, Saul himself was persecuted, withdrew to Tarsus, the church gained a respite and used it profitably, and Peter evangelized the coastal districts.

Churches. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading, "now the church throughout the whole of Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace." The reference is to the whole Christian body, not to specific congregations. This emphasizes the union of the local churches into the corporate body of the entire church. The word "church" thus seems to be used here in a universal rather than a local sense.

Rest. Literally, "peace." The respite may have arisen from Paul's departure: when he left, the irritant to the Jews was removed. Another reason may possibly be found in the diversion caused by the emperor Caligula's attempt to set up his statue in the Temple at Jerusalem (see p. 78)—an attempt from which he was dissuaded, according to Josephus (*Antiquities* xviii. 8. 2–8), only by the determined opposition of the Jews, by the earnest entreaties of King Herod Agrippa, who resided in the city of Rome at the time, and by the appeals of Petronius, the governor of Syria. According to Josephus, the Syrian governor was influenced by showers of rain that, after a long drought, fell from a clear sky in answer to the prayers of Israel.

All Judæa. This brief notice covers a great deal of early church history, and is especially significant. It is the first intimation of the existence of organized religious communities in the towns and villages of Palestine. No local churches are named, but many may have sprung up as a delayed result of Christ's personal ministry. In addition, the work of Philip, Peter, and John needs to be taken into account (see on ch. 8:5, 6, 14, 25). But, whatever may have been the origin of the Palestinian churches, this verse attests their existence and demonstrates that Christ's command (ch. 1:8) was being faithfully obeyed.

Edified. Gr. *oikodomeō*, "to build a house," "to erect a building," and, by extension, "to edify," "to build up" in general. The "peace" mentioned earlier in the verse gave opportunity for the church to be "built up" in both the organizational and the spiritual sense. *Oikodomeō* plays a frequent part in Paul's vocabulary (see Acts 20:32; Rom. 15:20; 1 Cor. 8:1; Gal. 2:18; etc.).

Fear of the Lord. The phrase is common in the writings of the OT, where it describes reverential awe (see on Job 28:28; Ps. 19:9; Prov. 1:7). It is rare in the NT, the English form of the phrase being used only here. In 2 Cor. 5:11 "the *terror* of the Lord" is better translated, "the *fear* of the Lord."

Comfort. Gr. *paraklēsis*, “consolation,” “exhortation,” “encouragement” (see on Matt. 5:4; Luke 6:24; John 14:16). The phrase may be translated, “walking ... in [or “by”] the counsel of the Holy Spirit.” The church members feared the Lord and were guided by the Spirit; their whole lives were under divine control.

Were multiplied. As a result of the satisfactory spiritual state of the church, its members and its groups increased in numbers. It will always be so. Deep spiritual life on the part of Christians will be fruitful in the salvation of the unsaved. Such fruitage may come from the lives of laymen as well as from the ministry of the officers of the church.

32. Came to pass. See on Luke 1:8. The phrase is typical of Luke’s style. He uses it at least 39 times in his Gospel, and 14 times in Acts. It usually marks a juncture in the narrative.

Peter. From this point until ch. 11:25, the record leaves Saul and turns to the work of Peter. Because of this, the present section is sometimes described as “The Acts of Peter.” It is evident, however, that Luke gives this account of Peter’s ministry not as a partial biography of this pillar of the church, but as a part of his over-all literary plan of depicting the conversion of the Gentiles. When, through the work of Peter, this new phase of Christian service is well on its way, the writer returns to Saul’s career and concentrates on his missionary labors among the Gentiles.

Luke’s narrative (Acts 8:25) had left Peter, with John, preaching the gospel to Samaritan villages on his way back to Jerusalem. After his return he received a 15-day visit from Saul (Gal. 1:18). But it is clear that the apostles did not cloister themselves in Jerusalem; they went farther afield and ministered to newly established groups of believers. Such visits helped to unify the infant church and promote its balanced growth.

Passed. Gr. *dierchomai*, “to go through.” For its missionary significance see on ch. 8:4 (cf. Luke 9:6).

Throughout all quarters. This may also be translated “among them all,” referring either to the church groups of v. 31 or to the “saints” mentioned later in this verse.

Saints. See on v. 13.

Lydda. Lod of the OT (1 Chron. 8:12; Ezra 2:33; Neh. 7:37; 11:35), known in modern times as *Ludd*. The town was founded by settlers from the tribe of Benjamin (1 Chron. 8:1, 12), in the rich plain of Sharon. It lay 11 mi. (17.7 km.) southeast of Joppa, and a day’s journey northwest of Jerusalem. Josephus (*Antiquities* xx. 6. 2) called it a village “not less than a city in largeness.” At the request of Judas Maccabaeus, Demetrius Soter transferred it to the holdings of the Temple at Jerusalem (1 Maccabees 11:32–34). Under the rule of the Roman Cassius, noted for his brutal seizure of property and funds, the inhabitants were sold as slaves (Josephus *Antiquities* xiv. 11. 2 [275]). However, it had recovered its former prosperity, and appears at this time to have been the seat of a flourishing Christian community. In the wars preceding the destruction of Jerusalem, it was burned by Cestius Gallus A.D. 66 (Josephus *War* ii. 19. 1 [515, 516]), when most of its inhabitants had gone to the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem, and was occupied by Vespasian in A.D. 68 (*ibid.* iv. 8. 1 [444]). When the city was rebuilt, probably under Hadrian (c. A.D. 130), it was renamed Diospolis (City of Zeus). It was later the seat of one of the chief bishoprics of the Syrian church. Its outstanding characteristic seems to have been its poverty. According to an ancient Jewish commentary, Rabbi Nathan (A.D. 160) said, “There are ten portions of poverty in the world, nine in Lydia [Lydda] and one

in the rest of the world” (Midrash Rabbah, on Esther 1:3, Soncino ed., p. 30). It is quite likely that the faith of Christ was planted in the city by Philip the evangelist. The town would be on the road that Philip would travel as he passed through “all the cities” on his way from Azotus to Caesarea (see on Acts 8:40).

Ministry of Peter to Jews and Gentiles

6



33. *æneas*. Gr. *Aineias*, an old Greek name, not to be confused with that of the famous hero of Troy, *Aineias*. In Josephus (*Antiquities* xiv. 10. 22 [248]) the name is used of a Jew, so this man could well have been a Hellenistic Jew (see on ch. 6:1). We are not told that he was a disciple, but it may be inferred that he was among “the saints.” The care with which Luke records that Aeneas had been eight years a bedridden paralytic, may reflect professional exactness (cf. Luke 13:11; Acts 3:2; 4:22; 14:8). For exhibits of Luke’s interest in medical matters see on Acts 3:7; 9:18; 28:8. For the significance of the word “palsy” see on Matt. 4:24; Mark 2:3. No doubt could be cast upon the miraculous nature of this man’s cure.

⁶Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Ac 9:2). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

34. Jesus Christ. Note the care with which Peter avoids claiming any personal power to heal. He acknowledges only Christ's ability to help the sufferer (cf. chs. 3:6, 12; 4:9, 10).

Maketh thee whole. Rather, "heals thee." Use of the present tense suggests that the healing was immediate (cf. "he arose immediately").

Arise. A command used by our Lord in similar cases (Matt. 9:6; John 5:8).

Make thy bed. He was to do at once for himself what others had done for him for so many years.

35. All that dwelt. That is, not necessarily every individual, but a large number of the inhabitants. As the news of this miracle was spread abroad, there was a general revival of godliness in the area.

Saron. Gr. *ho Sarōn*, "the Saron," from the Heb. *Sharon*. No village or town of this name is known. The use of the article makes it probable that the reference is to the Plain of Sharon, which lay between the central mountains of Palestine and the Mediterranean Sea, and extended along the coast from Joppa to Carmel. It was proverbial for its beauty and fertility (see on Isa. 35:2; 65:10).

Saw him. The man's eight-year-long paralysis must have been well known in the district, and to see such a one going about healed must have attracted as much attention as did the healing of the lame man at the Temple (cf. ch. 3). Many doubtless inquired as to how the man had been healed.

Turned to the Lord. The miracle that restored Aeneas physically, aroused faith in the power of Jesus Christ to heal spiritually. Thus the circle of believers was still further widened. The way was being prepared for the giving of the gospel to the Gentiles who lived in that coastal region.

36. Joppa. Gr. *Ioppē*, from the Heb. *Yapho*, meaning, "beauty," the modern Jaffa. See on Joshua 19:46; 2 Chron. 2:16; Jonah 1:3. The city is mentioned by the Egyptians of the 15th century B.C. The place was famous in Greek legends as the spot where Andromeda was bound when delivered by Perseus (Strabo *Geography* xvi. 2. 28; Josephus *War* iii. 9. 3 [420, 421]). The town stood on a hill so high that it was claimed that Jerusalem could be seen from its summit. It was the port nearest to Jerusalem, and though the harbor was difficult and dangerous to enter, it was used to land the timber which, first under Solomon, and afterward under Zerubbabel, was brought from Lebanon for the construction of the Temple (1 Kings 5:9; 2 Chron. 2:16; Ezra 3:7). It was the port from which ships sailed to Tarshish (Jonah 1:3). Under the Maccabees the harbor and fortifications were restored (1 Maccabees 14:5). Augustus gave the city to Herod the Great and afterward to Archelaus (Josephus *Antiquities* xv. 7. 3; xvii. 11. 4). When Archelaus was deposed, the city became part of the Roman province of Syria. It remained fanatically Jewish, however, and stayed loyal to Judaism throughout the upheavals of A.D. 66–70. In Peter's day and later it was notorious as a headquarters for pirates. Here, as in the case of Lydda (see on Acts 9:32), the raising up of a Christian company was probably accomplished by Philip (see on ch. 8:40).

Disciple. Gr. *mathētria* "a female disciple."

Tabitha. An Aramaic name, *Ṭabyetha'*, corresponding to the Hebrew name Zibiah in the OT (2 Kings 12:1; 2 Chron. 24:1), or Zibia (1 Chron. 8:9), "gazelle." The Greek form,

Dorkas, means “wild she-goat,” or “gazelle.” The fact that this disciple’s name is given in two languages may imply some points of connection between the Hebrew and the Hellenistic sections of the church.

Full of good works. By some, Dorcas is regarded as a deaconess in the church at Joppa. If this is true, it may reflect the influence of Philip. He was one of the seven (see ch. 6:3, 5), and it is possible that he carried the organization of the church in Jerusalem into the churches he himself established. Thus, Dorcas may have had special care of the widows of the church (cf. chs. 6:1; 9:39).

Almsdeeds. Gr. *eleēmosunē*, “mercy,” especially as shown in giving alms, hence, “charity,” “benefaction,” “alms.” Dorcas’ benevolence expressed itself in two principal ways: she gave her services in “good works”; she gave her means in “almsdeeds.” She was not content to be charitable by proxy, but gave herself as well as her possessions.

37. Came to pass. See on v. 32.

Was sick, and died. The details given of the treatment of Dorcas’ body are evidence that she had, indeed, died. Critics often attempt to throw doubt on the actuality of miracles of raising the dead by alleging that the person was simply in a coma.

Washed. The custom of washing the corpse was practiced by many people in classical times. Among the Jews it was known as the “purification of the dead.” In the Mishnah (*Shabbath* 23. 5, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 771) it is stated: “All the requirements of the dead may be done; he may be anointed with oil and washed.” The women of the church now performed this office for their beloved Dorcas.

Laid. In Jerusalem, burial took place on the day of death (cf. ch. 5:6, 10). Outside the capital there might be an interval of three days between death and burial. The corpse was allowed to lie until all hope of resuscitation was past and there was no danger of anyone’s being buried alive. During this waiting time the body was usually laid in the upper room, immediately under the roof. In the case of Dorcas, the church may have delayed burial in the hope of divine intervention. Peter had just healed Aeneas, and devout souls may well have hoped that he would restore Dorcas to life.

38. Nigh to Joppa. Lydda lay only 11 mi. (17.7 km.) southeast of Joppa, so the report of the healing of Aeneas could quickly have traveled from one town to the other.

Not delay. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the direct form of entreaty, reading, “entreating, Delay not to come unto us.” The messengers may have left Joppa before the death of Dorcas, hoping the apostle would arrive in time to avert death. If, as is more probable, death had already taken place, the church had faith that resurrection was possible through the power of God. In either case, haste was imperative, either to save a life or to forestall a burial.

39. Peter arose. He was ready for any genuine appeal that came to him, especially such an urgent call as came from the Christians in Joppa.

Upper chamber. See on v. 37.

All the widows. Luke shows a special sympathy for womankind (see on Luke 8:2, 3). He mentions “widow” nine times in his Gospel and three times in Acts. The “widows” of the church were the object of a special provision (see on Acts 6:1). The phrase used here suggests that the church at Joppa was also organized for charity.

Coats and garments. Gr. *chitōnes* and *himatia*, respectively (see on Matt. 5:40).

Dorcas made. Rather, “used to make.” It was her custom to make garments for charitable purposes (see on v. 36).

40. Put them all forth. In doing so, Peter was following his Lord’s example in the healing of Jairus’ daughter (see on Mark 5:39, 40), which he had witnessed. There was the noise of great mourning (Acts 9:39) in the chamber where the body of Dorcas lay. Peter felt the need for silence, in which he could commune with God. Compare Elijah’s method with the widow’s child (1 Kings 17:17–23), and Elisha’s procedure at the raising of the Shunammite’s son 2 Kings 4:33. Note also how God’s servants avoid ostentatious display of power.

Prayed. Peter kneels down and engages in earnest prayer, realizing that only divine power can accomplish the desired miracle. Prayer again proves to be the channel through which the early church obtains power (cf. on chs. 1:14, 24; 6:4, 6; 8:15; 9:11; 10:2; etc.). The humble, devout, earnest nature of Peter is clearly revealed in this incident (cf. on ch. 3:1).

Turning. After he had prayed and received the inner assurance that his prayer was heard. He realizes his utter dependence on supernatural power, but when assured of its operation he does not hesitate to act.

Body. This leaves no room for doubt concerning the nature of the subsequent miracle. Dorcas was *dead* (see on v. 37). Peter turned to her lifeless body.

Arise. The very brevity of his command shows his unfaltering belief that his prayer would be positively answered.

Sat up. Gr. *anakathizō*, “to sit up,” is employed by medical writers to describe a patient’s sitting up in bed, and by Luke in his Gospel (ch. 7:15). The brief description of Dorcas’ restoration is extraordinarily vivid. There is the opening of the eyes, as after sleep; the unexpected sight of Peter, who was probably unknown to her; and the dramatic sitting up of one who had been dead. Such details accord well with Luke’s medical interests.

41. Gave her his hand. She accepted his proffered hand, for she was already conscious, unlike Jairus’ daughter when Jesus “took her by the hand” (Matt. 9:25). This detail is evidence that the two narratives are independent. The latter is no mere echo of the earlier story, as some have contended.

The saints. See on v. 13. This does not necessarily imply that the widows were not “saints,” or Christians, although it may well have been that some of those whom Dorcas helped were not church members.

Presented her alive. Peter made sure that this miracle of God would receive due recognition by first gathering together those who knew Dorcas personally and could testify to the fact of her death, and then making a public presentation of her to them. Thus he ensured that there would be ample witness to the fact that a miracle had taken place.

42. Many believed. News of such a miracle spread quickly. The whole area of Joppa was aroused, and the gospel message received a great impetus.

43. It came to pass. See on v. 32.

Tarried. There is no way of knowing how long Peter tarried. For comment on “many days” see on v. 23.

Simon a tanner. Luke shows an interest in the names of minor characters in his story (cf. chs. 9:11, 33, 36; 12:13; 21:16; etc.) and in occupations (cf. chs. 8:27; 10:1; 16:14; 18:3; 19:24). The occupation of tanner was one that repelled strict Jews. This was either

because it would require coming in contact with carcasses and hides of dead beasts, with the risk of ceremonial defilement (see Lev. 11:24, 25), or because it was in general a repulsive and unpleasant business. The Jewish rabbis held that if a tanner who was about to marry concealed his occupation from his intended wife, the concealment was considered in the nature of a fraud, which would invalidate the contract (Mishnah *Kethuboth* 7. 10, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, pp. 482, 483). This tanner's house was "by the sea side" (Acts 10:6). It would be easy for Peter, during his long stay with the humble but hospitable Simon, to return to his old occupation of fishing, and thus earn his living. The fact that he was willing to take up his abode with a tanner indicates that the apostle was already tending to abandon Jewish prejudices. Even so did God prepare His servant for the greater step of preaching to Cornelius, the Gentile (see on ch. 10).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1, 2 SR 268
- 1-5AA 114
- 1-13EW 200
- 1-22SR 268-275
- 1-43AA 112-132
- 3-5Ed 65; GW 58; SR 269; 3T 429
- 4-6AA 117
- 6 AA 120; CE 60; CM 41; CS 343; FE 127, 216; GC 601; LS 267; MM 325, 333; SL 15; SR 270, 271; 1T 45, 511; 2T 166; 3T 430, 433; 4T 54; 5T 220, 584, 609; 6T 116, 480; 7T 252; 8T 94; 9T 169
- 7 AA 115
- 8 AA 117
- 8, 9 SR 271; 3T 430
- 9 AA 118
- 10-15AA 121; SR 272
- 11 3T 430, 431
- 15 AA 120, 121, 159, 163; EW 199, 222; GW 58; MB 34; 3T 429, 431, 433; 6T 415
- 15-18EW 201
- 16 1T 78
- 17 AA 121; 3T 433
- 17, 18 SR 272; 3T 431
- 18 AA 122
- 18-20SR 273
- 19, 20 AA 123
- 21 AA 124; EW 201
- 21, 22 SR 274
- 22 AA 125; EW 201
- 22-26SR 276
- 23-29EW 202
- 25, 26 AA 128
- 26, 27 SR 277
- 27, 29 AA 129
- 29, 30 SR 279
- 30 AA 130

32–39AA 131

34–40SR 281

36, 37 5T 304; WM 67

40 AA 132; GW 178; PK 48

40, 41 SR 282; 5T 304

CHAPTER 10

1 *Cornelius, a devout man, 5 being commanded by an angel, sendeth for Peter: 11 who by a vision 15, 20 is taught not to despise the Gentiles. 34 As he preacheth Christ to Cornelius and his company, 44 the Holy Ghost falleth on them, 48 and they are baptized.*

1. *Caesarea.* That is, Caesarea Palestinae, situated on the Mediterranean coast, not Caesarea Philippi. It was the capital of the Roman province (see on ch. 8:40) and the usual residence of the Roman procurator of Judea. It was doubtless a cosmopolitan city and a center of commerce. See Ministry of Peter to the Jews and Gentiles.

Cornelius. Luke may have learned the details of this story during one of his stays at Caesarea (chs. 21:8; 23:33; 24:27). The conversion of Cornelius marks a new stage of expansion in the growth of the church. Cornelius was a Roman officer, but he was not completely a heathen. He was “devout” and “feared God,” and gave alms to the people (see on ch. 10:2). Even so, in Jewish eyes he was a Gentile, for he was uncircumcised. Consequently his admission into the church marks a new stage in the expansion of Christianity. It is understandable, then, that the apostles in Jerusalem gave special consideration to his case (ch. 11:1–18). The striking, supernatural features of Cornelius’ conversion must have been an important factor in leading the apostles to accept the fact that an uncircumcised Gentile might become a Christian. It took the church several years more, however, to realize fully that Gentiles should enjoy exactly the same status and privileges as circumcised Jews (see Acts 15:1–31; Gal. 2:12).

Centurion. See on Luke 7:2. A centurion commanded about 100 men. He ranked as a minor officer who had immediate command of the soldiery and was chiefly responsible to see that they executed their duties and to maintain discipline. Centurions did not often rise to higher positions in the Roman army. Cornelius was a Roman citizen.

Of the band. Gr. *ek speirēs*, “from the cohort,” indicating that Cornelius was not commander of the cohort, but an officer in it. The cohort, the administrative unit of the Roman auxiliary forces, consisted of either 500 or 1,000 men.

Italian band. This was probably the *Cohors II. Italica*, which is known to have been stationed in Syria during the Jewish-Roman War, and apparently was there earlier, at the time of the present narrative. This cohort is thought to have been made up of freedmen, or at least of men who were non-Roman in origin. It was an auxiliary cohort of archers.

2. *One that feared God.* This expression, and the similar words, “one that worshipped God,” as well as the expression “devout persons,” are used repeatedly by Luke (chs. 10:22, 35; 13:16, 26, 50; 16:14; 17:4, 17; 18:7) in reference to Gentiles who, like Cornelius, had accepted Judaism to the extent of worshiping Jehovah. Many times, at least, this also involved keeping the Sabbath and abstaining from foods forbidden in the law. But such Gentiles did not fully identify themselves with Judaism by submitting to circumcision or by obeying punctiliously all the regulations required of a pious Jew. See Vol. V, pp. 62, 63.

These expressions have occasioned considerable scholarly discussion. The LXX refers to “those who feared” (2 Chron. 5:6) in such a way as to lead some scholars to think that a particular class apart from full-fledged Jews is indicated. Similarly, Josephus (*Antiquities* xiv. 7. 2 [110]; Loeb ed., vol. 7, p. 505) speaks of “those who worshipped God,” as sending gifts to the Temple from all over the world.

The additional suggestion has been made that those “that feared God” and those “that worshipped God,” mentioned in Acts, are the same as the “proselytes of the gate,” who are supposed to have constituted a recognized group of half-proselytes who though worshipping Jehovah and observing some of the Jewish law, were not circumcised, and therefore were not considered completely Jews. However, some question this explanation.

Thus it appears that the terms “one that feared God” (or “God fearer”) and “one that worshipped God” may have been technical expressions in the NT period for a particular class of half-proselytes to Judaism who enjoyed a certain recognition in the synagogue, as has often been suggested. In later Judaism a similar term, “fearers of Heaven,” may have represented some such group. The God fearers scarcely could have held any formally recognized status within the Jewish communities, and their relationship to Judaism must have been largely an informal one. Nevertheless the presence of such devout men throughout the Roman world provided Christian preachers with an audience of Gentiles, who, though not bound slavishly to the legalism of Judaism, were sincere seekers after God and were somewhat acquainted with the Jewish Scriptures (particularly the LXX) and Jewish beliefs.

With all his house. Cornelius was not satisfied with having found a higher truth for himself, but sought to impart it to his family, his servants, and others who came under his influence. The soldier sent to find Peter is called “devout” (v. 7).

Much alms. Cornelius was generous like the other centurion of whom the Jews said, “He loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue” (Luke 7:5).

The people. That is, the Jews, as contrasted with “the nations,” the Gentiles.

Prayed. The combination of almsgiving and prayer was common both in Judaism and in early Christianity (see Matt. 6:2, 5; Acts 10:4; 1 Peter 4:7, 8; Tobit 12:8).

Since the vision that follows doubtless may be regarded as an answer to Cornelius’ prayers, it is natural to think that he was seeking guidance to greater knowledge of God’s way (see Acts 11:14).

3. A vision. Gr. *horama*, “that which is seen,” and particularly, as here, of a view that is divinely granted. The phrase “in a vision” may also be translated, “in vision.” See on 1 Sam. 3:1.

Evidently. Gr. *phanerōs*, “clearly,” “distinctly,” “manifestly,” “apparently.”

Ninth hour. This was the afternoon hour of prayer at the Temple (see on Matt. 27:45; Acts 3:1). Apparently Cornelius had adopted the Jewish hours of prayer, as he was praying when the vision was given him (ch. 10:30).

4. Looked. Or, “gazed intently,” “stared.”

He was afraid. The angel is called a “man ... in bright clothing” (v. 30; cf. ch. 1:10). For the moment his sudden appearance terrorized Cornelius. The Roman soldiers guarding the tomb of Christ, who were not attuned spiritually as was Cornelius, shook and became like dead men in the presence of the blazing glory of the resurrection angel (see Matt. 28:2, 4; cf. Dan. 10:7–11).

What is it? By this question Cornelius indicated that the vision involved more than he could understand, and his words may be taken to imply his readiness to follow divine direction. Compare the response Saul gave when Christ appeared to him on the road near Damascus (ch. 9:6).

Lord. Gr. *kurios*, a title of respect, which, when applied to human beings, is to be translated, “sir” (ch. 16:30), but when referred to God, means “Lord” (ch. 7:33). Which translation is preferable here depends on the degree to which Cornelius at first recognized the angel as a heavenly messenger. “Lord” is probably the better translation.

Thy prayers and thine alms. See on v. 2. Cornelius’ alms were a tangible expression of the sincerity of his inner spiritual life, nourished, as it was, by habitual prayer.

Are come up. Rather, “have arisen.” Prayer may be thought of as similar to incense ascending to the throne of God (see Rev. 5:8; 8:3, 4) or to the smoke of the burnt offering, which in Hebrew was called an *‘olah*, “that which ascends.” This was a particularly fitting expression to use for prayer offered at the time of the evening sacrifice (see on Acts 10:3).

Memorial. Gr. *mnēmosunon*, a word used repeatedly in the LXX to refer to the portion of the meal offering the priest burned upon the altar (Lev. 2:2, 9, 16; 5:12; 6:15). The smoke of the offering, as it ascended, was representative of Israel’s prayers. This same word appears in Tobit 12:12, where an angel says, “I did bring the memorial of your prayer before the glory of the Lord” (in R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, p. 234). The prayers of Cornelius were acceptable to God. He followed “the true Light, which lighteth every man” (John 1:9), and he partook of the faith that from the beginning of the world has opened the way to justification—the belief that the true God “is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6).

5. Send men. God willed that Cornelius should make an active effort to obtain knowledge of the gospel. Truths gained as the result of personal inquiry often are more precious than those that are urged upon us.

Call for one Simon. Doubtless the centurion could have discovered that Simon the apostle was staying with Simon the tanner. But God, the Omniscient One, knew where Peter was and directed Cornelius accordingly. In His omniscience God knows every intimate detail about each one. Man’s realization of this can be a deterrent from sin; better, it is a vast encouragement to godly living. The psalmist’s wanderings and accompanying sorrows were known to God (Ps. 56:8). Even the fall of the sparrow is noted by the Lord, and the hairs of men’s heads are numbered (Matt. 10:29–31). The parallel between the experience of Cornelius and that of Ananias and Saul (Acts 9:10–12) is notable.

6. Simon a tanner. See on ch. 9:43.

He shall tell thee. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of the words, “he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.” However, the same thought is set forth in Peter’s own account of the visit to Cornelius (ch. 11:14), in the clause, “who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.” This is one of several instances found in some late manuscripts of the Acts where apparently an endeavor has been made to form a complete narrative in the earlier chapters by gathering together and adapting statements that appeared originally only in later chapters (cf. ch. 9:6).

For a discussion of the status of full proselytes and “proselytes of the gate,” who had accepted the Jewish faith in part, see Vol. V, p. 62.

7. *A devout soldier.* The word “devout” implies that this man was, like his superior the centurion, a worshiper of the true God, but hardly a circumcised proselyte (see Vol. V, p. 62).

8. *Declared all these things.* The confidence Cornelius placed in those under his command is shown by his frankly telling them at once about his vision. Doubtless they had known his former hopes and prayers, and so were ready to share in the promised answer. All this throws light on the character of Cornelius, indicating that, as far as he had been able, he had tried to lead those under his influence to the truth that had brought him personally to a higher life.

To Joppa. The distance from Caesarea to Joppa was about 30 mi. Joppa was the city whence Jonah fled when called to preach to the Gentiles a message that proved to be life to them. Now, from this same city Peter was to be called to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles.

9. *Drew nigh.* The events that led to Peter’s vision were so timed as to bring the climax of that vision just at the hour the messengers arrived (see vs. 17–20).

Housetop. Gr. *dōma*, “building,” “house.” To “go up on the house” was to ascend to the housetop, which in the East was usually flat. This was an appropriate place for prayer and meditation. In a city like Joppa, and in the tanner’s house, it was perhaps the only place suitable for such a purpose. For examples of other uses of housetops see 1 Sam. 9:25; Jer. 19:13; Matt. 10:27.

The sixth hour. That is, midday. Among the Jews this probably was not one of the regular hours for prayer, and early Jewish literature says nothing about it as such. Particularly pious persons may have observed it (see Ps. 55:17), and Peter’s prayer at this hour may possibly be so interpreted (see on Acts 3:1). However, other explanations are also possible. The regular morning prayer, which normally took place about 9:00 A.M., at the time of the morning offering, might be offered as late as noon. Thus it may have been his morning prayer that Peter was offering. Another other interesting possibility is suggested by a Jewish regulation that goes back at least to the 3d century A.D. This rule provided that if a man had not eaten until midday, he should then first offer his afternoon prayer before partaking of food, for the afternoon prayer (normally about 3:00 P.M.) was not to be said soon after eating. Inasmuch as Peter was “very hungry” (ch. 10:10), it may have been that on the day in question he had not yet eaten, and so purposely offered his evening prayer at an earlier hour.

Whatever explanation is adopted for Peter’s having prayed at this hour, it is clear that his meditation and devotion opened the way for his reception of a vision at exactly the right moment to prepare him to receive the messengers from the Gentile Cornelius.

10. *Very hungry.* Apparently Peter was not fasting, for he intended to eat. His noonday hunger prepared him for the command to eat, which was to be given him in connection with his vision (v. 13). Coming under these circumstances, the command was particularly forceful.

Would have eaten. Literally, “was wishing to eat,” or “began to want to eat.”

A trance. Gr. *ekstasis*, “a standing aside,” and by extension, a displacement of the mind from its normal environment. The English word “ecstasy” is derived from *ekstasis*.

Luke uses this word again for Paul's vision in the Temple (ch. 22:17). This word is employed in the LXX to describe the deep sleep of Abraham (Gen. 15:12). It represents a state in which the normal action of the senses is suspended, so that the vision is seen only mentally, as in a dream (see 2 Cor. 12:3). Peter's *ekstasis* provided a channel for a revelation of the divine will.

11. Heaven opened. Indicating that the vision and its message came from God (see ch. 7:56).

Vessel. Gr. *skeuos*, a word used to describe household and other utensils; in the present case, a general term for a container.

Unto him. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of these words.

A great sheet. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 10) as to whether this passage should read as in the KJV, or, "a great sheet let down by four corners." The word rendered "corners" is the common word for "beginning," and so refers to an extremity, which in the case of a sheet would be its corners. Apparently what the apostle saw was an extended sheet, the four corners of which were let down from what might be called the four extremities of the opened sky.

12. All manner of ... beasts. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of the words "of the earth, and wild beasts." However, the same words are found in ch. 11:6. The vision represented the whole animal creation. Evidently there were represented both the foods permitted to the Jews and those forbidden but used for food by the Gentiles.

13. Kill, and eat. Peter was hungry, and the natural promptings of appetite were confirmed by a voice from heaven. His resistance was because of conscience. Peter had not yet learned that the distinction between Jew and Gentile was done away in Christ (Gal. 3:28, 29). That Peter failed to learn this fully even after this vision is shown by his later dissembling at Antioch, for which Paul so frankly rebuked him (Gal. 2:9–21).

14. Not so, Lord. Peter's emphatic resistance even to a voice from heaven is quite in harmony with his character (see Matt. 16:22; John 13:8). His exclamation here is reminiscent of that of Ezekiel when he contemplated Israel's eating of defiled food (ch. 4:14). Abstention from unclean flesh was one of the most characteristic marks of the Jew, and a distinction to which he held rigorously. It had been one of the basic issues between the Jews and the Syrians during the Maccabean War (see 2 Maccabees 6:18–31), an issue over which stanch Jews willingly laid down their lives.

However, the distinction between clean and unclean beasts, made definite in Lev. 11, preceded the Jewish nation. This distinction was made by God and respected by Noah when he supervised the entrance of the animals into the ark (Gen. 7:2; cf. ch. 8:20). Man's original food consisted of fruit, grain, and nuts (Gen. 1:29). Before flesh foods were added to this diet (Gen. 9:2, 3), the distinction between clean and unclean animals already had been made clear. Thus there is no good basis for the position that the ban upon unclean foods was removed when the Jewish ceremonial law ended at the cross. In Peter's vision these dietary restrictions had symbolic reference to Jewish distinctions between men—themselves and the Gentiles—and the abrogation of these distinctions was the point at issue (see on Gen. 9:3; Lev 11; Acts 10:15; Additional Note on Lev. 11).

Common. The use of the word "common" in the sense of "impure" according to the Mosaic ritual, reflected the Jewish attitude toward Gentiles. All who were not Jews were viewed as the "common" rabble, shut out from God's covenant. The practices of these spiritual outcasts, different from those of the chosen people, were called "common"

things, and as these “common” things were generally those forbidden by the law, all such prohibited things or actions became known as “common.” Similarly, when men’s hands were defiled ceremonially, they were known as “common hands” (a literal translation of the expression rendered “defiled . . . hands” in Mark 7:2).

15. What God hath cleansed. In the vision clean and unclean beasts stood on the same footing, being let down from heaven in the same sheet. They represented thus a general mixing of things, among which none was to be called common, or unclean. In interpreting the vision one should recognize that, although it was given in the setting of physical hunger (v. 10), it did not concern food, it concerned men. It was for the souls of men, of every kind everywhere, that Peter was to experience a hunger. Having learned this lesson, at least in part, Peter declared, “God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean” (v. 28). Gentiles, ordinarily considered unclean, were awaiting the spiritual ministration of Peter. He must not hesitate to serve them. They were no longer to be considered unclean.

16. Done thrice. The vision was repeated three times, doubtless that it might remain in the apostle’s mind. Similarly Pharaoh’s dream had been given twice (Gen. 41:32), and Jesus had thrice repeated to Peter the injunction, “Feed my lambs” or “Feed my sheep” (John 21:15–17), an injunction that now was to take on a new and fuller meaning to him.

17. Doubted. Rather, “was perplexed,” “was at a loss to know.” This word is used of Herod’s perplexity about Christ, when men said that John the Baptist was risen from the dead (Luke 9:7). Now Peter, aroused from his trance, did not know how to apply what he had seen and heard. The representatives of Cornelius, calling for him at this moment, brought the answer. See Acts 10:28.

Stood before the gate. The general location of Simon’s house had been described to Cornelius (v. 6). and when his messengers found that the details corresponded, it must have given them confidence that their errand was to be successful. The timing of the vision of Cornelius with that of Peter to permit the arrival of the messengers, after a mile journey (see on v. 8), at Peter’s lodging at exactly the right moment, was no coincidence.

18. And called. That is, for someone inside the house to come forth. The messengers doubtless were Gentiles, like Cornelius himself, and so would hesitate to enter a Jewish house without giving notice of their presence.

19. Peter thought. Peter was pondering his difficulty and asking what God could have meant to teach by the vision. While he was thus pondering, the explanation came.

The Spirit said. Peter was no longer in a trance. The divine Spirit now spoke to the inner recesses of his soul. The Spirit’s instruction implied that Peter should connect the arrival of the delegation with the vision he had seen.

Three men. The two servants and the soldier whom Cornelius had sent (v. 7).

20. Get thee down. Peter was still on the housetop.

Doubting. Or, “hesitating.” As once before, Peter did not know yet what his Lord was doing, but he would know hereafter (John 13:7). He and the messengers of Cornelius were alike acting on the promptings of the Holy Spirit. The vision had given Peter no hint that he was to take a journey. Now Peter was informed of this, and he understood that the “doubting nothing” was to mean, at the end of his journey, that he was to put no distinction between Jews and other men. Thus the vision became intelligible little by little, and his perplexity was removed.

21. Which were sent. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of the words, “which were sent unto him from Cornelius.”

What is the cause? The Spirit had told Peter that the men were waiting for him and that he should go with them, but he had not been informed of the reason for their coming. Naturally, then, his first question was regarding the purpose of their call.

22. Cornelius the centurion. The description given by his messengers seems to imply that Cornelius was not altogether unknown at Joppa. Peter may have been reminded of the other centurion, whose name is not recorded, who was stationed at Capernaum and had built a synagogue for the Jews (Luke 7:5). With that recollection there would come back to his memory the words that his Master had spoken, in praising the centurion’s faith, that “many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 8:11).

One that feareth God. See on v. 2.

Of good report. That is, on account of the alms he had given and his evident reverence for the true God. Not only among the general populace of Caesarea was the piety of Cornelius known, but among all the Jews.

Was warned from God. Gr. *chrēmatisō*, “to advise.” This word was employed repeatedly by pagan writers for answering by an oracle. Josephus uses it a number of times for God’s speaking to men, and in the present passage this is clearly its meaning. It is used of admonitions to the wise men (Matt. 2:12), and to Joseph (Matt. 2:22), of the revelation given to Simeon (Luke 2:26), and of the divine messages sent to Moses (Heb. 8:5), and to Noah (Heb. 11:7). Consequently the KJV has rendered the one word as “was warned from God.”

To hear words. That is, to learn from Peter what God would have Cornelius do (see ch. 11:14). Similarly, the Jews frequently called the Ten Commandments the Ten Words (cf. Ex. 20:1).

23. Called he. For Peter to call these Gentiles into the house was to take a first step toward laying aside scruples that the Jews felt toward non-Jews.

On the morrow. Since it was about noon that Peter went up to the housetop to pray, the arrival of the messengers following his vision must have been in the early afternoon. Because it was already too late to reach Caesarea, some 30 mi. away, yet that day, Peter did not set out until the following day. Also the messengers doubtless needed to rest from their journey to Joppa.

Certain brethren. These men were, of course, Jewish Christian (v. 45), and according to ch. 11:12, they were six in number. Doubtless Peter remembered Christ’s words: “In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established” (Matt. 18:16). He wished them to report to the church whatever he did. The usefulness of their testimony later in Jerusalem is implied in Acts 11:12. No doubt Peter informed them of his vision and of the message that Cornelius’ servants had brought. The good reputation of Cornelius would have weight with them and make them ready to go with Peter.

24. The morrow after. Apparently Peter and his companions stayed overnight on their journey to Caesarea, as the messengers from Cornelius probably also had done on their way to Joppa (see vs. 7–9, 17). Their road lay along the Mediterranean coast.

Cornelius waited. Rather, “was waiting for them.” His attitude of preparation shows how convinced he was that his own vision was real, and that God was about to give him an answer to his prayers.

Kinsmen and near friends. These doubtless included soldiers under Cornelius' command who were more or less in sympathy with his religious feelings, and friends from the community. He sought to bring as many as possible within reach of the new light he was to receive.

25. Worshipped him. This obeisance was the most extreme form of Eastern homage. So Jairus bowed down before Jesus (Matt. 9:18), and John before the angel (Rev. 22:8). This act on the part of Cornelius, a Roman officer, revealed that he recognized Peter as God's messenger. Such acts were certainly not usual among Roman soldiers, particularly in relation to Jews.

26. Took him up. That is, "raised him up." Peter's answer shows that worship should be given to God alone. For man to require or receive such homage from man could never be right. Peter's words are parallel with those of Paul at Lystra (ch. 14:15). To worship saints, or even angels, is to efface the distinction that should ever exist between God and man (see Rev. 22:9).

27. Talked with him. Peter's subsequent remarks indicate that Cornelius told the apostle many things not specifically mentioned in the text.

He went in. Apparently the preceding part of the interview was conducted near the entry of the house. Cornelius' action in coming forth to meet Peter was in the spirit of the centurion in the Gospel, who said, "I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof" (Luke 7:6).

Many. The personality and conduct of Cornelius had won him many friends, and in his enthusiasm and faith he had brought them together to see and hear a man of whom he knew nothing (see on v. 24).

28. An unlawful thing. The apostle states it as a known fact that a Jew might not associate with a Gentile. The action of the messengers of Cornelius in standing outside the house of Simon and calling upon someone to come to them in the open air showed that they were aware of Jewish prejudice. Such Jewish exclusiveness was known to the classical writers. Juvenal says: "Having been wont to flout the laws of Rome, they [the Jews] learn and practice and revere the Jewish law, and all that Moses handed down in his secret tome, forbidding to point out the way to any not worshipping the same rites, and conducting none but the circumcised to the desired fountain" (*Satires* xiv. 100–104; Loeb ed., p. 273). Similarly Tacitus declared: "The Jews are extremely loyal toward one another, and always ready to show compassion, but toward every other people they feel only hate and enmity. They sit apart at meals, and they sleep apart" (*Histories* v. 5; Loeb ed., Vol. 2, pp. 181, 183).

Peter, of course, was speaking from the standpoint of traditional Pharisaism rather than from that of the law itself; but such feelings were exhibited widely, and showed themselves in rigorous forms wherever Jews and heathen came in contact. The strict Jew would hesitate to enter a Gentile's house, as is reflected by a prohibition in the Mishnah: "The dwelling-places of heathens are unclean" (*Oholoth* 18. 7, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 226). In an ancient Jewish commentary on Leviticus appears a remarkable

⁷Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Ac 9:33). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

example of ceremonial defilement by contact with a Gentile: “It is related that Simeon the son of *Kimhith* went out to talk with an Arabian King, and a jet of saliva from the latter’s mouth was spurted on to his garments and defiled him. His brother Judah entered and ministered in the office of the High Priesthood in his stead” (Midrash Rabbah, on Lev. 16:1, Soncino ed., p. 263). The Hindu feeling of caste, of shrinking from contact with those of a lower grade, although now slowly dying out under pressure of law and liberal feeling, presents a close modern parallel.

To keep company. Or, “to join himself” (see on ch. 9:26). The word signifies direct contact. Although the ordinary dealings of life forced Jews constantly to be in the company of Gentiles, they were to avoid such contact if possible, lest they be ceremonially defiled.

Not call any man common. The apostle now showed that he had learned the lesson of the vision. Humanity had been redeemed by the incarnation, the sacrifice, and the ascension of Christ, and even the lowest heathen was no longer common or unclean. God was willing to receive all men, and through Jesus He does so. Sin alone is that which separates men from Him (Isa. 59:2). Impurity is to be thought of as a moral, not a physical or racial, taint. The follower of God must learn to see in every sinner the potentialities of a redeemed, justified, and sanctified man. Inasmuch as every man is potentially the subject of such a godly transformation, he must be respected as one in whom the image of God is not entirely effaced and may yet be restored (see 1 Peter 2:17). Pride of class resting on mere differences of culture or opportunity, and showing itself in acts and words of contempt, is from one point of view even less excusable than distinctions resting upon a religious basis. The latter is the more amenable to cure.

It is evident from this verse that the lesson God taught Peter concerned, not beasts, but men. All men were to be reached with the gospel; ultimately they would be unclean only when they should reject God’s endeavors to save them.

29. Without gainsaying. Peter had come to Caesarea without argument or question, following in faith the guidance of the Spirit, although he saw only dimly what God would have him do.

30. Four days ago. This is a clear example of the method of counting time periods by inclusive reckoning (see Vol. I, p. 182; Vol. II, pp. 136, 137; Vol. V, pp. 249, 250). Cornelius received his vision and dispatched his servants on the first day of (vs. 3, 7, 8); they arrived at Joppa on the second day (vs. 9, 17); they, with Peter and his friends, left Joppa on the third day (v. 23); and all arrived at Caesarea on the fourth day (v. 24). Since they met Cornelius at about the same hour as he had had his vision (see below on “until this hour”), the total period could have been scarcely more than 72 hours, yet because parts of four days were involved Cornelius spoke of it as “four days.”

I was fasting. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of these words.

Until this hour. The Greek of this passage is ambiguous, but is probably best translated, “Four days ago about this hour.” This indicates that Peter’s arrival at Caesarea must have been in the middle of the afternoon, about the ninth hour, the same time of day at which Cornelius had received his vision.

At the ninth hour I prayed. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading, “I was praying the ninth,” that is, the ninth-hour prayer, offered at the time of the afternoon sacrifice (see on chs. 3:1; 10:3, 9). Thus this whole passage probably is best read, “Four days ago about this hour I was praying the ninth [-hour prayer] in my house.”

In bright clothing. See ch. 1:10. This phrase, in the Greek, is the same as that translated in James as “goodly apparel” and “gay clothing” (James 2:2, 3). The adjective, translated “bright” is employed by John to describe the raiment of the angels (Rev. 15:6), and of the bride of the Lamb (ch. 19:8).

31. Thy prayer. As contrasted with the parallel passage in v. 4, where the reference is to “prayers,” in the plural, the present passage speaks of “thy prayer,” implying a specific supplication. This gives a greater definiteness to Cornelius’ prayer, and to its object. Doubtless it was for greater light and fuller knowledge of truth (see on v. 2).

Thine alms. See on v. 4.

Had in remembrance. A verbal form of the word translated “memorial” in the parallel passage (see on v. 4).

32. Joppa. See on ch. 9:36; 10:8.

Simon a tanner. See on ch. 9:43.

33. Thou hast well done. The expression is not of mere approval, but of heartfelt gratitude (see Phil. 4:14).

We all here. The words imply that the friends gathered around Cornelius shared in his eagerness to know further truth, and were ready to comply with whatever might be revealed to them as the will of God.

To hear. This word implies also the intention to believe and obey (see on John 5:24). The centurion expected to hear from Peter words whereby he and all his house might be saved.

34. Opened his mouth. An expression used for utterances of importance (see on ch. 8:35).

Respecter of persons. Gr. *prosōpolēptēs*, “one who receives the face,” and so, one who distinguishes between persons on the basis of outward appearances. This expression finds an interesting parallel in the Hebrew phrase, *našo’ phanim*, literally, “to lift up the face,” which in common usage also meant to make unjust distinctions between men. Compare the English expression, “to lose face.” See Vol. V, p. 107. Peter had seen in his Master an absence of “respect of persons,” whether the distinctions were of social rank, or knowledge, or wealth. This even His enemies acknowledged (Matt. 22:16). James lays stress on this same element of character as essential to all who wish to be true disciples of Christ (ch. 2:1–9). Peter needed to learn that the full application of this great principle called for the Jewish Christians to accept those of other races into equal fellowship with themselves. Paul, the champion of Gentile Christianity, stresses this principle in Rom. 2:9–11. From Cornelius’ vision, parallel to his own, Peter was learning that God makes Himself known to all aspirants to righteousness, whether they are Jews or Gentiles. See Deut. 10:17; 1 Sam. 16:7.

35. In every nation. Peter dimly realized that Christianity was not to be national. In his dealings with Cornelius he began to see how this might be, though he did not yet understand it thoroughly. Paul would shortly declare that neither race, nor sex, nor social status have any bearing in God’s sight (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:10, 11).

The Jews had come to look upon themselves as exclusively the objects of God’s interest, care, and mercy. Whereas prior to the Babylonian captivity they had conformed their lives and their religious beliefs and practices to those of the heathen nations about them (see Vol. IV, p. 31), after the Captivity they put forth extreme efforts to insulate

themselves from their Gentile neighbors. They developed a spirit of exclusiveness that made them despise non-Jews and deny their eligibility to acceptance with God.

At first this spirit of exclusiveness constituted the chief barrier to the advance of the gospel among non-Jews. Had Christianity remained but a sect of Judaism—as Jewish Christians at first conceived of it—it could never have claimed the allegiance of all men everywhere. The first major task of the church was therefore to break the tight bonds of Judaism. In the conversion of Cornelius the Holy Spirit led the infant church to take its first important step in that direction.

Feareth him. This and the following phrase may be thought of as covering, respectively, the two tables of the law—the first referring to man's duty to God, the second, to his duty to his fellow men. See on Micah 6:8; Matt. 22:34–40.

Accepted. Or, “acceptable.” God has no longer a chosen race of people. He calls all men to repent, and accepts those who do so in sincerity.

36. The word. That is, the message, the tidings of the Messiah, which brought peace on earth through a Saviour who is Christ the Lord (see Luke 2:14). This was first preached to Israel as God's chosen people, but now Peter recognized that God is the remitter of sins to everyone who believes on Him (see Acts 10:43). The message of peace now was to be not only between God and the chosen race but also between God and the Gentiles.

Preaching. A form of the Greek verb *euaggelizō*, “to declare glad tidings,” and, in a technical Christian sense, “to preach the gospel” (see Isa. 52:7).

Peace. God is said to create peace for him that is afar off, as well as for him that is near, for the Gentile and for the Jew (see on Isa. 57:19; cf. ch. 49:6). Christ preached this peace between God and all nations without distinction (see Matt. 8:11; John 12:32 cf. Matt. 28:19). The apostles carried this good news to the world. Speaking to the Gentiles, Paul says, “Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ” (Eph. 2:13). The apostles preached always that there was no name under heaven by which men could be saved but the name of Christ (Acts 4:12), and that whether men be Jews or Greeks, Christ is all and in all (Col. 3:11). Hence, in this doctrine of peace through Christ there is harmony between OT and NT, between prophets and apostles. Christ is Lord of all (Rom. 3:29).

The peace that is promised is a peace, not primarily between men, but between God and each man, and is obtained when atonement is received through Jesus Christ by faith (Rom. 3:24–26; 5:1). The messenger of peace is Jesus Christ; the basis of peace is His atoning work; the terms of peace are faith; the blessing of peace is the remission of sins; the fruit of peace is holiness.

Lord of all. Inasmuch as Jesus Christ is Lord *of all*, every man must stand on an equal footing before Him. By saying this, Peter also safeguarded Cornelius against thinking that the Jews whom he understood was the Messiah, was only a prophet and a teacher.

37. Word. Gr. *rhēma*, which stresses the utterance, or preaching, of the word rather than the “word” (*logos*) itself, as in v. 36. There, it is the whole message of salvation through Christ. Here, more specifically, it is the tidings about Jesus that had been spread abroad after the preaching of John the Baptist. Apparently Cornelius and his friends knew of these tidings, perhaps through the teaching that already had extended as far as Caesarea (ch. 8:40). The content of this teaching was that though Jesus had lived as a

man in Nazareth, He was God's anointed, the Messiah, and was shown to be so by the mighty works that He did (see ch. 10:38). This indicates that the story of Christ was widely known—that the tidings concerning Him had been vigorously and effectively given by the apostles and lay members.

Began from Galilee. After Jesus was baptized in the Jordan, He began His preaching in Galilee (see Mark 1:14).

38. Anointed. Gr. *chriō*, “to anoint,” the same word that appears in a different form as “Christ” (see on ch. 4:26). Coming shortly after Peter's reference to Christ in ch. 10:36, this word seems to imply that it was at His baptism, when He received the Spirit, that Jesus of Nazareth became publicly and officially the Messiah (see Matt. 3:16, 17), the “Anointed,” though He was “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8).

Holy Ghost. Jesus was anointed at His baptism, not with oil, but with the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:13–17).

With power. When the Son of God humbled Himself at the incarnation, He laid aside the independent exercise of His attributes as the second person of the Godhead (cf. Vol. V, pp. 918, 919). For all that He accomplished on earth He relied, as must other men, on power from above (see DA 143; cf. John 5:19, 30; 8:28).

Doing good. The life of Jesus exhibits a consistent example of dedication to the service of mankind (see ch. 2:22; DA 70).

Oppressed of the devil. In a sense all illness and suffering are from Satan. Even Paul's “thorn in the flesh” was a “messenger of Satan to buffet” him (2 Cor. 12:7). But there is also a specific demonic possession, not always recognized as such by modern medical diagnosis. This possession was manifested in all its terribleness and repulsiveness during the early years of the proclamation of the gospel. Jesus conquered this force whenever He met it. Again and again He cast out demons. See Additional Note on Mark 1.

God was with him. Nicodemus confessed, “No man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him” (John 3:2).

39. We are witnesses. Peter had been with Jesus from the beginning of His ministry (John 1:40–42). The apostle recognized that the main purpose of his mission was to witness for Christ to men, as the Lord had commanded (see Acts 1:8, 21, 22; cf. Matt. 28:19, 20; Luke 24:48).

Land. Gr. *chōra*, “region,” “countryside,” here contrasted with the city, Jerusalem (see Luke 2:8; Acts 26:20).

They slew and hanged. See on ch. 5:30. As in ch. 2:23, Peter represents the crucifixion as mainly the act of the rulers and people of Jerusalem, and not of the Roman governor.

Tree. Gr. *xulon*, “wood,” but used in the LXX and the papyri also for “tree.” Clearly the cross is meant. There does not appear to be any allusion here to the tree of knowledge of good and evil in Eden, as some commentators have suggested.

40. The third day. This is an example of inclusive reckoning of a time period. For further discussion of this method see Vol. I, p. 182; Vol. II, pp. 136, 137; Vol. V, pp. 249, 250; cf. on v. 30. For the length of time Christ was in the tomb see Matt. 16:21; Luke 23:53 to 24:6.

Shewed him openly. Literally, “gave Him to be manifest,” that is, “made Him manifest.” Christ was not openly shown (see v. 41), but by many proofs it was made clear to those who saw Him that He was the same Jesus, now alive and glorified, who had hung on the cross.

41. Not to all. The Jews in general, having failed to recognize Jesus as the Messiah foretold in OT prophecy, were not likely to be willing witnesses to His resurrection (see Luke 16:31). The fact that even some of the disciples were at first unprepared to accept the risen Christ (Matt. 28:17; Mark 16:14) illustrates how unavailing a public appearance to the Jews in general would have been.

Witnesses chosen before. The disciples had been chosen from the beginning not only to aid Jesus in His ministry but, even more, to be witnesses after His departure to what they had seen and heard (see Matt. 28:19, 20; John 17:6–8; Acts 1:8; 2 Peter 1:16–18).

To us. See Acts 1:3; 1 Cor. 15:5–8.

Did eat and drink. See Luke 24:42, 43; John 21:13–15. His eating and drinking was the crucial test that proved Christ was no phantom of the disciples’ imagination.

42. Commanded us to preach. This command is implied in Matt. 28:18–20, and is covered by the instruction in Acts 1:8 to witness concerning the kingdom of God (cf. ch. 1:2).

Ordained of God. Under the terms of the everlasting covenant Christ was to accomplish man’s salvation. This makes it fitting that He also should be the judge of men, in complete fulfillment of the covenant.

Quick. That is, “living.” Paul (ch. 17:31) agrees with Peter in connecting the resurrection with the assurance that He who had risen was to be the future judge of all men. The fact that Jesus was a man, and yet a man who was victorious over sin and death, and the further fact that at the same time He was God, the author of the law by which men are judged, make Him the logical and rightful one to be the judge of all men (see on John 5:22, 27).

43. All the prophets. As in his earlier speeches (see chs. 2:16, 30; 3:18), so here, Peter reveals an understanding of the meaning of OT prophecy in regard to Christ and His work. Doubtless much of this was the result of the teaching that he and the other apostles received from Christ in the interval between His resurrection and His ascension (see Luke 24:27, 44). In the present instance Peter probably had reference to such passages as Isa. 49:6; Joel 2:32. The fact that Peter uses OT scriptures to reinforce his argument is an evidence that he knew Cornelius and his household were familiar with those writings.

Through his name. These words must have made a deep impression upon Peter’s eager listeners. Here was the answer to their doubts and perplexities. They were to find salvation, not by submitting themselves to circumcision, nor to the traditions of the Jews, nor to all that these things implied, but by the simple act of faith in Christ and in the power of His name (see on ch. 3:16). Their salvation was in the power of Christ’s divine attributes, of which His name was an inclusive symbol. Through Jesus Christ of Nazareth, they, Gentiles though they were, would receive the remission of sins that their aroused consciences taught them was the necessary condition of peace with God. The satisfaction of their previous yearnings put them in a spiritual condition to join in the wonderful event the next verse narrates.

Whosoever believeth. This is the promise of John 3:16. Here Peter reiterates it, as Paul did later (Acts 16:31). Salvation is by acceptance of the grace of God through Jesus

Christ (Eph. 2:5, 8), and not by the works of the law (Gal. 2:16, 20, 21). The works follow the receiving of the gift of salvation (Eph. 2:10; Phil. 2:12, 13).

Remission of sins. See chs. 2:38; 3:19.

44. The Holy Ghost fell. The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Gentile Cornelius and his family before their baptism directly fulfilled, for Peter's companions, Christ's promise that the Holy Spirit "will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13). In spite of Peter's vision they still were unprepared to accept Gentiles fully into the church (Acts 10:45), until the coming of the Holy Spirit demonstrated that Gentiles were acceptable to God.

Many Christians have held that the reception of the Holy Spirit is dependent upon the act of water baptism. They have taught that baptism has a sacramental power, and so is an instrumental cause that produces divine grace for the recipient. The present instance, in which Cornelius and his family received the gift of the Holy Spirit before they had been baptized by water, indicates that the reception of the Spirit is not dependent upon the act of baptism (see on v. 47). Baptism is rather an outward symbol of an inner spiritual regeneration, and derives its meaning from that experience (see pp. 43, 44; see on Matt. 3:6; Rom. 6:3–6).

45. They of the circumcision. That is, the six Jewish Christians mentioned in ch. 11:12 (see on ch. 10:23) as companions of Peter. Their astonishment is a testimony to the reality of the gift that Cornelius and his family received. Up to this point Christians had taken for granted that if Gentiles were to be Christians, they must first become full-fledged Jewish proselytes. The case of the Ethiopian eunuch baptized by Philip was probably not an exception to this. But Cornelius and his family were Gentiles, and Peter's Jewish Christian companions were unable to understand how such could receive the gift of the Holy Spirit without first having become proselytes. Possibly an added reason for their astonishment may be found in the fact that some ancient Jews declared that in the days of the Messiah no proselytes would be received into Israel (Talmud *'Abodah Zarah* 3b, Soncino ed., p. 8). Believing that the Messianic time had arrived, Peter's companions may have been influenced in their thinking by such an exclusive attitude toward proselytes.

On the Gentiles. Peter's Jewish Christian companions now saw a definite fulfillment of the apostle's vision. Cornelius and his family, filled with the Holy Spirit, were proof that no man might henceforth call the Gentiles "common or unclean." For Peter's fellow Christians this evidence doubtless sufficed.

46. Speak with tongues. The same kind of manifestation of God's gifts was made here as in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (see on ch. 2:4). The words imply a sudden thrill of spiritual joy and elevation that showed itself in a burst of unpremeditated praise. In the history of the apostolic church there are a number of recorded instances of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit through the gift of tongues (cf. Acts 19:6; cf. ch. 2:4; see on 1 Cor 14). This gift was given for a useful purpose. At Pentecost it enabled the apostles to proclaim the gospel to the non-Aramaic-speaking multitudes gathered for the feast. In the case of Apollos' converts who were rebaptized by Paul at Ephesus, it is reasonable to conclude that it prepared them for a wider area of Christian effectiveness (see on Acts 19:6). So also in the present instance, the gift of tongues was a sign and testimony to Peter's companions, who were not prepared to accept the Gentiles into the church.

Then answered Peter. No previous question is stated, but obviously Peter's words in v. 47 are in answer to the astonished inquiries of his Jewish Christian friends as to what action he would take in view of the fact that the Gentile Cornelius and his family had received the Holy Spirit. He had followed divine guidance in coming to preach to them; would he now go all the way and baptize them also?

47. Forbid water. Could the outward sign be refused these Gentiles, when the inward and spiritual grace that it symbolized had been so manifestly bestowed directly by God? Ordinarily, as in the case of the Samaritans (ch. 8:15–17), baptism was followed by the subsequent act of the laying on of hands, accompanied by the gift of spiritual power. But now the gift of the Spirit had been given first, and all that remained was the outward act of bringing these believers into the society of the church. The event showed that God gives His gifts directly, as men are ready to receive them (see on ch. 10:44). But it showed just as clearly that no spiritual gifts, however marvelous, thereby make obedience to certain outward forms, such as baptism, unnecessary. In fact, the exceptional gift was bestowed for the very purpose of removing any scruples that those of the circumcision might have felt concerning baptizing them. The gift of the Spirit cleared the way, and baptism followed.

As well as we. Peter recognized that God had chosen Gentiles as well as Jews, and had given the same grace to each.

48. Commanded them to be baptized. The construction seems to imply that Peter himself did not baptize these converts. Jesus (John 4:1, 2) and Paul (1 Cor. 1:14–16) refrained from baptizing converts, and apparently Peter followed a similar course in this instance. Paul declares that he refrained generally from baptizing, lest factions arise and Christian unity be broken by men dividing into parties under the names of those who had baptized them. This may also have been the reason here (see 1 Cor. 1:12).

Who administered the baptism we are not told. Perhaps it was done by Peter's companions. Possibly there already may have been an organized congregation at Caesarea, as the result of Philip's work, and its elders or deacons, or Philip himself, may have acted under Peter's instructions.

The Lord. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading "Jesus Christ."

To tarry. It is probable that Peter consented to stay (see ch. 11:3), and thus showed that he was prepared to act thereafter according to the teaching of his vision. Peter must have mingled freely with the new converts, eating and drinking with them (vs. 2, 3) without fear of being defiled thereby. Luke gives so much space to Peter's experience in Caesarea that it must be considered as marking a turning point in the life of the apostle, attesting his essential agreement with Paul. Although afterward Peter wavered in his attitude toward Gentile Christians (Gal. 2:11–13), and was rebuked by Paul for so doing, the account of that severe rebuke shows that Peter had laid aside his Jewish prejudices to a great degree, and had acted as he did only under the influence of certain very strict Jews who had come from Jerusalem to Antioch.

Certain days. See on ch. 9:19.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1, 2 SR 282

1–48AA 132–141; Ev 558; EW 78; SR 282–290

2 CG 263; MH 209

2–5AA 133

4 3T 405; 7T 216
 4–6SR 283
 5, 7, 8 AA 134
 9–16AA 135
 11–13SR 306
 11–16SR 284
 15 AA 193; SR 307
 17–20AA 136
 17–24SR 286
 19, 20 MH 473
 21–23AA 137
 24 AA 138
 25, 26 AA 137
 25–29SR 287
 27–29AA 138
 33 COL 59; FE 108; 4T 394
 33, 34 AA 138
 33–35SR 288
 34 CS 133, 162; PK 31, 304, 369; PP 420; IT 475, 536; 4T 423; 7T 21; WM 109
 34, 35 3T 172
 38 CH 498; COL 417; DA 241; Ed 80; GC 20, 327; LS 87; ML 118, 130, 166, 227; PK 718; SC 11; 1T 482; 2T 136, 337; 3T 217; 4T 139, 227, 268; 6T 225, 415; 7T 221; 8T 208; 9T 31; WM 53, 56
 43 DA 211
 44–48AA 139; SR 289
 46, 47 SR 306

CHAPTER 11

1 *Peter, being accused for going in to the Gentiles, 5 maketh his defence, 18 which is accepted. 19 The gospel being spread into Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, Barnabas is sent to confirm them. 26 The disciples there are first called Christians. 27 They send relief to the brethren in Judaea in time of famine.*

1. In Judaea. Or, “throughout Judea.” The context implies that while Peter remained at Caesarea the news of his contact with Cornelius traveled widely, first probably to Joppa and Lydda, and then to Jerusalem.

The Gentiles. This must have been shocking to the Jerusalem church. As far as is known, this was the first time that uncircumcised Gentiles had been baptized and received into the church.

2. To Jerusalem. Which was still the headquarters (see on ch. 8:14).

Of the circumcision. There is no indication that this expression describes a particular class of Jewish Christians, for all Christians were either Jews or proselytes at the time these events occurred. Therefore the protest must have come from the whole church. However, Luke’s narrative was written at a later time, when those who were “of the circumcision” had become a distinct party, and when their influence was working a definite division in the Christian congregations. Therefore Luke’s employment of the expression must be taken as significant. See on v. 3.

Those who had been born Jews, and who had neither heard of Peter's vision nor seen the gift of the Holy Ghost poured out upon Cornelius and his household, are to be pardoned if their scruples caused them to challenge Peter's conduct. When these had heard his story they were satisfied (see v. 18), but many Jewish Christians elsewhere continued to make this a matter of contention (see Acts 15:1; Gal. 2:11–14).

Contended. Gr. *diakrinō*, “to separate,” “to doubt,” “to hesitate”; “to make a difference,” “to discriminate”; “to oppose,” “to contend with” (see chs. 10:20; 11:12; 15:9). Here it means that they separated themselves from Peter in a hostile sense, opposed him, disputed with him. The contenders insisted that the difference between Jew and Gentile should still be maintained. That is, that Christians should hold fellowship only with those who had become proselytes to Judaism and gave due obedience to the ritual law. Cornelius had not been received into the fellowship of the Jews in Caesarea (see ch. 10:2), and the active Judaizing sentiment in the church would tend to prevent his being accepted into the Christian community. The prejudice that had grown up among the Jews through generations of ceremonial observance makes this comprehensible. An entire nation is not brought to a radical change of feeling in a short period of time.

Incidentally, the fact that Peter could be militantly challenged demonstrates that he was not considered the head of the church, nor the “chief of the apostles,” and certainly not infallible.

3. Wentest in. See on ch. 10:28.

Men uncircumcised. This expression, as used by a Jew, was the essence of scorn. Indeed, it shows the strength of feeling that had arisen against Peter. The men with whom he had mixed are not called Gentiles, but “the uncircumcised,” words of profound reproach in the mouth of a pious Jew.

Didst eat. Peter had eaten with men among whom there would ordinarily be no regard as to kinds of food and ways in which it was prepared—things very important to the Jew. This charge was the real issue. Compare the Pharisees' accusations against Christ (Luke 5:30; 15:1, 2; etc.). The Jewish attitude in regard to eating with Gentiles is strikingly revealed by a passage in the book of Jubilees, probably from the late 3d century B.C.:

“And do thou, my son Jacob, remember my words,
And observe the commandments of Abraham, thy father:
Separate thyself from the nations,
And eat not with them”(22:16; in R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, p. 46).

4. Peter rehearsed the matter. Rather, “began and set forth the matter.” The almost word-for-word repetition of the narrative of ch. 10 in ch. 11 appears at first inconsistent with Luke's skill in literary composition. Some commentators offer the explanation that Luke obtained the first account from the disciples he met at Caesarea, and the second from those at Jerusalem, and realized that their similarity confirmed the incident. Luke does the same with the narratives of Paul's experience at Damascus (chs. 9; 22; 26), leaving the slight variations as proof of independent accounts, and as the testimony of different witnesses.

For fuller comment on the story that follows in vs. 5–17 see on ch. 10:9–48. In the comment on ch. 11:5–17 attention will be given only to those points not discussed under ch. 10. The variations in the narrative, as given in chs. 10; 11, are few and of little importance.

5. *It came even to me.* There is a vivid touch of personal recollection in the description of the sheet coming “even to me,” that is, toward me; it not only came down, but moved forward to Peter.

6. *I considered.* Or, “I was pondering.” Another vivid detail. The apostle recalls the intense, eager gaze with which he had looked on the strange vision.

9. *Call not thou common.* The admonition is directed at Peter’s judgment of men, not of beasts (see on ch. 10:28).

10. *Drawn up again.* A somewhat more vivid description than that in the parallel account in ch. 10:16.

11. *Where I was.* Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 10) between this and the reading “where we were,” including his six companions in the statement.

12. *The Spirit bade me.* Guided by the Spirit, Peter had raised no contention, as those “of the circumcision” were now doing. These were challenging what the Spirit had led Peter to do.

Nothing doubting. Textual evidence maybe cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of these words.

These six brethren. They had been his companions on the journey to Caesarea, and Peter had brought them to Jerusalem, that their statement might support his account, and that they might declare to the church what they had witnessed.

14. *Shall be saved.* The words are not found in the report of the angel’s speech in ch. 10:4–6, but are implied in it. Cornelius longed for salvation, and when he was told, in answer to his prayer, to send for a certain one who could speak to him, he knew he would hear of the way of salvation.

15. *I began.* The Holy Spirit was ready to act upon Cornelius and his family as soon as everyone involved was prepared psychologically and spiritually to appreciate what was to happen. The opening words of Peter’s sermon (ch. 10:34–43) doubtless brought his hearers to this point. So the Spirit is ever ready to bless, when men are ready to receive Him.

At the beginning. That is, at the Feast of Pentecost. These words of defense were spoken to fellow apostles and disciples who had shared in the Pentecostal gift. Peter testified that what he witnessed at Caesarea was no less certainly the Spirit’s work than what the disciples had experienced at the first.

16. *Remembered I.* What a wonderful experience it must have been to have the Spirit call to their minds the things Jesus Christ had taught them! This is what Christ had promised would happen (see John 14:26).

The word of the Lord. The special promise referred to was that recorded in ch. 1:5 concerning the baptism by the Holy Spirit. When it was given, the promise had seemed to the disciples to refer only to them. Now Peter saw the gift of the Spirit in a broader perspective, as one to be bestowed also on those who were not of Israel. Since the baptism of the Holy Spirit was given to them also, therefore, as the greater includes the lesser, they also were admissible to the baptism of water.

17. *Like.* Literally, “equal.” They were, equally with the Christian Jews, recipients of the Holy Spirit.

Who believed. Literally, “having believed,” definitely and finally. The words refer alike to “them” and to “us.” Thus the two cases are made parallel, as in v. 15. For just as the faith of Peter and the apostles existed before the gift of the Spirit, so with Cornelius

and his companions there existed, before the gift, a measure of faith (see on ch. 10:35). The measure of faith was sufficient in their case to qualify them for greater gifts, and their acceptability for baptism and for fellowship with the church became evident.

What was I? The clause reads literally, “I, who was I? Able to withstand God?” That is, how was I, being such a one as I am, able to withstand God?

18. Held their peace, and glorified. Or, “held their peace, and began glorifying.” The difference in tense of the two Greek verbs indicates that they first “held their peace,” and then began a continuous utterance of praise. However, important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the reading “glorified,” with the same tense as “held their peace.” The fact that Cornelius and his household received the Spirit of God was obviously of immense importance as bearing on the question soon to arise between Paul and the Judaizers (see Acts 15; Gal. 2). The Spirit led in the first step in the free admission of Gentiles into the church at the hands of Peter, and the formal approval of the apostles and the other Jewish Christians of Jerusalem was added.

To the Gentiles. The Jews thought very highly of themselves, as if God’s blessings had been designed for them only, and ill of other nations. “Thou madest the world for our sakes,” says the book of Esdras. “As for the other people ... thou hast said that they are nothing, but be like unto spittle. ... These heathen ... have ever been reputed as nothing” (2 Esdras 6:55–57). The expected Messiah was to save the Jews and make them a glorious people, but was to destroy all other nations or to enslave them to the Jews. To free the growing Christian church from this arrogant the Lord made the singular display of His Spirit on Cornelius and those with him.

The lesson that the church learned in the experience of Cornelius was that God designed that the “middle wall of partition” (Eph. 2:14) between Jews and Gentiles was to be broken down. Paul knew that the gospel of Christ must accomplish this breaking down. The typical ceremonies were brought to an end in Christ’s death. His saving grace and divine strength, imparted to the believer and enabling him to keep the law, remove the law’s condemnation from the sinner (Rom. 8:1–4). Since both Jew and Gentile benefit from this, there is no difference: all are condemned; all are saved who believe (Gal. 3:27–29); Col. 3:10, 11). Both groups are reconciled to God and brought into harmony with the heavenly Father (Eph. 2:11–22).

This is the “mystery” now revealed (Eph. 3:1–12). The grace of God had rested upon Israel in the flesh. They had not recognized that He intended it to extend also to the nations. Now in Christ all is made plain. The Gentiles may enter into the “fellowship of the mystery” (Eph. 3:9 of righteousness, which includes all in the same great plan of salvation).

Granted repentance. God gives repentance. Faith is the gift of God (Rom. 12:3), and so is the repentance that follows it (Rom. 2:4; 2 Tim. 2:25). Through His Spirit God had given these Gentiles not only the opportunity for, but the experience of, repentance. Changed in heart (cf. Jer. 24:7; Eze. 11:19; 36:26), repentant and forgiven, they were accepted of God. How, indeed, could Peter withstand God?

19. Scattered abroad. What now follows is a continuation of ch. 8:1–4. There has been a digression to tell the story of Philip’s work with the Samaritans and the Ethiopian, of Saul’s with the Cilicians, and of Peter’s with Cornelius and his household. This digression prepares the reader for the narrative that now follows, which tells of the conversion of Greeks to the gospel.

Persecution. Or, “tribulation.” Reference is to the persecution in which Saul had taken an active part (see chs. 8:1; 9:1, 2).

About Stephen. The death of the martyr was followed, as ch. 8:1–4 shows, by a fanatical outburst against the Christians in Jerusalem. This resulted in a dispersion of many believers. Philip labored in Samaria and Caesarea. Others went to Phoenicia, to the cities of Tyre, Sidon, and Ptolemais, and were probably instrumental in founding the churches mentioned in chs. 21:3–7; 27:3. In Cyprus the way was prepared for the later work of Barnabas and Saul (see ch. 13:4–13), See Persecution and Expansion of the Early Church.

As far as Phenice. That is, Phoenicia, the district in which were the important cities of Tyre and Sidon (see Vol. II, pp. 67-69).

Cyprus. See on ch. 13:4.

Antioch. Here is the first-mentioned contact between the infant Christian church and the capital of Syria. Following Rome, Alexandria, and Ephesus, Antioch was the greatest city of the Roman Empire, and long a chief Christian center. Perhaps Nicolas, the proselyte of Antioch (ch. 6:5), had returned to proclaim his new faith. The entrance of Christianity there was of great importance. Located on the Orontes River, some 15 mi. (24 km.) inland from the port of Seleucia, Antioch, founded by Seleucus I Nicator about 300 B.C. and named after his father Antiochus, had grown in wealth and importance to be the leading city of Asia. The world acclaimed its men of letters and literature. To one of them, Archias, Cicero made a famous oration. Juvenal recognized the influence of Antioch upon Roman life and taste by declaring: “What fraction of our dregs come from Greece? The Syrian Orontes has long since poured into the Tiber, bringing with it its lingo and its manners, its flutes and its slanting harpstrings” (*Satires* iii. 62–64; Loeb ed., p. 37).

Antioch had a large colony of Jews, in honor of whom Herod the Great built a marble colonnade that ran the length of the city. Antioch was headquarters for the Roman prefect, or propraetor, of Syria. Christianity found itself at Antioch in closer contact with Greek culture than at Jerusalem or Caesarea. Here also it encountered heathenism in its most tempting and debasing forms. Its groves to Daphne were famous for their voluptuous, idolatrous worship. It was an amazing victory that the church was able to make Antioch one of its principal headquarters.

To none but unto the Jews only. Or, “to no one but Jews.” This, of course, was to be expected from those who had left Jerusalem before the conversion of Cornelius had occurred, or had become generally known. They had not been informed, as had Peter, that the time had come to carry out Christ’s prophetic command to its fullest extent (ch. 1:8). The singling out of the Jews is apparently noted in contrast both with the preceding narrative concerning Peter and Cornelius and with the following statement of missionary labors.

20. Men of Cyprus and Cyrene. In the case of these men, with their more cosmopolitan background, there was probably less hesitation about mixing with Gentiles than there was among the Jews of Palestine, the home of the Jewish nation and the stronghold of their prejudices. Who these men were we can only conjecture: possibly Lucius of Cyrene, who appears in the list of prophets in ch. 13:1; possibly Simon of Cyrene, who, there is reason to think, was a disciple of Christ (see on Matt. 27:32; see Mark 15:21). The founders of the church in Antioch must remain unknown.

To Antioch. See on v. 19.

Spake. The tense of the Greek verb used here implies that they began to speak and continued speaking.

Grecians. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 10) mainly between two readings: *Hellēnistai*, Greek-speaking Jews, or, more broadly, “Greek speakers,” and *Hellēnai*, Greeks by descent—or, more loosely in the NT, Gentiles—the weight of evidence inclining slightly in favor of the former. If we accept *Hellēnistai*, as the KJV does, then we must suppose that the stress is upon the fact that the evangelists, instead of speaking to the Jews at large (many of whom, being Syrians, would speak Aramaic), preached especially to the Greek-speaking Jews and proselytes. If so, they followed in Stephen’s footsteps, and indirectly prepared the way for Paul; for the *Hellēnistai* were, as a body, the link between the Jews, as a race, and the *Hellēnai*, who were Gentiles.

On the whole, however, other evidence tips the scale in favor of the reading, *Hellēnai*, Greeks (Gentiles). Several reasons support this reading: (1) Since the *Hellēnistai* were Jews, Luke would naturally include them among the Jews of v. 19, and so there would be no contrast indicated by their mention in v. 20. Luke would scarcely have had occasion to call attention to the fact that the preaching at Antioch was to *Hellēnistai*, Greek Jews, for there was a large number of them already in the church at Jerusalem (see ch. 6:1), and probably these Grecian and Cyprian teachers were themselves Greek Jews. But special mention by Luke *is* appropriate if they began preaching to the *Hellēnai*, that is, Greeks (Gentiles), in Antioch. (2) The contrast thus drawn between Jews and *Hellēnai* is an entirely natural one (see chs. 14:1; 18:4), and if the word *Hellēnai* is the true reading, here is a needed note of progress. Later references clearly imply the presence of Gentile Christians in Antioch of Syria (ch. 15:1, 28–31; AA 155–161, 188). (3) Also, if these were *Hellēnai*, they may not have been entirely heathen idolaters when they were converted. Perhaps, like Cornelius, some of them already feared God (see on ch. 10:2), and were attending the services of the synagogue (cf. the Corinthians, Acts 18:4).

Whether the conversion of the *Hellēnai* in this chapter preceded or followed the conversion of Cornelius cannot be known—the data are insufficient to provide an answer. It seems probable that the work went on at Antioch for many months among the Hellenistic and other Jews, and that the men of Cyprus and Cyrene arrived after the experience with Cornelius had set in motion forces that brought about the removal of restraints against reaching non-Jews.

Preaching. See on ch. 10:36.

21. Hand of the Lord. The expression is a common one in the OT for the direct interposition of God in the affairs of the world. See Ex. 14:31: “And Israel saw that great work [Heb. *yad*, “hand”] which the Lord did upon the Egyptians.” Compare the statement of the Egyptians magicians: “This is the finger of God” (Ex. 8:19). The expression makes vivid the truth of a very personal God.

A great number believed. Here is a further record of phenomenal increase in the church. See chs. 2:47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7; 8:6, 12; see on chs. 9:31; 11:24.

22. Tidings of these things. Or, “the report concerning them,” that is, concerning these converts at Antioch. If, as is probable, the new converts were Gentiles, the apparently favorable reception that the news of their conversion received at Jerusalem was doubtless due to the acceptance that probably already had been accorded to Cornelius.

Church ... in Jerusalem. See on ch. 8:14.

Persecution and Expansion, c. A.D. 34–c. A.D. 45

8



Sent forth Barnabas. To strengthen the work at Antioch and to give it the approval and direction of the church in Jerusalem, even as Peter and John had been sent into Samaria (ch. 8:14). Perhaps the choice fell upon Barnabas because he was known to sympathize with the work going on in Antioch. He was a friend of Saul, whom he had introduced to certain of the disciples at Jerusalem (ch. 9:27), and he must have known of Saul’s convictions and hopes regarding the Gentiles. Therefore he would welcome the opportunity to work in the same way. The fact that he was of the same country as some of the missionaries working in Antioch would further qualify him.

That he should go. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of this expression.

⁸Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Ac 10:28). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

As far as Antioch. Barnabas may have visited other congregations on the way to Antioch.

23. Grace of God. For comment see on Rom. 3:24.

Was glad. Barnabas saw in the new work only that which would call for his approval, and the fact that more members were being added to the church was a source of deep joy to him. In fact, the whole Christian experience and program should at all times be one of continuous and undiminished rejoicing.

Exhorted. Or, “began exhorting.” The tense may be understood to imply the beginning of continuous action.

Purpose. Barnabas wished them to be able to say, with the psalmist, “My heart is fixed” (Ps. 57:7; Ps. 108:1).

Cleave unto the Lord. Allegiance must be to Jesus Christ Himself, and must remain in Him “with purpose of heart,” as is indicated in the preceding phrase. Barnabas had seen the result of the operation of God’s grace upon those of Antioch, but he knew, as every true pastor knows, that man’s will, or lack of it, can frustrate that grace. “Once saved, always saved” is not true; men backslide and apostatize, and the cooperation of man’s will is necessary to bring the work of sanctification to completion.

24. Good. Or, “upright” (see Luke 18:18, 19). Applied to Barnabas, this was high praise, and no doubt expressed Luke’s personal opinion of the man. He was perhaps careful to put this recommendation into the record because he would shortly have to narrate the contention that was to separate Barnabas from Luke’s own friend and fellow worker, Saul of Tarsus (Acts 15:39).

Full of the Holy Ghost. A man of character like Barnabas, eminent among the Greek Jews of Antioch, would have a great influence among both Jews and Greeks in the city. The same qualification is given for Stephen (ch. 6:5). It was in consequence of the persecution following Stephen’s death that the preachers had come to Antioch. Some of them may have been Grecians who had been active in the work for which Stephen was martyred.

Much people. Literally, “a great multitude,” implying a large increase over the work related in v. 21. The approval of the church in Jerusalem on what was being done, as expressed in the joy and encouragement of Barnabas, “the son of exhortation,” would increase the zeal of these earnest workers for Christ.

25. Barnabas to Tarsus. This is significant. It presupposes that Saul would approve the work that was going forward in Antioch, and shows the confidence of Barnabas that Saul was the right person to aid in the work there. It implies, too, that some intercourse had been maintained with Saul by letter or messenger since his departure from Jerusalem. Saul, it is to be inferred, had remained in and around Tarsus, preaching the gospel there and in the neighboring towns of Cilicia (see pp. 101, 102; see on ch. 15:41).

To seek Saul. Literally, “to hunt up Saul.” He to whom the Lord had appeared, and who had been marked as a “chosen vessel” (ch. 9:15) to carry the name of Christ to the Gentiles, was now asked to join Barnabas in this new work of preaching to the Gentiles at Antioch. Doubtless having already heard of the operation of the power of God there, Saul accepted the invitation.

26. A whole year. Unlike preceding instances, here the length of time is given with exactness. Saul had preached at Damascus and at Jerusalem with his life in his hands, so

to speak. With the church at Antioch he found a degree of quiet and a wide scope of opportunity suited to his earnestness.

With the church. Or, “in the church.” Not in the church building—buildings were not in the possession of the church until the 3d century—but in the congregations. Those interested met with the believers and were incorporated into the body of the church as rapidly as they fully accepted the gospel message.

Taught much people. See on vs. 21, 24.

Were called Christians. Rather, “received the name of Christians.” The Roman emperor Julian, called the Apostate (A.D. 361–363), noted that the tendency to invent nicknames as a form of satire characterized the population of Antioch in his time. The same tendency doubtless prevailed at the time of the first appearance of Christianity. The first syllable of the word Christian is from the Greek *Christos*, “Christ,” while the ending is essentially Latin, and comparable to such words as *Pompeiani*, the followers of Pompey, and other party names. Similarly in the Gospels appears an analogous term, Herodians (*Herodianai*; Matt. 22:16), which apparently reflects Roman association. Possibly also, the name was given in ridicule to Christians by the heathen, somewhat as the term *Lutherani* was used derisively 15 centuries later by the enemies of Luther’s followers.

Apparently the disciples of Christ did not give the name to themselves; and since the use of it would imply that those who bore it were followers of the Messiah, the Christ, it is certain that it would not be given to them by the Jews. The reason for the new term is apparent. When these new Gentile converts joined the church at Antioch, none of the former names would embrace the entire cosmopolitan body. They were no longer all Nazarenes or Galileans or Greek Jews, and in the eyes of the people of Antioch they must have seemed a strange mixture. Therefore, the hybrid term “Christians,” a Greek word with a Latin termination, would seem to fit them. At a later time, what had been at first a taunt became a name in which to glory: “If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed” (1 Peter 4:16).

Tradition, however, ascribes the origin of the name to Euodius, the first bishop of Antioch. Ignatius, the successor of Euodius as leader of the church there, used it frequently.

27. In these days. See Additional Notes on Chapter 12, Note 2.

Came prophets. A fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel, referred to by Peter in his Pentecostal sermon (ch. 2:17), that there should be prophets in the infant church (see Acts 13:1, 2; Eph. 2:20). We cannot, however, gather from NT records a clear description of what this office of the “prophets” was. They were men who possessed a gift of the Spirit, who were sometimes occupied in preaching and explaining the Word of God, and sometimes had the power of foretelling future events, as Agabus did here (see Acts 13:1; 15:32; 19:6; 21:9, 10; Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:10, 28, 29; 13:2; 14:6, 29–37). The mission of the prophets must obviously be taken as a further approval given by the church at Jerusalem to the work that Saul and Barnabas were carrying on at Antioch.

28. Agabus. The same prophet appears later in the narrative at Caesarea (ch. 21:10, 11).

Signified by the Spirit. Compare the statement of ch. 21:11.

Great dearth. This famine is probably that mentioned by Josephus (*Antiquities* xx. 2. 5), who tells how Helena, queen of Adiabene, east of the Tigris, while visiting at Jerusalem helped the people by obtaining for them corn from Alexandria and dried figs from Cyprus. This famine may be seen as a partial fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy in Matt. 24:7. For its bearing on NT chronology see pp. 98, 100; Additional Notes on ch. 12, Note 1.

World. Gr. *oikoumenē*, a word referring to the inhabited earth. In Luke 2:1; 4:5, and elsewhere in the NT, it is used for the Roman Empire.

Claudius Caesar. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of "Caesar." The reign of Claudius lasted from A.D. 41 to 54, which period was memorable for frequent famines (Suetonius *Claudius* xviii. 2; Tacitus *Annals* xii. 43).

29. Then the disciples. That is, the church of Antioch.

According to his ability. Literally, "as each prospered." Apparently the collection was made, in consequence of the prophecy, before the famine itself came. Undoubtedly Saul and Barnabas were active in stirring up the Gentiles to support this charity. It was the first of those collections for the "poor saints ... at Jerusalem" (Rom. 15:25, 26) that were afterward so prominent in Paul's labors (cf. Acts 24:17; 1 Cor. 16:1; 2 Cor. 9; Gal. 2:10), and that the apostle regarded as a bond of union between the Jewish and the Gentile sections of the church. The liberality of the converts in Jerusalem in the glory of their first love (Acts 2:45), together with their subsequent persecution (ch. 8:1), probably had left them more exposed than most others to the pressure of poverty. Thus when the famine came it may have found them to a great extent dependent on the help of churches located in areas not affected by the famine. The church at Antioch set a worthy example for other churches.

30. Elders. Gr. *presbuteroi*, "older [men]," and so "elders," "presbyters." This is the first notice of such officers in the Christian church. They were probably not the apostles, for elders are mentioned separately from apostles in ch. 15:2, 4, 6. Henceforth they appear as a prominent element of church organization. The term "elder," and to a considerable extent the office in the church to which it referred, had backgrounds in both Gentile and Jewish life. Papyri from Egypt show that the "elders" played an important role in the economic life of local villagers. Thus appeals were made to them in questions regarding the renting of land and the payment of taxes (see J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, p. 535). In Asia Minor the term was used for the members of a corporation, and in Egypt, for the priests of a temple (see A. Deissmann, *Bible Studies*, pp. 156, 233). In Jewish life "elder" (*presbuteros*) was used to designate the leader of a local synagogue, as is shown by the Theodotus Inscription (see on ch. 6:9). It was also used for lay members (Heb. *zeqenim*) of the Sanhedrin (see on ch. 4:5). The term thus lay ready at hand for the Christian church to adopt for their officers who held the primary responsibilities in their local congregations. In addition to these local responsibilities, the elders in the church at Jerusalem may also have occupied a position somewhat analogous to that of the *zeqenim* in the Jewish Sanhedrin, inasmuch as they, with the apostles, are seen in ch. 15 to have had some authority beyond the limits of their own congregation. In the present instance it was to them that the funds collected at Antioch were sent for distribution to those in need, by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

In the early church the elder was also known as an *episkopos*, meaning “overseer,” a word that has come into English as “bishop.” Although historically, at least since the 3d century A.D., the terms “presbyter” (elder) and “bishop” have represented two different officers of the church, the evidence of the NT indicates clearly that in apostolic times the two terms referred to the same official (cf. 1 Tim. 3:2–7 with Titus 1:5–9; see on Acts 20:28; cf. Phil. 1:1). Clement of Rome (c. A.D. 96) appears to equate the two (*Epistle to the Corinthians* 44), and Chrysostom (d. A.D. 407) declared, “In olden times the elders were called overseers [or bishops] and ministers [or deacons] of Christ, and the overseers, elders” (*First Homily on Epistle to the Corinthians* 1, in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 62, col. 183).

According to Jame’s epistle one of the duties of an elder is visiting the sick, praying to the Lord for their restoration to health, and anointing them with oil for healing (ch. 5:14). For a discussion of later developments in the offices of elder and bishop see pp. 26, 38–43.

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1–4AA 141; SR 290
 12 AA 137; SR 290
 15–17AA 141; SR 290
 17 AA 193
 18 AA 142; SR 291
 19 AA 155
 20 AA 166
 20–25AA 156
 21,24 SR 301
 26 AA 157; SR 302
 27–306T 271

CHAPTER 12

1 *King Herod persecuteth the Christians, killeth James, and imprisoneth Peter; whom an angel delivereth upon the prayers of the church.* 20 *In his pride taking to himself the honour due to God, he is stricken by an angel, and dieth miserably.* 24 *After his death, the word of God prospereth.*

1. About that time. The event here narrated must have occurred not long before the death of Herod Agrippa I (see vs. 20–23). Since he died in A.D. 44, the events of the early part of this chapter can be dated perhaps the year previously or in the early months of A.D. 44.

Herod the king. Herod Agrippa I was the son of Aristobulus and Berenice, grandson of Herod the Great and the Hasmonaean princess Mariamne, and brother of the Herodias who appears in the story of John the Baptist (see Vol. V, p. 40). He was named after the statesman who was the chief minister of Augustus. After his father had fallen a victim in 7 B.C. to the suspicious of his grandfather, Herod the Great (see Vol. V, p. 42), he was sent to Rome, partly as a hostage and partly to keep him out of involvement in intrigues. There he became an intimate of Caligula and Claudius, both of whom later became emperors. When Herod Antipas married Herod Agrippa’s sister Herodias, Agrippa was made the market overseer of Tiberias, but he soon quarreled with Antipas and went to Rome. Here he fell under the displeasure of Tiberius, because he expressed a rash wish

that his friend Caligula might become emperor. He was imprisoned by Tiberius and remained in confinement until the death of that emperor. When Caligula succeeded Tiberius on the throne, he loaded his friend Agrippa with honors, gave him the tetrarchies, first of Philip and then of Lysanias (Luke 3:1), and bestowed upon him the title of king. When Antipas was deposed (see Vol. V, p. 65), Agrippa fell heir to his territories also. For a sketch of his reign see Vol. V, pp. 69, 234.

Stretched forth his hands. Rather, “laid hands on.”

To vex. That is, “to injure,” or “to afflict.” Since Agrippa was anxious to be looked upon as a devoted Jew, he could easily be aroused by the Jews to attack the Christians. Therefore he began a persecution of the church, “spoiling the houses and goods of the believers” (AA 143).

2. Killed James. Had the apostle been guilty of blasphemy or heresy the Sanhedrin would have sentenced him to death by stoning. As in the case of John the Baptist (Matt. 14:10), the decapitation of the apostle James shows that his death was decreed by a civil ruler, who employed Roman methods of punishment (cf. Matt. 20:23). Why Herod should have selected James as his first victim can only be conjectured; but as James preached the gospel, he may have continued to occupy the prominent position that he had shared with Peter and John in the gospel story. He may have been marked by a natural vehemence, for he was called a son of thunder (Mark 3:17). A tradition, preserved by Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* ii. 9) from Clement of Alexandria, records that James’s accuser became converted when he beheld the faith and patience of his victim.

James filled a short ministry of only 13 years after Christ’s ascension. Of the apostles, he died first, whereas John, his brother, was probably the last of the Twelve to die.

With the sword. Death by the sword was a Roman mode of punishment, which, according to the Mishnah (*Sanhedrin* 7. 3, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 354), was also employed at times by the Jews.

3. Pleased the Jews. This was Agrippa’s object. Josephus notices this. Comparing Agrippa with Antipas, he says that the latter “was more friendly to the Greeks than to the Jews,” but that Agrippa “was not at all like” Antipas (*Antiquities* xix. 7. 3).

An incident is related in the Mishnah (*Sotah* 7. 8; Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 202) that illustrates the sensitiveness of the king to popular praise or blame. At a Feast of Tabernacles in a sabbatical year, King Agrippa was reading the law. When he came to the words of Deut. 17:15: “Thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother,” his eyes overflowed with tears at the thought of his own Idumaeen descent. The people saw him weeping, and thinking rather of his Hasmonaeen ancestry, cried out, “Our brother art thou our brother art thou!” and the king’s heart was comforted.

Unless it was chiefly the Jewish leaders whom Agrippa wished to please, this story implies that a great change must have occurred from the earlier popular feeling in favor of the apostles, indicated so plainly in chs. 2:47; 5:26. Doubtless this change was caused by the rapid increase in the membership of the church.

Proceeded further to take. Literally, “added to take,” seizing Peter as well as James. The expression is a close translation of a common Hebrew idiom.

Peter also. Peter, being an outstanding figure among the Twelve, was a logical object of Herod’s attack.

Days of unleavened bread. This expression refers to the whole feast of the Passover, as may be seen from Luke 22:1: “The feast of unleavened bread . . . , which is called the Passover.”

4. Put him in prison. To keep him a prisoner until the termination of the feast.

Four quaternions. A quaternion was a squad of four men, used to maintain a watch. Probably two soldiers were chained to the prisoner and two stood guard outside (see on v. 10). Four such squads were appointed to have charge of Peter, apparently in rotation.

Easter. Gr. *pascha*, “Passover.” The translation “Easter” is an unfortunate one. As noted above, the whole paschal feast is meant, and not merely a single day of it. Peter was arrested about the beginning of the Passover feast (the Passover meal was eaten during the night that began the 15th of Nisan), and the king’s intention was to sentence and punish him after the feast had come to an end on the 21st.

The word “Easter” is of Anglo-Saxon origin, derived from the Norse *Eôstre*, the goddess of spring, in whose honor a festival was celebrated each year at the time of the vernal equinox. The term “Easter” now properly describes only the Christian festival that took the place of the Passover day. It first appears in Christian history in the 2d century, and was celebrated as the festival of the resurrection. The Roman bishops urged that its celebration fall always on a Sunday. (Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* v. 23–25), a custom that doubtless contributed to the practice of weekly Sunday observance. See p. 50.

To bring him forth. Literally, “to lead him up” for condemnation, as Pilate led Jesus forth to the judgment seat (John 19:13).

5. Peter ... was kept. Implying at least several days’ imprisonment.

Without ceasing. Gr. *ektenōs*, “earnestly,” the same word that is used in the description of Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane (Luke 22:44). The word is translated “fervent” in 1 Peter 4:8, and implies intensity. From the general situation of the church it may be supposed that these prayers were offered by groups of Christians meeting in private homes (Acts 12:12), for the persecution by Agrippa would render open Christian services dangerous, as was often the case in the early days of Christianity.

6. Would have brought. Literally, “was about to bring,” an additional evidence of the passage of time between Peter’s arrest and the moment of his intended execution.

The same night. Or, “on that very night.”

Peter was sleeping. It is an inspiration and a challenge to faith to see the calm repose of the apostle, as of one to whom God had given the sleep of His beloved (see Ps. 127:2), undisturbed by the fear of coming suffering and death.

Keepers. Or, “guards,” that is, probably the two soldiers of the quaternion who were not chained to the prisoner.

7. The angel. Rather, “an angel.”

Came upon. Gr. *ephistēmi*, literally, “to stand over,” the same verb that is used of the angels’ appearing to the shepherds (Luke 2:9).

A light shined. Just as the “glory of the Lord shone round about” the shepherds, so now the presence of the angel brought heavenly glory into the dark prison.

Prison. Gr. *oikēma*, “dwelling,” “chamber,” “cell.” The Athenians used this term as a euphemism for “prison.”

Raised him up. Or, “roused him up.” The verb indicates that the angel woke Peter from his sleep, but not necessarily that he helped him to arise.

His chains fell off. Peter was bound by chains to two members of the squad of soldiers. Though the chains dropped from his ankles and wrists, the guards did not awake.

8. Gird thyself. When he lay down to sleep, Peter would naturally have put aside his cloak, loosened the girdle that bound his tunic, and removed his sandals. To gird oneself was a necessary preparation for journeying (see Ex. 12:11; 2 Kings 4:29).

Garment. Gr. *himation*, the outer robe, or mantle, as distinguished from the undertunic (see Vol. V, p. 47).

Follow me. The angel made no explanation, but simply freed Peter from his shackles, which act was sufficient evidence to justify the apostle’s following him in faith.

9. Wist not. To Peter the situation evidently seemed very similar to his vivid trance and vision recorded in ch. 10. He must have thought he would wake to find himself chained to the two soldiers, as before he had wakened to realize that he had had a vision on the housetop while praying.

10. Ward. Gr. *phulakē*, “guard.” “The first and the second ward” may refer to guards stationed near the inner door of the prison and at a door some distance away, or possibly to guards chained to him and others at the door (see on v. 4). Perhaps Peter had been placed in an inner dungeon, and thus needed to be led through two courtyards.

Unto the city. Apparently the prison was inside the city. It may have been in the Tower of Antonia (see Vol. V, p. 225; cf. below on “went out”).

His own accord. Rather, “its own accord,” the idea being that no human agency was employed (cf. Lev. 25:5). Doubtless the gate was opened by an unseen angel.

The simple and almost casual way in which Luke records this miracle is a testimony to the accuracy of his record.

Went out. There is some textual evidence (cf. p. 10) for the reading, “going out they descended the seven steps and passed on through one street.” Although this reading cannot be shown to be original, it implies a more detailed acquaintance with Jerusalem than we now have. It may be based upon a tradition that Peter was imprisoned in the Tower of Antonia, which seems to have been entered by a flight of stairs (see ch. 21:34, 35, 40).

Street. Gr. *rhumē*, a word meaning either a street or an alley.

The angel departed. When supernatural aid was no longer necessary, he allowed Peter to take the further steps necessary for his escape.

11. Come to himself. Peter finds himself free in the cool night air in the open street.

The Lord. Peter had no doubt as to the source of this timely aid.

Delivered me. As before (ch. 5:19), Peter’s Master had sent His angel to deliver him. There could be no question now as to the reality of his freedom.

12. Considered. Or, “understood,” “comprehended.” At first Peter had been “like them that dream” (Ps. 126:1) in regard to his deliverance from prison, but at last his mind could grasp the wonderful truth and he could act upon it. The verb indicates that he also perceived the circumstances surrounding the deliverance; he took in at a glance the whole situation and realized what he should do.

Mary. This Mary was related to Barnabas (see Col. 4:10, where Mark is designated “sister’s son to Barnabas,” though the expression in Greek means rather “cousin to Barnabas”). As Mark’s father is not mentioned, Mary may have been a widow. Like Barnabas (see Acts 4:36, 37), she apparently possessed means, for she was able to have a house which was large enough to serve the church as a meeting place for prayer.

John. Since Peter speaks of Mark as his “son” (1 Peter 5:13), it may be that the young man was converted by him. The Latin name *Marcus* suggests some point of contact with Romans or Roman Jews.

Gathered together praying. Literally, “gathered together and praying.” Probably such gatherings were usual in Mary’s house. At the time Peter was being delivered from prison the group were earnestly praying (see v. 5) for his deliverance, for they realized that the church was in an hour of crisis.

13. Peter knocked. When the angel opened the prison doors, the supernatural intervened to meet an extraordinary need. But only a few minutes after the miracle of his deliverance, Peter had to knock at the door of a house to have his need of admission met in the usual way.

Gate. Gr. *pulōn*, see on Matt. 26:71.

A damsel. Gr. *paidiskē*, “a young girl,” “a servant girl.”

To hearken. A sense of danger is here implied—danger because of the persecution that Agrippa’s zeal for Judaism was bringing to the disciples. Saul had formerly entered into every house and carried off men and women to prison (ch. 8:3), and there was prospect of a like danger now. Therefore Rhoda would not open the door until she knew who might be seeking admission.

Rhoda. A common Greek name meaning “rose.” Rhoda is not mentioned apart from this experience, but few servants are so well known. Like the thief on the cross, the Mary who washed Jesus’ feet, and the unnamed widow who put the two mites into the offering box of the Temple, Rhoda has been known to every Bible reader for 19 centuries.

14. Peter’s voice. Doubtless the young woman’s Christian love for a devoted and courageous soldier of the cross had led her to listen carefully to Peter when she had had opportunity, and she knew his voice. Then too, Peter had a touch of Galilean dialect in his speech, which had caused him to be recognized by a servant girl on a previous occasion (Matt. 26:73).

For gladness. It was not because of lack of faith, but from sheer joy, that Rhoda did not open the door for Peter. She had shared in the anxiety of the brethren for Peter and in the prayers offered in his behalf. Her eager desire to tell the good news of Peter’s escape caused her to lose her presence of mind. Similarly Luke recorded of the disciples on the evening of the resurrection that when they recognized Jesus they “believed not for joy” (Luke 24:41).

15. Thou art mad. When Rhoda brought the news that Peter was at the door, the brethren could not believe her. They did not have enough faith to believe that God had answered their prayers. Therefore, they concluded, the young woman must be out of her mind.

Constantly affirmed. That is, stoutly asserted, confidently averred.

His angel. In Hebrews (ch. 1:14) the sound belief of the Jews concerning angels is expressed in the question, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” The Jews believed that a guardian angel was

assigned to each man, and that when the angel appeared in human form he assumed the man's likeness. During the intertestamental period the Jews developed a complicated angelology.

16. Continued knocking. Peter was as persistent in knocking for admission as the believers were in praying for his deliverance.

Were astonished. It would be hard to find a better illustration of the unwillingness of even good people to believe that prayers are definitely and specifically answered. When Peter stood before them, they could scarcely concede that it was he. Yet Jesus had given the fullest guarantee to His followers that their prayers of faith would be answered (John 14:13, 14).

17. Brought him out. When he had been released from prison and had come to himself, he had exclaimed, "The Lord hath sent his angel" (v. 11). Now he testified that it was the Lord who had delivered him.

Go shew. Gr. *apaggellō*, "to carry tidings," "to bring word," "to declare."

James. This is undoubtedly the James who presided over the council at Jerusalem concerning circumcision, and who gave his decision on that question (ch. 15:13). Thus he was in some sense the presiding elder of the church at Jerusalem, and it was natural for Peter to wish him to have news immediately of his deliverance.

This James may have been the son of Alphaeus or the James who was a brother of the Lord. Jesus' brothers did not believe in Him until the close of His life on earth, long after the Twelve had been chosen. To the James who was one of the pillars of the church in Jerusalem, after the death of James the son of Zebedee, Paul gives the express title "the Lord's brother" (Gal. 1:19; cf. ch. 2:9). This is probably the James to whom Peter here refers. Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* ii. 23; Loeb ed., vol. 1, p. 171) calls him bishop of Jerusalem, and quotes Hegesippus' *Memoirs* (A.D. 180) concerning James, which, though not necessarily exact, probably preserve some elements of truth: "He was called the 'Just' by all men from the Lord's time to ours, since many are called James, but he was holy from his mother's womb. He drank no wine or strong drink, nor did he eat flesh; no razor went upon his head; he did not anoint himself with oil, and he did not go to the baths. He alone was allowed to enter into the sanctuary, for he did not wear wool but linen, and he used to enter alone into the temple and be found kneeling and praying for forgiveness for the people, so that his knees grew hard like a camel's because of his constant worship of God, kneeling and asking forgiveness for the people." "According to tradition, he was carried up to a pinnacle of the Temple, and when he refused to disown Christ, and insisted on holding to his belief in Him, he was thrown down, and stoned, and beaten to death by the club of a fuller (see vol. V, p. 71). According to Josephus (*Antiquities* xx. 9. 1) he was stoned to death. See Introduction to the book of James.

Palestine Under Herod Agrippa I

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⁹Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Ac 11:23). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.



Into another place. Peter's removal to another place was in accordance with the command the Lord gave to the Twelve (Matt. 10:23). There is no way of knowing to what place Peter made his escape. Some Roman Catholic writers have insisted that he went to Rome, and after founding the church there returned to Jerusalem in time for the council recorded in Acts 15. Others have suggested that he went to Antioch, which is perhaps less improbable, but there are no traces of his presence there until after the Jerusalem Council (unless Gal. 2:1–10 is equated with Acts 11:30; see Additional Notes on ch. 15, Note 1; cf. Gal. 2:12). Some nearer city, such as Lydda or Joppa, may well have sufficed for a place of refuge. The fact that the name of the place is not given suggests that it was comparatively unimportant for Luke's record.

18. No small stir. The guards who had been chained to Peter must have discovered as soon as they awoke that he had gone, and they knew that their lives were to be forfeited because of his escape.

This is the end of the Scripture record of Peter's activities. Reference has already been made to Paul's mention of him in Galatians (chs. 1:18; 2:7, 8, 11, 14). Peter gives a few hints of his doings in his two epistles (1 Peter 1:1; 5:12, 13; 1 Peter 1:14). Otherwise nothing further is known of him from any inspired record. Tradition has a great deal to say, but its claims must be accepted or rejected on their own merits. The statement in Jerome's paraphrase of Eusebius' *Chronicon*, that Peter preached for 25 years in Rome, is made highly questionable by the fact that Peter was in Jerusalem for the council (Acts 15); that he was present in Antioch apparently following the council 2 (Gal. 2:11–14; see Additional Note on Acts 15); and that he himself hints of labors in the northwest region

of Asia Minor (1 Peter 1:1; see Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* iii. 1). In the light of Acts 8–12, all of this must have come subsequent to Peter's release in A.D. 44.

19. Be put to death. Literally, "that they should be led away," that is, to execution. The same verb is rendered "led ... away" in the accounts given in the Gospels of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus (Matt. 26:57; 27:2, 31; Mark 14:53; Luke 23:26). A Roman law promulgated about A.D. 529, declares: "The custody and care of imprisoned persons devolves upon the jailor, who must not think that some abject and vile dependent will be responsible, if a prisoner should, in any way escape, for We desire that he himself shall suffer the same penalty to which the prisoner who escaped is shown to have been liable" (*The Code of Justinian* ix. 4. 4; in S. P. Scott, tr., *The Civil Law*, vol. 14, p. 364). Doubtless this had long been the law, or at least the usage, in respect to a guard from whom a prisoner escaped. At Philippi, the jailer, when he thought his prisoners had all escaped, was ready to commit suicide rather than meet the death penalty at the hands of the law (Acts 16:27). Compare ch. 27:42.

To Caesarea. Agrippa, not a Roman governor, was in power at Caesarea at this time, for Josephus says that he had received Judea and Samaria from Claudius, in addition to the districts over which he had ruled under Caligula (*Antiquities* xix. 8. 2).

20. Was highly displeased. Or, "was exasperated," "was in a hostile state of mind," implying a deep-seated feeling of anger.

Tyre and Sidon. These two Phoenician cities, seats of maritime industry, were not subject to Agrippa. They were in a sense autonomous, though under the control of Rome. Perhaps Agrippa's regard for the people at Berytus (*Beirût*) another Phoenician seaport a little north of Sidon, may have been connected with his anger at the people of the two older cities. Josephus gives an account of the splendid buildings that Agrippa built in Beirut (*ibid.* 7. 5; see Vol. V, p. 69). It is clear that in some way the royal anger made itself felt, interfering with the commercial prosperity of Tyre and Sidon.

They came. That is, they joined in a common embassy and sent persons from both towns to make representations and to use their influence to appease Herod's anger.

Blastus. Nothing else is known of this man. The title of "chamberlain," found in inscriptions, was common in the Byzantine period. From imperial usage it was taken over into European courts. It meant, literally, the officer who had charge of the king's bedchamber, and designated a sort of highly placed secretary. It is possible that the representatives from the two cities secured his friendship by means of bribes.

Desired peace. That is, "were asking for peace." It is not to be understood from these words that Agrippa was actually making war on Tyre and Sidon, but only that he was on unfriendly terms with them. See 1 Kings 5:11; Eze. 27:17, which show the identity of the commercial needs of the two countries at widely separated intervals in their history.

Was nourished. The extent of Herod's rule was wide (see Vol. V, pp. 69, 234), and if he favored another port and diverted traffic from Tyre and Sidon, he could seriously cripple their trade.

21. A set day. Josephus says (*Antiquities* xix. 8. 2) that this was a day appointed for holding a festival on which to make vows for the safety of Caesar.

Sat. For a graphic description of the incident see Josephus *Antiquities* xviii. 6–8; xix. 8. 2. See Additional Notes at end of chapter, Note 1.

An oration. Or, a popular harangue.

22. *The people.* Gr. *dēmos*, “the mass of the people”; the pagan populace, assembled in a public place. Luke alone uses this word, and he uses it only in non-Jewish settings.

The voice of a god. Probably in the sense of pagan worship of the emperor, not of a celestial being (see on v. 21).

23. *Smote him.* In v. 7 an angel smote Peter to awake and save him. Here, by striking contrast, and angel smites Herod to destroy him. Smiting by a divine agency usually implies a severe judgment (see 1 Sam. 25:38; 2 Kings 19:35; Acts 23:3).

Gave not God the glory. The words do not necessarily mean merely that Agrippa had failed to ascribe to God the praise that was due Him, and Him only. To give God the glory always involved taking such action, appropriate to the circumstances, that would glorify God. Sometimes this meant the confession of sin and weakness, as in Joshua 7:19 (cf. on John 9:24).

Eaten of worms. Josephus, in his parallel account, does not name the specific form of the disease. Luke’s more detailed description may reflect his profession, though it is to be doubted that “eaten of worms” is intended as a technical description of a specific disease. This was a divine judgment. Being eaten of worms was always regarded by the ancients as a divine chastisement, because of its loathsome character. There are several instances of it recorded in history: Pheretima, queen of Cyrene (Herodotus *History* iv. 205); Antiochus Epiphanes (2 Macc. 9:5–10). Herod the Great (Josephus *Antiquities* xvii. 6.5); and Galerius, an enemy of the church in the time of Diocletian’s persecution, A.D. 303–313 (Lactantius *On the Manner in Which the Persecutors Died* 33). A similar account is given of a death of Philip II of Spain. Agrippa died in A.D. 44, in the seventh year of his reign, at the age of 53.

Gave up the ghost. See on ch. 5:5.

24. *Word of God grew and multiplied.* See chs. 6:7; 19:20; see on ch. 11:24. “The seed is the word” (Luke 8:11), said Christ, and so the Christian historian, Luke, tells us that the word was as a seed: when it was cast forth diligently, it grew and bore fruit. The words describe a continuous expansion. The death of Agrippa, as the chief persecutor, left the preachers of the gospel free to proclaim their message, and they were not slow to avail themselves of the opportunity.

25. *Barnabas and Saul returned.* That is, from their visit to Jerusalem (ch. 11:27–30) to their labors among the Gentile converts in Antioch (see below on “from Jerusalem”; see also Additional Notes at end of chapter, Note 2).

From Jerusalem. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading “unto Jerusalem,” as though Barnabas and Saul were returning to Jerusalem from “their ministry” in the field at Antioch. However, most of the editors of the Greek text, obviously judging from the context and considering that ch. 12:25 is the conclusion of ch. 11:27–30, prefer to regard as original the less well-attested reading “from Jerusalem,” as in the KJV. A suggestion has been made whereby the better-attested reading can be understood in this same sense, by reversing the order of “unto Jerusalem” and “when they had fulfilled their ministry.” The unpunctuated Greek text allows this translation, which would read literally, “Barnabas and Saul returned, having fulfilled their ministry unto Jerusalem.”

Fulfilled their ministry. Or, “charge,” “deaconate,” “ministration.” The Greek word is the same as that translated “relief” in ch. 11:29. Barnabas and Saul completed the mission on which they had been dispatched by the church at Antioch.

Took with them John. See on v. 12. The choice is partly explained by John's relationship to Barnabas (Col. 4:10), but it shows also that John was entering heartily into the work of converting the Gentiles. See Acts 13:5, 13; 15:37–39; 2 Tim. 4:11. Apparently, he had been living at home in Jerusalem until this time.

ADDITIONAL NOTES ON CHAPTER 12

Note 1

Comparing Luke's narrative with that of Josephus, it seems probable that the delegates from Tyre and Sidon were among those who raised the cry, "The voice of a god, and not of a man," and added, as Josephus reports, "Be thou merciful to us." Note the marked contrast between Peter's refusal of homage on the part of Cornelius and Agrippa's acceptance of the blasphemous flattery by the multitude at Caesarea. Josephus' account agrees with that of Luke in the following details: (1) Among the multitude who flattered Agrippa there were some who were seeking to regain his favor. (2) The day was a "set day." (3) Herod was clad in royal robes. (4) The flattery consisted in calling him a god. (5) He did not rebuke them. (6) He was stricken immediately so that he had to be carried to his palace. Josephus adds that Agrippa acknowledged that the stroke came from God as a rebuke for accepting such blasphemous flattery, and that everyone expected him to die at once.

With reference to the latter portion of the Josephus account, which says that violent pain increased in force very rapidly, and to the NT account, which says that Agrippa was eaten of worms, it is noticeable that in the account of the death of Antiochus Epiphanes these two features are mentioned as characterizing the same disease, and are described separately: "The all-seeing Lord, the God of Israel, smote him with a fatal and unseen stroke; the words were no sooner out of his mouth than he was seized with an incurable pain in the bowels, and his internal organs gave him cruel torture. ... Worms actually swarmed from the impious creature's body" (2 Maccabees 9:5, 9; in R. H. Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, p. 144). Josephus, who looked upon Agrippa with marked approval, has merely described the form in which the king's malady made itself apparent at first, and has omitted the loathsome details from the death story of one who in his eyes was a great king. The Scripture has given the fuller account, because the object of the writer of Acts was to emphasize in all its seriousness the sin for which, as Josephus tells us, Agrippa knew he was stricken. The points of agreement in the two accounts are so many, and the differences so slight and so easily explained, that the account by Josephus must be regarded as a tribute to the historical accuracy and carefulness of Luke.

Note 2

At the end of chapter 12 the question arises whether the famine visit of Barnabas and Saul (ch. 11:27–30) occurred before or after the imprisonment of Peter and the death of Herod Agrippa I, since the last verse of ch. 12 is evidently the conclusion of the narrative begun in ch. 11:27–30. This problem is made apparent by the fact that chronological evidence suggests that the death of Herod occurred before the famine visit, an order that seems to be in reverse of that in which Luke treats these events.

In considering this problem it is to be recognized that Luke does not always attempt to be strictly chronological in his accounts in either his Gospel or the Acts. Luke, in his Gospel (ch. 1:1–3), mentions "many" who took "in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us." From their records

he chose, as “it seemed good to” him, “having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first,” those events that provided a coherent narration of certain phases of early Christian history. After he had followed the activities of one character (such as Peter, mainly, in Acts 1–12), or had given a coherent picture of one area of development (such as the gospel in Palestine, to ch. 11:18), Luke then went back and picked up another phase or another character, and followed that through to another logical point of climax or conclusion (cf. the transition, ch. 11:18, 19). Chronological order sometimes is less important to Luke than other kinds of orderly arrangement, such as by subject or by geographical area. This attitude is characteristic of the literature of his time, as it is of the OT (see on Gen. 25:19; 27:1; 35:29; Ex. 16:33, 35; 18:25).

The expressions “in these days” (ch. 11:27) and “about that time” (ch. 12:1) are used, as often in the Gospels, merely as stereotyped transitional phrases, not necessarily intended to point out a specific time chronologically. It is entirely possible that the events of ch. 12:1–24 occurred between vs. 26 and 27 of ch. 11; ch. 12:25 logically follows ch. 11:30. The “ministry” (ch. 12:25) apparently refers to the carrying of the “relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judæa” (ch. 11:29). Thus the famine visit would come after Peter’s imprisonment, miraculous release, and departure from the city of Jerusalem, and after the death of Herod Agrippa I, which occurred in A.D. 44.

Following his historical method as described above, Luke has related the story of the opening of work for the Gentiles in Antioch. At the end of that narrative, its heroes, Barnabas and Saul, are sent to Jerusalem to carry the famine relief offering to the elders. In view of this change of scene, Luke next goes back (ch. 12:1) to bring his readers up to date on what had been happening in Jerusalem during the period represented by his narrative on Antioch. He tells the story of Herod’s persecution of the church, including the killing of James and the imprisonment of Peter, and of the fearful end to which the persecutor came. He is then ready to pick up again his narrative at Antioch, with the sending forth of Barnabas and Saul as ordained missionaries (ch. 13:1–3). But first he brings his main characters back to that place by mentioning (ch. 12:25) that they “returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry.” He also uses this opportunity to introduce a new character, John Mark (already mentioned incidentally at Jerusalem, v. 12), for Mark is to accompany the two older men as they set out on the journey that Luke now proceeds to describe (chs. 13:4 to 14:27), Paul’s first tour.

Such a minor displacement of the account of the famine visit is entirely reasonable in view of Luke’s habitual method of organizing his material, and it does not involve any major rearrangement or the coalescing of two events, or records of events, as do some views (see Additional Notes on Chapter 15, Note 1).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–3AA 143; SR 292

1–25AA 143–154; Ev 581; SR 292–300

2 AA 597

2, 3 EW 186

4, 5 AA 145

5, 6 SR 293

6, 7 AA 146

6–10CG 42

6–115T 748

7 AA 152; EW 186
7, 8, 10 SR 295
8–10AA 147
11 SR 296
11–15AA 148
13–17SR 296
16–19AA 149
19 SR 297
21 AA 150
21–23EW 186
22 SR 298
22, 23 AA 151
23 AA 152; SR 299

CHAPTER 13

1 *Paul and Barnabas are chosen to go to the Gentiles. 7 Of Sergius Paulus, and Elymas the sorcerer. 14 Paul preacheth at Antioch, that Jesus is Christ. 42 The Gentiles believe: 45 but the Jews gainsay and blaspheme: 46 whereupon they turn to the Gentiles. 48 As many as were ordained to life believed.*

1. Church ... at Antioch. See ch. 11:26. With chapter thirteen the center of the narrative shifts from Jerusalem to Antioch, as has already been anticipated in ch. 11:19–30. From Antioch Paul, as the apostle to the Gentiles, set out on his three great missionary tours. The record of these three journeys takes up most of the remaining chapters of the book of Acts. It is quite proper, therefore, that the focal point of the narrative should now shift to Antioch. There, for the first time, Gentiles had come in large numbers into the church. See pp. 28, 29; see on ch. 11:19, 20, 26.

Prophets and teachers. Here is the first time that those persons who exercised particular gifts of the Spirit are seen functioning administratively in the church. No specific indication is given regarding formal church organization at Antioch, although it doubtless existed. At all events it is clear that the men of the Spirit were functioning actively. See pp. 26, 38, 39.

The NT treats such men as a recognizable group, although they were not organized as an official class. A man was recognized to be of this number not merely when he was seen to be “spiritual” in the sense of “pious” (see Gal. 6:1), but when he proved himself possessed of a functioning gift of the Holy Spirit. Later, in the Christian literature of the 2d century, these men emerge as a class known as *pneumatikoi*, “spiritual [men].” Eventually they disappeared, unjustly discredited by the appearance of “false prophets” (see 1 John 4:1), and by pressure from the elected officers, the elders or bishops (see pp. 26, 38). For a further discussion of the gifts of the Spirit see on 1 Cor. 1:12.

The different connections and activities of the men mentioned here indicate that the church at Antioch enjoyed a cosmopolitan leadership. Barnabas was a Cypriote; Lucius, a Cyrenian; Manaen, apparently a Palestinian aristocrat; and Saul, a rabbi from Tarsus in Cilicia.

Barnabas. See on ch. 4:36; cf. chs. 9:27; 11:22.

Simeon. This man’s first name, Simeon, or Simon, indicates that he was of Jewish origin. His second name is a Latin adjective meaning “black,” which he may have assumed, or may have been given, because of a dark complexion. Jews frequently had

Gentile names in addition to their Jewish ones, as John Mark, Simon Peter, Joses Barnabas, and Saul “who also is called Paul” (see on v. 9). This second name may have been given to Simeon to distinguish him from other persons who bore the same name.

Lucius of Cyrene. The fact that this man came from Cyrene suggests that he may have been one of the Jews who abounded in that province, and one of the “men of Cyprus and Cyrene” (ch. 11:20) who had been among the first to evangelize the Gentiles in Antioch. He may be the Lucius who is mentioned in Rom. 16:21. On the ground that Cyrene was famous for its school of medicine, and that inscriptional evidence shows that the names Lucius and Luke might be used interchangeably, some writers have identified this man with the author of Acts, Luke the physician. However, such identifications must be accepted with extreme reserve in view of the fact that the name Lucius was very common among the Romans, and could easily have been held by more than one prominent Christian.

Manaen. A Greek form of the Hebrew name Menahem.

Brought up. Gr. *suntrophos*, a word that may mean either that Manaen was a foster brother of Herod, perhaps in the sense that Manaen’s mother was nursing mother to Herod, or that he was reared with him, or even simply that he was in some way connected with the court of Herod. “Herod the tetrarch” must be Herod Antipas (see Matt. 14:1; Luke 3:19; 23:7–12; Vol. V, pp. 64, 65), the ruler whom Jesus once called “that fox” (Luke 13:32). Josephus (*Antiquities* xv. 10. 5) mentions an Essene named Menahem, or Manaen, who foretold that Herod the Great would become king. The Talmud also knows a Menahem who is supposed to have been in the service of Herod the Great (see Talmud *Hagigah* 16b, Soncino ed., p. 108). The identity of name would seem to indicate that the name Manaen became a favorite among those who were in the good graces of the Herodian house. Both Herod Antipas and his brother Archelaus were educated at Rome, and Manaen of Antioch may have accompanied them thither. How or when he was brought to believe in Jesus as the Christ is not known. His activity as a Christian teacher at Antioch presents a striking contrast to the career of Herod Antipas, the ruler who slew John the Baptist, mocked Jesus, and who some years before the time of the present story, was exiled in disgrace to Gaul.

Herod the tetrarch. See above on “brought up.”

Saul. Saul of Tarsus is here “among the prophets” with far better results than was true of Saul the king a millennium before (1 Sam. 10:11, 12). Saul’s name comes at the end of the list. The construction of this passage in Greek suggests, but does not necessitate, the conclusion that the first three men named here were prophets, and the last two, teachers. Saul may not yet have exercised the prophetic gift.

Paul’s First Missionary Tour, c. A.D. 45 to 47

10

¹⁰Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Ac 12:18). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.



2. Ministered. Gr. *leitourgeō*, “to minister,” a word used in secular Greek to describe service rendered by a state official, and in both the LXX and the NT for the ministry of the priests and Levites in the sanctuary (Num. 18:2; Heb. 10:11). Paul used it figuratively of his ministry to the Gentiles, likening himself to a priest, and presenting the Gentiles as offerings to God (Rom. 15:16).

To the Lord. The ministry of the prophets and teachers of Antioch, their work of prayer, exhortation, and teaching, was dedicated to God (see Rom. 14:18; Col. 3:24).

Fasted. This was a solemn act of devotion as the men of Antioch faced the work before them. It has been well said that “a full stomach neither studies diligently, nor offers devout prayers.” See on Matt. 4:2, 3.

The Holy Ghost said. Doubtless the Spirit spoke His will through the lips of the prophets, as in ch. 20:23.

Separate. In the Greek the particle *dē* follows this verb, indicating the definiteness of the command and that it was to be executed immediately. Barnabas and Saul were to be set apart for a new work.

Barnabas and Saul. For the previous companionship between the Saul and Barnabas see chs. 9:27; 11:25, 26. From the first Saul was called a “vessel of election” (see on ch. 9:15), and had been intended by God for extensive missionary service. In view of the previous association of the two men, it was logical that Barnabas was selected as Saul’s colaborer. Up to this time the two men had been among the prophets and teachers of the church. Now they were being sent out on a distinct mission, on the authority of an inspired command, and were consecrated to the work of apostleship among the Gentiles.

For the work. Since the basic command came from the Holy Spirit, it can be supposed that the general course of the First Missionary Journey was outlined also by the Spirit. Certainly there is no record that the church gave any study to plans for such a missionary journey.

3. Fasted and prayed. The repetition of these words would indicate that the fast of v. 2 continued. The new command called for an intensity of spiritual life, to which fasting was a normal prelude and accompaniment. The implication is that a solemn dedication service marked the closing hours of the fast.

Laid their hands. See on ch. 6:6. As the apostles laid their hands on the Seven, so did the prophets and teachers of the church of Antioch witness to the divine commission of Saul and Barnabas and implore for them the divine blessing.

4. Sent forth. Here begins Saul's (Paul's) First Missionary Journey; see Paul's First Missionary Tour. Barnabas and he now went forth under the direct command of the Holy Spirit, evidently with specific instructions from that divine Source. See p. 29.

How were these missionaries to be supported? There is no indication of a salary, nor of any fund furnished to them. Probably, as he did later (ch. 18:3, 4), Paul worked at his trade during the week and preached in the synagogues on Sabbaths. Years afterward, writing to the Philippians, Paul indicated that he had received but little support (Phil. 4:15–18). Apparently it had not yet occurred to the infant church that tithe, which was always paid to the Levites, might properly be given for the use of a consecrated Christian ministry. In fact, there was as yet no clergy as a professional class.

Unto Seleucia. This town lay about 15 mi. (24 km.) from Antioch near the mouth of the Orontes River, and was the seaport for Antioch. Seleucia was named for its founder, Seleucus I Nicator (d. 280 B.C.), the general of Alexander who established the Seleucid Empire. The Journeys of Paul.

Sailed to Cyprus. If the missionaries were not specifically directed, doubtless they chose this first point of call because Cyprus was the birthplace of Barnabas. Its population was largely Greek. It claimed Aphrodite, or Venus, as its patron goddess. Her chief center of worship was at Paphos, which was conspicuous for the licentiousness of the harlot-priestesses of her temple. The metal *cuprum*, "copper" took its name from the island, and the copper mines, lying only a short voyage from Syria, had attracted many Jews. Probably it was among these that the gospel had been preached already by itinerant Christian evangelists (ch. 11:19). It is probable, too, that some of those from Cyprus who were converted in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost took the Christian message back to their homeland.

5. Salamis. At the eastern end of the island, this was the nearest port of Cyprus for those coming from Seleucia.

Preached. They proclaimed forthrightly from the Scriptures the word of God, giving the message of a crucified and risen Saviour (see v. 12).

Synagogues. The mention of "synagogues," plural, implies a considerable Jewish population. Following their general rule of preaching first to the Jews (v. 46), the apostles naturally made their initial contacts in the synagogues. The synagogue services provided particularly valuable opportunities for visitors such as Saul and Barnabas to preach (see Vol. V, pp. 57, 58).

John. That is, John Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (see on Col. 4:10).

Minister. Gr. *hupēretēs*, an “under rower” on a ship, and so, by extension, an “assistant” of any kind. In the NT this word is used for an officer who executes sentences imposed by a judge (Matt. 5:25), for the *chazzan* in the synagogue (see Vol. V, p. 56), and for officers under the command of the Jewish leaders (John 7:32). In addition to the present passage Luke uses this term twice of ministers of the gospel (Luke 1:2; Acts 26:16). The specific duties of Mark are not stated, but evidently he assisted the two apostles generally in their ministry.

6. Through the isle. Textual evidence attests (see p. 10) the reading “through the whole island.” Probably Paul and Barnabas taught at various places on their way across the island.

Paphos. Paphos lay at the western extremity of the island. There was an old city of Paphos that was noted for its sanctuary dedicated to Aphrodite, but in Paul’s day a new city had been built some 7 mi. (c. 11 km.) farther to the northwest, and this served as the headquarters of the Roman governor of Cyprus. It was to this new city that Paul and Barnabas came.

Sorcerer. Gr. *magos*, “magus” (pl. “magi”), originally a Persian word denoting the priestly class among the Iranian fire worshipers. As such, the Magi held a position of dignity and respect. To this class belonged the “wise men” who visited the infant Jesus (see on Matt. 2:1). However, as early as the 5th century B.C. the term *magos* also had come to have the bad sense of a “sorcerer,” or a “quack.” Thus the Greek poet Sophocles makes Oedipus revile Teiresias under this name, as one who practiced magic (*Oedipus the King* 387). Luke uses a similar term for Simon, the sorcerer at Samaria (Acts 8:9). He apparently employs it in a general sense in connection with “false prophet,” to indicate that Bar-jesus, though he held a position of influence with the governor, was a quack.

A false prophet. A decadence in the use of true revelation produces false prophets, who in turn accelerate the decay.

A Jew. Pretenders to magic powers were common among the Jews (see Talmud *Berakoth* 59a, Soncino ed., p. 367). They traded on the religious prestige of their race, and boasted, in addition to their sacred books, of spells and charms that had allegedly come down to them from Solomon.

Bar-jesus. This is clearly a Jewish name, but textual evidence is so divided as to its correct spelling in Greek that a final decision on its exact meaning in Hebrew or Aramaic is hardly possible. It may mean “son of Joshua” (see on Matt. 1:1).

7. Deputy. Gr. *anthupatos*, the Greek equivalent of the Roman title “proconsul.” The provinces of the Roman Empire, under the organization of Augustus (27 B.C.), were divided into two classes. Those needing military control were placed under the emperor as commander of the legions, and were governed by *propraetors*, and *procurators*. The more peaceful provinces were left to the rule of the Senate and were under the government of *proconsuls*. Cyprus had been an imperial province (see Strabo *Geography* xiv. 6. 6), but later it was reassigned to the Senate (Dio Cassius *Roman History* liii. 12. 7), and consequently in Paul’s day it was ruled by a *proconsul*. The existence of *proconsular* government there is proved also by the fact that extant from the time of Claudius are coins of Cyprus that give the title of *proconsul* to the local ruler, Cominius

Proclus. Luke here, as elsewhere, is careful to use correct titles for the various officials who appear in his narrative (see on Acts 23:24; cf. on Matt. 27:2).

Sergius Paulus. A Latin inscription from A.D. 35, listing a group of the Arval Brethren, priests who served as curators of the Tiber, contains the name “L[ucius] Sergius Paullus.” Although no positive identification of this man with the proconsul in the present narrative can be made, it is not impossible that they are the same person, and that Sergius Paulus had been a priest at Rome before being sent to Cyprus. Another inscription, from Soli in Cyprus, declares itself to be from the time of “Paulus, proconsul.” Scholars have sought repeatedly to identify this proconsul with the Sergius Paulus of Acts, but the best opinion is that the date of this inscription cannot be reconciled with the time of the First Missionary Journey. It probably refers to a proconsul who ruled Cyprus several decades earlier. Pliny the Elder, writing c. A.D. 90, has been thought to name a Sergius Paulus as his chief authority for the facts in certain portions of his *Natural History*, but a critical study of the manuscript evidence indicates that the man mentioned there was rather one Sergius Plautus. Consequently nothing certain is known concerning the Sergius Paulus of Acts beyond that recorded by Luke.

A prudent man. The adjective describes intelligence and discernment, as in Matt. 11:25; Luke 10:21; 1 Cor. 1:19. The presence of Elymas with Sergius Paulus shows that the proconsul was a man of inquiring mind. He certainly displayed this characteristic when he asked to hear Barnabas and Saul. He showed his prudence when he came to recognize the higher type of character presented by the missionaries. He can scarcely have been dominated by the sorcerer.

8. Elymas. Many conjectures have been made by scholars as to the meaning of this name, but no final conclusion has been possible. Perhaps it may represent a Semitic word that has some such meaning as “sorcerer,” or “wizard.” In this case the phrase “by interpretation” would not mean that “Elymas” is a translation of “Bar-jesus,” but would merely be a way of adding that he was a sorcerer.

Sorcerer. Gr. *magos* (see on v. 6).

Withstood them. The charlatan feared the loss of the influence he thought himself exercising over the proconsul. He saw his victim emancipating himself, passing from credulity toward the sorcerer to faith in the gospel, and that change Elymas was determined to check. Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses (2 Tim. 3:8) in somewhat parallel circumstances, and with the same sort of satanic endeavor.

Seeking to turn away. At this point Sergius Paulus had not yet accepted the doctrine of Christ, though it is probable that both Elymas and he had heard much concerning the apostles’ message since they had landed at Salamis. The sorcerer saw that the proconsul’s interest was aroused, and he wished to divert his attention, lest he send for Barnabas and Saul. But the proconsul was determined in his purpose, and had the apostles brought before him.

9. Called Paul. At this point for the first time the name is introduced by which the apostle to the Gentiles is best known. For a discussion of the names Saul and Paul see Additional Notes on ch. 7, Note 2.

Filled with the Holy Ghost. The tense of the Greek participle here implies a sudden access of spiritual power, showing itself at once in insight into character, righteous indignation, and prevision of divine chastisement to be applied. Evidently the sentence of

punishment to be inflicted on Elymas was revealed to the apostle by the Spirit. Paul knew from the same Source that what he was about to say would come to pass.

Set his eyes. Gr. *atenizō*, “to gaze intently.” It has been suggested that such a gaze was necessary because Paul’s vision was defective as a result of the fierce brightness seen on the Damascus road. But Luke uses this Greek word repeatedly of the fixed gaze of men of normal powers of sight, as they look in wonder or scrutiny (see Acts 3:4; Luke 4:20; 22:56). Elymas needed to be observed, for he was standing by, ready to employ any means he could to discredit the apostles. But Paul fixed him with his eyes and delivered a bitter condemnation.

10. All subtilty and all mischief. The word translated “mischief” is found only here in the NT. Its primary meaning of “ease [or, “facility”] in working” came to have the bad sense of “shiftiness” and “trickery.” Paul was explicit and unreserved in his condemnation of Elymas. Filled with the Holy Spirit, he indicted the sorcerer witheringly but truly. There are those who think that a Spirit-filled Christian will show only the relatively passive “fruit of the Spirit” catalogued by Paul in Gal. 5:22, 23. But the Spirit also leads His messengers to identify and define sin frankly, and to condemn it in clear terms. The Spirit-filled Paul did this very thing in the case of Elymas.

Child of the devil. See on John 8:44. As the devil is the father of lies, so Elymas, who traded in deceit, could well be called by this bitter epithet. If the name Bar-jesus means “Son of Joshua” (a name that means “Jehovah is salvation”; see on v. 6), Paul’s characterization of him here would have been a particularly striking contrast.

Enemy of all righteousness. Paul recognized in the proconsul an earnest desire to know truth. His wrath blazed against Elymas for interfering with that desire.

Pervert the right ways. The influence of Elymas was a twisting and misrepresentation of the true way of God. He turned the straight paths of God’s making into the crooked ones of man’s subtlety. It was an exact reversal of what Isaiah described as the true preparation of the way of the Lord, making the crooked straight (Isa. 40:4).

11. Hand of the Lord. See on Acts 11:21; cf. Ex. 9:3; Judges 2:15. The inquiries Sergius Paulus had made of Elymas probably concerned the Jewish faith. Instead of teaching the proconsul to know God, he had led him astray by his own pretensions. The hand of the Lord, whose ways Elymas had perverted, was about to fall upon him.

Thou shalt be blind. A most fitting judgment, for Elymas had fought against the light of truth. The form of Elymas’ punishment stands in striking contrast with the apostle’s own previous experience. Paul had become blind to outward light, but had been illuminated inwardly by a light from heaven (see on ch. 9:9). Elymas, blinded for a time, might be able yet to receive the Light that lights every man (John 1:9).

For a season. That the blindness was temporary implies that it was not only a punishment but an intended remedy. The punishment inflicted on Elymas was lighter than that on Ananias and Sapphira, because their conduct, if continued, would have brought ruin upon the church. Their sin was against greater light than had been bestowed on the magician of Cyprus.

A mist and a darkness. The order of words indicates a gradual diminution of sight. At first Elymas’ eyes clouded over, and then he became blind. Such precision in the record seems to reflect Luke’s training as a physician (see Col. 4:14; cf. on Acts 9:18).

To lead him. Elymas had falsely and selfishly used what knowledge he had to guide others wrongly, to his own advantage. Now he must seek others to guide his own steps.

He did it gropingly, for such a man would wish to show as little as possible how exactly the apostle's words had come to pass for him.

12. The deputy. The proconsul saw the miracle, and heard the words that accompanied it. He believed that the apostles showed the greater power, and accepted their message, so evidently superior to what Elymas had been teaching him.

Astonished. Or, "amazed." Here, as in Matt. 7:28, the word is used of glad amazement at the hearing of the gospel.

Doctrine of the Lord. That is, the teaching about Jesus Christ.

13. Paul and his company. Literally, "those about Paul." From this point on, Paul is recognized as the leader of the mission. Henceforth, Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, is the central figure in nearly every scene of the book of Acts.

Loosed. Gr. *anagō*, commonly used for sailors "putting to sea." Paul and his company sailed to the northwest.

Perga in Pamphylia. Pamphylia was a small region about midway on the south coast of Asia Minor. In A.D. 43, just before Paul's visit, it was combined with Lycia, its western neighbor, to form an imperial province. Perga was its chief city, situated on the river Cestrus, about 8 mi. from the sea. Luke records no evangelistic work in the city at this time, perhaps because there were no synagogues. Trouble of mind at John Mark's departure may have caused Paul and Barnabas to move on. They did preach in Perga on the return journey (ch. 14:25). See Paul's First Missionary Tour.

John departing. That is, John Mark (see on v. 5). There is no clue as to why John left. Perhaps he feared the perils and hardships of the journey into the interior.

John Mark was probably the same person as the writer of the second Gospel. He became afterward an earnest laborer for Christ. Paul spoke of him later with affection (Col. 4:10), and wished to see him during his last imprisonment (2 Tim. 4:11). If Luke knew why John Mark withdrew, respect for his more successful experience later evidently kept Luke from revealing the reason here.

14. Departed from Perga. Or, "passed through from Perga." The route of Paul and Barnabas led north, probably along one of the branches of the Cestrus River into the province of Galatia. To reach Antioch they "passed through" the whole breadth of Pamphylia and the southwestern corner of Galatia. See Paul's First Missionary Tour.

Antioch. Pisidia was only a region in Paul's day, and did not become a province until the end of the 3d century A.D. The Antioch in question was not in Pisidia, but nearby in the region of Phrygia. However, in 39 B.C. it had come under the rule of the king of Pisidia, and consequently it was known as Pisidian Antioch, to distinguish it from other cities of the same name. In NT times it was included in the province of Galatia.

Antioch was one of the many cities built by Seleucus I Nicator (d. 280 B.C.), who named it after his father, Antiochus. It lay on the lower slopes of the Taurus Mts. at an elevation of 3,600 feet above sea level. Its people had been granted a form of Roman citizenship under Augustus. Antioch probably had attracted a considerable Jewish population, which apparently had led the Gentiles to acquire an interest in Judaism (v. 42).

Perhaps on this journey Paul and his companion were exposed to "perils of robbers," of which he speaks in 2 Cor. 11:26. Pisidia, through which they passed to reach Antioch, was a mountainous country, rising gradually toward the north. Strabo (died c. A.D. 24; *Geography* xii. 7. 2) speaks of much brigandage in those regions.

The synagogue. Although Paul was the declared apostle to the Gentiles, he always went first to the synagogues (see on ch. 13:5, 14), which frequently afforded visitors an opportunity to speak (see Vol. V, pp. 57, 58). The organization of the synagogue excluded any sort of priestly ceremony, and lay preaching was an established practice for those trained for it. Neither the elders nor the scribes of the synagogue needed to be of the tribe of Levi, as did the priests in the Temple.

On the sabbath. Like his Lord (see Luke 4:16), Paul was habitually present at the synagogue services on the Sabbath day (see Acts 13:42–44; 17:2; 18:4; cf. ch. 16:13). The apostle Paul obviously had a double purpose in this—he wished to make effective spiritual contact with the Jews (see above on “the synagogue”), and to keep holy the Sabbath day “according to the commandment” (Luke 23:56).

15. Reading of the law. On the place of the readings from the Law and the Prophets in the synagogue service see Vol. V, pp. 57, 58. These readings frequently formed the basis for the sermon that followed. Although it is impossible to say with certainty what the readings were on this particular Sabbath, it is an interesting fact that vs. 17 and 18 contain key words that are found also in Isa. 1:2 and Deut. 1:31, passages that are still read together on the same Sabbath in the synagogue service (see comment on Acts 13:17, 18). This would seem to suggest that these two passages, which have a certain similarity of theme, may also have been read together in Paul’s day. However, inasmuch as there is no evidence that there was a set cycle for the Sabbath reading of the Scriptures at the time of the present narrative (see Additional Note on Luke 4), any attempt to ascertain the time of year of Paul’s visit to Antioch from the date on which these Scriptures would be read in cycle must remain highly dubious.

Rulers of the synagogue. Gr. *archisynagōgoi*, a term that had both pagan and Jewish usage. A pagan inscription has been discovered in Thrace in which the title is applied to the leader of an association of barbers. In Jewish circles this term was a counterpart to the Hebrew phrase *ro’sh hakkeneseth*, “head of the assembly,” an official who was one of the leading men of a Jewish community. His chief duty, as reflected here, was to arrange for the worship services in the synagogue; he chose those who offered prayers, read the Scriptures, and delivered the sermon (see Vol. V, p. 56). Although the usual practice appears to have been to have only one such official in each congregation, the present passage seems to indicate that in some instances a board of such officers directed the affairs of a synagogue.

The rulers doubtless noticed Paul and Barnabas in the congregation, and perhaps learning of Paul’s rabbinical training, invited the apostle to speak, since it was part of their official privilege to extend such invitations.

Ye men and brethren. Literally, “Men, brethren.” As in chs. 1:16; 2:37, this was a courteous mode of address.

Exhortation. Or, “consolation.” Barnabas was called “son of exhortation” (see on ch. 4:36), and the same word is used here.

16. Beckoning. Rather, “signaling.” Paul waved his hand to command silence and request attention rather than to invite someone to come, as we now understand beckoning (see ch. 12:17).

Men of Israel. When audience, subject matter, and purpose are considered, it is not surprising that this address of Paul at Antioch, the speech of Peter at Pentecost, and the defense of Stephen are similar. Paul had heard Stephen’s defense; the visions at

Damascus (ch. 9:3–7) and Jerusalem (ch. 22:17–21) had confirmed to him the truths that Stephen had uttered; he now spoke with boldness concerning the truth of the resurrection.

Ye that fear God. Paul's audience seems to have included Gentiles, or at least proselytes (see on ch. 10:2; cf. ch. 13:42).

Give audience. Literally, "hear ye!"

17. God of this people. Paul introduced his speech much as Stephen had his. The Jewish approach to religion was historical rather than theological. Thus Paul begins with the recapitulation of the main facts of the history of Israel, a theme that Jews never tired of hearing. Such an approach also showed that the apostles recognized that the Hebrews were God's chosen people.

Exalted. Gr. *hupsoō*, a word found also in the LXX of Isa. 1:2 (KJV, "brought up").

This may be an echo of the *haphṭarah*, the Scripture reading from the Prophets, that may have just been read (see on Acts 13:15; cf. on v. 18).

An high arm. That is, with a demonstration of power.

18. Forty years. The time spent by the Hebrews between leaving Egypt and reaching Canaan (see Ex. 16:35; Num. 14:33, 34; Deut. 8:2–4).

Suffered he. Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for reading "he suffered," or "he endured," and "he bore," "he nourished." This same textual variant is found in the LXX manuscripts of Deut. 1:31, where the Hebrew should be translated "he bore thee." All this suggests the possibility that Paul referred here to God's gracious care of Israel in the wilderness rather than to His forbearance. The apparent connection between the present verse and Deut. 1:31 may not be coincidental, as the latter passage may have been part of the Scripture reading from the Law (the *parashah*), that had been read before Paul began to speak (see Vol. V, p. 57; see on Acts 13:15; cf. on v. 17).

19. Seven nations. These are enumerated in Deut. 7:1, before the story of the Israelites' crossing over Jordan, as the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

Chanaan. That is, Canaan.

He divided. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading, "he gave as an inheritance."

20. Judges. Rule by itinerant judges was God's first plan for the government of His people in Canaan. Only when they showed themselves unwilling to cooperate with that plan did God give them a king "like all the nations" (see 1 Sam. 8:5–9).

Four hundred and fifty years. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading "He gave their land as an inheritance for about four hundred and fifty years. And afterwards He gave judges until Samuel the prophet." For the significance of this passage for Hebrew chronology see Vol. I, p. 193.

21. Desired a king. In doing so, the ancestors of Paul's Jewish hearers had rejected God (1 Sam. 8:7). The apostle was soon to tell them (Acts 13:23–28) that their fellow countrymen had also rejected Jesus as the Messiah. The expectation of a kingly Messiah, for whom the Jews of Paul's day looked in vain, had caused them to commit a sin similar to that of their forefathers.

Saul. Paul, the present speaker, was also a Saul of the tribe of Benjamin (see Phil. 3:5).

Forty years. The length of Saul's reign is not given in the OT, but Ishbosheth, Saul's youngest son (see on 1 Chron. 8:33), was 40 years old at that time of Saul's death (2 Sam. 2:10), and Saul himself was a "young man" when chosen king (1 Sam. 9:2). Josephus (*Antiquities* vi. 14. 9 [378]) says that Saul reigned 18 years before Samuel's death and 22 years after it, which statement agrees with Paul's account here. See on 1 Sam. 13:1.

22. Found David. Here Paul makes a composite quotation, after the manner of the rabbis, from Ps. 89:20 and 1 Sam. 13:14.

After mine own heart. See 1 Sam. 13:14. David was anointed king because he was a man after God's own heart. The intent of his heart was to serve God (Ps. 57:7; 108:1), and when he sinned, he repented in sincerity and humility (Ps. 32:5–7; 51:1–17). "The character is revealed, not by occasional good deeds and occasional misdeeds, but by the tendency of the habitual words and acts" (SC 57, 58).

Fulfil all my will. This is highly reminiscent of God's words to Cyrus in Isa. 44:28. It states the basic requirement for acceptance with God, and for doing His service (see Luke 22:42; John 14:15; Heb. 10:9). Not the doer of great works as such, but only he who does the will of the Father in heaven, will come into the kingdom (Matt. 7:21–23).

23. According to his promise. A general reference to the promises of the Messiah and perhaps more particularly to such passages as 2 Sam. 22:51; Ps. 132:11; cf. Acts 2:30.

Raised. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading "brought."

A Saviour, Jesus. The name Jesus means "Jehovah is salvation" (see on Matt. 1:1). Thus Paul could present Him with particular fitness as "a Saviour." The name of Jesus was probably not entirely unknown, even in the distant regions of Pisidia. Any Jew who had gone up to a feast at Jerusalem during recent years must have heard of Him. By the way he spoke, Paul seemed to assume that his hearers had at least a vague knowledge of Jesus, and he offered to bring to them greater knowledge.

24. Baptism of repentance. See Matt. 3:1–12. John's message was essentially a call to repentance in preparation for the coming Messiah. Thus his baptism signified repentance and the remission of sin (Luke 3:3). For the distinction between John's baptism and the spiritual knowledge of those who entered into it, compared with baptism in the name of Jesus, see Acts 19:1–7.

25. Fulfilled. Or, "was fulfilling."

Whom think ye? Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 10) between this reading and "What think ye?" This precise question is not found in the Gospels. For John's words see Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:7; Luke 3:16; John 1:20, 21, 27.

26. Men and brethren. See on v. 15.

Stock of Abraham. Gr. *genos Abraam*, "the race of Abraham," "Abrahamic descent."

Whosoever ... feareth God. See on v. 16.

To you. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 10) between this reading and "to us." If the latter reading is original, it agrees with v. 17, "God ... chose our fathers." It is evident throughout this whole address that Paul sought to avoid wounding Jewish feelings. Whenever he could do so truthfully he classed himself with his hearers.

This salvation. In connection with v. 23 the demonstrative pronoun makes clear that the salvation Paul preached rested upon the work of Jesus Christ, and was gained by union with Him.

27. They knew him not. See ch. 3:17. Paul implies that he now was preaching to the Gentiles and the dispersed Jews because the proffer of salvation had been rejected by those who normally should have accepted it, and who, had they done so, would have become witnesses to those who were “afar off” (Eph. 2:17), both geographically and spiritually.

Voices of the prophets. That is, their writings, which preserved in written form the messages that many times their voices originally had proclaimed.

Read every sabbath. See on v. 15. Paul appeals, to the Sabbath readings of the synagogue service, that they might witness to the suffering Messiah, who was realized in Jesus. The thought of such a Messiah stood in sharp contrast with the concept of the kingly Messiah, a concept that stood in the way of Jewish acceptance of the gospel.

Fulfilled them. Paul uses their own Scriptures to convict the Jews of their sin in crucifying Christ. He turns the Messianic prophecies back upon the Jews and declares that they themselves had brought about their fulfillment. Compare on Luke 24:26, 27, 32.

28. No cause of death. The Sanhedrin had condemned Jesus on the technical charge of blasphemy (Matt. 26:65, 66), but they could not bring sufficient evidence to prove the charge (vs. 59, 60). When they came before Pilate they hesitated to urge the accusation, and contended themselves with stating in general terms that they had condemned Him as a malefactor (John 18:30). Afterward, however, in the presence of the wavering Pilate, they added that according to their law He ought to die, because He had made Himself the Son of God (John 19:7), and that by making Himself a king, He had spoken against the emperor (John 19:12). But Pilate said that he “found no cause of death” in Him (Luke 23:22). Christ “did no sin” (1 Peter 2:22).

29. Fulfilled all. That is, the prophecies that pointed to the cruel treatment Jesus received, and the other circumstances that surrounded His death.

They took him down. In the present context Paul would appear to say that the same men who had condemned Jesus also took Him from the cross. In reality, it was Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus, two prominent Jews, who took Him down and buried Him, men who apparently had not been involved in Jesus’ condemnation (see Luke 23:50, 51; cf. John 19:39). At the same time, it is clear that their removal of Jesus’ body from the cross was in harmony with the Jewish leaders’ expressed desire (John 19:31). In view of all this, Paul in his present brief summary may be understood as generalizing.

Tree. See on ch. 5:30.

30. God raised him. See on Acts 2:32; cf. on John 5:26; 10:17, 18. Paul put forward the resurrection as proof that God was fulfilling the promise made to Abraham and to David, of the “seed” in whom all nations of the earth should be blessed (Gen. 12:1–3). Paul says elsewhere that Jesus was “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 1:4). As with every argument the apostles put forward in these early days of the beginning church, the resurrection is necessary in the development of the gospel argument. The resurrection is proof that Jesus is the Messiah.

31. Seen many days. Paul speaks as one who has talked with witnesses, and has been convinced of the truth of their testimony. What he says here he gives in expanded form in 1 Cor. 15:3–8. See Additional Note on Matt. 28.

From Galilee to Jerusalem. The apostles and most of Christ’s followers were drawn from Galilee. Thus even before the crucifixion His followers were popularly

characterized as Galileans (Mark 14:70). Paul asserts this Galilean background, in the face of official and even popular contempt for those who came from Galilee (see John 7:52; cf. ch. 1:46).

Who are his witnesses. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 10) between this reading and “who now are His witnesses.” Without having mentioned the ascension of Jesus, Paul implies that He was no longer on earth to be seen of men. The emphasis is upon the witness borne by those who were with Christ during His incarnation. Apparently on this occasion Paul did not tell that he himself had seen his risen Lord (see 1 Cor. 15:8).

The Church Before Paul’s Missionary Journeys.

¹¹



The people. That is, the Jews, to whom the Twelve still largely restricted their proclamation of the gospel (see ch. 26:17, 23).

32. Declare ... glad tidings. Gr. *euaggelizō*, “to proclaim good news,” and in the technical Christian sense, “to preach the gospel” (see on ch. 5:42). Paul declares that while the Twelve are Jesus’ witnesses, Barnabas and he are His evangelists, the bringers of “good news.”

The promise. The promise of the prophecy becomes the “glad tidings” of the gospel. The promise and glad tidings are one.

¹¹Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Ac 13:2). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

33. Fulfilled. Gr. *ekplēroō*, “to fulfill completely,” “to make good” a promise.

Raised up Jesus again. Or, “raised up Jesus.” These words may most naturally be understood to refer to the resurrection of Christ. But if so, a problem arises in regard to the application of the quotation that follows from Ps. 2 (see below on “this day”). Therefore many commentators understand the words, “raised up Jesus,” here in the same sense that they appear in chs. 3:22; 7:37, where they clearly refer, not to the resurrection, but to God’s introduction of Christ into this world. See on Deut. 18:15.

Second psalm. The quotation is from Ps. 2:7. In ancient times, however, the first and second psalms were sometimes counted as one, and thus some manuscripts could refer to this passage as being in the first psalm.

My Son. See on Luke 1:35.

This day. This quotation from Ps. 2:7 has been understood in the present context in various ways. Some interpreters take it to refer directly to the resurrection of Jesus. According to others, Ps. 2 was, in its original historical context, a song of triumph written to celebrate a victory of a king of Israel. The victory of that day had proved the king to be a chosen “son” of God, and the day itself marked a new begetting, or manifestation, of this sonship. By inspiration Paul applies the words of this psalm to Christ as the King of Israel and as God’s Son in a unique sense, and to His resurrection (cf. on Deut. 18:15). Christian believers made the resurrection the foundation of their belief in Christ’s Sonship. Christ was “the first begotten of the dead” (Rev. 1:5), and the resurrection is understood as confirming to Him the title “Son of God.” See on Luke 1:35.

Another interpretation of the present passage is to understand the “promise” (Acts 13:32) in the broad sense of all the OT promises of Christ as Saviour, of which the resurrection was the culminating fulfillment (see above on *ekplēroō* under “fulfilled”). On this view the quotation from Ps. 2:7 would not refer directly to the resurrection, but to the career of Jesus as a whole, crowned by the resurrection. Such a view places the present quotation in much the same setting as it is found in Heb. 1:5.

Still another interpretation grows out of understanding the words “raised up Jesus” (see comment above) as not referring to the resurrection, but to the incarnation. The quotation from Ps. 2:7 then refers clearly to the incarnation also, and is in the same setting as in Heb. 1:5. Acts 13:34 then goes on to speak specifically of the resurrection.

34. Concerning that he raised. Paul turns directly to the question of the resurrection here, and this may indicate that in the previous verse he had not yet had it so specifically under discussion (see on v. 33).

To corruption. Not as Lazarus, who, having been raised again to this life, had to die again. Although Christ is forever “the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5; see Heb. 2:9–18), He is also eternally exalted and glorified (see 1 Cor. 15:20–25; Phil. 2:9–11).

Sure mercies of David. Rather, “holy, faithful [mercies, or blessings] of David.” This is a quotation from the LXX of Isa. 55:3, where the Hebrew may be translated “the true, steadfast love for David.” The Greek word *hosios*, here rendered “holy,” is one that the LXX frequently used to represent the Hebrew *chesed*, “mercy,” “steadfast love.” Paul doubtless used the LXX in speaking at Antioch, for it was the Bible of the Greek-speaking Jews. The “sure mercies” that God had promised to David included the promise of an eternal kingdom (2 Sam. 7:16), which was realized through Christ, the Son of David. This broad understanding of “the sure mercies of David” is indicated by the

promise, “I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David” (Isa. 55:3). The victory of Christ, made certain by the resurrection, was a fulfillment of this covenant and a crucial point in the establishment of the kingdom promised to David.

35. *Thine Holy One.* A quotation from Ps. 16:10. In the original, this quotation is connected with the previous one by the repetition of the word “holy” (see on Acts 13:34). The argument Paul presents here is strikingly parallel to Peter’s on the day of Pentecost (see ch. 2:25–31). It expresses the basic thesis of the apostolic preaching.

To see corruption. The fact that Christ rose bodily the third day implies that His body, in contrast with the bodies of other men who die, did not suffer decomposition.

36. *Served his own generation.* Or, “served in his own generation.” This suggests a contrast between the limited service that a man can render to men, however great or powerful he may be, and the boundless, endless service to the whole human family that Jesus Christ, the Son of man, gives.

By the will of God. These words may be translated simply, “the will of God,” and taken as the direct object of “served” (in which case the previous phrase should be translated, “in his own generation” [see comment above]), or they may be connected with the verb that follows. The word translated “will” is *boulē*, “counsel,” “purpose.” Thus the passage may be understood as saying that David served God’s purpose, that he served in accordance with His purpose, or that he fell asleep in accordance with it when his life’s work was done.

Fell on sleep. That is, “fell asleep.” Paul uses here a customary scriptural word for death, “sleep” (see Acts 7:60; John 11:11–14; 1 Thess. 4:13, 14). The pagans thought that the sleep of death was eternal, as numerous Greek and Roman epitaphs show.

37. *Whom God raised.* See on v. 30.

Saw no corruption. See v. 35; ch. 2:27. A contrast to the experience of the revered David, who, in spite of his lofty place in Hebrew history, was still dead.

38. *Be it known unto you.* It was a characteristic of the apostolic preaching to climax the sermon with a direct application to the audience (see chs. 2:36; 7:51).

Men and brethren. See on v. 15.

Is preached. The present tense emphasizes the fact that forgiveness was at that very moment “being proclaimed.”

Forgiveness of sins. This message of the forgiveness of sins is the happy news of the gospel, bringing rejoicing to every sin-burdened heart (see 1 John 1:9). It was the keynote of Paul’s preaching (see Acts 26:18), as it was of Peter’s (chs. 2:38; 5:31; 10:43). It had been the burden of John the Baptist (Mark 1:4) and of Jesus Himself (Matt. 9:2, 6; Luke 7:47, 48; 24:47).

39. *By him.* Or, “in him,” that is, justification is obtained through being in vital connection with Christ.

All that believe. Rather, “everyone that believeth,” as highly personalized a statement as the very gospel itself.

Are justified. Rather, “is justified.” The verb translated “is justified” is not found elsewhere in Acts. In Paul’s teaching this is, in fact, the first recorded instance of the doctrine of justification, which became so characteristic of his theology (see Rom. 3:21–26). In the context of “forgiveness of sins,” the word “justified” means “acquitted,” “declared not guilty.”

Not be justified. Compare Rom. 3:27, 28; Gal. 2:16–21. Here is a central point of Paul’s teaching. The law presents the highest possible standard of righteousness; it demands entire obedience; the sacrifices bear witness to the awfulness of sin; yet law has no power to liberate conscience or to bring righteousness. Since the fall of man the purpose of law has been to point out sin, to condemn (Rom. 7:7), and not to free men from sin. Paul himself had discovered that freedom from guilt, and the true life that follows, could be gained only through faith in Jesus Christ. “The just shall live by his faith” (Hab. 2:4; see Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11).

Law of Moses. To Paul’s hearers this meant the Torah, the whole Law contained in the Pentateuch, as interpreted by the scribes.

40. Beware. A solemn warning, without which gospel preaching is a mere rhetorical performance.

Come upon you. Not long after Habakkuk, bakkuk, whose prophecy was about to be quoted, the Chaldeans under Nebuchadnezzar brought upon the land and people of Judah dreadful punishment, which culminated in the Babylonian captivity. This cruel fate was a result of the Hebrews’ disobedience to God. Paul now warned the Jews that they could expect no better fate if they rejected Jesus Christ as the Messiah.

In the prophets. A general reference to the prophetic section of the OT, of which Habakkuk, that Paul is about to quote, was a part. See on Luke 24:44.

41. Behold, ye despisers. This is a quotation from the LXX of Hab. 1:5.

Perish. This is the rendering of the LXX of Hab. 1:5, where the traditional Hebrew text reads *temahu*, “be astounded.”

Work a work. Paul is now drawing the lines of his argument close, and making a stern application. Long-continued wrongdoing results in unbelief and hardening of the heart against warnings. The “work” of which Habakkuk spoke was the raising up of the Chaldeans, “that bitter and hasty nation,” to execute God’s judgment (Hab. 1:6). Paul may have had in his mind a like judgment, already foretold by Christ, and about to be executed by the Romans (Matt. 24:2–20), and closely connected with the rejection of Jesus Christ by the Jewish nation. As in Stephen’s speech (see on Acts 7:51), the sharp tone of warning suggests that Paul saw signs of anger and impatience among his listeners.

42. When the Jews were gone out. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the reading “as they were going out they besought,” which would imply that both Jews and proselytes asked for further instruction.

Words. Gr. *rhēmata*, “words,” and by extension, “a discourse,” “a declaration” (see on ch. 10:37). The people wanted to hear a full statement of the Christian doctrine.

The next sabbath. Gr. *eis to metaxu sabbaton*, literally, “in the midst of the sabbath” (that is, in the middle of the week), or “the next sabbath.” Comparison with v. 44 (see comment there) indicates that “the next sabbath” is the better translation here.

43. Congregation was broken up. Or, “synagogue was dismissed.” As Barnabas and Paul withdrew, they were followed by many of their hearers, both Jews and others.

Religious proselytes. Rather, “worshiping proselytes.” The exact status of these persons has been the subject of scholarly debate, but they probably were Gentiles by birth who had become fully Jewish in religion. Such persons doubtless were common in the synagogues of the Dispersion. See Vol. V, p. 62.

Persuaded. Rather, “sought to persuade,” “urged.” The form of the verb employed here may be understood as implying that this exhortation was a continuation of that begun in the synagogue.

In the grace of God. Under similar circumstances Barnabas had urged the converts at Antioch in Syria to the same end (ch. 11:23). Although Luke does not say that any actual converts had yet been made at Antioch in Pisidia, the apostles must have known the intent of the inquirers, and so urged them to continue “in the grace of God” that they already had begun to enjoy.

44. Next sabbath. Gr. *tō erchomenō sabbatō*, “on the coming sabbath,” or possibly, “in the coming week.” The holding of a large public religious meeting, together with the fact that the more normal translation of *tō erchomenō sabbatō* is “on the coming sabbath,” or “the next sabbath,” indicates that the meeting was held “on a sabbath” (see on v. 42).

Almost the whole city. The preaching of the gospel, whether by Christ in Palestine or by the apostles there and elsewhere, was not done secretly, or to only a few. Huge crowds heard the proclamation, and whole cities were enlightened and admonished. The implied contrast between “almost the whole city” and “the Jews” (v. 45) suggests that the crowd here contained a large proportion of Gentiles.

It is evident that the Jewish synagogue where the meeting was held on this “next sabbath” could not contain the crowd, and accordingly we must picture the listeners thronging around the doors and windows while the apostles were inside speaking or else gathered in some open space near the synagogue, addressed from its entrance. From the fact that Luke does not relate this discourse, it may reasonably be assumed that it was similar to the sermon Paul had delivered the previous week.

The word of God. Note the emphasis upon the word of God in vs. 44, 46, 48. Paul and Barnabas presented the gospel as God’s message to their hearers.

45. The Jews. As contrasted with the large crowd that had come to hear Paul and Barnabas, which evidently contained a great number of Gentiles (see on v. 44).

Envy. Gr. *zēlos*, “zeal,” and so, in a bad sense, “jealousy.” Apparently two factors entered into this feeling. The Jews of Antioch doubtless were chagrined that newcomers such as Paul and Barnabas should attract so much interest among the Gentiles. They also realized that these Gentiles were being invited to the same religious privileges as themselves, and this was abhorrent to them. They had felt too long that they were exclusively the children of God, to be content to have Gentiles invited to salvation on the same terms with themselves. They could accept a message as sent of God, and could endure some changes in their teachings and way of worship, but they could not endure having Gentiles made equal in God’s sight with His chosen people. This practical repudiation by Paul and Barnabas of the exclusive privileges upon which the Jews prided themselves was more than they could bear.

Contradicting and blaspheming. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of the word “contradicting.” For similar conduct of the Jews at Corinth see ch. 18:6.

46. Waxed bold. See ch. 9:27, 29; cf. ch. 13:9–11.

First ... to you. Christ had come first unto His own (John 1:11), and so His messengers declared their good news first to the Jews. The order for the preaching of the

gospel was “to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile” (Rom. 2:10). The preaching to the Jews was with a view to their becoming the means by which “all the nations of the earth” should “be blessed” by a knowledge of salvation through Jesus Christ (Gen. 22:18). They rejected this privilege. But despite this the message was taken to the Gentiles.

Unworthy. There is a touch of irony in Paul’s words. The Jews thought themselves worthy of the highest blessings of God, and the apostles brought to them the greatest blessing of all, life eternal through Christ Jesus. But in their exclusiveness and jealous pride they rejected the message, and showed themselves “unworthy.” Thus by their refusal the Jews passed judgment upon themselves.

To the Gentiles. These words were an echo of what Paul had heard in his vision in the Temple at Jerusalem shortly after his conversion (ch. 22:21); although they would be heard by believing Gentiles with joy, they would be heard by the Jews with envy.

47. I have set thee. A quotation from Isa. 49:6. There it may be understood as referring, first, to Israel, and prophetically, to Christ (see on Isa. 41:8; 49:6). Apparently a Messianic application of this passage was made by the Jews during the intertestamental period, for the apocryphal Book of Enoch (ch. 48:4) declares that the Messiah “shall be the light of the Gentiles.” Shortly after the birth of Jesus the aged Simeon applied this prophecy directly to Him, declaring that He would be “a light to lighten the Gentiles” (Luke 2:32). In the present instance Paul and Barnabas take a prophecy originally intended for Israel, the fulfillment of which Christ had initiated, and apply it to the Christian church in general and to themselves in particular. To them now was committed the responsibility of bringing the good news of salvation to the world—a responsibility the Jews had failed to fulfill.

Ends of the earth. See Matt. 28:19; Col. 1:23.

48. They were glad. In contrast with the Jews, who were filled with envy at Paul’s preaching, the Gentiles gladly believed.

Word of the Lord. That is, the teaching that had the Lord Jesus as its subject. See on v. 44.

Were ordained. Gr. *tassō*, “to enroll,” “to appoint,” “to arrange.” The interpretation of this passage has been vigorously disputed by theologians. The KJV translation seems to support the dogma of divine decrees as determining the ultimate destinies of men. However, the Greek does not require such a translation. The form of the verb here may be understood reflexively as well as passively, so that it may mean “appointed themselves,” or “set themselves.” This meaning is illustrated by two Egyptian papyri from the 3d century A.D. One of these says, “I arranged with Apollos, and he appointed for certain the eleventh for his coming down [or, “he appointed himself for certain to come down on the eleventh”].” The other reads, “I am by all means looking after the copper, as I arranged [or, “as I appointed myself”].” These examples illustrate that it is possible to interpret the language of the present passage as meaning, “and as many believed as had appointed [or, “set”] themselves unto eternal life.”

Such an interpretation is in harmony with the context here, for according to v. 46 the Jews had proved themselves unworthy of eternal life, and the words of this verse are meant to describe the opposite of that experience. The Jews had acted so as to proclaim themselves unworthy, while the Gentiles manifested a desire to be deemed worthy. The two sections were like opposing troops, ranging themselves, and to some degree looked upon as arranged by God on different sides. Thus the Gentiles were ordering themselves,

and were ordered, unto eternal life. The text does not indicate that God had ordained any one person to a specific choice, or that he could not later reverse his choice if changing circumstances should require it. See on John 3:16–18; Rom. 8:29.

49. Throughout all the region. The gospel already had received wide publicity in Antioch in Pisidia (see v. 44). Now in the surrounding areas, bordering on Phrygia, Lycaonia, and Galatia, the gospel message was planted. Probably in many towns and villages of the area there were at least a few men and women who had given up worshipping their country's gods and had turned toward Judaism. Now, many of these, together with Jews who had accepted Christ, doubtless gathered in small companies here and there as disciples of their new Master, Jesus of Nazareth, the Saviour and Messiah.

50. Devout and honourable women. These were probably Gentile women of rank who had become interested in Judaism. Perhaps through them the Jews sought to influence the leading men of Antioch. In many cases the Jews found a real longing on the part of such women for a higher and purer life than could be had in the deep debasement of Greek and Roman society, and many of them had come to appreciate the higher ethics in the life and faith of Israel. Often such women went so far as to become proselytes.

Chief men. Through their pagan magistrates the Jews in Antioch sought action against Paul and Barnabas, in much the same way as the Jews in Jerusalem had done in regard to Jesus.

Raised persecution. Obviously Barnabas and Paul could not have been the only sufferers. At the very beginning the Christians in Antioch in Pisidia had to learn that the kingdom of God came only through "much tribulation" (ch. 14:22). The memory of these sufferings came back again and again to Paul and emerged finally in what he wrote in the last moments of his life (2 Tim. 3:11).

Coasts. That is, "boundaries," or "regions." The word "coast" formerly was used for any borderland, and not, as now, only for the "seacoast."

51. Shook off the dust. This was in literal obedience to the Lord's command (Matt. 10:14), and shows that these missionaries had a knowledge of what Jesus had taught the Twelve. Here this gesture was made, not against heathen, but against unbelieving and bitter Jews, the very dust of whose streets was unclean to the apostles, because of their rejection of the gospel.

Unto Iconium. See on ch. 14:1.

52. Filled with joy. The form of the verb used here implies that this was a continuing experience. Such "joy" is a normal result of conversion.

With the Holy Ghost. Perhaps the infilling of the Holy Spirit implies particular gifts such as tongues and prophecy, but apart from such gifts the infilling certainly proved a stimulus to spiritual life, and joy was the natural result. The message of this new religious faith was so fresh to the Gentile converts that they may have shown more of the outward manifestations of joy than did their brethren in the faith, the converted Jews (see Rom. 14:17; see on Acts 2:4; 15:9).

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- 1, 2 AA 160
- 1–52 AA 160–176
- 2 AA 163
- 2, 3 SR 303
- 3 AA 161

4, 5 AA 166
5–8AA 167; GC 516
9–12AA 168
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14, 15 AA 170
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22 Ed 48
23–31AA 171
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47 GC 315
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50, 52 AA 176

CHAPTER 14

1 *Paul and Barnabas are persecuted from Iconium. 8 At Lystra Paul healeth a cripple, whereupon they are reputed as gods. 19 Paul is stoned. 21 They pass through divers churches, confirming the disciples in faith and patience. 26 Returning to Antioch, they report what God had done with them.*

1. Iconium. The journey of Paul and Barnabas to Iconium is passed over rapidly by Luke, and the inference is that there was little opportunity on the way for missionary work. The city lay some 90 mi. southeast of Antioch at a junction of several important roads. Some ancient writers assigned it to Phrygia; others, to Lycaonia. The city was of sufficient size and dignity to be called the Damascus of Lycaonia, and became noted in later Christian tradition as the setting of the story of Paul and his convert Thecla. In the Middle Ages Iconium rose to importance as the capital of the Seljuk sultans, and under the shortened, altered name of Konya, it is still a flourishing city of Turkey. See Paul's First Missionary Tour, and The Journeys of Paul.

Both together. Evidently this did not describe one special visit to the synagogue, but repeated occasions upon which Paul and Barnabas went together to meet with the Jews.

Into the synagogue. As usual, Paul commenced his labors among the Jews and God-fearing Gentiles who met with them in worship. Obviously these synagogue visits were on the Sabbath days (see on ch. 13:14, 44).

So spake. They spoke on various occasions, during some of which not only Jews but Gentiles apparently were present (see below under "Greeks").

A great multitude. As with the preaching at Antioch in Syria (see ch. 11:21, 24), so here there was remarkable success from the preaching of the gospel.

Greeks. Gr. *Hellēnes*, a word used by Luke to signify a Gentile, in contradistinction to *Hellēnistai*, by which he means Greek Jews (see on ch. 11:20). Apparently here, as at Antioch, there were "believing" Gentiles to be found in the synagogue (cf. ch. 13:16). Furthermore, the apostles were at Iconium a considerable time (see ch. 14:3), and doubtless they spoke in other places besides the synagogue.

2. Unbelieving Jews. Or, "Jews that would not be persuaded." The word translated "unbelieving" has the idea of an unbelief breaking out into rebellion, and so describes well the character of these Jews who persecuted Paul and Barnabas.

Stirred up the Gentiles. For the most part the persecutions recorded in the book of Acts were occasioned by the enmity of the Jews. The case of Demetrius (ch. 19:24) is almost the only exception, and even there the Jews seem to have been responsible for the bitter reaction of the Greek craftsman. At a considerably later date, after the middle of the 2d century, the Jews were very active in bringing about the death of Polycarp at Smyrna (*The Martyrdom of Polycarp* 13; Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* iv. 15. 29). Early in the 3d century Tertullian called the Jewish synagogues of his day “fountains of persecution” (*Scorpiace* 10).

Evil affected. The word used here implies not only the ill temper aroused against the brethren, but the injury done to the minds of those in which the feeling was stirred up.

Against the brethren. That is, the new converts, in contrast with the “unbelieving Jews.”

3. Long time. Probably several months. Because the new believers were so many, a long stay was necessary to confirm their faith.

Speaking boldly. Their boldness lay in a full declaration of the gospel of divine grace, which they set forth in sharp contrast with the narrow Judaism with which the Gentile proselytes to Judaism had heretofore been familiar. See ch. 9:27–29. Such boldness was closely connected with miraculous deeds, and with other signs and wonders done in the name of Jesus Christ.

Which gave testimony. Rather, “who,” that is, the Lord. By the miracles He enabled Paul and Barnabas to perform, He bore witness to the fact that they were His men, speaking His truth.

Word of his grace. That is, the message concerning the saving grace of God, the glad tidings of the gospel. Paul’s preaching always was in terms of the unmerited favor of God, unto salvation (see Eph. 2:5, 8; Rom. 5:1, 2).

Signs and wonders. These were not so much the basis of faith as an evidence of faith. The record does not specify the “signs” performed.

4. Was divided. The Christians and non-Christians became distinctly marked parties in the population, with accompanying bitterness of spirit on the part of the latter. Luke evidently refers to the bulk of the heathen population. Converts to Christianity were doubtless in the minority and probably came from the lower classes of society as was commonly the case in the early days of the church (see 1 Cor. 1:26–28). As at Antioch in Pisidia the chief men and women of the city were against them (see Acts 13:50).

Part held with the Jews. As later, with Paul’s preaching at Thessalonica (ch. 17:4, 5). Jesus had foretold that such divisions would result from the preaching of His word (Luke 12:51–53).

5. An assault. Gr. *hormē*, “an assault,” or “an attempt.” The word does not indicate a direct attack here for such did not take place (see v. 6). The Jews excited and urged their pagan companions, with the hope that violence would result.

Rulers. That is, the rulers of the Jewish synagogue, where Paul and Barnabas had begun to preach when they first arrived at Iconium.

Use them despitefully. They suffered wanton insult and outrage. It marks what was planned as a piece of mob incitement. Paul employs a closely related word to describe his own conduct as a persecutor (1 Tim. 1:13).

To stone them. Stoning was the Jews’ mode of punishment for blasphemy (Lev. 24:14–16), and apparently they believed that the apostles’ teaching was just that. There

had probably been no legal process to arrive at this plan; they simply decided “to use them despitefully” (see on Acts 7:58; cf. John 10:31).

6. *Ware of it.* Undoubtedly there were those on the side of the apostles who had sufficient contact with the opposing group to know of the plot. Luke makes no attempt to exaggerate the sufferings of the Christian evangelists. This narrow escape from stoning is told in simple language, without elaboration.

Fled. The apostles’ action was in obedience to Jesus’ command that when persecuted in one city they were to flee to another (see on Matt. 10:23).

Lystra. Until 1885 the exact location of Lystra was unknown. In that year an inscription was discovered identifying as Lystra a site now known as *Zoldera*. It is situated some six hours’ journey southwest of Iconium. Traveling on the road from Iconium, the apostles would have ascended through a range of hills to the plateau on which Lystra lay. Although Lycaonia is noted in classical literature as a wild, uncivilized country, inscriptional evidence indicates that Lystra was made a Roman colony by Augustus, and so it doubtless enjoyed a higher culture than the surrounding country. As a Roman commercial center Lystra may have had Jews in its population, but the record of Acts gives no indication that the city contained a synagogue, and Paul’s contacts there appear to have been largely with Gentiles. Even Timothy, the child of a devout Jewish mother, probably of Lystra, had grown up uncircumcised (see on ch. 16:1, 3). See Paul’s First Missionary Tour.

Derbe. The site of Derbe was discovered in 1956 when an inscription mentioning Derbe was found at Kerti Hüyük, 52 mi. (83 km.) southeast of Iconium, the modern Konia. Another inscription confirming this identification had come to light in more recent years. Gaius, later one of Paul’s fellow travelers, was from Derbe (ch. 20:4). See Paul’s First Missionary Tour.

Lycaonia. Lycaonia was not a Roman province, but a racial area, the western part of which lay in the Roman province of Galatia and the eastern part in the kingdom of Antiochus of Commagene. Paul and Barnabas apparently remained within the boundaries of the province of Galatia. In NT times Iconium was reckoned as belonging to Phrygia, so in going on to Lystra and Derbe, the apostles entered a new area.

Lieth round about. This suggests that the cities of Lystra and Derbe were small and that Paul and Barnabas evangelized them in a short time. In so far as they worked in the country villages, they must have met Gentiles almost entirely.

7. *Preached the gospel.* Gr. *euaggelizō* (see on ch. 13:32).

8. *From his mother’s womb.* An example of Luke’s care as a physician to record the details of the case (see on chs. 3:7; 9:33).

9. *Heard.* Or, “used to listen.”

Stedfastly beholding. Gr. *atenizō* (see on chs. 13:9; 23:1). Doubtless the crippled man’s faith shone out in his countenance, and Paul recognized here a man fit, by being cured, to become a sign to the people of Lystra.

He had faith. Faith was prerequisite for miraculous healing (see Matt. 9:22; Mark 9:23).

10. *A loud voice.* Paul raised his tone above that in which he had been speaking to the people.

Stand upright. This command would have been a mockery to anyone who was not prepared by faith to go beyond the limits of ordinary human experience. The cripple willed to act in response to faith. This is one of a pattern of miracles to which belong the healing of the paralytic (Matt. 9:6, 7); the cripple at Bethesda (John 5:11, 14); and the lame man at the gate (Acts 3:6–8). In each of these instances spiritual restitution accompanied physical healing.

The parallel between the healing of the lame man by Peter at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple (ch. 3:1–11) and the healing of the cripple at Lystra by Paul is evident.

Leaped and walked. Or, “leaped up and began walking.” (See on ch. 3:8.)

11. *The speech of Lycaonia.* Although Paul declares that he spoke with tongues (1 Cor. 14:18), yet quite apparently this gift did not include the ability to understand the speech of Lycaonia. The only consistent view to hold is that he and Barnabas did not know that the people of Lystra were about to worship them. It is an indictment of their character to suppose that they deliberately permitted the people to proceed with a plan to offer divine worship in order that they might produce a dramatic effect in rejecting such worship. The people of Lystra were undoubtedly bilingual and could understand what Paul and Barnabas said in Greek, but the missionaries could not understand what the people were saying when they laid their plans for the pagan sacrifice. Little is known of the nature of the Lycaonian language.

The gods. In NT times the belief that the gods would thus mingle among men was held, not only by the simple Lycaonians, but commonly among pagans, both in the cities and in the country. In Lycaonia there was an old legend that gave a foundation for what the people now attempted to do for Barnabas and Paul. According to this myth Zeus and Hermes (Jupiter and Mercury) had come in human guise and been received by the aged couple Philemon and Baucis, to whom they presented gifts (*Metamorphoses* viii. 626–724). The legend indicates that the place where the gods were supposed to have dwelt later became a shrine for devout worshippers, who made pilgrimages to the spot and left offerings there.

12. *Jupiter ... Mercurius.* Gr. *Zeus ... Hermēs*, the Greek Zeus, the chief of the gods, and his son Hermes, the herald and messenger of the gods, and patron of eloquence. In the Roman Pantheon the counterparts of these gods were Jupiter and Mercury, and their names are accordingly used in the KJV. The worship of Zeus and Hermes appears to have been popular in the region of Lystra. An inscription has been discovered near Lystra telling that certain men, whose names are Lycaonian, had dedicated a statue to Zeus. A stone altar has also been discovered near Lystra dedicated to the “Hearer of Prayer,” who was probably Zeus, and to Hermes. The people of Lystra would naturally believe that if any deity were to come among them with a good purpose, it would be the god Jupiter, for whom a temple had been erected in front of their city (see on v. 13), and to whom their chief worship was paid. Mercury was counted as the principal attendant of Jupiter. Barnabas may have been of more impressive bearing than Paul, and thus to him was assigned the title of Jupiter. Since Paul had done much of the speaking, he was identified as Mercury.

13. *Priest of Jupiter.* The sense of this passage seems to be, “the priest of the local Zeus [located] in front of the city.” Thus Zeus was the tutelary divinity of Lystra, and his temple apparently stood near the gate of the city, as if to protect it. It was to the priest of

Zeus that the people ran with their cry, and brought him, with all the preparations for a sacrifice, to the entrance of the house where the apostles were lodged.

Garlands. Such garlands are familiar from ancient sculptures. Usually of white wool, they were sometimes decorated with leaves and flowers. Priests, attendants, doors, and altars, as well as sacrificial animals, were often adorned in this way.

The gates. Gr. *pulōnes*, a word that may refer either to the gates of a house (see ch. 12:14) or of another building, or of a city (see Rev. 22:14). In the present instance the word has been interpreted by some to mean the gate of the house where Paul and Barnabas were lodging. However, it is probably better to refer the word either to the gates of the city or perhaps to the entrance to the local temple to Zeus (see above on “priest of Jupiter”).

Done sacrifice. The act of sacrifice probably would have consisted of cutting the throats of the oxen and pouring some of their blood upon an altar.

14. The apostles. The elaborate preparations for the sacrifice naturally aroused the apostles’ suspicions.

Rent their clothes. With the Jews this was an expression of extreme horror, used particularly as a protest against blasphemy (see on Matt. 26:65), which Paul and Barnabas now realized the heathen people of Lystra were about to commit in ignorance. How far the population of Lystra may have understood this act is not known, but its very violence must have startled and arrested them.

Ran. Gr. *ekpēdaō*, “to leap forth,” “to rush out.” Probably the disciples rushed out of the city gate to where the people were gathered for sacrifice, perhaps at the temple dedicated to Zeus, which was “before their city” (see on v. 13).

15. Like passions. The word covers the more passive feelings of human life, as well as what are commonly known as “passions” (see James 5:17). A striking similarity may be noted between the language of Paul and Barnabas here and that of Peter to Cornelius (Acts 10:26).

Preach unto you. Literally, “bring you the good tidings” (see on ch. 13:32). To idolaters a message that sets forth the living God in place of dumb idols must be “good tidings,” and especially so since Jesus Christ is God incarnate, the Saviour of men.

These vanities. That is, the pagan sacrifice that was about to take place, and all it signified. Language such as this is often used to describe the emptiness and worthlessness of heathen worship (Eph. 4:17; 1 Peter 1:18).

Living God. In contrast with their idolatry, the apostle calls the people of Lystra to turn to a God who lives and acts, who made the heavens and the earth, who is the Giver of all good gifts, and who will judge all men. Isaiah dramatically draws this contrast (Isa. 40:6–31; 41:18–29; 44:6–28).

Heaven, and earth, and the sea. This contrasts sharply with the popular heathen religions, which assigned heaven, earth, and sea to different deities. Paul proclaims that one God made all these things and controls them.

The appeal to God’s creatorship is one made repeatedly in Scripture. It lies at the beginning of the whole history of God’s relation to the universe (Gen. 1), and is the foundation of the last gospel message of warning to the world (Rev. 14:7).

16. Nations. Gr. *ethnē*, a common NT word designating Gentiles. Here is the first indication of what may be called Paul’s philosophy of history. A similar thought appears

in his speech at Athens (ch. 17:30), where Paul declared that the times of ignorance God had “winked at.” Those who had lived through them would be fairly dealt with, and judged according to their limited knowledge. He expands this philosophy in Rom. 1; 2. The ignorance and sin of the Gentile world had been allowed to run their course as a part, so to speak, of a divine drama, to lead the Gentiles to feel the need of redemption, and to prepare them for its reception.

17. Without witness. God is not left without a witness among the heathen, such as those of Lystra. Here again is an outline of what Paul later expanded in Rom. 1:19, 20, although there his point is that the heathen are consequently without excuse. In the present instance, Paul emphasized the evidence of divine goodness as shown in nature, which his hearers constantly viewed. Later, addressing philosophers at Athens, Paul declared that “in him we live and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28; cf. Rom. 2:14, 15).

Did good. This implies the continuing manifestation of His gracious will in behalf of men (see Matt. 5:45). Paul included the giving of rain, thus drawing a contrast to Jupiter, the supposed god of the rainfall.

Our. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading “your.”

18. Scarce restrained. So eager were the people to engage in this act of worship. Some of those who were prevented, undoubtedly turned from these “vanities” to serve the living God. In any case, Paul no doubt labored at Lystra long enough to permit the establishment of a church there. The Jewess Lois, together with her daughter Eunice and her grandson Timothy, was doubtless among the first converts (2 Tim. 1:5; see on Acts 16:1).

Not done sacrifice. That is, “from doing sacrifice.”

19. Jews from Antioch. Clearly Pisidian Antioch, as the context makes evident (see on ch. 13:14). The force of the enmity of the Antiochian Jews is apparent from the fact that the Jews of Antioch and Iconium acted in concert, and that the Jews from Antioch traveled more than 100 mi. to hamper the work of the apostles.

That a close relationship existed between the people of Antioch and those of Lystra is suggested by an inscription discovered on a statue at Antioch stating that the monument had been set up in honor of that city by the people of Lystra.

These Jews knew that Paul and Barnabas were of their own nation, and their wrath was aroused against them, probably because they thought the apostles were casting away the legal requirements that were so dear to them. At Lystra these accusing Jews would have to present some other charge, however, to be able to arouse the heathen against the apostles. The miracle of healing the cripple had proved the reality of the apostles’ power, but not the source of it, and the Jews may now have attributed it to an evil agency in order to influence the heathen (compare the similar experience of Jesus, Matt. 12:24–27).

Persuaded the people. The sudden change of attitude on the part of the people of Lystra is reminiscent of that which transformed the hosannas of the Jerusalem multitude into the cry, “Let him be crucified” (Matt. 21:9; 27:22). Such tides of emotion are not difficult to understand in the case of a superstitious people, such as the Lycaonians, who are traditionally described as untrustworthy. A comparable change, in the reverse direction, appeared among the heathen people of Melita (Malta; Acts 28:3–6). The people of Lystra probably reasoned that if Paul and Barnabas possessed such mysterious powers,

and were not gods in the likeness of men, they must be sorcerers, possibly demons. The Jews could have enhanced this feeling and urged the people on to barbaric action.

Stoned Paul. Such a mode of punishment was characteristically Jewish, and the Jews, aided, of course, by the heathen inhabitants of Lystra, were doubtless its instigators. This is the one recorded instance in Paul's life of his having suffered this form of persecution (see 2 Cor. 11:25). At Iconium, Paul had just escaped stoning (Acts 14:5, 6). Both occasions are mentioned by Luke, but the apostle mentions only the actual suffering itself. This experience at Lystra stood out in Paul's memory with distinctness to the close of his life (2 Tim. 3:11, 12).

Out of the city. Hebrew law provided that stoning should take place outside the camp (Lev. 24:14), or city. In the present instance, however, perhaps both because Lystra was a heathen city and because the stoning was the result of mob action, it seems to have taken place within the city. Therefore Paul's body had to be dragged out of the city.

20. Disciples. That is, the new believers. Obviously they had been unable to forestall the attack, but they followed to the place where Paul, unconscious, was dragged, with their sorrowing thoughts probably concerned as to how they might provide for reverent burial. It is reasonable to believe that Timothy, to whom Paul's bitter experience would be both a challenge to service and an example of devotion, witnessed the stoning (AA 184, 185). Perhaps Lois and Eunice also were present in the group, first mourning, but later rejoicing when they found that their beloved teacher was not dead.

He rose up. Paul's revival from unconsciousness and his immediate show of vigor and boldness in entering the city again must have been looked upon as a miracle. That one stoned and left for dead by a savage mob should revive and go about as if nothing had happened to him was an even more striking evidence of the power of God than was the restoration of the cripple.

Next day he departed. Though providentially preserved from death, Paul doubtless realized that the mood of the populace had not changed toward him, and that for a time it was best that he leave the city. He paid at least two more visits to Lystra (see v. 21; ch. 16:1).

With Barnabas. Barnabas had not been such an object of jealousy on the part of the Jews. Though his power was great as a "son of exhortation" or "consolation" (see on ch. 4:36), it had evidently not been so demonstrative as that of his fellow apostle.

To Derbe. See on v. 6.

21. Preached the gospel. Gr. *euaggelizō* (see on ch. 13:32).

Taught many. Or, "made many disciples." Perhaps Gaius of Derbe, whom Luke mentions as one of Paul's companions on a subsequent journey (ch. 20:4), may have been one of those converted at this time. The work accomplished implies a stay that may have lasted several months.

Returned again. It would have been a much simpler matter to proceed east to Tarsus, and return by ship to Antioch in Syria. But Paul and Barnabas chose a long, weary way, traveling some 250 mi. on their return journey to the sea. But by going back over the ground they had covered, they had opportunity to scatter still further the seed of the word they had earlier sown at such personal peril. The hostility of the Jews at Antioch and Iconium must have subsided to enable the apostles to revisit those cities without further personal danger. Perhaps in some places the city officials had served their terms, and others had succeeded them. See Paul's First Missionary Tour.

22. Confirming. Rather, “strengthening.” This does not mean the ecclesiastical rite of confirmation common in later times. Paul’s action here is in harmony with Jesus’ charge to Peter, “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:32). This Paul could do by warnings and exhortations drawn from his own trials and his deliverance from them.

The faith. Probably to be understood here as the objective expression of faith, that is, in what was believed and taught. This sense of the word “faith,” meaning a “body of belief,” appears in later apostolic literature (see 2 Tim 4:7; Jude 3, 20), and is probably used similarly here.

That we. In Greek the word *hoti*, “that,” often introduces a direct quotation, serving much as quotation marks in English. Thus the words, “we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God,” apparently are a direct quotation of what Paul said to the churches on this visit. The use by Luke of the pronoun “we” has been taken by some to indicate that he also was present to hear these sermons. However, as he gives no further indication of being a party to Paul’s travels until the Second Missionary Journey at Troas (ch. 16:10), it is probably best to understand by the word “we” that this is a direct quotation of Paul’s words and that Paul identified himself with his hearers as he spoke. Surely he could point to his own tribulations as illustrations of the truth of his message!

Much tribulation. Rather, “many tribulations.” In Paul’s second epistle to Timothy, the chosen disciple of Lystra (see Acts 16:1–3), is a touching reference to tribulation. He refers to the persecution he endured at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra, and states the axiom that “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12; cf. Rev. 1:9; 7:14).

The kingdom of God. See on ch. 1:6. This phrase, familiar in the Gospels, occurs early and often in the recorded teaching of Paul (Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 4:20; 6:9; Col. 4:11; 2 Thess. 1:5). For Paul it is an actual kingdom, and Christ is King.

23. Ordained. Gr. *cheirotoneō*, literally, “to extend the hand.” This word was used among the Greeks for the action of electing officials by show of hands; from this was derived the general meaning, “to elect,” without particular regard to the method employed (see 2 Cor. 8:19, where *cheirotoneō* is translated, “chosen”); and from this was developed the further meaning, “to appoint,” whether by election or by other means (see Acts 10:41). On the basis of this verb some scholars have suggested that the elders chosen at Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch were elected by popular vote. Although it is probably true that some system of election was practiced in the apostolic church (see Acts 6:3; 2 Cor. 8:19), serious doubt must be entertained as to whether such was the method of selection employed here. The present passage indicates that Paul and Barnabas, rather than the churches, made the selection, and in view of this, the broader meaning of “chose,” or “appointed,” appears to be the best translation. Though formal ordination doubtless took place (see 1 Tim. 4:14; 5:22; 2 Tim. 1:6), it is not necessarily implied by the verb used here. Local circumstances probably were such that the apostles felt it was wiser to appoint officers directly in these new churches than to open the matter to a general election. Paul seems to have recommended a similar procedure to Titus (Titus 1:5).

At a later time bishops were elected regularly by vote of the clergy and the people. Thus Fabian of Rome was chosen by the people in A.D. 236 (Eusebius *Ecclesiastical*

History vi. 29. 2–4). Cyprian of Carthage (d. A.D. 258) speaks of the “suffrage of the whole brotherhood” (Epistle lxvii. 5; *ANF*, vol. 5, p. 371). The *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* (probably 4th century) provide that the church leaders are to be “chosen by the whole people” (viii. 2. 4; *ANF*, vol. 7, p. 481). From the 4th century on it was the established policy for a new bishop to be nominated by neighboring bishops, and his name approved by the clergy and laity of his diocese. In the Middle Ages the laity meant, of course, the aristocracy, not the common man.

Elders. See on ch. 11:30. By virtue of the authority vested in them as missionaries (see ch. 13:3), Paul and Barnabas led out in the choice of elders. Thus they instituted in the Gentile churches a form of organization already adopted by Christians in Jerusalem. It was based on the synagogue rather than on the Temple (see Vol. V, p. 57). Paul organized these churches soon after their members had become Christians, which fact shows that organization is essential for maintaining the spiritual life and growth of the church.

Prayed with fasting. As had been the procedure when the apostles themselves were sent forth from Antioch (see on ch. 13:3).

Commended. That is, “committed.” This word suggests the confidence one person feels in another to whom he has committed the keeping of his treasured possessions. In the present case it implies absolute trust in God.

24. Pisidia. See on ch. 13:14.

Pamphylia. See on ch. 13:13.

25. Perga. The city from which Mark had turned back (ch. 13:13). There is no mention of the apostles’ having preached previously here. Now on their return they do what before they apparently had left undone.

Attalia. On their way into the province the apostles apparently had gone straight from Paphos to Perga up the river Cestrus (see on ch. 13:13). On their return they made a detour that led them to Attalia, a port at the mouth of the river Catarrhactes. This city was built by Attalus II Philadelphus, king of Pergamum (159–138 B.C.). There is no record of any work done at Attalia, and the apostles probably went to it only as a port where they could board ship for Syria. See Paul’s First Missionary Tour.

26. Antioch. In Syria, whence the apostles had set out on their journey. Their ship could pass between Cilicia and Cyprus, and either dock at Seleucia or enter the river Orontes and sail up to Antioch.

Recommended. That is, “commended,” “given over.” In sending forth Paul and Barnabas, the church at Antioch had given them over to the grace of God for guidance, protection, and sustenance in their labors. This grace had not failed them.

Which they fulfilled. Paul and Barnabas had been sent forth by the church at Antioch for the accomplishment of a specific task—the evangelization of Gentiles. Now they could return to their home congregation with the satisfaction that their commission was fulfilled. Though they had only begun their preaching to the heathen, yet what they had done was done well.

27. The church. That is, the Christian congregation at Antioch, which had been moved by the Spirit (ch. 13:2) to send them on their journey. It was fitting that the apostles should report to this church the results of their First Missionary Journey.

Rehearsed all. During the interval of the missionary tour the Christians had probably heard little or nothing from the apostles, and we may well picture the eagerness with which they now gathered to listen to the report.

God had done. The great things they had accomplished were actually the acts of God.

Opened the door. This meaningful phrase is a favorite metaphor of Paul (see 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3), and occurs here probably as a fragment from his speech.

Unto the Gentiles. The gospel privileges had been given to everyone who believed. This freedom was first offered to the Gentiles at Antioch, where Paul had assisted Barnabas and others in the work (ch. 11:20–26). The gospel had now been carried to the Gentiles over a much wider field. Paul was fulfilling his commission to go to the Gentiles (ch. 22:21).

28. Long time. Or, “no little time.” Paul naturally was attracted more to Antioch than to Jerusalem, for it was at Antioch that Gentiles had first formed a church and it was that church that had commissioned him as a missionary to the Gentiles. During this period the two apostles doubtless continued to attract many Gentile converts, in addition to those previously won.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–3AA 177

1–28AA 177–188

4 AA 178

5, 6 AA 179

8–10EW 203

8–13AA 181

13–15EW 203

14–18AA 182

17 AA 598; Ed 66

19 AA 183

19, 20 AA 184; EW 203

21–23AA 185

24–26AA 187

27 AA 188

CHAPTER 15

1 *Great dissension ariseth touching circumcision. 6 The apostles consult about it, 22 and send their determination by letters to the churches. 36 Paul and Barnabas, thinking to visit the brethren together, fall at strife, and depart asunder.*

The Jerusalem Council Regarding Gentile Conduct, c. A.D. 49

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¹²Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Ac 13:32). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.



1. Certain men. The emissaries of dissension are not named. They seem to have been Pharisees who had become Christians (see v. 5).

Down from Judaea. That is, from Judea to Antioch. These new teachers came from the center of apostolic authority, but apparently without authorization to teach what they set forth.

Taught the brethren. The church at Antioch was a cosmopolitan body, composed of Jews, Gentile proselytes, and members converted directly from paganism (cf. on ch. 11:19, 20). Furthermore, Paul and Barnabas, the leading spirits in preaching to the Gentiles, were prominent there and had been commissioned by that church. For these reasons, and because the Antiochian church was the one nearest to Judea containing Gentiles in large numbers, the question of how to deal with Gentiles in the church from the point of view of Judaism naturally emerged there.

Be circumcised. See on ch. 7:8. This demand proves what is not elsewhere plainly stated in Scripture, that Paul and Barnabas had not required their Gentile converts to be circumcised. Here opens the account of the first major controversy in the Christian church. It was certain to arise as soon as Christianity spread beyond Palestine. The first converts to Christianity were Jews, but they retained most of the practices and prejudices of the religion in which they had been reared. Therefore they were shocked to see Gentiles come into the Christian church without first having become full proselytes to Judaism. It might have seemed that the conversion of Cornelius, or even that of the Ethiopian, or of the Samaritans, would have settled the question. Those who now set forth objections may have been willing to accept Cornelius and his household into the church. But they probably argued that the leading of the Holy Spirit had brought about an

exception in Cornelius' case that did not vitiate the rule of circumcision. Hence they declared that those who were brought into the church through baptism, under the clear leading of the Holy Spirit, should now be circumcised.

These agitators came to Antioch probably claiming to speak in the name of James, the presiding officer of the church in Jerusalem. But James distinctly denied having authorized them to do this (v. 24). However, inasmuch as he seems to have been a stickler for Judaic ritual and custom in his personal life (cf. Gal. 2:12), they probably felt justified in identifying him with their teaching. They maintained that circumcision was part of the law, and that if it was neglected or refused, the whole law was broken. They were neither prepared nor willing to recognize the true relationship between Christ and the law. The Judaizers brought into prominence at Antioch a question that proved a continuing cause of dissension throughout Paul's ministry, and left its mark on most of the writings of the NT, and even upon postapostolic Christian literature.

The query may be raised as to why the Lord did not anticipate such questions as this during His ministry on earth. He did not deal with it specifically, but did lay general emphasis upon true religion as being that of the soul, and not of outward observances. Christ laid a broad foundation, and enunciated principles rather than detailed dogmas. The church was to be led step by step into all truth by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13). This did not mean that the church was to develop an authoritative tradition. But it did indicate that the church was to discover and experience new light. Christianity has had to solve many problems in the face of fresh developments, but this was not to be done by changing the teachings and examples of Scripture (Rom. 15:4). New light, with the solution of unforeseen problems, would come from increasing study of the truths of Scripture, and making applications of scriptural principles to the work of the church.

Manner of Moses. Or, "custom of Moses." The practice was more than a "manner" in the sense of "fashion." Circumcision was given to Abraham by God (Gen. 17:10–13), and was confirmed to Moses (Lev. 12:3; cf. John 7:22).

Ye cannot be saved. Here was the heart of the problem. Circumcision could hardly be required of the Gentiles on the grounds of the antiquity of the custom, nor as a condition of church membership. The Judaizers presented it as a necessary step to salvation. However, God had "opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles" (ch. 14:27), a development that could not but prove that ceremonial rites were no longer needed.

2. Paul and Barnabas. These apostles were at the center of the dispute, for the demands of the Judaizers presented a direct condemnation of the work that these two missionaries had done in Cilicia, in Antioch itself, and on their First Missionary Journey. Such work they could not but interpret as a triumph of God's grace. They had proclaimed salvation through faith in Christ. Now they could not stand by silently while their converts were told that the acceptance of God's grace through faith was not sufficient, but that external rites must be performed in order to obtain salvation.

Dissension. Gr. *stasis*, "status," "party," or "faction." In Mark 15:7 and Luke 23:19 it is used of the insurrection in which Barabbas had been a ring leader. Here it portrays a vigorous dispute.

Disputation. Gr. *zētēsis*, "a seeking," and so "a questioning" "a debate."

They determined. Gr. *tassō*, "to appoint," "to arrange" (see on ch. 13:48).

Paul and Barnabas. No better representatives of the cause of freedom in the gospel could have been chosen than these two, who had already worked so successfully among the Gentiles.

Certain other. These are not named. They may have been some of the prophets at Antioch (ch. 13:1), or some of the men from Cyprus and Cyrene (ch. 11:20) who had a special interest in the Gentiles. Titus went, probably as a striking example of the kind of work the Holy Spirit had enabled Paul and Barnabas to do (Gal. 2:1).

To Jerusalem. On the question of the identification of this visit to Jerusalem with that of Gal. 2 see Additional Notes at end of chapter, Note 1.

Apostles and elders. Peter, John, and James, the Lord's brother, were at Jerusalem (see Gal. 2:9; cf. ch. 1:19). These, with the elders (see on Acts 11:30), and possibly other apostles not specifically named, appear as the guiding group of the youthful church. The fact that the early church referred the vexing question of circumcision to a council of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem is a highly significant precedent for church organization. It stands against the theory that a final decision in ecclesiastical matters should be made by one man acting as an autocrat. It also illustrates the need of counsel and authority on a wider level than that of the local congregation, when affairs affecting the entire church are in question. For the NT church, the apostles and officials of the initial congregation at Jerusalem logically constituted such a board of appeal. At the same time it will be noted later in the chapter (ch. 15:22, 25) that apparently the final decision in the present instance was based on the agreement of all present, including those who had appealed the case as delegates from Antioch, and not merely on a decision of the Jerusalem leaders. By taking their problem to Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas, and indeed the whole Antiochian church, demonstrated their confidence in the guidance of the Holy Spirit through the leadership at Jerusalem. Thus Paul declares that he went up to Jerusalem "by revelation" (Gal. 2:2). See AA 96.

3. Brought on their way. This custom is recorded repeatedly in the Acts (chs. 20:38; 21:16). To accompany a guest, and especially a departing teacher for a short distance on his way, was considered by the Jews as an act of hospitality. Thus Abraham had accompanied the angels on their way toward Sodom (Gen. 18:16). An ancient Jewish tradition declares: "A teacher [accompanies] his pupils until the outskirts of a city; one colleague [accompanies] another up to the Sabbath-limit; a pupil [accompanies] his master a distance without limit" (Talmud *Sotah* 46b, Soncino ed., p. 243). A declaration attributed to Rabbi Meir (c. A.D. 150) says: "Whoever does not escort others or allow himself to be escorted is as though he sheds blood" (*ibid.*, p. 244).

Phenice. That is, Phoenicia. The apostles' route from Antioch to Jerusalem lay along the coast through Sidon, Tyre, and probably Caesarea, and then through Samaria. They found "brethren," implying established congregations, along the way. Some of these doubtless had been established by Philip. Regarding the origin of others nothing is known beyond the present brief allusion, which suggests how much of early Christian history had not been preserved.

Conversion of the Gentiles. Inevitably this was Paul's principal theme. Doubtless he gave the story on numerous occasions in full detail, and stressed, as Peter did with the experience of Cornelius, that the Spirit had put the seal of His approval upon the acceptance of uncircumcised men.

Caused great joy. The form of the verb used here implies that as Paul and Barnabas made their way toward Jerusalem, the news of the conversion of Gentiles was received continually with gladness. This attitude on the part of the churches of Phoenicia and Samaria contrasts strikingly with the narrowness and bitterness of the Pharisees in the church at Jerusalem (v. 5) and the Judaizing party that sought to speak on behalf of it.

Unto all. Compare ch. 11:2–4, 18. The church was happy at the good news Paul and Barnabas brought. Those who insisted on circumcision for the Gentiles were only a group among the Christian Jews, and are described as “certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed” (ch. 15:5). The Pharisees were earnest supporters of the ritual law.

4. Received of the church. Upon first arriving at Jerusalem, the apostles seem to have been welcomed cordially by the church in general. The opposition faction made itself apparent after the apostles stressed publicly their success with Gentiles.

The apostles. See on ch. 1:2.

They declared. Comparison with v. 6 seems to indicate that a preliminary meeting was held at which Paul and Barnabas told the story of their missionary labors. Perhaps this was the meeting held “privately” with “them which were of reputation” to which Paul later refers (Gal. 2:2). Some time must have been consumed in telling the story of the deeds and sufferings, of the signs and wonders, as well as of the purity and love, of the Gentile converts. Such a narrative was the best possible introduction to the question that was later discussed and decided in the council.

5. Rose up. Perhaps this rising up of the Judaizers necessitated the convening of a more formal council meeting.

Sect. Gr. *hairesis* (see on ch. 5:17). Some from the Pharisees had become Christians. They accepted Jesus as a teacher sent from God (see John 3:2), which had been proved by His resurrection from the dead. Accordingly, they expected Him to become head of the kingdom that was to transmit to mankind a restored, glorified Judaism, with the law and the Temple in their rightful place, and Gentiles admitted as a favor, upon circumcision. It was these who now stood up and protested against what Paul and Barnabas had been doing. Perhaps the general issue was debated in terms of an individual case, that of Titus (see Gal. 2:3), a Gentile who had not gone through the transitional stage of proselytism. Titus’ involvement in the present controversy prepared him later to contend against the Judaizers’ insistence upon the obsolete forms of religion (cf. Titus 1:10, 14, 15).

The law of Moses. See on ch. 6:13. Circumcision was not the only requirement the Judaizers proposed to make of Christians. It was only their entering wedge.

6. Apostles and elders. See on v. 2; ch. 11:30. A comparison with ch. 15:23 implies that in addition to the church officials, “brethren,” known today as laity, also took some part in the council.

7. Disputing. Gr. *zētēsis* (see on v. 2). The human element apparent in the handling of such a crucial question as was decided here strikingly demonstrates the fact that God’s guiding Spirit works with and through human beings and accomplishes His will in spite of their frailties and disagreements.

Peter rose. Peter was in a place of authority, but not of primacy. He did not preside, and although his speech set the keynote of the council’s decision, he did not propose the final resolution. The fact that it was he who had been instrumental in converting the first Gentile, Cornelius, a Roman, and that that conversion had been approved by the church

(see ch. 11:1–18), placed him in a particularly favorable position to urge the acceptance of other Gentiles now.

Men and brethren. See on chs. 1:16; 2:37; 13:15.

A good while ago. Literally, “from early days.” Peter alluded to the conversion of Cornelius (ch. 10), which had occurred perhaps a decade or more before. Much that was relevant to the present problem had happened since that time.

By my mouth. Peter was not claiming distinction of position, but put himself forward as a mouthpiece for God.

8. Knoweth the hearts. Literally, “heart-knowing.” This expression is used in the NT elsewhere only in ch. 1:24. God had acted, putting the uncircumcised on the same level as the circumcised, and the church could not but act accordingly.

The Holy Ghost. See on ch. 10:44.

9. No difference. That is, “no distinction.” God had given to the new Gentile converts, without circumcision, the same outpouring of the Spirit as He had first given at Pentecost, making no distinction between Jews and Gentiles. This obviously meant the complete acceptance of Gentiles into the church. See Paul’s later statement of the same principle (Rom. 10:12).

Purifying their hearts. Faith had purified the hearts of Cornelius and his house. The observance of the law of ceremonies was superfluous and meaningless when the heart was clean before God, who alone can judge purity. The ceremonies of the law were for purification, but here was a higher ideal of purity than that upon which the Pharisees insisted. They put the Gentiles under a blanket indictment of impurity because they did not observe the ceremonial law and the traditions of the elders. Peter had learned that no man may be called common or unclean (ch. 10:28), and that purification must be of the heart rather than of the flesh (see Titus 1:15).

10. Why tempt ye God? That is, why experiment with God as to His will in reference to accepting the Gentiles, when He had already manifested what His will was for them? Should man’s resisting will be made stronger than God’s? The Jews had tempted God in the wilderness (Heb. 3:9) when, in the presence of His mighty works for them, they murmured against the leaders He had given them. They had tempted Christ (1 Cor. 10:9), and their disobedience had brought upon them the punishment of the fiery serpents. Ananias and Sapphira had tempted the Spirit of God by seeking to deceive the church concerning their offering (Acts 5:9). Peter warned his hearers against tempting God again in the matter of admitting the Gentiles.

A yoke. The yoke Peter speaks of was the ceremonial law (see AA 194), together with its traditional elaborations, by which the Jews sought to gain salvation. Paul himself could not have spoken sterner words than these. They harked back to Christ’s own language as to the “heavy burdens” of the traditions of the Pharisees (Matt. 23:4), in comparison with His own “easy” yoke (ch. 11:30). They anticipated Paul’s warning to the Galatians not to be “entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Gal. 5:1).

Able to bear. As originally intended by God, the ceremonial requirements of the law of Moses were not intolerable. Only because the Jews lost sight of their real import, making them a round of ceremonies by which they sought to gain salvation, did these things become an unbearable yoke. Furthermore, the rabbis had sought to make a hedge about the law, so to fence in its precepts by additional regulations of their own that there

would be no chance to break the commandment. As a result, the Jewish ceremonial observance had become an intolerable load.

11. Grace of the Lord. Peter urged that it was not conformance to the law that brought salvation, but the grace of the Lord. This statement came as his closing argument.

Shall be saved. The salvation God promises is by grace (see Rom. 3:21–26; 5:1, 2; 11:5, 6; Eph. 2:5, 8). The works follow upon the receiving of the gift of salvation by grace (Rom. 8:4; Eph. 2:9, 10; Phil. 2:12, 13).

12. The multitude. That is, the assembled group (see on v. 6).

Kept silence. In response to Peter's convincing testimony, there were no dissenting voices. Opposition was silenced, even if all minds were not changed. Peter had had his prejudices overcome in the matter of Cornelius; now he had overcome the prejudices of others.

Gave audience. Up to this point Paul and Barnabas apparently had not spoken at length to the assembly. Now Peter's speech had prepared the audience to listen to them narrate the remarkable events of the First Missionary Journey. The two missionaries repeated publicly what they already had told the apostles and elders (v. 4).

Miracles and wonders. Or, "signs and wonders" (see Vol. V, p. 208). In view of the questionings of some of those present, doubtless Barnabas and Paul stressed the miraculous phase of their work as an attestation of God's acceptance of the results. Their report showed that miracles had been worked among the Gentiles as well as among the Jews.

13. James. This is probably the brother of the Lord and leader of the church at Jerusalem. See on ch. 12:17.

Men and brethren. See on chs. 1:16; 2:37; 13:15.

Hearken. James's summary ignores the "much disputing" (v. 7). Peter's insight (vs. 7–11) accorded with OT prophecy, and upon this fact James based his decision.

14. Simeon. Gr. *Simeōn*, a form of the name "Simon" that reflects more closely the Heb. *Shim'on*. This form is used for Peter only here and perhaps in 2 Peter 1:1, and was natural for James as a speaker from Galilee.

How God at the first. Rather, "how God did first visit." That is, what Peter had narrated marked the first acceptance of a Gentile into the church.

Visit. Gr. *episkeptomai*, "to look upon," often, as here, having the connotation, with kindness (see Luke 1:68; 7:16; Heb. 2:6).

A people. The Jews believed that they alone were "the people"—God's people—and that all others were outside the circle of God's love. But James proclaimed that God was taking to Himself a people from these heathen nations also. Paul recognized this same change (Rom. 9:26). Since "the chosen people" were no longer in Christian eyes to be Jews only, the ceremonial requirements that had marked Jews from Gentiles were now unnecessary.

15. To this agree. That is, to this action on God's part the OT prophets agree. They had looked forward to the conversion of the Gentiles, which now was taking place.

As it is written. The quotation in vs. 16, 17 is from the LXX of Amos 9:11, 12. The audience, familiar with the OT Scriptures, might recall other like prophecies, as Paul did in Rom. 15:9–12. The fact that James's quotation is from the LXX, and that the LXX of

this passage clinches his argument more strongly than does the alternative reading of the Masoretic text, has raised the question as to whether the council was conducted in Greek. In favor of the idea that it was, is the fact that many Jews, even in Palestine, were bilingual, and that the question at issue here was one that centered about Greek-speaking Christians. Christians from Antioch were present (see Acts 15:2) who may or may not have known Aramaic, and Titus, and uncircumcised Gentile (see Gal. 2:3), who probably did not understand Aramaic, no doubt also was there. For the sake of these, Greek would have been an appropriate language to use.

However, there are good reasons to suppose that James made his speech in Aramaic, probably quoting Scripture in the closely related Hebrew language. James stands, both in the NT and in early Christian literature, as the leader of Jewish Christianity. The issue in question was essentially a Jewish one, and had been raised by the most Jewish of Christian Jews, the Pharisees. In view of this it would seem reasonable to expect that a discussion among the apostles in Jerusalem at this time would probably have been carried on in Aramaic. This does not mean, however, that Luke is in error in quoting the LXX, the Bible version familiar to his Greek readers. The Hebrew of Amos 9:11, 12, as it is in the Masoretic text, would not be inappropriate to his argument, and if he did not use that, he may have quoted from a form of the Hebrew text that was more closely related to the LXX than is the Masoretic. Discoveries at Qumran have shown that such texts existed for at least parts of the OT (see Vol. V, p. 93).

16. *I will return.* This phrase does not accord with either the Hebrew text or the LXX of Amos 9:11. It is, however, a favorite Hebrew expression for, “I will do such and such again” (see Eccl. 9:11; Hosea 2:9; 11:9). This may be an indication that James quoted the OT in Hebrew.

Tabernacle. Gr. *skēnē*, “a tent,” representing the Hebrew word *sukkah*, “a booth,” used at the Feast of Booths (or Tabernacles), during which the Hebrews lived for a week in frail and temporary shelters.

17. *Residue of men.* At this point the Masoretic text of Amos 9:12 reads, *she’erith ’edom*, “the remnant of Edom.” However, in the Hebrew alphabet the words *’edom*, “Edom,” and *’adam*, “man,” are almost identical; the LXX apparently read the latter word, and so translated, “residue of men.” The argument of James is emphasized by the Greek rendering. “The residue of men”—the Gentiles—were to call upon the “name of God.” James recognized the prophecy as a prediction of the conversion of the Gentiles, and thus relevant to the question now under discussion.

Might seek. The Masoretic text differs widely from James’s quotation, as is illustrated by a comparison of this passage in Acts with the KJV of Amos 9:12. The latter portrays the restored people of Israel (under the figure of the tabernacle) as possessors of the remnant of Edom and all the heathen. But as James applies this prophecy, it is declaration of the intention of God that the Gentiles might seek Him. James makes it clear that this seeking “after the Lord” is to be the true upbuilding both of the house of David and of all mankind.

My name is called. The expression “upon whom my name is called” is Semitic, and means, “who are called by my name.” It appears in the Hebrew of Deut. 28:10 and the Greek of James 2:7.

Saith the Lord. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) a reading for the last part of v. 17 and v. 18 that may be translated either (1) “saith the Lord, who maketh these things known from of old”; or, (2) “saith the Lord, who doeth these things that were known from of old.” Either translation shows that the salvation of Gentiles was no novelty in God’s plan (see Vol. IV, pp. 27–30).

18. Known. That God would accept Gentiles, startled the Jews, but He had revealed it by His prophets. Now He was carrying out what He had known and designed from the beginning (see Eph. 3:2–12).

19. My sentence is. Literally, “I decide.” James’s words imply that he speaks with authority. However, what follows is not a decree, for when finally promulgated it rested upon the authority of the apostles and elders (see ch. 16:4).

Trouble. Gr. *parenochleō*, “to worry,” “to harass,” “to trouble,” by putting obstacles in the way of another. This is the only place in the NT that this verb is used.

Are turned. Rather, “are turning.” The work of conversion was going on among the Gentiles at that very moment. This verb (Gr. *epistrephō*) appears repeatedly in Acts in reference to conversion (see on ch. 3:19). That the Gentiles really were turning to God and that God was accepting them, was evidenced by the report of Paul and Barnabas, and perhaps by the presence of Titus, a Gentile Christian (see Gal. 2:1; cf. Additional Notes at end of chapter, Note 1). This was the basic reason for the decision taken. Gentiles were being converted; God was accepting them. How then could the church refuse to accept them?

The church did not yet see clearly that the ceremonial laws pointing to Christ were fulfilled in Him, and that the ethnic symbols characterizing the Jews as Jews (such as circumcision) were likewise no longer meaningful. For decades Jewish Christians, in general, continued to identify themselves with the Temple rituals, and even Paul joined in them when he was at Jerusalem (Acts 20:16; 21:18–26; cf. ch. 18:19). But later it was revealed, especially to Paul, that there was a theological reason for not requiring the observance of the Mosaic rituals. Many of these were “shadows” pointing to Christ and His work; once His mission was finished, they were no longer meaningful (Col. 2:11–20; Heb. 9:1–12). Others were characteristic symbols of Judaism that ceased to be significant when all men might equally find salvation in Jesus Christ without having to become identified with the Jewish people (see Rom. 10:11, 12; Col. 3:10, 11). Paul saw clearly that the spirit of legalism encouraged by these rituals had become a barrier between Jew and Gentile that had no place among men who were one in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:13–16).

20. Write. Gr. *epistellō*, “to send a message,” “to write a letter” (see Heb. 13:22). The messengers sent by the apostles took with them the written decision of the council (see Acts 15:23).

That they abstain. The decision was essentially a practical one (see on v. 19). With the coming of greater theological insight, the question of eating meat offered to idols was later viewed in a somewhat different light (see below on “pollutions of idols”). But under the conditions of the moment, this decision was as far as the church felt it expedient to go. The Gentiles could not but be gratified, since no extreme burden was imposed upon them, and those of a Pharisaic tendency could not deny that Gentiles had truly been converted. The requirements stipulated seemed to be especially acceptable to Christian Jews.

Pollutions of idols. In view of the fact that the official written pronouncement of the Jerusalem Council declared against “meats offered to idols” (Gr. *eidōlothuta*, “[things] offered to idols”; v. 29), it is probably best to understand “pollutions of idols” here in the specific sense of food (and drink) that had been offered to heathen deities. In Greek and Roman religion food was routinely presented to the deities in the temples. However, only a small portion of it was put upon the altar. The rest was either consumed by those living in connection with the temple, or sent to the market for sale. In the eyes of strict Jews, such food was polluted. Thus a judgment attributed to Rabbi Akiba (c. A.D. 100) declares: “Meat which is being brought in to a place of idols is permitted [to derive some benefit therefrom], but that which is brought out is forbidden, because it is [regarded] as sacrifices of the dead” (Mishnah *‘Abodah Zarah* 2. 3, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 145). Similarly another regulation from the Mishnah (codified c. A.D. 200) declares regarding wine offered to an idol, “Yen nesek (libation-wine) is prohibited and renders [other wine] prohibited by the smallest quantity. Wine [mixed] with wine and water with water [disqualifies] by the smallest quantity. Wine [mixed] with water and water with wine [disqualifies when the prohibited element] imparts a flavour. This is the general rule: with the same species [the mixture is disqualified] by the smallest quantity, but with a different species [it is disqualified when the prohibited element] imparts a flavour” (*ibid.* 5. 8, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 349). Consequently a strict Jew never bought meat in the open market, but only of a Jewish butcher. When he traveled, it was with his *kophinos*, or basket, on his back; he carried his food with him (see on Mark 6:43). Juvenal refers to “Jews, who possess a basket and a truss of hay for all their furnishings” (*Satires* iii. 13, 14; Loeb ed., p. 33).

In view of this strong Jewish feeling, the council saw fit to ask Gentile Christians to abstain from meat offered to idols. This would entail no small denial of self. The convert must refuse invitations to many festive affairs, or if present, refuse to eat. A man of careful conscience also would refuse to eat food set before him in a private house, unless he was satisfied it had not been offered in a temple. At the same time, this restriction had the practical value of safeguarding Gentile Christians against the temptation to engage in pagan rituals, where tasting the sacrificial food and wine was an essential part of worship. If nothing offered to an idol was to be eaten, the conscientious Christian could clearly understand that even the perfunctory ritual of tasting food and drink at an emperor’s altar was forbidden. This seems especially to have been an issue at the time of the writing of the Revelation (see on Rev. 2:14).

A few years after the Jerusalem Council, this restriction met with some resistance. At Corinth men claimed the right to eat what they chose, and Paul conceded the right in the abstract, to the extent that they might buy food in the market places without regard to whether it had been offered previously in a temple, since “an idol is nothing.” But he supported the restriction on the ground of brotherly love and respect to others’ scruples (1 Cor. 8–10; see on Rom. 14).

From fornication. It may be surprising at first to find a moral rule placed along with restrictions that seem purely ceremonial. But the first item in the decree was moral also in so far as it was based on the second commandment of the Decalogue. In regard to fornication, the Levitical law against every form of unchastity was rightly strict (Lev. 18; 20:10–21).

The sin of fornication, involving the lack of any real respect for the purity of womanhood, was so widespread an evil in the ancient world that it can be considered almost a characteristic of Greco-Roman life. Idolatry and fornication sometimes were related in the pagan cults. As with the harlot-priestesses of Aphrodite at Corinth and Paphos, prostitution was often a part of idolatry. The man who indulged himself in the temple thereby expressed his supposed faith in the goddess thus worshipped. The sin of fornication was a permissible and even routine thing to the pagan. For this reason the Jewish Christian would want to know that Gentile converts had entered into purity of life (see 1 Cor. 6:15; Rev. 2:14). Therefore at the Jerusalem Council Christianity took its first public step toward holding aloft high moral standards, not only by its general teaching, but by a specific rule laid down for its members to follow.

Things strangled. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of the words, “and from things strangled.” There is no clear prohibition in the OT against the eating of “things strangled.” However, the principle involved appears to be the same as that of the next prohibition, abstaining from eating blood. Animals strangled would not normally be bled, and so their flesh would not be bled, and so their flesh would not be acceptable for food (see Lev. 17:13, 14). James’s declaration may also have been based on the Mosaic restrictions against the flesh of animals that had died of themselves or that had been killed by another beast (Lev. 17:15; Deut. 14:21). Such restrictions were observed by the early church, as is testified by Tertullian (died c. A.D. 230), who, writing to pagans, declares: “Blush for your vile ways before the Christians, who have not even the blood of animals at their meals of simple and natural food; who abstain from things strangled and that die a natural death, for no other reason than that they may not contract pollution, so much as from blood secreted in the viscera” (*Apology* 9; *ANF*, vol. 3, p. 25). Similarly, an ancient rule in the Eastern Church ordains: “If any bishop, or presbyter, or deacon, or indeed any one of the sacerdotal catalogue, eats flesh with the blood of its life, or that which is torn by beast, or which died of itself, let him be deprived; for this the law has forbidden. But if he be one of the laity, let him be suspended” (*Apostolic Canon* 63; *ANF*, vol. 7, p. 504). Ancient Jewish tradition declared that when the neck of an animal was broken the blood flowed into the limbs in such a way that it could not be brought out, even with the use of salt (Talmud *Hullin* 113a, Soncino ed., pp. 621, 622).

From blood. The prohibition against the use of blood as food was made as soon as animal food was permitted for men (Gen. 9:4), and it was frequently reiterated in the Mosaic law (Lev. 3:17; 7:26; 17:10; 19:26). To eat blood was counted a sin against the Lord in the days of Saul (1 Sam. 14:33). Food prepared with blood was common on the tables of both Greeks and Romans. For instance this is found in Homer: “Here at the fire are goats’ paunches lying, which we set there for supper, when we had filled them with fat and blood. Now whichever of the two wins and proves himself the better man, let him rise and choose for himself which one of these he will” (*Odyssey* xvii. 44–49; Loeb ed., vol. 2, pp. 199, 201).

The heathen were accustomed, at their sacrifices, to drink blood mingled with wine. Josephus, speaking from the standpoint of the Jews of the 1st century A.D., recorded that “blood of any description he [Moses] has forbidden to be used for food, regarding it as the soul and spirit” (*Antiquities* iii. 11. 2 [260]; Loeb ed., vol. 4, p. 443). The attitude of the Jews toward this prohibition may be seen from a statement attributed to Rabbi Shim’on ben ‘Azzai (c. A.D. 110): “In the Torah there are 365 prohibitions, and among

all the laws there is none like this ... if the Scriptures admonish you thus regarding the prohibition of blood [Deut. 12:23], in comparison with which there is no easier one among all the commandments, how much the more does this apply to all the rest of the commandments!" (Sifre Deuteronomy 12:23; quoted in Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, vol. 2, p. 734). That the prohibition of blood might be considered the most easily observed of all the commandments helps to make understandable the feeling of the Jewish Christians at Jerusalem that Gentile converts should abide by it. For several centuries, in some areas at least, the early Christian church appears to have held to this rule (see above on "things strangled"). At the same time, particularly in the West, an attempt seems to have been made to present the restrictions of the Jerusalem Council as purely moral prohibitions. Thus Irenaeus (c. A.D. 185) quotes the present passage as follows: "'That it be enjoined them, that they do abstain from the vanities of idols, and from fornication, and from blood; and whatsoever they wish not to be done to themselves, let them not do to others'" (*Against Heresies* iii. 12. 14; *ANF*, vol. 1, pp. 435, 436). That from such a standpoint "blood" was interpreted as the shedding of human blood, that is, murder, is clear from Tertullian (died c. A.D. 230), who explains, "The interdict upon 'blood' we shall understand to be (an interdict) much more upon *human* blood" (*On Modesty* 12; *ANF*, vol. 4, p. 86). See on Gen. 9:4.

21. Of old time. Rather, "from ancient generations." James apparently had no other thought than that the Jewish Christians would retain all that the Judaism had given them, and that they would not separate from the Jewish synagogue.

In the synagogues. On the program of the synagogue worship, see Vol. V, pp. 56–58. Jewish Christians were still in attendance at the synagogue were still in attendance at the synagogue services. The connection of this verse with the preceding may be understood in various ways. Some take it as meaning that the Jewish Christians need not fear that Gentile freedom would encroach on their observance of the Mosaic laws, for they and their children would continue to be admonished in the law every Sabbath as they attended the synagogue. Others understand this verse as a basis for James's prohibitions in this sense, that inasmuch as Moses is read in the synagogue, the Gentiles should at least abstain from the things he enumerates. Still others see it as meaning that the Gentile Christians would certainly not find James's prohibitions difficult, since they already were familiar with them from their contacts with the synagogues, where the law was regularly read.

22. Pleased it. Gr. *dokeō*, "to seem fitting," or, as the word was used in an official sense, the passage here may be translated, "it was ordered," "it was voted."

The whole church. This shows the important position occupied by the members of the church. They concurred in the commissioning of the representatives sent with the letter. In later centuries the laity was largely excluded from official church councils.

With Paul and Barnabas. The men chosen were sent along with Paul and Barnabas, in order that the confirmation of the decrees adopted might come from lips other than those of these two men, who were so personally involved in the question. Thus there would be no chance of some recalcitrant Judaizer charging Paul and Barnabas with forgery.

Judas surnamed Barsabas. The name Barsabas was also borne by Joseph, "who was surnamed Justus" (see on ch. 1:23). If Barsabas is considered a family name, this Judas

and Joseph were possibly brothers. Joseph at least had been one of the personal followers of Jesus. In ch. 15:32 Judas is called a prophet.

Silas. This may be an Aramaic name, or a contraction of the Roman Silvanus. Like Judas, he was a prophet (v. 32). He became the companion of Paul on the Second Missionary Journey (v. 40), and is probably the Silvanus mentioned in 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1; 1 Peter 5:12.

Chief men. Or, “leading men,” “authorities.” Their position may have arisen from the fact that they were prophets (see v. 32). If they had been followers of Jesus, this also would have caused them to be greatly respected by the brethren.

23. Wrote letters. What follows in this chapter is doubtless the transcript of the document sent, the first of a long series of decrees and canons of councils that appear in the history of the church. Probably this letter was written in Greek. Its format is Greek; the Gentiles most concerned in the decisions contained in it were largely Greek speaking, as was doubtless the church of Antioch to which it was dispatched.

By them. Literally, “by their hand,” perhaps a Hebraism. This does not mean that the letter was written by these men, but that it was sent by them.

Apostles and elders and brethren. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading, “The apostles and the elders, brethren.” Thus the leaders at Jerusalem assured the Christians to whom they wrote that they were all brethren in Christ.

Send greeting. Gr. *chairein* (see on Rom. 1:7). This word is a usual salutation in Greek letters, but is not used in the NT except here, in Acts 23:26, and James 1:1.

Gentiles. As indicated in v. 20, the letter of the council was addressed to the Gentiles, and not to the Jewish Christians.

Antioch and Syria and Cilicia. In Antioch the dispute over requirements laid upon the Gentiles had come to a head. The churches in the surrounding regions of Syria were undoubtedly involved. The mention of Cilicia suggests that Paul had done important work in his native province, prior to laboring with Barnabas at Antioch (see ch. 11:25).

24. Which went out. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 10) between retaining or omitting these words. From v. 1 it is clear that they were from Judea. Their lack of authority contrasts with the authority given Judas and Silas by the council (v. 27).

Subverting. Gr. *anaskeuazō*, “to unsettle.” The Judaizers had unsettled the faith of Gentile converts, for their contentions had struck at the very basis of Christian experience and belief—the fact that salvation is not gained by outward observances or by being identified with a certain group of people.

Saying. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of the words, “saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law.”

Gave no such commandment. Rather, “gave no orders.” This is a complete disavowal that any authority had been given to the Judaizers. The passage is also important in evaluating the claims set up by the same group later (Gal. 2:12).

25. It seemed good. Gr. *dokeō*, see on v. 22. If the words are taken in their official sense, the first part of this verse may be translated, “We have voted unanimously to send.” An alternative translation is, “Having come to agreement, we have decided to send.”

Chosen men. That is, Judas Barsabas and Silas.

Beloved. Gr. *agapētos*, an adjective that in the NT is particularly applied to those who are united in faith and love. The whole letter does intentional honor to Paul and Barnabas, and the expression “beloved” illuminates Paul’s statement that the “pillars” of the church at Jerusalem gave to him and Barnabas the “right hands of fellowship” (Gal. 2:9). Peter speaks of Paul with this term (2 Peter 3:15).

Barnabas and Paul. Probably the name of Barnabas is put first here because he had been formerly a special messenger sent from the church in Jerusalem to Antioch (ch. 11:22).

26. Hazarded. Gr. *paradidōmi*, “to give over,” “to commit.” This passage may be understood in either of two ways. It may mean that they were men who had shown themselves willing to give up their lives for Christ’s sake—which certainly was true (see chs. 13:50; 14:5, 19)—or it may mean more generally that they had committed their lives to the cause of Christ.

For the name. Here as before “name” signifies the Messianic dignity and divine authority of Jesus. The missionaries had been preaching Jesus as the Christ. See on ch. 3:16.

27. By mouth. Literally, “by word.” Compare the expression, “by word of mouth.”

28. Seemed good. The Greek verb is the same here as in v. 25. Jesus had promised that the Spirit of truth would guide His disciples into all truth (John 16:13), and Luke often speaks of them as filled with the Spirit. Hence the men of the council unhesitatingly claimed that their Guide was the Spirit of God. Under the direction of the Spirit of God. Under the direction of the Spirit of the Jewish Christians were laying aside their prejudice of long standing against fellowship with Gentiles. How much better it would have been for the church had it always been honestly able to say that it was under the control and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

No greater burden. The Jews themselves felt this burden in their load of legal observances (see on Acts 15:10; Rev. 2:24).

29. Meats offered to idols. This wording gives sharper definition to James’s warning against “pollutions of idols” (see on v. 20).

And from things strangled. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of these words as in v. 20. For discussion of these prohibitions see on v. 20.

Do well. Gr. *eu prassō*. This expression may mean either “to get along well” or “to do right.” Although the former meaning is more common, Christian literature from the 2d century supports the latter, and it seems to be more fitting in the present context.

Evidence from the papyri shows that *eu prassō* was a term used in epistles of the Koine period to express a courteous request, and the present passage might even be translated, “from which please keep yourselves.”

Fare ye well. A form of the Greek verb *rhōnnumi*, “to be strong,” “to prosper,” that is a common closing salutation in Greek letters. This letter follows standard Greek style at both its beginning and its end (see on v. 23).

30. Came to Antioch. It is natural to suppose that the envoys from the council returned north through Samaria and Phoenicia. Doubtless there was rejoicing among the Gentiles in the Christian congregations at the news of the freedom they received.

Multitude. Gr. *plēthos*, a word used repeatedly in Acts for gatherings of believers (chs. 4:32; 5:14; 6:2; 15:12). Here it refers to the Christian congregation at Antioch.

Delivered the epistle. There must have been eager excitement as the letter was solemnly opened and read aloud, with perhaps murmuring on the one side, and applause on the other, as sentence after sentence repudiated the teachings of the Judaizers and confirmed the stand taken by Paul and Barnabas. To the Gentile believers at Antioch this epistle was a charter of freedom, won after a real struggle.

31. Consolation. Barnabas, “the son of consolation” (see on ch. 4:36), was a worthy member of such an embassy. Consolation would be felt by both Jews and Gentiles; by the former because they would now know on what basis they could receive the Gentile converts as fellow Christians; by the latter, because they were now free from the yoke of ceremonies and rituals. See Additional Notes at end of chapter, Note 2.

32. Judas and Silas, being prophets. See on ch. 13:1. “Prophet” is used here, not of one who necessarily foretells the future, but of one who, being filled with the Spirit, speaks forth for God with unique authority. Judas and Silas were therefore qualified both to exhort and to strengthen the disciples. Exhortation would be needed by the Gentiles. This was the sort of work to which Peter was bidden by his Lord (Luke 22:32), and it was now to be done under the same terms Peter had learned to employ in his dealing with Cornelius.

33. In peace. This is the translation of the normal Hebrew salutation of farewell. It does not signify that the men were allowed to go away quietly, but rather that the church’s prayers for their peace accompanied them. Compare Mark 5:34.

Unto the apostles. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading “to those who had sent them.”

34. Notwithstanding. Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of this verse. However, since Paul shortly afterward chose Silas for his companion on his next missionary journey (v. 40; cf. v. 36), Silas must have remained in Antioch after Judas had gone, or have returned there soon after.

35. Preaching. A form of the Greek verb *euaggelizō* (see on ch. 13:32). Both teaching and preaching had to be done to set forth Jesus as the Saviour, and to instruct in the way of life for God; doubtless this was especially essential for Gentiles, who, it was becoming clear, were now partakers of the new covenant under the gospel.

36. Some days after. See on ch. 16:1.

Let us go again. This proposal was characteristic of Paul. His heart was ever full of “the care of all the churches” (2 Cor. 11:28), which he was always mentioning in his prayers (Rom. 1:9; Eph. 1:16; Phil. 1:3). Judging from his concern for Timothy, revealed in Paul’s epistles to him, Paul would be as much concerned about the spiritual growth of individual members who were his children in the faith as he was for the general condition of the churches he had founded. Paul proposed the journey as an opportunity for revisiting the churches founded on the first tour, but he branched out when constrained by the Spirit to go to Europe, in answer to the Macedonian call.

Paul’s Second Missionary Tour, c. A.D. 49 to 52

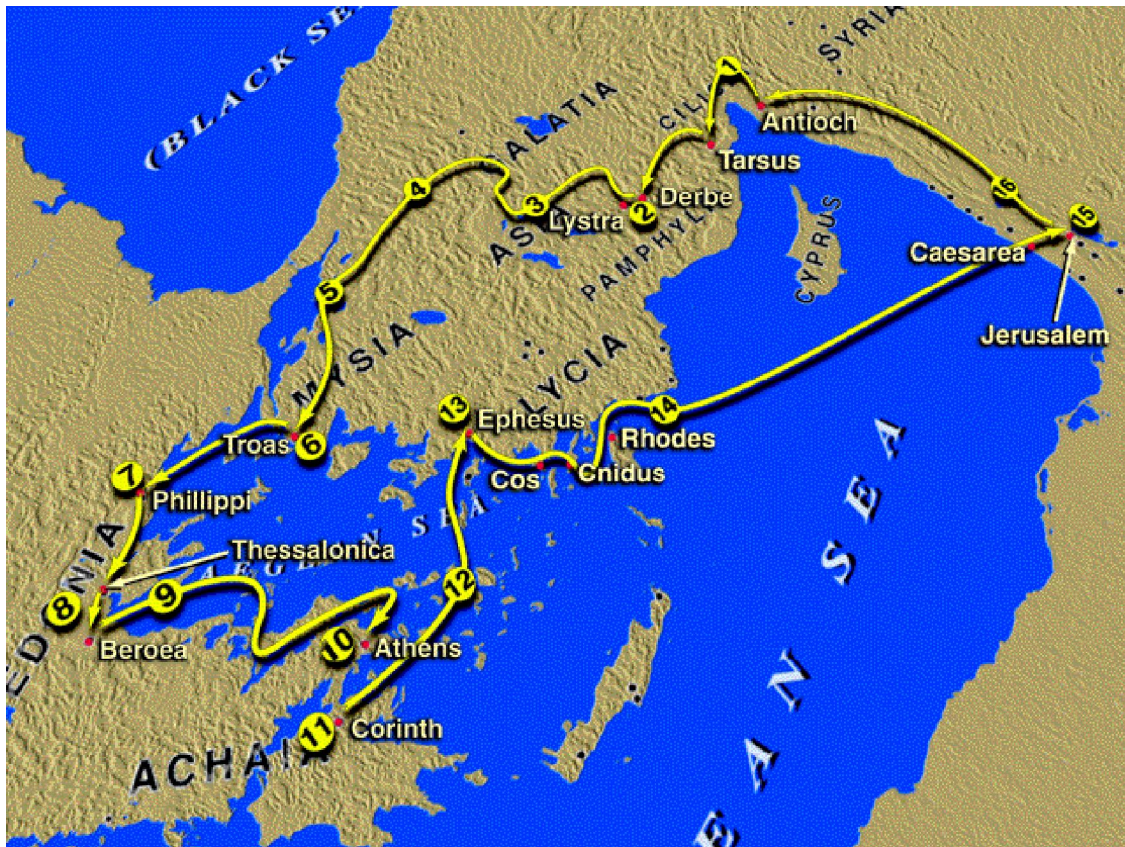
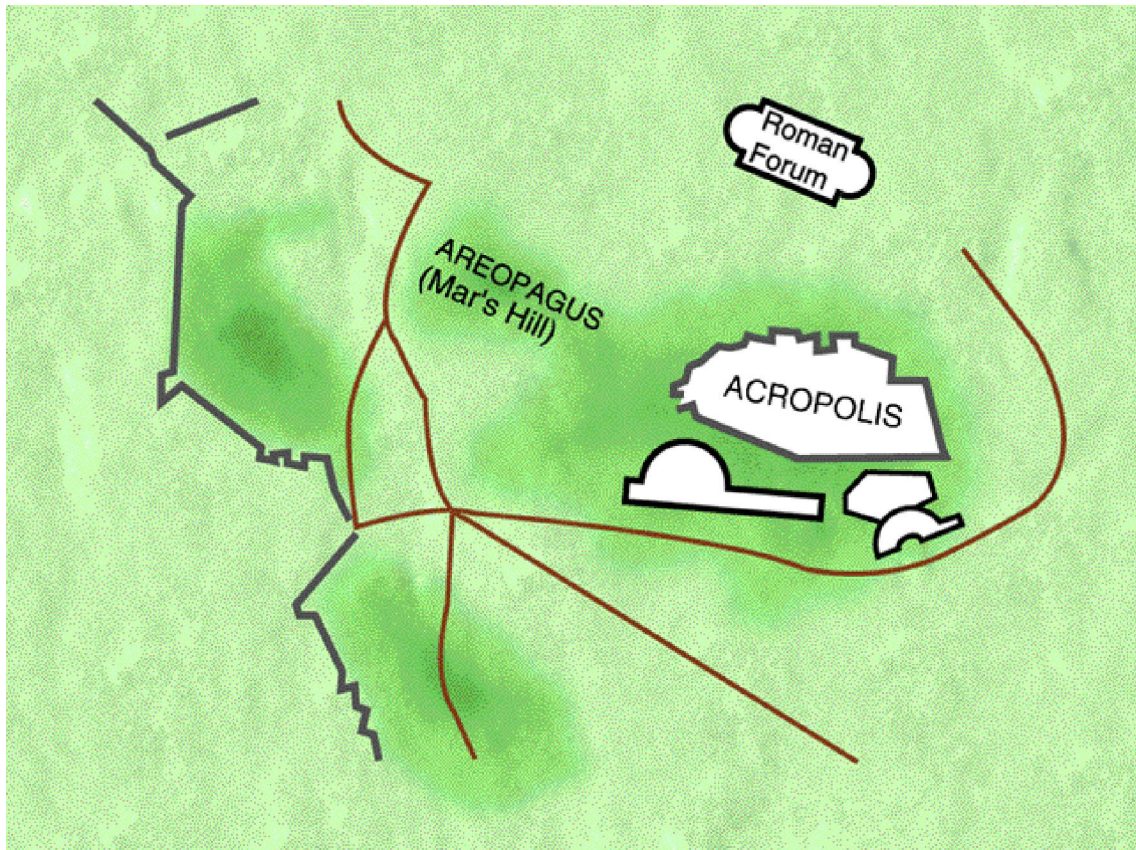


Diagram of Central Athens

¹³Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Ac 15:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.



37. *Determined.* Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading “was minded,” or “desired.” Undoubtedly it was Barnabas’ family relationship with John Mark that led him to wish to take the young man once more on a missionary tour, to give him an opportunity to show his fitness for service (see Col. 4:10). Doubtless he recognized, as Paul did not, circumstances that at least in part excused John’s former turning back from an arduous task (see on Acts 13:13). To Paul, the earnest and courageous warrior for Christ, anyone who had so acted seemed, in the Lord’s own words, not “fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62), and was in need of discipline, of rejection at least for a time, to fit himself for further work.

Surname. Literally, “who is called.”

38. *Departed from them.* See on ch. 13:13. John Mark had turned back to Jerusalem from Perga.

Went not. These words suggest that Paul’s complaint against Mark was that in returning to Jerusalem he had shirked his share of the burdens of the tour.

39. *Contention.* Gr. *paroxusmos*, “irritation,” “sharp anger.” From this word comes the English “paroxysm,” which may intimate a temporary, although severe, division, rather than a long-lasting one. The warmth of a long-standing friendship sealed by Barnabas’ help to Paul when he stood most in need of a human friend (see on ch. 9:27), as well as the mutual prosecution of a great work, and the successful securing of a great decision, made the breach between Barnabas and Paul the more painful. This is the last mention in Acts of either Barnabas or Mark. For the church, the result was that two missionary journeys were undertaken instead of one. Though the apostles differed as to

who was worthy to join in such work, there was no division between them as to what work ought to be done in the gospel. Barnabas' name occurs in Paul's epistles in 1 Cor. 9:6; Gal. 2:1, 9, 13; and Col. 4:10. In writing to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 9:6), the apostle named Barnabas as setting the same noble example as he, in laboring with his own hands and receiving no support from the churches where he labored in the gospel. Col. 4:10 reveals that Paul once more received John Mark as a fellow worker (Philemon 24), and Paul learned to recognize in John Mark one who was "profitable" to him "for the ministry" (2 Tim. 4:11). After working with Barnabas in Cyprus, Mark apparently returned to Peter, and was with him in Rome (1 Peter 5:13). It may have been in connection with this stay at Rome that Mark labored once more with Paul.

Sailed unto Cyprus. This was the homeland of Barnabas. It was natural for him and Mark to begin their labors here.

40. Paul chose Silas. See on v. 34. This shows the interest of Silas in evangelism among the Gentiles, and doubtless he was as well fitted as was Barnabas, for he had the gift of prophecy. Silas could now claim the title of apostle, in its broader sense of "missionary," as he was sent forth by the church of Antioch.

Recommended. See on ch. 14:26.

41. He went. Although the pronoun refers only to Paul, the narrative shows that Silas accompanied the more experienced apostle. Thus the sense of the passage is, "they went" (cf. ch. 16:1, 6).

Syria and Cilicia. As Paul had not visited his home province of Cilicia on the first journey, it is probable that the churches there were founded by him during his years at Tarsus following his conversion (see chs. 9:30; 11:25). But the Judaizers had been active in the two provinces named, and the presence of Paul, with Silas as one of the emissaries from the council, must have helped to allay any doubts or questionings in the minds of either Jews or Gentiles in the churches they now visited.

Confirming. See on ch. 14:22.

ADDITIONAL NOTES ON CHAPTER 15

Note 1

One of the knottiest problems in the book of Acts is that which grows out of the comparison of Luke's record of Paul's visits to Jerusalem with the apostle's own narrative in Gal. 1; 2. Thus far Luke records three such visits (Acts 9:26–30; 11:27–30; 12:25; 15:1–29), whereas Paul recounts only two (Gal. 1:18, 19; 2:1–10). Of these visits, those in Acts 9:26–30 and Gal. 1:18, 19 are clearly the same. The question arises, however, in regard to the relationship of the second and third visits recorded in Acts with the second visit in Galatians. Which of the visits recorded by Luke in Acts is that mentioned by Paul in Galatians?

In general, scholars have proposed three approaches to this problem. Some equate the "famine visit" of Acts 11:27–30; 12:25 with the journey of Gal. 2:1–10. Many others hold that it is the journey of Acts 15, involving the Jerusalem Council, that Paul records in Gal. 2. Still others, seeing difficulties in both of these identifications, have concluded that the accounts of Luke and Paul can be harmonized only by a radical reconstruction. One such solution suggests that the "famine visit" (Acts 11; 12) and the "council visit" (Acts 15) are really one journey, which is also that recorded by Paul in Galatians. This view holds that Luke took the two accounts in Acts from different sources, and that although they concerned the same journey, he mistakenly understood them to be two

visits. Another radically critical view would place this “famine visit” at the end of Paul’s Third Missionary Journey before his first imprisonment, making it identical with his trip to Jerusalem recorded in Acts 21, when he took an offering from churches in Macedonia and Achaia (see Rom. 15:25, 26). The prophet Agabus is mentioned in Acts 21 as well as in ch. 11, and on both occasions he uttered a prophecy.

In evaluating these views, it may be said first that the third type of approach, which necessitates radical reconstructions of Luke’s narrative, seems to take too little account of the knowledge he must have had regarding this phase of Paul’s career, and of the inspiration that illuminated his mind. A man as interested in Paul’s biography as Luke was, and who had as intimate personal contact with him as Luke did, could hardly have been in such ignorance of Paul’s relationships with the church at Jerusalem regarding the Gentile problem as not to know at what point in Paul’s career the Jerusalem Council had taken place, nor does it seem reasonable that Luke would have confused so badly the facts in the story of Agabus. From the point of view of this commentary such radical reconstruction is unwarranted.

Certain evidence may be presented in favor of equating the “famine visit” of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 11:27–30; 12:25) with the journey Paul records in Gal. 2:1–10:

1. Paul declares that he “went up by revelation” (Gal. 2:2) to Jerusalem; Luke seems to parallel this by portraying the “famine visit” as the direct result of a prophecy by Agabus that a famine was coming (Acts 11:28).
2. In Gal. 1; 2, Paul argues that he did not learn his view of the gospel from men, and certainly not from the Judaizing elements of the Jerusalem church, but from Christ alone. He then sketches his life since his conversion, putting special emphasis on his contacts with the leaders at Jerusalem to illustrate that his relationships with them had been comparatively meager and consistently against the Judaizing spirit. If the second visit to Jerusalem that Paul mentions here (Gal. 2:1–10) is equated with that in Acts 15, then the apostle plainly omitted one visit (that of Acts 11) from his narrative in Galatians—which would have made him immediately liable to the accusation that he purposely had minimized his contacts with Jerusalem for the sake of his argument. This, Paul was hardly naive enough to do. But if, in Gal. 2, he refers to the “famine visit,” and if he is writing before the Council of Jerusalem took place, as many scholars hold (see p. 104), he then has recorded all his contacts with Jerusalem up to the time of his writing, and cannot be accused of having withheld evidence for the sake of his argument.
3. Paul declares that during the years between his first visit to Jerusalem (Gal. 1:18, 19) and the visit in question, he “was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea” (ch. 1:22). This statement would hardly seem to be in agreement with his having taken famine aid there (Acts 11:27–30), if that journey occurred between the two visits narrated in Gal. 1; 2.
4. In Galatians, where Paul is largely concerned with the relation of Christian Gentiles to Judaism, he makes no mention of the official action taken by the leaders at Jerusalem regarding this very problem. This seems strange unless the second journey to Jerusalem that he records in Galatians is that of Acts 11:27–30 and the Jerusalem Council had not yet occurred.
5. If the journeys of Acts 11 and Gal. 2 are the same, Peter and Barnabas’ dissimulation at Antioch (Gal. 2:11–13) would have occurred before the Jerusalem Council and the First Missionary Journey. This is more easily understood than if they are seen to have given

way to Jewish pressure after Barnabas' experiences with the Gentiles on the first journey, and after both Barnabas and Peter had placed themselves publicly in the vanguard of the decision at Jerusalem (see Acts 15:7–12). If Peter and Barnabas were fearless to speak at Jerusalem, why should they later dissemble at Antioch?

Such arguments as these have led many scholars to conclude that it is the famine visit (Acts 11) rather than the council visit (Acts 15), that Paul records in Gal. 2.

However, most of the older commentators have identified the visit of Gal. 2 with that of Acts 15, and there remains much to be said in favor of this view:

1. Acts 11:27–30; 12:25 give no indication that the Gentile problem arose at the time of the famine visit. On the other hand, this problem is plainly the issue in both Acts 15 and Gal. 2. Furthermore, the First Missionary Journey (Acts 13; 14) provides a logical background for the problem presented in Gal. 2.
2. In both Acts 15 and Gal. 2 the point at issue was raised by intruders; Luke speaks of them as “certain of the sect of the Pharisees” (Acts 15:5), but Paul refers to them more vigorously as “false brethren” (Gal. 2:4). There is no hint of any such persons given in the account of the “famine visit.”
3. In regard to the fact that if Gal. 2 is equated with Acts 15, a visit is missing from Paul's account in Gal. 1; 2, it has been suggested that at the time of the “famine visit,” Paul had no contact with any apostle. Luke says only that he and Barnabas took gifts “to the elders” (Acts 11:30) at Jerusalem. Thus, in recounting his contacts with the apostles, Paul may not have considered the “famine visit” as significant enough to mention.
4. There is no necessary contradiction between Luke's statement that the “relief” was sent “to the *elders* by the hands of Barnabas and Saul” (ch. 11:30) and the declaration of Paul that he was “unknown by face unto the *churches* of Judaea” (Gal. 1:22). Luke's brief account would indicate that there was nothing more connected with that trip than the carrying of the collected alms to the elders, a mission that they might have fulfilled quickly and then returned immediately to their pressing work at Antioch. (For a discussion of “elders” see on Acts 11:30.) Thus this trip may have been omitted by Paul in Galatians as not being of sufficient consequence to bring into his statement to the Galatian churches.
5. Although it is easier to see the dissimulation of Barnabas and Peter as occurring before the Jerusalem Council, it is not impossible to understand them as having weakened afterward under Jewish pressure. Paul clearly indicates that they acted against their own better knowledge (Gal. 2:12, 13).
6. Luke's record of the “famine visit” gives no indication that anyone accompanied Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem. But Luke says specifically that when they went to Jerusalem for the council, “certain other of them” also went along (Acts 15:2). This would find a parallel in the statement of Paul that he took Titus with him to Jerusalem on the visit recorded in Galatians (ch. 2:1).

For such reasons as the foregoing, many scholars have preferred to equate the visit of Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem in Acts 15 with the visit recorded in Gal. 2. The tentative chronology followed in this commentary equates the journey of Gal. 2 with the “council visit” of Acts 15 (see p. 100).

Note 2

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the decisions of the Council of Jerusalem. Four particulars were named, but the general provision, “no greater burden,”

was the vital one. By the whole church, in an official action, the Gentiles were declared free from ritualistic performances. This was a proclamation of emancipation.

The entrance into the church of the Ethiopian, the Samaritans, Cornelius and his household, and especially the starkly heathen Greeks in Antioch, was significant and had a cumulative effect upon the thinking of the Jewish element in the church. But at Jerusalem the church came together in council and took definitive action. Circumcision, the offering of sacrifices, washings, and the whole round of performances which were a part of, or had grown up around, the practice of the Jewish religion, were not to be required of Gentiles baptized into the Christian church.

In view of the importance of this decision, the naming of specific things to be expected of the Gentiles was perhaps less important, but nevertheless necessary to complete the picture. The real crux of the decision lay in a general statement as to what should not be laid upon the Gentiles. With it was a brief, specific statement as to what would be expected. The points selected emphasized, evidently, the things concerning which a Gentile might err or be indifferent.

The vacillation of Peter at Antioch (Gal. 2:11–14), the stubborn insistence of the die-hard Judaizers in Galatia (ch. 3:1, 2), and the later rise of the Judaizing Nazarene and Ebionite sects (see pp. 53, 54) all show how essential it was for the church to come to a clear-cut decision on the question of Judaizing. Otherwise the church would have had to look to ancient forms and ceremonies, honorable but typical, the blessed Antitype of which had come and accomplished His work. It would have felt always the pull of a center, Jerusalem, even after that place had been destroyed. Worse yet, it would have been a national, racial church, Jewish at its core. Doubtless, Gentiles would have been made increasingly to think that they were admitted, not by the grace of God, but by the favor of men of the “chosen” race. Such an introversion, such a racial complexing, such a centering upon men, would have been stultifying and fatal in its effect upon the life, program, and progress of the church.

Such a situation would have stamped the church as subject to forms and rituals as expressive of its nature. But the true nature of Christianity is not in forms and ceremonies. The genius of Christianity is its spirituality, its worshiping of God in spirit and in truth. It was intended that Christianity should be freed as far as possible from forms and rituals and ceremonies. Had the full meaning of the decision of the Council of Jerusalem been thoroughly applied in the church’s later experience, much of error and apostasy would have been avoided.

The question may be asked as to why the Jerusalem Council did not specify, as binding, all the commands of the Decalogue. The answer is that the council was not dealing with the ten-commandment law as such. Worship of God, keeping of the Sabbath, honoring one’s parents, allowing one’s neighbors to live and enjoy life, being honest and content, were so much in the warp and woof of the basic morality of Christianity that they were not mentioned. More importantly, these were not points in debate at this council. As already pointed out, the prohibitions pertained to things concerning which Gentiles, even after conversion, need especially to guard against, either to avoid gross sin or to avoid practices that might bring discord into the church. Eating of blood, and of meat from which the blood had not been properly removed, becoming involved in idolatry, and fornication—these were all common practices among the Gentiles, with no thought given to the fact that they were injurious either to body or to spirit or to both.

Therefore, against these things the Gentiles must be warned, and from their practice, restrained.

As to the specific stipulations themselves, it is natural to ask regarding the status of these in the later life of the church. As an agreement between the contending Gentiles and Jews in the church it was in some respects a compromise, or at least a ground for common life (see on v. 19). The time had not come for the proclaiming of the full meaning of Paul's teaching (Gal. 2:2), and Paul, who had accepted the decision of the council as a satisfactory settlement of the matter in debate, never referred later to its stipulations. Even when discussing one of the chief points the decision dealt with, that of the use of food offered to idols, he did not apply the council's decree (1 Cor. 8; 10). Indeed, his counsel in respect to eating food would hardly be considered in full harmony with the council's decision, though certainly not contrary to the spirit and intent of the council. He argues that it was not necessarily wrong to eat things offered to idols, because the gods themselves represented by the idols did not exist. The wrong would be in failing to appreciate the scruples of another Christian, who would not eat such things, and would be troubled when his neighbor did so. This provision would tend to avoid unnecessary friction between Jewish and Gentile Christians in their social contacts.

When Paul dealt with the matter of sexual impurity, as he did again and again in his epistles, he did not do so with reference to the Council of Jerusalem, but with reference to the basic scriptural principle on which the council action itself rested. In other words he deals with this problem on the basis of the fact that the Christian belongs to God, and his whole person has become a temple inhabited by the Holy Spirit. In such a divine presence impurity must not be.

Consequently, the importance of the council was not to be seen primarily in the effect upon the church of its specific prohibitions. Its importance lies rather in the liberation of the Gentile Christian church from religious performances for their own sake.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 AA 189

1-41AA 188-202, 400, 401; SR 304-309

2, 3 AA 190

4-6AA 191

5 AA 188

7 AA 192

8 AA 196

8-10AA 193; SR 307

12, 13 AA 194

14 COL 79

18 MH 433; 8T 282

19 AA 194; SR 307

20 AA 195

22, 23 AA 196

25-29AA 195

32, 35 AA 197

36 AA 201

36-40AA 170

37-41AA 202

CHAPTER 16

1 *Paul having circumcised Timothy, 7 and being called by the Spirit from one country to another, 14 converteth Lydia, 16 casteth out a spirit of divination. 19 For which cause he and Silas are whipped and imprisoned. 26 The prison doors are opened. 31 The jailor is converted, 37 and they are delivered.*

1. Came he. Gr. *katantaō*, “to come to,” “to arrive at” a certain place. For the use of the singular form see ch. 15:41. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 10) concerning the inclusion of “also” between “he” and “to.” Its inclusion may serve to emphasize the continuity between chs. 15:41 and 16:1. The chapter division would be better placed in ch. 15 between vs. 35 and 36.

Derbe and Lystra. This continues the visiting of churches previously raised up (ch. 15:36). See on ch. 14:6, where the order is reversed in accord with geography. Here, Paul and Silas would naturally come first to Derbe (see Paul’s Second Missionary Tour). To get to this region from Cilicia, Paul and his companions must have passed through the famous mountain pass, the Cilician Gates, through which Alexander the Great had marched his soldiers.

Was there. It is uncertain whether this refers to Lystra or to Derbe. Informed opinion favors Lystra, although some, on the basis of ch. 20:4, prefer Derbe (see on ch. 14:6). It at least is clear that Timothy came from the Derbe-Lystra district, and was known to the churches in that area as a fruitful disciple.

Timotheus. A common Greek name, meaning “honored of God.” Its English form is “Timothy.” He was probably converted by Paul during his visit to Lystra and Derbe in the First Missionary Journey (see on ch. 14:6). Thus Paul could truly call him “my beloved son” (1 Cor. 4:17) and “my own son in the faith” (1 Tim. 1:2). He was young (1 Tim. 4:12; see AA 203), probably not more than 18 or 20, since his youth is still spoken of about a dozen years later in 1 Tim. 4:12. But in the almost two years that had passed since Paul’s departure from Lystra (for chronology see pp. 100, 102) Timothy had become well reported of for his devotion and “unfeigned faith” (2 Tim. 1:5). He had been brought up to know the OT from his childhood (2 Tim. 3:15). The fact that he was well thought of by the brethren at Iconium as well as Lystra (Acts 16:2) suggests that he busied himself maintaining contact between the two churches. Paul writes to him and of him as though he were not physically strong, and perhaps less so in later life from having followed a rigorous missionary program (1 Tim. 5:23). He appears to have been emotional (2 Tim. 1:4), yet ready to face hardships and responsibilities in the strength of Christ (1 Cor. 16:10). Timothy is spoken of as a fellow worker with Paul (Rom. 16:21), and was the companion of his labors in the Second and Third Missionary Journeys at least as far as Troas (Acts 20:4, 5). From 1 Cor. 4:17 we learn that he was Paul’s messenger to Corinth, and in 2 Cor. 1:1 he is joined with Paul in the greeting to that church. He was also a messenger between Paul and the church in Thessalonica (1 Thess. 3:2, 6), and must have been at Rome with Paul during his first imprisonment there, for he is mentioned in the epistle to the Philippians (chs. 1:1; 2:19), to the Colossians (ch. 1:1), and to Philemon (v. 1). Heb. 13:23 refers to his being in prison, an event that cannot be located as to time or place. Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* iii. 4. 5) writes of him as the first bishop of Ephesus. He is said to have suffered martyrdom at the hands of the Ephesian populace.

A certain woman. Literally, “a certain woman, a faithful [or “believing”] Jewess.” There is slight textual evidence (cf. p. 10) for the addition of “a widow” after “woman.” If Timothy’s father was dead, this, together with his probable difference in religion, would account for the prominence of the mother in Timothy’s history. Her name was Eunice (Gr. *Eunikē*, “conquering well,” or “good victory”). Apparently Lois and Eunice were devout Christians (2 Tim. 1:5), and had been careful to give Timothy a Christian education based on a personal knowledge of the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:15).

Father. Luke gives no clear information concerning the religion of Timothy’s father. That he was “a Greek” may indicate that he was a heathen Gentile, in which case his marriage with Eunice would not have been acknowledged by the Jews; or, he may have been a Gentile “that feared God” (see on ch. 10:2). However, apparently he was not a full proselyte, for his son, Timothy, had not been circumcised.

2. Well reported of. Similar expressions are used of Cornelius (ch. 10:22), and of Ananias (ch. 22:12). Such a report would tend to encourage Paul to choose the young man for his companion.

Brethren. That is, the members of the Christian churches in the area. During the three or four years that had passed since Paul’s previous visit (ch. 14:6, 7), the new congregations had developed, and the character of such an earnest member as Timothy was well known. Intercourse between the churches of Lystra and Iconium was easy, since only 20 mi. lay between them.

3. Him would Paul. Apparently Paul wished Timothy to take the place that would have been filled by John Mark, to act as an “assistant” (see on ch. 13:5), and thus begin the “work of an evangelist” (2 Tim. 4:5). The apostle saw how useful a companion Timothy could be, but realized that unless he were circumcised, he would be a cause of trouble instead of help.

Circumcised him. Probably Paul himself performed the rite. This act seems at first inconsistent with Paul’s conduct respecting Titus, whom he refused to circumcise (see on Gal. 2:3), and with his general teaching concerning circumcision (see on 1 Cor. 7:18, 19; Gal. 5:2–6). But there is a distinct contrast between the cases of Titus and Timothy. Titus was a Greek, and to have him circumcised would have yielded a principle that Paul was not prepared to yield. The mixed parentage of Timothy made him a Jew, for the rabbinical code held that the child of a Jewish mother was reckoned as a Jew (Talmud *Yebamoth* 45b, Soncino ed., p. 297). Had both his parents been faithful Jews, he would have been circumcised on the eighth day (Lev. 12:3), but religious differences between his parents doubtless prevented this.

Now, however, the young Timothy was about to enter public work and would be in close contact with Jews. If uncircumcised, he would be a source of difficulty to the Jews, who would think that a bad Jew could not be a good guide as a Christian. Hence, Paul saw no inconsistency in opposing the teaching that circumcision was a spiritual necessity, essential to salvation, while having this lad of Jewish background circumcised in order not to give offense. This was in harmony with his declared philosophy (see on 1 Cor. 9:20), and is the reason recorded by Luke for the action—“because of the Jews.”

4. Decrees. Gr. *dogmata*, “opinions,” “judgments,” “decrees,” from *dokeō*, “to give an opinion.” The “decrees” here were the decisions of the council in Jerusalem (see ch. 15:22–31). The inference is that Paul passed on copies of the decisions (called an

“epistle” in ch. 15:30) to the churches he had previously raised up. The apostles gave the decrees to the Gentile Christians for their guidance and observance. There was nothing in them that the Christian Jew would be likely to disregard, and the freedom granted to the Gentiles did not apply to the Jewish Christians. To the Gentiles, however, they would assume the character of a charter upon which the Gentiles could take their stand in the case of any dispute with the Judaizers. The same decrees may also have helped many Gentiles to decide to enter the Christian church, knowing they would not be burdened with a heavy round of ceremonies.

5. Established. Or, “strengthened.” The church, coming out of infancy, is preparing to make great progress, and the missionaries are strengthening its members for that development.

Increased in number. A highly significant barrier to the admission of Gentiles had been removed, and the number of Christians multiplied daily. But here the reference may be not only to an increase in the number of believers but also to an increase of congregations. No further information is given. Three centuries later, when Christianity was legalized, a church included all the believers in a city, organized into a number of congregations. Congregations in surrounding villages were also included in this “church,” after the style of the Greek and Roman city-state. The presiding elder of the central congregation by that time had become a bishop who held heavy responsibilities in both church and state. In Paul’s day, and for more than two centuries thereafter until Christianity became the state religion, Christians possessed no church buildings. See pp. 26, 38.

6. Now when. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading, “but they went through,” rather than, “now when they had gone throughout.” The Greek construction of vs. 5, 6 implies a division in the narrative at this point. One episode is complete, another begins. This is relevant to the interpretation of the following verses.

Phrygia. An ill-defined area in western Asia Minor (see The Journeys of Paul). The name was used with an ethnological rather than a political significance, and did not at this period indicate a Roman province. The gospel message may already have been carried there by inhabitants of the area who were in Jerusalem at the time of Pentecost. Phrygia possesses a special interest for Christians because it later included the churches of the Lycus Valley, Colossae and Laodicea. See Additional Note at end of chapter.

Galatia. That is, the land of the Gauls (Gr. *Galatai*). One great branch of the Gallic people had moved west into Europe, and occupied territory that came to be known as Gaul, which roughly corresponded to modern France. In the 3d century B.C. another branch of the same people had poured south over Greece and into Asia Minor, where they settled in the central section of the country and absorbed many of the Phrygian people. In turn, the Galatians were later conquered by the Romans, and in 25 B.C., during the days of Augustus Caesar, their territory became a Roman province (see Vol. V, p. 23). The inhabitants spoke a Celtic dialect similar to that used by the Gauls in Western Europe, and retained the quickness of emotion and tendency to sudden change that characterized the Celtic temperament. They readily adopted the Phrygian religion, with its orgiastic worship of the great earth goddess Cybele, in whose temples were found eunuch priests consecrated to her service (see on Gal. 5:12). The chief seat of this worship was the town of Pessinus.

In Gal. 4:13–15 (see comment there) Paul refers to his visit to Galatia, where he seems to have been detained by a serious illness, possibly some affliction of the eyes. Many commentators have understood Paul's statement about a "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7; cf. on Acts 9:18) as referring to an eye malady. Probably this led to a longer stay in this region than Paul at first intended. During this illness the Galatians had opportunity to show themselves singularly devoted to him. He declares that they would have "plucked out" their "own eyes," if it had been possible to replace his own with them, and thus relieve his suffering. They thought it was their highest "blessedness" to have such a one as Paul among them. They received him "as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus." The memory of that reception made his sorrow all the more bitter, when he later found the Galatians led astray by Judaizing teachers, and he rebuked them for leaving their first love.

Were forbidden. Rather, "having been forbidden," implying that the Spirit's prohibition was given soon after the party left the Iconium district, and before they entered Phrygia. See Additional Note at end of chapter.

Holy Ghost. How the Spirit instructed Paul, whether by inner promptings, or by night visions, or by prophecies given through those who had received the gift (cf. ch. 21:4), Luke does not say (cf. on chs. 2:4; 8:29, 39; 13:2). But Paul did know, however he knew it, that God through the Spirit was forbidding him to enter Asia, and then Bithynia (ch. 16:7), and he did not go into either of these regions. For a time he was thus kept out of Asia, with its teeming cities such as Ephesus, Smyrna, and Sardis, which had large Jewish communities, and were great centers of idolatrous worship. Such cities must have made a strong appeal to Paul, but he was completely obedient to the Spirit's commands. Thus the missionary party was led toward the northwestern coast, not knowing where their next labors would be.

In Asia. See on ch. 2:9; see Additional Note at end of chapter.

7. Mysia. See Additional Note at end of chapter.

Assayed. An archaic expression meaning "attempted" (cf. ch. 9:26).

Bithynia. Bithynia, lying to the north of Paul's route, had large towns such as Nicomedia and Nicaea and a considerable Jewish population. It was natural that Paul and his party should wish to work there next. But the Lord had other plans for His willing, obedient servants, and they were led, not to the north, but to the west (see Additional Note at end of chapter). There is no record of any work they did on this stage of their journey, and probably they passed through only some unimportant villages.

Spirit. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading "Spirit of Jesus." This confirms the view that the Spirit stands in the same relation to the Son as to the Father, and may therefore be spoken of as either the Spirit of God, or of Christ, or of Jesus (cf. on Rom. 8:9).

Suffered them not. That is, did not allow them. It is possible that Peter worked in "Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia," for it is to those converted in these regions that he wrote his first epistle (1 Peter 1:1). A likely time for this ministry was after his "dissimulation" at Antioch (Gal. 2:11–16). Therefore some have suggested the possibility that while Paul was working in Phrygia, on his way to Europe, and Barnabas, who had also "dissembled" (Gal. 2:13), was preaching in Cyprus (Acts 15:39), Peter could well have been working in the very regions, including North Galatia, from which the Spirit was now excluding Paul. To what extent Paul and Peter at this moment had

accommodated their differences is not known. But these two great men of God were perhaps saved the pain of further misunderstanding by being kept from meeting again in the “mission field”; and Paul was able to say that he had avoided building on another man’s foundation (Rom. 15:20). However this may be, the main reason for the prohibition to work Bithynia and Asia seems to have been the divine purpose that the gospel should be carried into Europe at this time.

8. *Passing by Mysia.* That is, they omitted Mysia. Mysia was generally reckoned as a part of Asia, where they had been forbidden by the Spirit to preach (see Additional Note at end of chapter).

Came down. From the mountainous interior.

Troas. At last their travels had brought them to the coast, and they looked out westward upon the waters of the Aegean Sea. The town of Alexandria Troas, so named in honor of Alexander the Great, was at this time reckoned as a Roman colony and a free city. The site of ancient Troy lay a few miles to the north of Troas. But Paul doubtless had little interest in Homer’s account of the siege of the old Greek town. The questions occupying his thoughts now concerned the best means of proclaiming Christ as Saviour, that the inhabitants of Troas might find eternal life. Such thoughts undoubtedly expressed themselves in Paul’s prayers, and in answer to those prayers came the vision recorded in v. 9. There is no mention of any missionary work done by Paul at Troas at this time, but Scripture gives ample evidence that a church was later established there (see on Acts 20:5–12; 2 Cor. 2:12, 13; 2 Tim. 4:13).

9. *Vision.* Gr. *horama*, “that which is seen,” hence, “a vision.” *Horama* is used 11 times by Luke in Acts, and elsewhere only once (Matt. 17:9). For “visions” see on Acts 2:17. Compare Paul’s earlier vision recorded in ch. 22:17–21.

Macedonia. Originally a country north of classical Greece. It rose quickly to power under Philip (359–336 B.C.) and Alexander the Great (336–323 B.C.). In 142 B.C., however, it became a Roman province and preserved that status through Paul’s day (see Vol. V, pp. 23–28). Many of its flourishing towns held large Jewish communities, which would provide excellent bases for Christian evangelism. Some have wondered how Paul knew that the man whom he saw in the vision was a Macedonian. One answer appears in the man’s own words—he associates himself with Macedonia. Another reply is that Luke has not necessarily given a complete report of the vision, but has only recorded its chief features, omitting details that merely support the outline he has recorded.

Prayed. Gr. *parakaleō*, literally, “to call to one’s side,” hence, “to summon,” “to address,” “to entreat.” The word gives a sense of urgency to the man’s appeal. See on Matt. 5:4.

Come over. Gr. *diabainō*, literally, “to pass through,” or “to cross over.”

Help. Gr. *boētheō*, “to run to the cry [of those in danger],” hence, “to succor,” “to help.”

Us. The man speaks for all his fellow countrymen in Macedonia. From a more modern viewpoint the appeal may be given an even wider interpretation by realizing that the man stands in Europe, and is calling Paul to enter that great continent with the gospel message. This is one of the crucial moments in history. Much of Europe’s future depends on Paul’s response to the appeal. Europe can well be thankful that the courageous apostle did not hesitate to answer the call that now came to him. Hitherto, he had been prevented

from fulfilling his great desire to evangelize in Asia and Bithynia (see on vs. 6, 7); but now a whole continent beckons him, and he cannot fail to have seen the reason that lay behind the divine prohibitions he had so faithfully obeyed.

The Macedonian call, the cry of those who know no Christ, has impelled uncounted thousands to leave their homes and take the gospel to strange lands, where they have worked under discomfort, loneliness, sickness, and the shadow of death. Such self-sacrificing service has brought strength to the church. When it closes its ears to Macedonian calls, spiritual weakness creeps in. The call may be unexpressed by those in need, for they may be unaware of their spiritual destitution. But their need makes a strong appeal to the Christian, and he will hasten, like Paul, to the rescue of those who do not realize they are lost.

10. Immediately. Because of the urgency of the call, Paul made immediate preparations to enter Macedonia. Having been previously hindered from preaching, doubtless he was more than ordinarily eager to tell others of Christ.

We. The beginning of the first “we” passage in Acts (vs. 10–17). The other passages occur in chs. 20:5 to 21:18; 27:1 to 28:16. Mostly they concern journeys, and infer that the author was Paul’s traveling companion on those occasions (see Vol. V, p. 663). When a narrative is being related in the third person, and the first person of the pronoun is suddenly introduced, the inference is plain that the author has become an actor in the events recorded. Most commentators conclude that Luke, the author of the Acts (see Introduction), joined the missionary party at Troas, rather than that he wrote artificially from the point of view of Silas or Timothy. Since Luke does not mention his own conversion, it is reasonable to suppose that it had taken place some time before this junction at Troas. Since he includes himself in the phrase “the Lord had called *us* for to preach the gospel,” Luke must also be counted as one of the evangelists.

Endeavoured. Rather, “sought.” The seeking would be as to ways and means of getting across the Aegean to Europe.

To go. Literally, “to go out,” or “forth,” from Asia into Macedonia, which hitherto was unknown to the missionaries. It should be realized, however, that the distinction between Asia and Europe did not exist in Paul’s day. The same Greek culture covered both areas and produced a common mold.

Assuredly gathering. Gr. *sumbibazō* (see on ch. 9:22). Here *sumbibazō* may be translated “concluding.” The evangelists used sanctified reason to help decide what was God’s will for them.

11. Loosing. The word “loosing” has nautical associations, referring to the release of hawsers holding a ship at dock. For further evidence of the author’s nautical knowledge see Additional Note on Chapter 27.

We came with a straight course. Gr. *euthudromeō*, “to run a straight course,” and, as a nautical term, “to run before the wind.” The fact that they held a “straight course” implies that Paul and his company had the wind in their favor. The current must have been against them, for it runs south from the Hellespont, and east between Samothrace and the mainland. The voyage from Troas to Philippi, about 125 mi. took five days (ch. 20:6).

Samothracia. An island which lies in the north of the Aegean Sea, opposite the Thracian coast, about halfway between Troas and the Thracian port of Neapolis. Probably they spent each night in a harbor, as was the custom at that time.

Neapolis. The name, which means “New Town,” was very common wherever Greek was spoken. It survived in two conspicuous instances: in Naples, Italy, and in Nablus, Palestine. The town here considered was in Thrace, but served as the port of Philippi, which lay about 10 mi. to the northwest. Neapolis has been identified with the modern Kavalla, where there are a Roman aqueduct, columns, and Greek and Latin inscriptions witnessing to the former importance of the now-ruined city. It was the eastern terminus of the Egnatian Way, the great road that connected the Aegean and the Adriatic.

12. From thence. At Neapolis they probably left their ship and went overland to their immediate goal, Philippi.

Philippi. Originally known as Krenides, “place of small fountains,” the city was rebuilt by Philip of Macedon (359–336 B.C.), father of Alexander the Great, and named in his honor. Between Neapolis and Philippi there lay a range of mountains, in which were rich deposits of gold and silver.

The chief city of that part. This phrase presents some difficulties. Philippi was not the chief city of any one of the four subdivisions of the Roman province of Macedonia (see on v. 9), the chief cities being Amphipolis, Thessalonica, Pella, and Pelagonia. However, there is no definite article in the Greek, hence it is possible that Luke meant simply to say that it was a chief town of the district and not the official capital. The adjective *prōtos*, “first,” here translated “chief,” was often found on coins of cities that were not capitals. It is also possible that he was using the word *meris*, translated “part,” or “district,” in the sense of “borderland,” and that it was the *first* city of that frontier district, either as the most important or as the first to which travelers would come from Thrace. This was precisely the position of Philippi, which had been garrisoned as a Roman outpost, because of the restless tribes in Thrace.

Colony. Philippi had become a Roman colony after the defeat of Brutus and Cassius by Octavian and Antony in 42 B.C. After the Battle of Actium, 31 B.C., this status was strengthened, and the city’s full title, as shown on coins that have been found, came to be Colonia Augusta Julia Philippensis. A Roman *colonia* bore little relation to our modern concept of a colony. It was a portion of conquered territory assigned to Roman citizens, who were often veteran soldiers. These were sent out under the authority of Rome, and marched to their destination like an army, to reproduce an equivalent to Roman civil and social life. These colonies were often on the frontiers as a protection, and as a check upon local provincial magistrates. The names of the colonists were retained on the lists of the tribes of Rome. They took with them their Latin language and their Roman coinage. Oftentimes their chief magistrates were appointed from the mother city, and were independent of the governors of the province where the colony was planted. In this way the colony was closely united with Rome. These colonies were sometimes described as the “bulwarks of an empire” (Cicero *De Lege Agraria* ii. 27. 73; Loeb ed., *Speeches*, vol. 3, p. 449) or “miniatures, as it were, and in a way copies” of the people of Rome (Aulus Gellius *Attic Nights* xvi. 13. 9; Loeb ed., vol. 3, p. 181). The spirit of a colony was therefore intensely Roman. Thus in this Macedonian city Paul, himself a Roman citizen, came directly in contact with a flourishing example of Roman imperial organization.

Certain days. See on ch. 9:19. Here the phrase seems to refer to less than one week, for it appears that the Sabbath in ch. 16:13 was their first in Philippi.

13. On the sabbath. Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke were in a strange city in a strange land. They had been there some days, but when the Sabbath came they would naturally long to be with fellow Jews with whom they could worship and to whom they could impart their good news of salvation (see on ch. 13:14).

Out of the city. Rather, “outside of the gate.” They possibly searched the city for a synagogue, and finding none, went to seek a temporary place of worship by the riverside. Alternatively, they may have known that the synagogue or meeting place lay outside the city wall.

By a river side. Gr. *para potamon*, “beside a river,” that is, doubtless, by the stream Gangites, which ran into the river Strymon.

Prayer. Gr. *proseuchē*, “prayer,” or probably here, “place of prayer” (see 3 Macc. 7:20; cf. on Acts 1:14; 16:16). If there were no synagogues in Philippi, the few Jews may have established a meeting place on the riverbank, where they could perform their ceremonial washings (cf. Ezra 8:15, 21; Ps. 137:1). Juvenal (*Satires* iii. 13, 14; Loeb ed., p. 33) notes this as one of the instances of the decay of the old religion of Rome: “The holy fount and grove and shrine are let out to Jews.” A relevant application is seen in another line from the same writer (*ibid.* 296; Loeb ed., p. 55): “‘Say, where is your stand? In what prayer-shop [*proseuchē*] shall I find you?’” Such enclosures or oratories were frequently circular, and without a roof. The practice of having such places continued into the time of Tertullian, who speaks of the waterside prayers (*orationes litorales*) of the Jews (*Ad Nationes* i. 13).

Was wont to be made. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the reading, “where there was supposed to be a prayer [place]” (see above under “prayer”).

Sat down. A common custom of Jewish teachers (see Vol. V, pp. 57, 58).

Spake. Or, “began speaking.” The form of the Greek verb suggests that all four of the apostles addressed the group.

Women which resorted thither. The phrase might be better translated, “women who had come together,” or “assembled women.” Someone has observed that the “man of Macedonia” (v. 9) proved to be a devout group of Jewish women. Some preachers would have found in this an excuse for neglecting their commission, but Paul and his companions were not so easily dissuaded from their task. That there were only women gathered at the place of prayer points to an almost entire absence of Jewish men in the local population. This would account for the probable lack of a synagogue, since none could be established without a minimum membership of ten men. Some of the women whom the missionaries found may have been proselytes, like Lydia (see on v. 14). Such women would naturally welcome Jewish strangers who came to give instruction. In Macedonia women seem to have enjoyed greater freedom than was usual to their sex at the time.

14. Lydia. A popular name for a girl in Roman times. But she may also have taken the name, like so many slaves and women of the freedman class, from her country of origin, the old kingdom of Lydia, which was a Macedonian colony.

Seller of purple. That is, of purple cloth (see on Luke 16:19). The fact that she, and not her husband, is named as the purple seller, suggests that she was managing her own business, and was probably a woman of some substance.

Thyatira. A Lydian city in the province of Asia. It had been founded as a colony from Macedonia, a sequel to the conquest of the Persian monarchy by Alexander the Great. Its name is included among those of the seven churches in the book of Revelation (chs. 1:11; 2:18–29). The city, like many other towns of Asia Minor, was famous for its dye works, which rivaled those of Tyre and Miletus. Inscriptions found in the district show that in Thyatira there was a guild of purple dyers, to which Lydia may have belonged.

Worshipped God. See on ch. 10:2.

Heard. Rather, “was hearing,” that is, was listening, over a period of time.

Whose heart the Lord opened. The Lord had called the evangelists to preach the gospel in Macedonia, and they had lost no time in fulfilling His commission. Now the Lord cooperates with their efforts by opening the heart of a prominent member of their audience. Luke recognizes the need for such divine cooperation; he knows that their preaching is vain without the work of the Spirit upon the hearer’s heart.

That she attended. Literally, “to attend,” “to give heed.” The Lord opened the heart of Lydia in order that she might attend to the message. The context shows that she accepted that message.

15. She was baptized. Probably in the very river beside which the “prayer place” was situated. See on Matt. 3:6; Acts 8:38. There is no need to suppose that the baptism took place on that Sabbath. In fact, the phrase “was listening” (see on v. 14) allows time for instruction, and permits the baptism to be placed some time after the first meeting between the woman and the missionary group. The fact that “her household” was baptized is no proof of the practice of infant baptism by the apostles. Lydia’s “household” may have consisted of slaves and other employees (cf. on chs. 10:2; 16:32, 33). These may also have been proselytes (see on ch. 10:2). For these, Judaism had been a “schoolmaster,” leading them to Christ (see Gal. 3:24). Euodias and Syntyche, and other women of Philippi who “laboured” with Paul “in the gospel” (see on Phil. 4:2, 3), may have been among the “women” of v. 13. The group formed the first Christian church in Europe founded by Paul. By its loving hospitality and steadfast adherence to the faith it won a special place in Paul’s affections.

Besought. Gr. *parakaleō*, “to entreat” (see on v. 9). The tense, in Greek, suggests that she continued her entreaty until Paul yielded.

If ye have judged. The Greek construction anticipates an affirmative answer. The preachers had acknowledged the quality of her faith and had baptized her. If she was fit for that blessed rite, was she not then fit to be their hostess?

Abide there. Like the two disciples who followed Jesus (John 1:37–39), Lydia was anxious to retain the teachers whose lessons she found so helpful to her recently opened heart. The four missionaries probably had been supporting themselves by labor—Paul as a tentmaker (see on Acts 18:3; 1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8; etc.), Luke perhaps as a physician. Now Lydia urged them to become her guests.

Constrained. Gr. *parabiazomai*, “to compel by force,” “to constrain by entreaty.” The “us” suggests that Luke’s home was not at Philippi, as some have thought.

16. To prayer. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading “to the prayer.” This then may be interpreted, “to the place of prayer” (see on v. 13). Even without the article, the expression may be compared to our modern phrase, “go to church.” The incident subsequently related probably took place on a Sabbath some time after the Sabbath

mentioned in v. 13, after the baptism of the first converts (v. 15), and after the missionaries' work had become known in the city.

Damsel. Gr. *paidiskē*, a young female slave.

Spirit of divination. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading "a Python spirit." In Greek mythology Python was a dragon or serpent who was thought to have guarded the oracle at Delphi and to have been killed by Apollo, who was subsequently known as the Pythian Apollo. Python was worshipped at Delphi as the symbol of wisdom. Plutarch (d. c. A.D. 120), himself a priest of the Pythian Apollo, says that the name "Python" was given to those who, by practicing ventriloquism, were credited with extraordinary powers (*On the Cessation of Oracles* 9). That Luke here uses this unusual adjective implies either that this was the way in which the people of Philippi spoke of the girl or that Luke himself recognized in her wild contortions and shrill cries a similarity to the techniques of the priestesses at Delphi. It is clear that the local population believed that the slave possessed supernatural abilities, and doubtless her wild cries were noted and received as oracles. Her masters took advantage of her supposed inspiration, and made the girl give answers to those who made inquiries of her.

Her masters. Her joint owners, men who had discovered the girl's strange power and were exploiting it for their own gain.

Much gain. See on v. 19.

Soothsaying. Gr. *manteuomai*, "to divine," "to prophesy," used only here in the NT. In the LXX the term is always used for the words of lying prophets (Deut. 18:10; 1 Sam. 28:8; Eze. 13:6; etc.). Here it may be taken in the same sense: "to pretend to foretell the future."

17. Followed. Gr. *katakolouthēō*, "to follow after," "to follow closely." The girl closely followed the missionaries, and kept on crying aloud (cf. v. 18). Compare the publicity given to Jesus by unclean spirits or demons (Luke 4:33–37; 8:26–36).

Us. The last occurrence of the inclusive pronoun in this section of the narrative. It is not used again until ch. 20:5, where Paul returns to Philippi. It therefore seems likely that Luke remained at Philippi, possibly to spread the gospel in that district, and took up his fellowship with the apostles once more when Paul passed through the city on his Third Missionary Journey. This would give Luke a sojourn of some seven years in Philippi (see p. 102), though, of course, it must be conceded that he might have made various trips into adjoining areas during that time.

Most high God. Gr. *ho theos ho hupsistos*, literally, "the God the most high [one]." For a correct understanding of this title it is necessary to bear in mind the setting in which it was used and the meaning of the word *hupsistos*. This word was a poetic term meaning "highest," or "most high," and often referred to position or rank. Its religious connotation can be linked with Semitic terminology. The Canaanites had a god of the vault of heaven whom they called 'Elyon, "Most High." This title was also applied to Jehovah, the God of the Israelites (see on Gen. 14:18). The Greeks employed *hupsistos* as an equivalent to 'Elyon, and used it for Zeus, the head of their own pantheon. When they came in contact with the Jewish religion, they used *hupsistos* to represent Jehovah, the God of the Jews. It is so used in the LXX (Gen. 14:18–22; Num. 24:16; Deut. 32:8; 2 Sam. 22:14; etc.). The

title became so well known through the missionary activities of the Jews of the Dispersion that it was used for the Deity by people who had absorbed some Jewish teaching without fully accepting their religion. Inscriptions from the kingdom of Bosphorus, north of the Black Sea, made in the 1st century A.D. and therefore contemporary with Paul, amply testify to such usage of *hupsistos*.

In the present instance the title *hupsistos* was spoken by the slave girl. Since she is said to have been possessed of a "Python spirit" (see on Acts 16:16), her words need to be considered against their pagan background. When, therefore, she spoke of "the most high God" she was probably referring to the common heathen conception of a vague divine being who was supposed to preside over the well-known Greek pantheon. Nevertheless, her words expressed great truth. The Christians whom she was following were truly the servants of the one and only most high God. For somewhat similar instances compare on Mark 1:24; 5:7.

Way of salvation. See on John 14:6; Acts 4:12, where Jesus Christ is revealed as the only way of salvation. The girl's darkened mind was longing for a share in "the way of salvation," but the demon within her was challenging that "way," and her words impeded the missionaries' work.

18. Many days. Either successive Sabbaths, as Paul and his group came again to the house of prayer, or having begun her speaking on a Sabbath (see v. 16), she continued at every opportunity, day after day.

Being grieved. See on ch. 4:2. There is a limit to what even a Christian can passively endure when the Lord's work is being hindered.

Spirit. The agent behind the girl's "soothsaying" (v. 16) is here identified. For a discussion of possession by evil spirits or demons see Additional Note on Mark 1.

I command. Here Paul followed the example of his Master with the demoniacs at Gadara (see Luke 8:29; see on Mark 5:7).

In the name. See on ch. 3:6, 16.

He came out. In fulfillment of the Master's promise (Mark 16:17). The evil spirit could not resist the command; his obedience was immediate (cf. Mark 9:26; see on Matt. 15:28; Mark 1:31; John 4:53). Here the record ends, as far as the girl is concerned, but we cannot believe that she was left to drift back into ignorance and unbelief, or worse. It is surely permissible to think that she became a Christian (AA 213) and found shelter with the women who "laboured" with the apostle (Phil. 4:3).

19. Gains. Gr. *ergasia* (see on ch. 19:24, 25). Men may tolerate strange religions or the speculations of philosophers, but they would be roused to violence by anything that threatens their business (cf. on ch. 19:23–28). Such circumstances must have been in the background of many persecutions of the early church.

Was gone. The occurrence of the same Greek verb as is used in the previous verse for "came out," emphasizes that in each case the action was the same; the men's business and the spirit of divination had both passed away.

Paul and Silas. The two were the most prominent members of the missionary party, and both were Jews (cf. v. 20). Luke and Timothy escaped, possibly because of their Gentile appearance (see Vol. V, p. 664; v. 1).

Drew. Gr. *helkō*, "to drag [by force]," used also in Acts 21:30; James 2:6.

Marketplace. Gr. *agora* (see on Matt. 11:16). It corresponded to the Roman Forum, and was the center, not only of social and business life, but also of the administration of justice.

Rulers. Gr. *archontes*, “commanders,” “chiefs,” “rulers”; in general, “authorities.” Particular members of this group are designated in the next verse.

20. Magistrates. Gr. *stratēgoi*, “civic commanders,” or “governors.” The Roman title for such officials was *duumviri*, or *praetorēs*. They were the chief civil magistrates in a Roman colony. There were usually two such officers. They had power to inflict punishment on offenders. Inscriptions from Philippi show that the people of that city incorrectly used the term *stratēgoi* for *duumviri*. This incidentally confirms Luke’s accuracy in using the term here.

Being Jews. The situation is characteristic of many of the early persecutions endured by the Christians. While they were exposed to the enmity of the Jews, they were, at the same time, often identified by the heathen as Jews. Thus they came in for twofold suffering, as Christians and as Jews. If the emperor Claudius had already decreed the expulsion of Jews from the city of Rome (see on ch. 18:2; see p. 98), his edict was doubtless known in the Roman colony of Philippi (see on ch. 16:12, 13), and would intensify the present accusation.

Exceedingly trouble. Gr. *ektarassō*, an intensive form of the verb translated “to trouble” in ch. 17:8. The kind of trouble and disturbance is indicated in v. 6, where the Christian missionaries are accused of turning “the world upside down.”

21. Teach. Rather, “declare,” or “publicly proclaim.”

Customs. The slaveowners’ charge refers not only to what Paul was preaching but to the ritual and the social habits of the Jews, which they believed Paul was advocating (see on ch. 15:1).

Not lawful. Jews were permitted to follow their own religion, but were forbidden to make proselytes of Roman citizens.

Being Romans. The people of Philippi, as inhabitants of a *colonia*, had a right to the title of Roman citizens, a title that those who were merely inhabitants of a Greek city, such as Thessalonica or Corinth, could not claim (see p. 94; see on v. 12).

22. Multitude rose up. In sympathy with the men whose profits were threatened by the damsel’s cure.

Rent off their clothes. That is, tore off the clothes of Paul and Silas, in preparation for the flogging that was to follow.

To beat. Gr. *rhabdizō*, “to beat with rods,” from *rhabdos*, “a rod,” referring to a peculiarly Roman form of punishment. The *stratēgoi* (see on v. 20) had official attendants, known as lictors, each of whom carried bundles of rods as symbols of their office. Such rods were used in flogging the missionaries. It is possible that Luke saw the cruel punishment administered. Paul endured similar suffering on two other occasions (see 2 Cor. 11:25). The question arises, Why did he not claim exemption from such degrading, painful punishment on the grounds of his Roman citizenship, as he afterward did at Jerusalem (Acts 22:25)? Some have questioned, without basis, the truthfulness of his claim of citizenship. Others have suggested that he could have secured exemption, but

for himself only, leaving Silas to suffer penalties that he himself escaped. But it is probable that Silas was also a Roman citizen (see on ch. 16:37). Perhaps the violence of the mob made it impossible for his claims to be heard (see on v. 37).

23. Laid many stripes. The Jews limited such punishment to 39 stripes (see on Deut. 25:3; 2 Cor. 11:24), but Roman practice depended on the judgment of the local official. Paul speaks of having been “shamefully entreated” at Philippi (1 Thess. 2:2).

Into prison. This would prevent the two Christians from continuing their teaching. It would appear from v. 35 that the authorities intended to keep them in prison for one night and then turn them out of the city.

Jailor. Gr. *desmophulax*, literally, “prison keeper”; not a mere turnkey, but an official, possibly an ex-soldier.

24. Inner prison. Roman prisons often had an outer and an inner section. In the first was the guardroom, where light and air could enter. Beyond this lay the inner prison, where, when the door was shut, light and air were excluded. Conditions in such a cell were fearful, and inflicted terrible punishment upon the prisoner.

Stocks. Gr. *xulon*, “wood,” “timber.” In the NT, *xulon* is also used for “tree” (Luke 23:31; Rev. 2:7; 22:2, 14), for articles made from trees, such as “gibbet,” or “cross” (Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29; Gal. 3:13; 1 Peter 2:24), and for “staves,” or “clubs” (Matt. 26:47; etc.). Here the word refers to the stocks, an instrument of torture, a wooden frame with holes into which head and feet and hands were thrust, thus placing the prisoner in a most uncomfortable position. From Job 13:27; 33:11 it appears that such punishment was well known at a very early period in the East. With Paul and Silas the feet only were fastened, and the rest of the body was left lying on the ground, a particularly agonizing position for men punished as the apostles had been.

25. At midnight. Since sleep was out of the question, Paul and Silas passed the night in devotional exercises.

Prayed, and sang praises. Or, “praying, they were singing hymns,” for the Greek expresses one continuous act rather than two. The missionaries’ well-established devotional habits surmounted the most discouraging circumstances. Even when in a dungeon, and fettered so that they could not kneel in prayer, they continued to praise the Lord. The hymn may have been one of the prayer-psalms, but whatever they sang, Tertullian’s words were true: “Though the body is shut in, though the flesh is confined, all things are open to the spirit. ... The leg does not feel the chain when the mind is in the heavens” (*Ad Martyras* 2; *ANF*, vol. 3, p. 694).

Unto God. They were servants of the most high God, they were suffering for His sake, and they genuinely praised His holy name. God, in turn, gave them His comfort and strength in a manner incomprehensible to those who do not serve Him.

Heard them. Rather, “were listening to them.” The inner prison held other occupants, outcasts and criminals who had never before heard such sounds in a place that usually echoed to wild curses and foul jests.

26. Great earthquake. Indicative of divine intervention (cf. Matt. 28:2; Rev. 16:18; cf. on Acts 4:31), for angels came to deliver God’s faithful servants (AA 215). The effects of such an upheaval would not be restricted to the prison, but would be felt throughout the city, and would condition the minds of magistrates and people, when the connection between the earthquake and the Christian prisoners became known.

Doors were opened. The severity of the earthquake was sufficient to account for this effect. The foundations of the prison had been shaken, and doors were probably unfastened (cf. on chs. 5:19; 12:10).

Bands. Or, “fettters.” The prisoners were held with chains that were doubtless fastened to the walls. The violence of the earthquake was sufficient to have released these chains, and thus set the prisoners free. The deliverance could also have been wrought by angels (AA 215), although angels are not mentioned as in chs. 5:19; 12:7.

27. Keeper of the prison. See on v. 23.

Awaking. Startled out of sleep by the earthquake. Either he slept where, upon waking, he could instantly see whether the prison doors were secure, or, because of the earthquake, he hurried to see whether his prisoners had escaped.

Would have killed himself. Rather, “was about to kill himself.” The jailer knew that, according to Roman law, he would have to answer with his life if the prisoners escaped (see on ch. 12:19). Under such circumstances suicide appeared preferable. Some of the greatest minds of the pagan classical world held such suicide to be justifiable, and even praiseworthy.

28. Paul cried. From the foul gloom of the inner prison the apostle could see the form of the jailer silhouetted against the outside light. He perceived the intention of the terror-stricken man, realized the conclusion to which the jailer had come, and wished to prevent the suicide. Even in the midst of his own considerable suffering, Paul thought of another’s salvation. He was anxious that not even the man who had thrust him into the loathsome prison should perish in his despair.

Do thyself no harm. The sound of Paul’s voice was sufficient to arrest the jailer’s hand. At least one of his prisoners had not escaped! Paul’s message was even more reassuring—none was missing. The possibility of escape may not yet have dawned upon the other prisoners. They were also stayed by Paul’s calm example.

29. For a light. Rather, “for lights,” probably that he might count his prisoners.

Sprang in. Or, “rushed in.”

Came trembling. Literally, “becoming terrified.” The rapid succession of extraordinary events broke his professional hardness and filled him with fear.

Fell down. He may have heard the slave girl’s tribute to their being servants of the most high God (v. 17). He knew, from his instructions (v. 23), that they were unusual prisoners, and now that they had not fled, he probably thought them to be more than mere men.

30. Brought them out. Away from that dark inner prison, and from the other prisoners. This was permissible, in spite of the charge given him (v. 23), for they had already demonstrated that they did not intend to escape.

Sirs. Gr. *kurioi*, a title of respect. *Kurios* (singular) is customarily translated “lord,” and is the same word used by Paul and Silas for Christ in v. 31 (see on ch. 9:5).

What must I do? It is unlikely that the jailer fully understood his own question, and we must be careful not to read a modern meaning into his words. But under the influence of the Holy Spirit, there came a great sense of spiritual need, and with all his other fears, he now feared to stand in the presence of a righteous God. The fear of earthly consequences had opened up the way for a fear of divine effects. When the mind is terror stricken it does not stay to separate its fears into categories. But the terror that demanded an assurance of present safety also awoke a desire for ultimate salvation. Compare his

question with Saul's query on the Damascus road (ch. 9:6). Little did the heathen jailer know how effective his own inquiry would be in leading countless others also to find eternal life.

31. They said. The appeal was addressed to both missionaries, and they unite in returning an answer.

Believe. Circumstances did not permit a profound theological discussion. The fearful man needed succinct directions for salvation. His situation might be compared with that of the thief on the cross (see on Luke 23:39–43). The Christian prisoners skillfully ministered to the jailer's urgent need. They put Christian teaching into a simple formula that the distressed man could readily grasp. The formula did not represent the extent of their teaching. At the moment, however, they impressed on the suppliant the truth that salvation depends on personal belief in the redeeming life and work of Jesus. For the significance of belief in Christian teaching see on Matt. 9:28; John 1:7, 12; 3:18; Acts 10:43.

Lord Jesus Christ. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of the word "Christ."

Thou shalt be saved. Note the certainty of the answer, not wavering doubt, but confident assurance. The apostle and his companion had found the formula to be true. They enjoyed salvation through believing on the Lord Jesus, and thus were qualified to assure another sinner that he also could find redemption through belief. The promise was extended to include the jailer's "house," that is, the members of his household who would believe on Jesus.

32. They spake. Having given a one-sentence reply to the jailer's urgent query, they now explain the Christian message in greater detail (cf. on chs. 8:5, 12; 10:36–38).

His house. The prison keeper was not content to ensure only his own salvation; he wanted others to enjoy the divine gift. He therefore cooperated with God's servants and assembled the members of his household that all might learn the way of life. What an unusual congregation, and what a strange meetinghouse, yet how blessed the results!

33. He took them. As soon as conviction came to the jailer he gave evidence of a change of heart. The hardened pagan official became a sympathetic Christian, solicitous for the welfare of the suffering evangelists. He had no authority to release the prisoners, but he did what he could to ease their pains by washing their lacerated backs. Such tender ministry was practical proof of his conversion.

Was baptized. It is clear that the instruction given by Paul and Silas was comprehensive. It was wholeheartedly received by the jailer's household, and led them to desire and to receive baptism. He who had just washed the wounds of his prisoners, was now, with those who were dear to him, washed from the stains of sin. This reciprocal ministry is typical of genuine Christian fellowship. It is not unreasonable to suppose that the prison contained a pool or cistern where baptism by immersion could take place. See on Matt. 3:6.

Straightway. No time was lost. Between midnight and dawn (vs. 25, 35) the prison had been shaken, the prisoners released, the vital question asked, the answer given, conversion experienced, and baptism administered.

34. Into his house. The newly converted man manifests thoughtful hospitality. He removes the missionaries from the dreadful prison and takes them into the comparative comforts of his own house.

Set meat. Literally, “set a table,” a common Greek expression for providing a meal. Paul and Silas had probably not eaten since early the previous morning, and food would be more than usually welcome after the ordeals through which they had passed. But their first thoughts had been for the spiritual needs of the unconverted; their own physical wants took second place in their thinking.

Rejoiced. Gr. *agalliao*, “to rejoice [intensively],” expressive of exceeding joy. The phrase, “with all his house,” may be attached to the thought of joy or of belief, or to both, that is, the whole household rejoiced and believed.

Believing in God. Rather, “having believed in God.” The man believed utterly and completely, once and for all, and with joy almost inexpressible looked forward to his new life with Christ.

This chapter presents a vivid picture of the beginning of Christian work in Europe. The conversions recorded were dramatic and of widely differing types. There was Lydia, a settler from Asia, apparently a woman of wealth and refinement. There was probably also the slave girl, who was delivered from demonic possession (see on v. 18). Now follows the conversion of a jailer, a heathen and doubtless a Roman citizen, of a stern and hardened type, who would be thought least likely to respond to the gospel. In this mixed group of converts was contained a promise of future gospel triumphs on the continent of Europe.

35. Magistrates. See on v. 20.

Serjeants. Gr. *rhabdouchoi*, “rod bearers,” that is, the Roman officials known as lictors (cf. on v. 22). These may have been the very ones who had inflicted the stripes in the first place.

Let those men go. No reason is given for this command. The magistrates may have considered the punishment to have been sufficient, or they may have felt that they had acted hastily in punishing the accused without a regular trial or an inquiry into their backgrounds. Probably the earthquake had alarmed the magistrates. The Holy Spirit also may have aroused within them an uneasy sense of wrongdoing. In any event they wished to release the two prisoners as quickly and as quietly as possible.

36. The keeper. See on v. 23.

Told this saying. Rather, “reported these words.” The jailer doubtless came with great joy, expecting Paul and Silas to take immediate advantage of their release.

Depart, and go. Rather, “coming out, depart,” that is, from the prison precincts.

In peace. Probably a conventional expression, but it may have had added meaning in the light of the jailer’s new-found faith.

37. Paul said unto them. That is, he addressed his remarks to those who had been sent by the magistrates. His reply forms a concise indictment of the injustice done by the magistrates, for every word is judicially significant.

Beaten us openly. That is, publicly. No doubt they had been tied to the *palus*, or public whipping post, in the sight of the people of the town. By the *Lex Valeria*, 509 B.C., and the *Lex Porcia*, 248 B.C., Roman citizens were exempted from such a degrading punishment as scourging. The fact that Verres, governor of Sicily, had broken this law was one of the severest of the charges brought against him by Cicero: “To bind a Roman citizen is a crime, to flog him is an abomination” (*Against Verres* v. 66. 170; Loeb ed.,

Verrine Orations, vol. 2, p. 655). The statement “I am a Roman citizen” oftentimes acted almost like a charm in stopping the unjust violence of provincial magistrates.

Uncondemned. Or, “untried.” There had been no formal trial. The mob had haled the missionaries before the magistrates, but there had been no opportunity for defense (v. 22). Summary punishment had been meted out to prisoners who had not even been found guilty.

Being Romans. The slave masters had based their reasoning on a similar claim (v. 21). Here Paul includes Silas as being a Roman citizen. A false claim to Roman citizenship was a capital offense. The sort of challenge that Paul threw out to the city authorities is one to be made only by a consecrated, Spirit-led Christian. Paul’s method does not sanction belligerent self-defense on the part of accused believers.

Let them come. The magistrates had grievously erred in publicly punishing a man not judicially condemned. Paul now insists that they personally atone for the injustice. By so doing he may have hoped to ensure better treatment for Philippian converts, many of whom probably were Roman citizens. Not Paul’s personal honor, but that of the gospel, was at stake.

38. They feared. With good reason, for wrongful punishment of a Roman citizen could have caused the magistrates’ removal, degradation, and inability to hold other positions of responsibility. This explains their oversolicitous efforts to find a quiet solution to their predicament. A plea of ignorance of the victims’ citizenship would not be sufficient defense for their illegal actions. They could only hope to persuade Paul and Silas to accept a discreet settlement for the injustice done them. Little did they know the unselfish character of the men they had so violently mistreated.

39. Besought. Gr. *parakaleō*, “to entreat” (see on v. 9). Added significance may be drawn from the translation “apologized” (RSV).

Brought them out. In an effort to make amends they personally released Paul and Silas from prison.

Desired. Gr. *erōtaō*, “to ask,” “to question,” but also used in the sense of begging, beseeching. The form of the verb implies that the magistrates kept on asking the evangelists to leave Philippi quietly.

40. They went out. When once they had achieved their purpose of showing the magistrates their serious error and vindicating the gospel publicly, the missionaries showed exemplary magnanimity. They made no self-important, embarrassing demands, but quietly acceded to the officials’ request.

Into the house of Lydia. It would appear that Lydia’s house was a meeting place for the brethren, as well as a lodging place for the missionaries. They probably stayed with her until they were fit to travel farther.

Brethren. These included the household of Lydia and that of the jailer.

Comforted. Or, “exhorted.” In the midst of their own suffering and convalescence their chief concern was still with the Christians whom they had brought into the church.

And departed. Since the narrative is closed in the third person, it is evident that Luke remained at Philippi. What Timothy did is not specifically mentioned. He may have stayed with Luke, since he does not reappear until ch. 17:14, when he is seen in Beroea with Silas. On the other hand, he may have accompanied Paul and Silas in their further travels.

Luke again brings himself into the picture in ch. 20:5, where the second "we" section begins (see on ch. 16:10). It seems probable that he remained in the vicinity of Philippi (ch. 20:6) until Paul again passed through Macedonia during his Third Missionary Journey. The two Christian workers would thus be separated for some six years (see p. 102). We may well believe that Luke used those years for spreading the gospel in needy Macedonia, and that he gave strong leadership to the church in Philippi. The quality of the Philippian church is beyond reproach, judging from the letter Paul wrote to its members. The church certainly was grateful for Paul's ministry and did its best to repay the apostle by hospitable acts (Phil. 4:14–18, and possibly 2 Cor. 11:9).

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON CHAPTER 16

Luke's narrative in Acts 16:6–8 gives rise to two closely related problems. The first concerns Paul's route through central Asia Minor, the second deals with the identity of the Galatian churches. A study of these two questions has resulted in the formation of the North and South Galatian theories. Sir William Ramsay, the chief proponent of the southern theory, holds that Paul's epistle to the Galatians was addressed to churches that had been founded in South Galatia during the First Missionary Journey. J. B. Lightfoot, Kirsopp Lake, and others believe that the epistle was written to churches that had sprung up as a result of Paul's ministry in North Galatia during his Second Missionary Journey, as recorded in vs. 6–8. A final answer to these problems may not be possible, but a clearer understanding of the issues involved may be gained by considering certain key phrases in the passage:

1. "*Phrygia and the region of Galatia*" (v. 6). Gr. *Phrugia kai Galatikē chōra*, which may be literally translated, "Phrygia and Galatian region." Much discussion has centered on the meaning of this phrase, and divergent views are still held by scholars. The weight of grammatical and contextual evidence, however, seems to suggest that Luke was here referring to two closely related districts—Phrygia, and a less well-defined area inhabited by Galatians. The history of Phrygia can be traced back to the second millennium B.C., when Phrygian invaders poured in from the Balkans, overcame a section of the Hittite people in western Asia Minor, and established their own ethnic district. About a millennium later, in 278 B.C., the Gauls entered Asia Minor from the north and swept over what remained of Phrygia and laid the foundations of what was later known as Galatia (see on v. 6). In Luke's day the Roman province of Galatia spanned central Asia Minor in a north to south direction, and included areas that were not Galatia in any true sense of the term. That Luke was not referring to this political division may be inferred from his use of the word *chōra*, which was loosely employed to denote "land," "country," "region," and was not a technical term used to define specific political areas. Thus it seems probable that, after visiting Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and other cities of Lycaonia (ch. 16:1–4; cf. ch. 14:6; see Paul's Second Missionary Tour), Paul's company went westward into Phrygia, and northward into a region that was locally known as Galatia. In both areas they would preach the good news to the heathen inhabitants, and thus establish groups of believers that developed into the Galatian churches (AA 207, 208). See *The Journeys of Paul*.
2. "*Asia*." There are several possible interpretations of this term, but in this setting they may be reduced to two: (1) the Roman province of Asia, which covered the western extremity of the Asia Minor peninsula; (2) the coastal area of that province, bordering on

the eastern shores of the Aegean Sea, wherein were Greek cities such as Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, and Laodicea (cf. Rev. 1–3). When trying to decide which of these two is indicated by Luke, we confront a grammatical point in the narrative that needs to be made clear. The Greek construction in Acts 16:6 may be understood to imply that Paul and his companions went into Phrygia and the Galatian region *because* they had been forbidden by the Spirit to preach in Asia (see on v. 6). This would place the prohibition before they left the area of the cities in which they had already established churches, and would indicate that “Galatia,” as used here, refers to a different area. On this interpretation, they would have planned to pass from the area of their previous labors into Asia. In this case “Asia” could refer to the province, since its border lay near to the cities they had just visited (vs. 1, 2, 4). The objection that they subsequently passed through the province of Asia in going to Troas (v. 8) may be met by explaining that the Spirit’s instruction, while restraining them from preaching the word in Asia (v. 6), did not prohibit them from passing through the area. On the other hand, Laodicea, the most easterly of the Greek cities, also lay near the travelers (see The Journeys of Paul), and Paul may have cherished a plan to visit that area. Because he was limited by language his regular plan appears to have been to preach in Greek-speaking areas rather than to attempt the task of giving the gospel through interpreters in tongues that he himself could not use. Furthermore, whatever the exact route that he subsequently took, he certainly did not pass through those Greek cities on this occasion, so the second of the alternatives gives an acceptable interpretation. This is favored by ch. 2:9, 10, which makes it clear that Asia and Phrygia are separate areas, whereas the Roman province of Asia undoubtedly included part of Phrygia. The evangelists therefore fulfilled the divine injunction either by passing through the eastern borders of the Roman province of Asia without stopping to preach, or else by not going into the thickly populated Greek urban area that spread inland from the Aegean coast.

3. “*Mysia*” (v. 7). This was the extreme northwest promontory of Asia Minor, bordering on the Hellespont and Propontis (Sea of Marmara) to the north and the Aegean to the west. It lay within the boundaries of the province of Asia. Luke employs the phrase *kata tēn Musian*, which may be translated, “opposite to Mysia,” showing that he was in the vicinity of Mysia without having actually entered it. This harmonizes with the statement that Paul wished to enter Bithynia, adjacent to Mysia on the east. It would appear, then, that the Christian party had come west from Phrygia and the Galatian region near to the junction of Bithynia and Mysia, with the intention of first evangelizing Bithynia. Once again, however, the Spirit intervenes, entrance into Bithynia is forbidden, and the party turns westward, passing near the southern borders of Mysia and ultimately entering that district on their way to its chief port, Troas.

Attention may now be focused upon the Galatian problem. Those who hold the South Galatian theory believe that during the First Missionary Journey, Paul’s work in and around the cities of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe established churches that might legitimately be called “Galatian,” since they all lay within the boundaries of the Roman province of Galatia. But this theory is difficult to harmonize with Luke’s careful language. He speaks of Pisidian Antioch (see on ch. 13:14); he refrains from locating Iconium in any political area (chs. 13:51; 14:1); and he specifically identifies Lystra and Derbe as Lycaonian cities (ch. 14:6). Nowhere does he link any of these cities with Galatia. On the other hand, he does introduce “Galatia” in the Second Missionary

Journey, and apparently keeps it distinct from any previously mentioned area. As has already been shown, Paul left Lycaonia and went into Phrygia, a district which is differentiated from Galatia (chs. 16:6; 18:23), though possibly in close association with it. It therefore seems probable that “the churches of Galatia” (Gal. 1:2) were those established by the apostle after he left Phrygia and before he reached the borders of Bithynia and Mysia. Some advocates of the North Galatian theory would extend Paul’s travels into the northern districts of the province of Galatia, around the capital city of Ancyra (modern Ankara). Such an extension is possible, but not necessary. It is reasonable to limit Paul’s work to an area immediately south of Bithynia. This leads to the adoption of a modified version of the North Galatian theory. The divergence of opinion on this problem is not vital to the integrity of the book of Acts. However, it is profitable to have as clear an idea as possible of the location of the churches to which Paul wrote his impassioned Galatian epistle.

With the apostle’s arrival at Troas, uncertainty concerning his route disappears. The major and most fruitful part of his Second Missionary Journey lies before him, and Europe is about to receive the gospel.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1 AA 184
- 1–3AA 203
- 1–40AA 202–220
- 3 AA 204
- 4, 5 AA 206
- 5 AA 402
- 6 AA 207
- 9 CS 56; GW 465; TM 43; 3T 39, 404; 4T 156; 5T 732; 6T 27; 8T 16; 9T 46, 49
- 9–12AA 211
- 13–18AA 212
- 14 SL 15
- 16 GC 516
- 16, 17 EW 203
- 17 AA 216
- 18–28EW 204
- 19–24AA 213
- 19–253T 406
- 24–34AA 426
- 25 AA 214; MB 35
- 25, 26 ML 20
- 26, 27 AA 215
- 28 Ed 66; SR 312
- 28–30AA 216
- 30 AA 208, 329; COL 112, 231; CSW 114; DA 104; Ev 248; EW 205, 234; GC 369, 518; MH 120; MM 31, 191; PK 435; SR 359; 1T 450, 705; 2T 289; 3T 32; 4T 178, 401; 6T 88; 7T 72, 159
- 31–39AA 217; EW 205
- 35, 36 AA 214
- 40 AA 218

CHAPTER 17

1 *Paul preacheth at Thessalonica, 4 where some believe, and others persecute him. 10 He is sent to Berea, and preacheth there. 13 Being persecuted at Thessalonica, 15 he cometh to Athens, and disputeth, and preacheth the living God to them unknown, 34 whereby many are converted unto Christ.*

1. Had passed through. Gr. *diodeuō*, “to make one’s way,” from *dia*, “through,” and *hodos*, “way.” In the NT the Greek verb occurs only here and in Luke 8:1. Its use provides further evidence for the common authorship of the two books.

Amphipolis. About 30 mi. (48 km.) southwest of Philippi. In earlier days this city was known as *Ennea Hodoi* (“Nine Roads”), in acknowledgment of its strategic position. Under the Romans, Amphipolis became the capital of the first of the four sections into which the Roman province of Macedonia was divided.

Apollonia. About 30 mi. (48 km.) southwest from Amphipolis. The exact site of the city is uncertain. The two towns just mentioned may have been overnight stops for the travelers from Philippi, although traveling distances of about 30 mi. daily would have placed a great strain on men who had been recently scourged. The missionaries did not linger in the two towns, possibly because they contained few, if any, Jews.

Thessalonica. Situated about 37 mi. (c. 59 km.) slightly north of west from Apollonia. The city was earlier known as *Thermae*, but had been enlarged by Philip of Macedon, and renamed by Cassander in honor of Thessalonike, his wife and Philip’s daughter. It was well situated for commerce on the Thermaic Gulf, and had become a port of some importance. As Thessalonike it is still an important city.

Synagogue of the Jews. As a busy commercial center, Thessalonica attracted Jews in large numbers. These members of the Dispersion (see Vol. V, pp. 59–61) enjoyed religious freedom, and were able to build their own place of worship. It is probable that the synagogue in Thessalonica also served nearby towns whose Jewish populations were not large enough to support a building of their own.

2. As his manner was. See on Acts 13:5, 14; cf. on Luke 4:16.

Went in. As of right, as a Jew. He may have been invited to speak, as in Pisidian Antioch (see on ch. 13:14).

Three sabbath days. Gr. *epi sabbata tria*, literally, “upon three Sabbaths.” The RSV has “for three weeks.” This translation seems unwarranted. Applying the rule that the primary, direct, and obvious translation is to be preferred, unless form or context require an accommodated meaning, the translation “Sabbaths” is appropriate here. There is nothing in the Greek, linguistic or contextual, or in the circumstances described, that requires the translation “weeks.” Of 68 versions consulted on this passage, in 13 languages, only one of them, besides the RSV, namely, the German of Bohmer, gives the reading “three weeks.” The RSV gives “sabbaths” as a marginal reading. Many versions use the expression “sabbath days” or “successive sabbaths,” precluding any thought of “weeks.” We may therefore conclude that the translation “upon three Sabbaths” is valid

¹⁴Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Ac 15:37). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

and to be preferred. For Paul's relation to Sabbath observance see on chs. 13:14; 16:13. During the intervals between the Sabbaths the apostle doubtless worked at his trade of tent-making (see Acts 18:3; 1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8). That Paul was allowed to preach for three Sabbaths in succession shows the respect accorded him as a rabbi, and his earnest eloquence.

Reasoned. Gr. *dialegomai*, "to converse," "to discourse," "to discuss," rather than "to dispute," as the same verb is translated in v. 17. Paul's witness was as fearless as ever. He preached the gospel of God not "in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance" (1 Thess. 1:5). At the same time, he was gentle, "even as a nurse cherisheth her children" (1 Thess. 2:7). As a result, not only Jews and proselytes were saved, but many Gentiles turned "from idols to serve the living and true God" (1 Thess. 1:9).

Out of the scriptures. Rather, "from the Scriptures." Paul drew his reasons from the Scriptures, as did Jesus (Luke 24:25–27, 44), and Stephen (Acts 7), and as he himself did at Antioch in Pisidia (ch. 13:16–41).

3. Opening. Gr. *dianoigō*. The same word is used by Luke for (1) Christ's opening, or explaining the Scriptures to the disciples on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:32), (2) Christ's opening the minds of the Eleven "that they might understand the scriptures" (v. 45), and (3) the Lord's opening the heart of Lydia that she might understand Paul's teaching (Acts 16:14). Here Paul follows his Master's example and opens Scripture, that the minds of his hearers might open to receive his message.

Alleging. Gr. *paratithēmi*, "to set forth alongside," used of setting food on a table (ch. 16:34), or, figuratively, of setting forth arguments. "To allege," in its older sense, did not mean to set forth a doubtful assumption but "to cite." Paul produced scriptural proof for his teaching, and persuasively set it before his hearers in the synagogue.

Christ. The Greek has the article, giving the reading "the Christ," or "the Messiah." The apostle purposes to correct the Jews' erroneous conceptions of the Messiah (see on Luke 4:19).

Must needs. Or, "it was necessary." Paul showed how the Messiah could not conquer sin unless He suffered. Suffering was essential to triumph (see on Luke 24:26, 27).

Have suffered, and risen again. Rather, "to suffer and to rise." Paul specifically deals with two aspects of Christian teaching that Jews found hard to accept—the suffering Messiah and His resurrection. The 53d chapter of Isaiah would hold a prominent place in such a study (see on Luke 24:26, 27; cf. on Acts 8:32–35; 13:26–33).

That this Jesus. The Greek construction justifies the insertion of "saying" before "that." The phrase may then read, "saying that this is the Messiah, Jesus, whom I am publicly proclaiming unto you" (cf. on ch. 9:22).

4. Some of them. That is, of the Jews in the synagogue (cf. ch. 13:43). These were probably in the minority compared with the unbelieving Jews (ch. 17:5).

Believed. Rather, "were persuaded," that is, by Paul's reasoning.

Consorted with Paul. Literally, "were allotted to Paul [by God]" to be disciples. Rotherham translates, "cast in their lot with Paul."

Devout Greeks. There is some textual evidence (cf. p. 10) for the reading "devout persons and Greeks." Some of these were proselytes (see on ch. 10:2). But the

Thessalonian church appears to have been predominantly Gentile, and some of its members were won from idolatry without passing through Judaism (1 Thess. 1:9; 2:14).

A great multitude. These Gentiles were not hampered by the prejudices that clung so closely about those who were born Jews.

Chief women. These may have been economically and socially independent, like Lydia (ch. 16:14), or the wives of the chief men of the town. It is not possible to decide whether they were Jewesses or Gentiles. Women enjoyed a large measure of freedom in Macedonia. It seems probable that this verse (ch. 17:4) covers more than the three Sabbaths mentioned in v. 2. The tenor of the narrative, with its picture of a prospering work at Thessalonica, and Paul's epistle (1 Thessalonians) suggest a stay of more than three weeks.

5. Which believed not. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of these words. Whether this clause is omitted is of little significance, for v. 4 states that some Jews believed, and it is obvious that those Jews who raised up a mob against Paul and Silas "believed not." The preaching of the gospel in the synagogue almost always produced sharp division among those who heard it (see chs. 13:14, 43–45; 14:1, 2; 19:8, 9).

Moved with envy. Gr. *zēloō*, "to be heated with envy," that is, to be jealous (cf. on ch. 13:45).

Lewd fellows of the baser sort. The expression may be more exactly translated, "vile fellows of the rabble" (RV). The words apply to the men who, without any fixed calling, lounged about the market place, picking up an uncertain living, ready for anything bad or good that might arise. The jealous Jews were willing to employ such rascals, organize them as a mob, and use them to foment trouble against the missionaries and their converts.

Set all the city. The word for "all" does not appear in the Greek. Its omission does not weaken the force of the narrative.

On an uproar. Gr. *thorubeō*, "to disturb," "to throw into confusion." The riot technique used by the Jews has been copied by the enemies of Christianity throughout succeeding centuries. Opponents of the church have raised trouble, and then often accused the Christians of causing the disturbance.

Assaulted. Gr. *ephistēmi*, "to come upon [anyone, anything] suddenly" (cf. Luke 20:1; Acts 22:13; 23:27). This unprovoked attack was an act of public disorder that should have caused the authorities to discipline the Jews rather than to punish Jason or Paul.

Jason. A Greek name often adopted by Jews whose Hebrew name was Joshua (2 Maccabees 4:7; see Josephus *Antiquities* xii. 5. 1 [239]). The name is also found in a list of Paul's "kinsmen" (Rom. 16:21), but there is no evidence to suggest that this refers to Paul's Thessalonian friend. That Paul had taken up residence with him would indicate that he was a Jew. His hospitable act now brought upon him the fanatical wrath of his unbelieving fellow countrymen.

Them. Paul and Silas.

People. Gr. *dēmos*, possibly "popular assembly," in contrast to *laos*, which usually represents people as a tribe, a nation. Since Thessalonica was a free Greek city, the Jews

may have planned to bring the matter before the *dēmos* as the people's court.

Alternatively, they may have hoped that the excited mob would lynch the missionaries, without benefit of trial.

6. Found them not. Alert friends had probably smuggled Paul and Silas out of the house and were hiding them until they could be safely moved out of Thessalonica (v. 10). When balked of their hoped-for prey, the rioters seized local victims, but dealt more legally with them.

Drew. Gr. *surō*, “to drag,” or “to draw.” In ch. 8:3 the word is used of Saul's “haling” men and women to prison.

Certain brethren. These brethren are unnamed, but by no means unnoticed.

Rulers of the city. Gr. *politarchai*, from *polis* (“city”) and *archōn* (“ruler”). In known literature the word appears to have been used only by Luke, but archeology has shown that he used it accurately. Nineteen inscriptions have been discovered in which the word *politarchēs* is used. In the majority of cases the reference is to magistrates in Macedonian cities, and five inscriptions actually refer to Thessalonica, so Luke's detailed accuracy is confirmed. He correctly described the officials in Philippi, a Roman colony, as *stratēgoi* (see on ch. 16:20); but Thessalonica was a free Macedonian city, and its non-Roman magistrates, of which there were five or six at this time, were known officially as *politarchai*. It was before these officials that Jason and his friends were now haled.

Turned the world upside down. Or, “stirred the world up,” as also in Acts 21:38; Gal. 5:12. For comment on the word “world” (Gr. *oikoumenē*) see on Matt. 24:14; Luke 2:1. Similar charges of trouble-making were brought against Elijah (1 Kings 18:17), and against the Christians of the 3d century (Tertullian *Apology* 40; *Ad Nationes* 9). Similar accusations will be brought against God's people in the last days (GC 614, 615).

In the present case the charge was doubtless exaggerated in the heat of the moment, but its import was serious. The Romans took pride in their Pax Romana (“Roman Peace”), and were ready to deal severely with those who disturbed it. But no matter how overstated the accusation may have been, it shows that the missionaries' reputation for gaining converts had preceded them to Thessalonica, and testifies to the rapid spread of Christianity.

7. Hath received. Gr. *hupodechomai*, “to receive [as a guest],” “to entertain,” as in Luke 10:38; 19:6; James 2:25. The apostles were Jason's guests, and consequently he was considered a sympathizer with their teaching.

These all. That is, Jason and certain brethren. Paul and Silas, whom the accusers had not found, would also be included in the accusation if they were caught. In an even broader sense, the charge may have been against the whole Christian church.

Decrees. Gr. *dogmata* (see on ch. 16:4). The reference is probably to Roman laws against seditious teaching. However, it is also possible that the “decrees” here may refer to the terms of the edict issued by the emperor Claudius, under which the Jews were to be expelled from Rome, if that edict was prompted by the growth of Christianity (see Vol. V, p. 71; see on ch. 18:2). Actually, this edict was binding only in Rome and its *coloniae* (such as Philippi), but it would influence all parts of the Roman Empire. Thus,

Thessalonica, though a free city, was under the imperial government, and would harmonize its legislation with the tenor of imperial Roman policy.

Another king. Gr. *basileus heteros*, that is, a different kind of king (see on Matt. 6:24). On this phrase the accusers based their main charge: They claimed that the Christians were proclaiming a rival king, or emperor. A more serious accusation could hardly be laid against any group (see Mark 12:14; see on Luke 23:2), and although it was not true, it had enough basis to appear plausible. Christians everywhere taught the superiority of Christ's kingship (see on Matt. 3:2, 3; John 18:36), and their words could readily be interpreted into seditious sentiments by hostile critics. It is clear from the letters to the Thessalonians that Paul emphasized the kingdom in his preaching, and stressed Christ's second coming as King (1 Thess. 1:9, 10; 2:12; 4:14–17; 5:2, 23; 2 Thess. 1:5–8; 2:8). In the eyes of a Roman official, such teaching was sufficient to substantiate the charge that the irate Jews and their associates now made.

8. Troubled. Gr. *tarassō*, “to agitate,” “to stir up.” The news given by the Jews disturbed the inhabitants of Thessalonica. The public feared an insurrection, with its attendant horrors, while the officials faced the responsibility of having failed to keep order and having permitted treasonable activities.

People. Gr. *ochlos*, “crowd,” “multitude,” “common people”—a different word from that translated “people” (*dēmos*) in v. 5.

9. Security. Gr. *hikanos*, literally, “sufficient,” but here used as a technical term equivalent to “bail.” Jason probably had to lay down a sum of money in lieu of producing Paul and Silas in person, or as a pledge that the evangelists would not return to trouble the city, or as guarantee of his own good conduct. The local Christians ran great risks on behalf of the missionaries, but they willingly faced danger for the gospel's sake (cf. 1 Thess. 1:6; 2:14). It is clear that the magistrates were refusing to be stampeded into injudicious action, and they merit commendation for their moderate decision. They probably judged that there was insufficient evidence for conviction.

The other. Rather, “the others.”

10. Immediately sent away. Either because of the magistrates' command, or because of the imminent danger (cf. ch. 9:25). Paul and Silas had been the benefactors of the new believers, but now the tables were turned, and the Thessalonian Christians were efficiently caring for the missionaries. Paul never forgot their kindness, and often longed to see them again. On at least two other occasions he attempted to pay return visits to the church in Thessalonica, but had to be content to send Timothy in his stead (see on 1 Thess. 2:18; 3:1, 2).

Berea. A small Macedonian city about 50 mi. southwest of Thessalonica. The city was of far less commercial importance than Thessalonica. The town still retains its name in the modern Verria. The Biblical form of the name may be more accurately rendered Berea. See Paul's Second Missionary Tour.

Into the synagogue. The Jewish population was large enough to support its own place of worship. It was Paul's custom to begin his gospel work in the synagogue (cf. on vs. 1, 2), but in this case, immediately after the trouble in Thessalonica, such action called for unusual courage.

11. Noble. Literally, “wellborn” (cf. 1 Cor. 1:26). Here the word stands for the generous, loyal temper that was ideally supposed to characterize those of aristocratic birth. It was this quality of kindness and open-mindedness that the apostle and Luke admired in the Berean Jews. In contrast with those in the synagogue of Thessalonica, they were not the slaves of prejudice, but, with open minds, were ready to study the truths that Paul presented.

Received the word. That is, the Word of God. Paul gave them the same Biblical teaching that he had given to the Jews in Thessalonica (v. 3).

Readiness. Or, “eagerness.” They eagerly desired enlightenment.

Searched. Gr. *anakrinō*, “to investigate,” “to examine,” “to sift [evidence],”

especially in a legal sense, as in chs. 4:9; 12:19. In John 5:39 a different word, *ereunaō* (“to search,” “to examine into”), is used. The Bereans used sanctified intelligence in studying the Scriptures, and found that the inspired words told of a Messiah who would suffer and rise again. Having examined the evidence and having found what was true, they proved their sincerity by accepting the new teaching. The Berean converts have always been regarded, particularly by those who emphasize the right of private judgment, as representative of those who exhibit the right relation between reason and faith, avoiding credulity on the one hand and skepticism on the other. In their readiness to look at what was proposed as truth, and to check it against a revered authority, the Scriptures, finally following truth as they found it, they constitute a good example to follow.

Daily. The use of this word suggests that Paul’s stay with the Bereans was at least long enough for him to direct the inquirers in extended study of the Word.

12. Therefore. As a result of diligent, daily searching of the Scriptures many believed the gospel message. The Bible will still bring conviction and conversion to those who sincerely search its pages for truth.

Many of them believed. In contrast with “some of them believed” (v. 4).

Honourable women. That is, women of good rank or standing, distinguished for their influence and wealth (cf. on ch. 13:50).

Which were Greeks. The phrase refers especially to the women, but it is probable that the men were also included (see on v. 4).

13. Jews of Thessalonica. These were not content with driving the missionaries out of their own town; their hatred pursued the Christians to Beroea (cf. on ch. 14:19).

Word of God. This is Luke’s term. The Thessalonian Jews who did not accept Paul’s message would not have described it as “the word of God.” Prejudice and long training in Jewish teaching blinded their eyes (cf. on 2 Cor. 3:14, 15).

Stirred up. Gr. *saleuō*, “to agitate,” “to shake thoroughly.” The figure suggests a storm at sea where all are troubled, an apt enough description for the confusion that the Jews of Thessalonica sought to create. Important textual evidence (cf. p. 10) may be cited for the reading, “they came thither also, stirring up and troubling the people” (see below under “the people”). The Jews probably made charges similar to those they had brought against the Christians in Thessalonica, accusing the believers of fomenting political disturbances.

The people. Gr. *hoi ochloi*, “the crowds.” Apparently the Thessalonian Jews attempted the same mob action against the apostles at Beroea as had been successful in their own city (vs. 5–10).

14. Immediately. As from Thessalonica (v. 10), so from Beroea, the departure of the apostles was made in all haste. Once again local Christians, new in the faith, and at personal risk, arranged for their teachers' safety.

As it were to the sea. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading, "as far as the sea." This sudden action was preparatory to taking ship for a destination that may not yet have been decided. Because there is no mention of stopping places between Beroea and Athens (as Amphipolis and Apollonia were listed between Philippi and Thessalonica in v. 1) it is presumed that Paul did travel by sea. Rounding the promontory of Sunium, he would enter Athens by way of the port of Piraeus (see on v. 16). He was accompanied thus far by some who had gone with him from Beroea (v. 15), but they returned and he was left alone. His desire for companionship and counsel is expressed in the message that he sent with the returning Bereans for Silas and Timothy to come to him "with all speed" (v. 15). From 1 Thess. 3:1–3 it would appear that Timothy came to Athens, probably after the incident on the Areopagus, and was sent back soon after, with words of counsel and comfort for those in Thessalonica whom he had reported as suffering much tribulation.

Silas and Timotheus. Timothy has not been mentioned by name since he was introduced into the narrative at Lystra (see on ch. 16:1), but it appears that since his circumcision (v. 3) he had constantly been with Paul. Now, with Silas, he is separated from the senior evangelist. The persecuting Jews were thirsting for Paul's blood, and were not likely to molest the less prominent workers if they remained in Beroea. Thus Silas and Timothy would be free to strengthen the new believers in Beroea and Thessalonica.

15. Conducted. Apparently the entire care and direction of Paul's journey was in the hands of the Bereans, rather than in his. They personally accompanied him on the journey, thus ensuring his safety.

Unto Athens. The apostle probably had planned to go on foot through Macedonia into Greece, but the unexpected crisis caused abandonment of the plan, and he took direct passage to Athens (see Paul's Second Missionary Tour; see on v. 16). There he could safely await his fellow missionaries. He may have planned to wait without preaching, but his ardent, evangelistic spirit was roused by the sights he saw in Athens.

With all speed. Or, "as quickly as possible." Those who had conducted Paul to Athens were sent back to Beroea with instructions to have Timothy and Silas join the apostle immediately. There is reason to think that Paul could not easily travel or work alone because of his infirmities (cf. on ch. 9:18). He wanted the presence of his faithful companions that he might promptly set about his work. In 1 Thess. 3:1, 2 is an implication that Timothy, at least, came to Athens. Apparently soon afterward Paul sent him back to care for the Thessalonian converts. From Athens, Paul went to Corinth (Acts 18:1), where Silas and Timothy later joined him (v. 5).

They departed. That is, the Bereans who had taken Paul to Athens. For the first time in his major missionary journeys, the apostle is left without the companionship of fellow workers.

16. Athens. The capital of ancient Attica and of modern Greece, situated in the southeast extremity of the Roman province of Achaia (see The Journeys of Paul). It lay 41/2 mi. from the sea, and was connected with the port of Piraeus by a broad, walled corridor. Tradition takes its history back to 1581 B.C., but the city did not become prominent until about 600 B.C. During the next 200 years Athens climbed to the peak of

her power and attained her Golden Age under Pericles (461–430 B.C.). Her illustrious sons included Sophocles, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Demosthenes. In 338 B.C., however, the city was crushed by the rising power of Macedon, and in the 2d century B.C. was included in the Roman province of Achaia. In Paul's day Athens no longer possessed effective political power, but it was still the recognized intellectual center of the world, and was regarded as the university city of the Roman Empire. The population probably numbered 250,000 at that time. See Paul's Second Missionary Tour.

The focal point of Athens was the Acropolis ("upper," or "higher," city). This was a hill about 500 ft. high, and was the site of several famous temples, the chief and most beautiful of which were the Parthenon, the Erechtheum, and the Temple of the Wingless Victory. On a lower hill, to the west of the Acropolis, rose the Areopagus ("Mars' hill," see on v. 19), a bare outcrop of rock running in a northwest to southeast direction. Such was the setting in which Paul found himself while he awaited the arrival of Silas and Timothy from Beroea.

His spirit. That is, his mind, his inner spiritual depths.

Was stirred. Gr. *paroxunō*, "to irritate," "to provoke," "to rouse to anger" (cf. on ch. 15:39). Apparently Paul had not intended to preach in Athens, but the sights that he saw provoked him to action, and he felt impelled to speak even before Timothy and Silas arrived.

Wholly given to idolatry. Rather, "full of idols." Josephus describes the Athenians as being "the most pious of the Greeks" (*Against Apion* ii. 12 [130]; Loeb ed., p. 345). According to one ancient report there were more than 3,000 statues in the Athens of Paul's day. One of its streets was adorned with a bust of the messenger-god Hermes before every house. Temples, porticoes, colonnades, and courtyards were replete with exquisitely carved works of art that lavishly proclaimed the Greek love of beauty. Paul, with his Hellenistic background, could hardly have been indifferent to the aesthetic appeal of such artistic wealth, but any pleasure he may have felt would be overwhelmed by the spiritual implications of what he saw. The greater part of the statuary was linked with pagan worship, and could justifiably be described as "idols." To a Jew, such a display would glaringly flout the first and second commandments. To a Christian, the sight would bring even greater sorrow as revealing the gulf that lay between Greek paganism and the gospel revelation of God in Christ. Yet, so fully did Paul share the Saviour's desire to redeem men from their follies that his final reaction was evangelistic. He could not neglect the opportunity to proclaim the gospel to the Athenians.

17. Therefore. His righteous anger against rampant idolatry did not find vent simply in fulminations, but led him to attempt to evangelize the pagan city.

Disputed. See on v. 2.

Synagogue. There is no evidence that a large colony of Jews existed in Athens, but early Jewish inscriptions have been found in the city. Paul, as his custom was (see on Acts 9:15; 13:5, 14; cf. on Luke 4:16), went first to the Jews, naturally expecting support from them in his fight against idolatry. The narrative gives no hint as to his reception among his compatriots, and leaves no record of tangible results from his work with them.

Devout persons. See on ch. 10:2.

Market. Gr. *agora* (see on Matt. 11:16; Acts 16:19). In Athens there were two agorae, one being the commercial market place, whereas the other, to which reference is here made, was the social center of the city. In the time of Paul it was adorned with a host of

statues, images of national heroes as well as of most of the gods in the Greek pantheon. This agora was the arena where most political and philosophical discussions were conducted in Athens. Here Paul would hear professional and amateur philosophers disputing with one another and with their hearers. The apostle would be free to participate in the discussions and to expound his own philosophy of life.

Them that met with him. Rather, “the chance comers,” that is, the casual passers-by, difficult soil in which to sow gospel seed.

18. Philosophers. Literally, “lovers of wisdom,” a term used of those who were given to the pursuit of wisdom, or learning.

Epicureans. The two philosophic schools, the Epicureans and the Stoics, were at this time the great representatives of Greek thought. Epicureanism took its name from its founder, Epicurus, who lived a long and quiet life at Athens, from about 342 to 270 B.C. In harmony with its founder’s will, meetings were held in a garden, and hence the Epicureans were sometimes known as the School of the Garden. The speculations of Epicurus included both a physical and an ethical solution of the problems of the universe. In company with most thoughtful men of the time, he rejected the popular polytheism, which he did not yet dare openly renounce, and taught that the gods in their serenity were too far removed from men to be bothered about men’s sorrows or sins. They needed no sacrifices and answered no prayers. The great evil of the world was superstition, which was enslaving the minds of most men, and was the source of most crime and misery. Man’s goal was the attainment of happiness, and the first step toward it was emancipation from the idea of future punishment. The next step was to recognize that happiness consisted in pleasurable emotions. Experience showed that what some call pleasure is frequently more than offset by the pain that follows; consequently he taught that one should avoid sensual excesses. The life of Epicurus himself seems to have been marked by self-control, kindness, generosity, piety, and patriotism (Diogenes *Laërtius* x. 10). But he regarded human laws as merely conventional arrangements, and found no place for a higher moral law. Each man was therefore left to arbitrate on the lawfulness of his own pleasures, and most men chose a life of ease and self-indulgence. Sometimes, but all too rarely, careful thinking balanced an Epicurean’s tendency to sink into animalism. More often those who devoted themselves to the indulgence of the sense of taste, on the one hand, and of sexual freedom, on the other, provided sorry exhibits of the depth of degradation to which such a philosophy permitted men to sink.

Epicurus has been credited with foreseeing some of the so-called discoveries of modern science in the world of physics. He excluded the idea of both creation and control. He taught that matter had existed from eternity, and that the infinite atoms of which matter was composed had by a process of attraction and repulsion entered into manifold combinations, out of which had issued the world of nature as men see it. The poem of Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, is perhaps the loftiest expression of this negative and virtually atheistic system, for it does possess a certain nobility of indignant protest against the superstition that so firmly gripped the pagan world.

Epicurean poetry gives characteristic examples of the ethical teaching of this system. Says Horace: “Cease to ask what the morrow will bring forth, and set down as gain each day that Fortune grants” (*Odes* i. 9; Loeb ed., 29).

“Show wisdom. Strain clear the wine; and since life is brief, cut short far-reaching hopes! Even while we speak, envious time has sped. Reap the harvest of to-day, putting as little trust as may be in the morrow!” (*ibid.* 11; Loeb ed., p. 33).

Paul was now brought face to face with this philosophy. In vs. 22–31 we learn how he dealt with it. He asserted the personality of the living God, as Creator, Ruler, Father; the binding force of a divine law written in the heart; the nobility of a life raised above a frantic search for pleasure, and spent, not for itself, but for others and for God. Finally, he pointed to man’s moral accountability in the light of the resurrection and the judgment. Such teaching set the apostle apart from the pagan professors of higher philosophy.

Stoicks. This school of philosophy took its name, not from its founder Zeno (c. 340–c. 260 B.C.), of Citium in Cyprus, but from the *Stoa Poikilē*, the painted porch in the agora at Athens, where Zeno used to teach. Josephus (*Life* 2 [12]) states that there are points of similarity between the Stoics and the Pharisees. Indeed it may be said that their attitude toward the moral life of heathenism at this time presented many features similar to that of the Pharisees. They taught that true wisdom consists in being the master, and not the slave, of circumstances. The things that are not in our power are neither to be coveted nor avoided, but are to be accepted with equanimity. The seeker after wisdom was taught to be indifferent alike to pleasure or pain, and to maintain an intellectual neutrality. Stoic theology was nobler than that of the Epicureans. The Stoics conceived of a divine mind pervading the universe and ordering its affairs. They recognized its authority in the affairs of nations and in the lives of individual men, yet held a practical belief in freedom of man’s will. The *Manual of Ethics*, a record of the philosophy of Epictetus, the ex-slave, and the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius, the emperor, show how the slave and the emperor are, in a sense, considered as equals according to this system of philosophy. The writings of Seneca show that the ethics of the Stoics were similar to those of Christians. Many of the Stoics became tutors for the sons of noble families, and exercised influence comparable to that of Jesuit confessors in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries.

There were several drawbacks to the ethical effectiveness of their philosophy: (1) In aiming at unconcern for themselves they also lost sympathy for others; (2) in aspiring to ethical perfection through the operation of their own will, they falsely assumed of their own will, they falsely assumed that men are able to work out their own salvation; (3) in stressing the perfect life, the high ideal—like the Pharisees—they made it a mask for selfish and corrupt lives. Like the Pharisees, they were too often “hypocrites” (or, “play-actors”), acting a part before the world to which their inward character did not correspond. In the language of the satirist:

“People who ape the Curii and live like Bacchanals dare talk about morals” (Juvenal *Satires* ii. 2, 3; Loeb ed., p. 17).

Obviously there were numerous points of similarity between the better representatives of this school of thought and Paul, nevertheless, even for them the basic principles that he represented would seem to them an idle dream. When Paul spoke of Jesus and the resurrection, and of a judgment to come, the Stoics shrank from the thought that they needed pardon and redemption.

Encountered. Gr. *sumballō*, “to bring together,” not necessarily with bad intent, but as a casual meeting.

Babbler. Gr. *spermologos*, literally, “seed picker,” often used of birds that picked up stray seeds. Here the philosophers applied the term to Paul, as one who, having picked up stray scraps of knowledge, was overready to instruct those who were better informed.

Strange gods. That is, foreign deities. The Greek word here translated “gods” (*daimonia*) is used by NT writers for “demons,” or “devils” (see on Mark 1:23), malign supernatural beings, unworthy of man’s worship. But pagan writers used *daimonia* for an inferior order of divine beings, not necessarily evil, who claimed men’s adoration. It was one of the accusations brought against Socrates, the charge on which he was condemned, that he introduced new *daimonia* (Xenophon *Memorabilia* i. 1. 1, 2). But the intellectual atmosphere at Athens had changed since the prosecution of Socrates, for it was not anger but curiosity that prompted Paul’s challengers. They were not assailing Paul for his teaching; amid the abundance of idols they probably felt no difficulty in allowing Jesus a place, provided that He would not seek to overthrow their own divinities.

It has been thought by some that the Athenians, by using the plural word “gods,” understood that “Jesus” was one new divinity and *Anastasis* (Greek for “resurrection”) another. The Athenians had dedicated temples and altars to Concord, and Epimenides had bidden them erect altars to Insolence and Disgrace (Cicero *De Legibus* ii. 11), the two demons they blamed for bringing their city to ruin. It would be natural for the Greeks to think of the Christian preacher as a setter forth of new “divinities.” They also saw that he had more to say than they had yet heard.

Jesus. The Saviour was the constant theme of apostolic preaching (cf. chs. 2:22; 3:13; 5:30, 42; 8:5, 35; 9:20; 11:20; 13:23; etc.). Paul boldly proclaims the same Jesus to the skeptical intellectuals of Athens.

Resurrection. This was also a central theme in the preaching of the early church (cf. chs. 2:24; 3:15; 4:2, 10; 10:40; etc.). Paul had personal experience to prove Christ’s resurrection, for he had conversed with the risen Lord (ch. 9:4–6). But the apostle was also teaching the final resurrection of all men (cf. on Acts 17:32; 1 Cor. 15:51; 1 Thess. 4:14–16), and this is what startled the philosophers of Athens. They already believed in the immortality of the soul, but were astonished to hear anyone teaching the literal resurrection of the body. In 1 Cor. 15:35–44 we see the nature of the objections raised to this doctrine, and the manner in which Paul answered them.

19. Took him. Gr. *epilambanō*, “to take hold of.” It is not to be supposed that any violence was used or intended. Paul was alone, and if it is true that his eyesight was a problem to him (see on ch. 9:18), he may have been somewhat dependent upon others in getting readily from place to place. *Epilambanō* is often used of taking by the hand to aid or protect (see Mark 8:23; Acts 23:19), and is employed by Luke to describe the action of Barnabas when he “took” Paul “and brought him to the apostles” (ch. 9:27). Moreover, the whole context shows that the action of the crowd was in no sense an arrest, for when his speech was done, “Paul departed from among them” (ch. 17:33), evidently having been under no sort of duress.

Areopagus. Gr. *Areios Pagos*, “hill of Ares,” *Ares* being the Greek equivalent to the Latin *Mars*, the god of war; hence, *Areios Pagos* is translated “Mars’ hill” in v. 22. For its

location see on v. 16. The site was famous as the meeting place of the Athenian council of Areopagus, which took its name from the hill on which it met. This council, which claimed to owe its origin to Athena, the patron goddess of the city, was the oldest and most revered tribunal in Athens. It numbered among its members men of the highest official rank. Originally it had consisted only of those who had served in the high office of archon and had attained 60 years of age. Pericles had in some measure limited its wide authority (5th century B.C.), and it was as the spokesman of the party who opposed Pericles' ideas of progress that Aeschylus wrote the tragedy *Eumenides*, which stressed the divine authority of the council. Exactly what authority this council may have exercised in Paul's day is not known.

Opinion is divided as to whether Paul was taken to the hill or before the council. The Greek text has the definite article before *Areios Pagos*, giving the translation "the Areopagus," which may refer to the hill, or to the council of the Areopagus, which had long since been simply called "the Areopagus." The hill itself was comparatively small, and crowded with altars, so the council usually met in the *Stoa Basileios*, "King's Porch," and assembled on Mars' Hill only to deliver its judgment. If Paul was taken before the council, it is extremely unlikely that there were any judicial proceedings. His appearance would rather be for the purpose of presenting his teaching before the supreme intellectual body of the university city. If, on the other hand, he was taken only to the hill, he could still have been heard by the rather select group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers who wished to decide on the value of his strange teaching. There, distant from the bustle of the agora (see on v. 17), the apostle would be free to expound his doctrine. Some suppose that the court was sitting when Paul was brought to the hill, particularly since a member of the court was converted by Paul's preaching (see on v. 34). But there is no evidence on this point.

May we know? An idiomatic expression, which may here be rendered: "Is it possible for the us to know?"—a question that may have been courteous, sarcastic, or ironical. The Epicureans and Stoics had no doubts about their own ability to understand all that Paul might say to them, but they were obviously eager to hear about his strange teaching.

New doctrine. Gr. *kainos*, "new" in *quality*; hence here, by implication, something different from the usual barren philosophies peddled by the Athenians and so highly prized by them.

20. Strange things. The clause may be rendered: "For surprising things you are bringing to our ears." Never before had his audience heard any teaching such as Paul was bringing them. His message startled them into attention by the strangeness of its contents.

We would know. That is, we wish to know (cf. on v. 19). Their consuming passion was "to know," to acquire knowledge.

What these things mean. Paul had been able to sketch only the outline of his message (v. 18). His hearers now wanted to have its import and application explained to them.

21. All the Athenians. Rather, "all Athenians." This verse is a parenthesis to explain those that precede. The restless inquisitiveness of the Athenian mind was proverbial. In words almost identical with those Luke here uses, Demosthenes formerly reproached his fellow citizens for idling away their time in the agora, asking for news of Philip of Macedon's movements or of the actions of their own envoys, when they should have been devoting their efforts to preparation for war (*First Philippic* 10–13 [43]).

Strangers. That is, resident foreigners, of whom there were a great many in Athens. The intellectual life of the city attracted a very mixed group—young Romans sent to finish their education, artists, sight-seers, philosophers, and curiosity seekers from every province in the empire, and even beyond.

Spent their time. More literally, “were having leisure for.” The tense of the Greek verb implies that this was their constant state of mind. If all one’s time is spent in a certain occupation, there is no leisure for anything else. The Athenians could find time for the pursuit of novelty, but for little else besides.

Some new thing. Literally, “some newer thing,” or, as we would say, the “very latest news.” This propensity of the Athenian populace is confirmed by statements of classical authors. Thucydides represents Cleon as complaining of his countrymen that they were in the habit of playing the part of “spectators of words and hearers of deeds” (*History* iii. 38. 4; Loeb ed., *Thucydides*, vol. 2, p. 63). Reference has already been made to a like charge laid by Demosthenes.

22. Mars’ hill. Rather, “the Areopagus” (see on v. 19). If the apostle was standing atop the rocky hill, he looked down upon the temple of Hephaestus to the northwest, and up to the Parthenon that rose above him on the Acropolis. On the height of that larger hill stood the colossal bronze statue of Athena, who was regarded as the tutelary goddess of her beloved Athens. Below the apostle lay the city itself, which was veritably “full of idols.” See illustration facing p. 352.

Men of Athens. Although this is a respectful opening, the speech that follows is not that of a man on trial (cf. on v. 19), but of an ardent advocate of peculiar, but cherished, beliefs. Paul adopts the language of Athenian orators. This was in keeping with his custom of adapting himself to his audience (see on 1 Cor. 9:19–22). That Paul was able to do this speaks highly of his ability. Luke compresses the apostle’s speech into ten verses (Acts 17:22–31), but it is probable that Paul spoke at much greater length, especially before so distinguished an audience.

Perceive. Gr. *theōreō*, “to behold,” “to look at,” suggesting that Paul was basing his remarks on what he had seen.

Too superstitious. Gr. *deisidaimonesterōi*, a comparative adjective formed from *deidō* (“to fear”) and *daimōn* (“deity”), and translatable as “more god-fearing.” The Greek word (*deisidaimōn*) was used in both a good and a bad sense. A *deisidaimōn* was a consulter of soothsayers and a believer in omens. He would, for instance, avoid making a journey if he saw a weasel on the road. A conspicuous example of this overreligiosity in high places is that of Nicias, the Athenian general, who was always oppressed with a sense of the jealousy of the gods, and therefore countermanded important strategic movements, because there was an eclipse of the moon (Thucydides *History* vii. 504). The emperor Marcus Aurelius, a Stoic (*Meditations* i. 16) congratulates himself on being, not a *deisidaimōn*, but, from his mother’s devotion, a *theosebēs*, a devout man (*ibid.* i. 3). Paul was not likely to employ a word in a derogatory sense at the very beginning of his speech. He would rather be commenting on the scrupulous way in which the Athenians sought to acknowledge all forms of deity. Such an opening would gain the attention of the philosophers, and the Athenians in general.

23. Passed by. Rather “passed through,” that is, through the city, either in leisurely wandering or while entering the city and penetrating to its center.

Beheld. Gr. *anatheōreō*, “to look at attentively,” “to observe accurately.”

Devotions. Gr. *sebasmata*, “objects of worship,” rather than “acts of worship.” Paul had seen and studied many of the numerous statues and their inscriptions. He politely identifies these sculptures as the Athenians’ deities, the objects of their worship. Thus he sought to create good will at the outset that he might receive a continued hearing. He was intent on winning, not alienating, his audience.

Found an altar. The Greek has an emphatic conjunction between the words translated “found” and “an altar,” so the phrase should read, “found also an altar,” that is, in addition to the host of devotional objects already noted. The Greek word for “altar” (*bōmos*) is used only here in the NT, but it appears in the LXX, where it sometimes refers to heathen altars (Ex. 34:13; Num. 23:1; Deut 7:5).

With this inscription. Literally, “upon which had been written.”

To the Unknown God. Gr. *agnōstō theō*, “to an unknown God.” This unusual ascription has been the center of much discussion. Some have doubted the existence of an altar with such an inscription, and others have thought that Paul or Luke referred in the singular to an inscription that was generally found in the plural, that is, “to unknown gods.” A reasonable solution of the problem can be found in a consideration of ancient references to altars bearing similar inscriptions. Four of these may be mentioned: (1) Pausanias (c. A.D. 150) says that on the road from Phaleron, one of the harbors of Athens, there were altars to gods that were called unknown (i. 1. 4); (2) the same writer records that at Olympia there was also an altar to unknown gods (i. 14. 8); (3) Diogenes Laërtius (i. 110), an early 3d century writer, tells how Epimenides of Crete was invited to help Athens in the time of great pestilence. The Cretan took some black and some white sheep to the Areopagus and turned them loose to wander through the city. Wherever one of the sheep lay down, a sacrifice was offered, and an altar was erected on the spot. The memorials of this atonement bore no name. (4) Philostratus (c. A.D. 200), in the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (vi. 3), makes special mention of Athens, where, says he, there were even altars to unknown deities. Such references are sufficient to establish the fact that the Greeks did erect altars to gods whose names they did not know. Although, outside the NT, there is not known record of an altar bearing the inscription in the singular, “to an unknown god,” the evidence above cited demonstrates the possibility that such an altar existed in Paul’s day. The presence of such an altar would be in harmony with what is known about Athenian religious philosophy. The inhabitants of the city were anxious to propitiate all deities, and erected altars to an unknown god, or to unknown gods, in order that none might be neglected. Such a practice represents the ultimate confession, similar to that which has sometimes been heard on the lips of modern scientist, of man’s impotence to solve the problems of the universe. A Latin counterpart of the Greek inscriptions is found on an altar discovered at Ostia, the seaport of Rome, and now in the Vatican Museum. This altar presents a Mithraic sacrificial group, and bears the inscription, “The Symbol of the Undiscoverable God.” An altar has also been found at Pergamum with a broken inscription in Greek apparently dedicating it to unknown gods.

Whom. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading “what” and “this” instead of “whom” and “him.” Paul doubtless used the neuter pronouns, although he was referring

to the Deity, since the Athenians were as yet ignorant of the personality of the living God. He may also have had the Godhead in mind, as in v. 29, where the Greek word for “Godhead” (*theion*) is neuter.

Ignorantly. Gr. *agnoountes*, a participle meaning “unknowing.” Here Paul makes a play on Greek words. He declares that the “unknown [*agnostos*] god” is the One “which you [who are] unknowing [*agnoountes*] are worshiping.”

Declare. Gr. *kataggellō*, “to announce,” “to proclaim.” In v. 18 the philosophers had used virtually the same word (*kataggeleus*, “an announcer,” “a proclaimer”) to describe Paul as “a setter forth of strange gods.” Paul does not trouble to deny the charge, but takes the word (*kataggellō*) and uses it to justify his own procedure. In this way he was able to introduce the true God, whom he loved and served.

24. God. Now that Paul is speaking of the true God, he drops the neuter form of v. 23 and employs the masculine gender. This places the One whom he worships on a higher plane than the gods of the Athenians.

That made the world. Here the apostle gives the ultimate identification of the God to whom he is referring—He is the Creator. This distinguishes Him from all false gods (see on Jer. 10:10–12). Creation by a personal God was a teaching opposed to both Epicurean and Stoic philosophy, yet Paul so states it that it arouses the wonder and interest of his listeners, and he is allowed to continue. The word translated “world” (*kosmos*) was used by the Greeks with reference to the ordered universe, and might embrace both “heaven and earth” (cf. on Matt. 4:8).

All things therein. The intrepid speaker leaves no room for misinterpretation of his words or the insertion of skeptical ideas—God not only made the universe, but created all things therein. Such teaching rings the death knell of pagan mythology.

He is Lord. Rather, “He, being Lord.” This places Paul’s God immeasurably above all other supposed deities, and makes Him the possessor and ruler of the whole universe.

Dwelleth not in temples. See on Acts 7:48; cf. John 4:21–24. While speaking of “temples” Paul would probably be pointing to the magnificent examples of Greek architectural skill with which he was surrounded in Athens. His teaching of the omnipresence and transcendence of God made pagan worship seem futile and divorced from the high spiritual qualities he was now proclaiming.

25. Worshipped. Gr. *therapeuō*, “to treat,” “to heal” in a medical sense, but here used with religious significance, and meaning “to serve.” Paul is emphasizing the spiritual nature of the service that God expects from men, in contrast with the materialistic worship that unregenerate men tend to give.

He needed any thing. Literally, “[as though] needing anything in addition.” Pagan religions represented their gods as dependent on, and covetous of, men’s gifts. Paul explains that the true God is different. Men should think of God as the supreme giver, not requiring anything at their hands but justice, mercy, and humility (Micah 6:8). Other Jewish and heathen writers had borne witness to the same truth. David had said, “Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it” (Ps. 51:16), and the Latin Epicurean poet Lucretius (*De Rerum Natura* ii. 649–651; Loeb ed., p. 131) had written of the divine

nature, saying that it was “without danger, itself mighty by its own resources, needing us not at all, it is neither propitiated with services nor touched by wrath.”

Giveth to all. By these words Paul included his hearers, and states that they too are dependent upon the God of whom he is speaking.

Life, and breath. These two nouns may be taken to comprehend man’s mortal existence. God gives man original life, and maintains that life by granting him physical breath. Thus Paul emphasizes man’s utter dependence on the one true God.

26. One blood. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of “blood,” which word may have been later added to clarify the thought. Paul is stating the historical truth that all men, and consequently all nations, sprang from one common ancestor, Adam. The belief was one that no Greek, and especially no Athenian, was likely to accept. For such, the distinction between Greek and barbarian was radical and essential. The one was by nature meant to be the slave of the other (Aristotle *Politics* i. 2. 6). But there was no place in Paul’s theology for a “superior” race. He believed the Genesis account of the creation of man. He saw the oneness of physical structure, of potential or actual development, which forbids any one race or nation—Hebrew, Hellenic, Latin, or Teutonic—to assume that it is the cream and flower of humanity. Compare Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11, where Paul stresses the unity achieved through belief in Christ. The Christian is doubly obligated to recognize the oneness of men—through creation and through salvation.

All the face of the earth. A further link in Paul’s chain of reasoning. The Creator intended men to populate all parts of the earth, without assigning superiority to the inhabitants of any particular section.

Hath determined. Gr. *horizō*, “to mark out the boundaries,” “to appoint,” “to determine.” The form of the word used here is a participle, and may be translated “having determined.”

Times before appointed. Gr. *prostetagmenoi kairoi*, “appointed times [or “seasons”].” The sense is more readily perceived if the word “their” is inserted so that the phrase reads, “having determined their appointed times.” The word “times” (*kairoi*) refers to historical epochs rather than yearly seasons. The reference is to God’s knowledge of men’s affairs.

Bounds. That is, God, through His providence, has fixed the natural boundaries, or limits, for the nations (see on Dan. 4:17; cf. Deut. 32:8).

27. Seek the Lord. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading “seek God,” and some evidence may also be cited for the reading “seek the Godhead.” But the meaning is clear: God so planned His creation that all who wished might seek and find Him.

If haply. Gr. *ei ara ge*, “if then indeed,” or “that then indeed.” God expects men to seek Him. The only doubt involved derives from the fact that often men do not choose to do so.

Might feel after. Gr. *psēlaphaō*, “to handle,” “to touch,” “to feel,” used in the LXX for the act of groping in the dark (Deut. 28:29; John 5:14; etc.). This aptly describes men’s blind groping for knowledge of the Supreme Being.

Find him. The altar to the Unknown God was a witness that they had not found Him. “The world by wisdom knew not God” (1 Cor. 1:21). But Paul brought the assurance that

the true seeker could know. God desires to be found. He is “a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6).

Not far. The whole clause is very emphatic, and literally reads: “And yet He is not far from each one of us.” There is no doubt expressed in Paul’s words; he is rather making a positive statement of fact. The Lord is near to men, even when they do not acknowledge Him. This makes it a comparatively simple matter for men to find God, for He is by their side, awaiting their awakening and aiding their efforts to discover Him. God can and does reveal Himself according to the measure of zeal and earnestness shown by those who seek Him. At this point the Stoics would see parallels between their own teaching and Paul’s thinking, but the Epicureans would be repelled, for the apostle’s words constituted an attack on the basic atheism of their system.

28. In him we live. The whole clause literally reads: “In [or “by”] Him we are living, and are being moved, and are existing.” The words of the apostle express the thought that not merely our initial dependence is on the Creator, but that all our activities—physical, mental, and spiritual—are derived from Him. In the teaching of Paul the personality of the omnipotent, omniscient God is not merged, as is the God of the pantheist, in the impersonal Soul of the world, but stands forth with awful distinctness in the character of Creator and Sustainer of all life. “Through the agencies of nature, God is working, day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment, to keep us alive, to build up and restore us ... The power working through these agencies is the power of God” (MH 112, 113).

Your own poets. It is possible that this phrase refers back to the first statement in this verse, as well as forward to the quotation that follows. The words “for in him we live, and move, and have our being” are an almost exact quotation from a stanza that appears to have been written by Epimenides the Cretan (6th century B.C.), and is recorded by the 9th century commentator Isho’dad:

“They fashioned a tomb for thee, O holy and high one—
The Cretans, always liars, evil beasts, idle bellies!
But thou art not dead; thou livest and abidest for ever;
For in thee we live and move and have our being”

(quoted in F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* [The New International Commentary on the New Testament], p. 359).

This passage is interesting, not only in view of the possible connection of Epimenides with the altar “To the Unknown God” (see on v. 23), but particularly because it contains the quotation Paul uses of the Cretans in Titus 1:12. That Paul quoted Epimenides in the latter instance increases the probability that he also had his verse in mind here.

The second phrase, “for we are also his offspring,” is clearly a quotation from a Greek poet, and was confessedly so used by Paul. It comes from Aratus (c. 270 B.C.), who was a friend of Zeno, founder of the Stoics. Like Paul, Aratus was from Cilicia. His didactic poem, *Phaenomena*, dealing with the main facts of astronomical and meteorological science as then known, opens with an invocation to Zeus, and contains the words that Paul quotes:

“From Zeus let us begin; him do we mortals never leave
unnamed; full of Zeus are all the streets and
all the market-places of men; full is the
sea and the heavens thereof; always we all have need of Zeus
For we are also his offspring.”

(*Phaenomena* 1–5; Loeb ed., p. 381).

The quotation would at once catch the attention of Paul's hearers. By quoting from their own literature, Paul illustrated his policy of becoming "all things to all men" (1 Cor. 9:22). They would recognize that they were not dealing with an uneducated Jew, like the traders and exorcists so common in Greek cities, but with a man possessed of a culture like their own, and familiar with the thoughts of their poets. There is no need to exaggerate Paul's classical scholarship, but it is clear from the references here mentioned, and from the quotation in 1 Cor. 15:32, that the apostle was acquainted with Greek authors and was able to introduce apt quotations from their works when the situation warranted. By so doing he does not necessarily endorse the sentiments revealed in the contexts of the words he utilizes, but merely uses Greek writers to illustrate the higher teaching he presents.

Paul's psychological approach at this juncture is instructive. The apostle does not tell them at the outset that they have too high an opinion of themselves, that they are only creatures of the dust, children of the devil. Instead, he points out that they have taken too low an estimate of their position. They have forgotten that they are God's offspring, and have counted themselves, even as the unbelieving Jews had done, "unworthy of everlasting life" (Acts 13:46).

29. *The offspring of God.* The apostle immediately uses the words of the Greek poet (see on v. 28) to combat idolatry. If we are indeed God's "offspring," our conception of Him should mount upward, rather than descend to idols, which, being made by men, are below them. Although he subscribes to the same truth that is uttered by the OT prophets (1 Kings 18:27; Ps. 135:15–18; Isa. 44:9–20), Paul's tone in speaking of idolatry is very different from theirs. He has studied the beginning of idolatry, and instead of speaking of it with scorn, hatred, and derision, he speaks of it with pity toward those who are its victims.

Ought not to think. As a man is of more honor than material things, how far above these must the Godhead be.

Godhead. Gr. *theion*, "divinity," "deity." *Theion* is used by Josephus (*Antiquities* viii. 4. 2 [107]) and Philo (*The Unchangeableness of God* xxiii [105]) for the one true God, and is here employed by Paul as a term acceptable to his Greek audience.

Gold, or silver, or stone. The first word would remind the Athenians of the lavish use of gold in the colossal statue of Athena by Phidias that stood in the Parthenon. Silver was not commonly employed, but the shrines of Artemis (Diana) at Ephesus (see on ch. 19:24) are examples of its usage. "Stone" was the term commonly applied to the marble of Mt. Pentelicus, which was so widely used in the beautiful sculpture and architecture of Athens.

Graven by art. Rather, "graven [or "sculptured"] work of art."

Man's device. Rather, "thought [or "imagination"] of man." This and the preceding phrase reveal Paul's awareness of the art with which he was surrounded in Athens.

30. *Times of this ignorance.* The clause literally reads "The times of ignorance therefore." The word here used for "ignorance" (*agnoia*), and the words for "unknown" and "ignorantly" in v. 23 are from the same root, and illustrate the closely woven texture of Paul's speech. He characterizes and partially excuses the whole pre-Christian period as being based on lack of knowledge, especially knowledge of the divine.

Winked at. Gr. *hupereidon*, “to overlook.” The English phrase, as now used, suggests not merely tolerance, but a conniving at, and condoning of, the wrong. Paul was actually deriving some comfort from the thought that ignorance lessened the guilt of, and thus the punishment due to, the heathen world. In the past ages of the world there had been a “passing over” (*paresis*) of men’s sins in that full retribution had not fallen upon sinners. This was due to the forbearance of God (see on Rom. 3:25). In His great mercy, the Lord was granting forgiveness to men, on condition of repentance, because of Christ’s atoning sacrifice.

But now. There is no word for “but” in the original. However, the Greek phrase points up the contrast between the past times of ignorance and the present time of enlightenment ushered in by such preaching as Paul’s.

Commandeth. Or, “proclaims,” “announces,” “declares.”

All men every where. A comprehensive phrase that embraces every human being, and harmonizes with the worldwide nature of the gospel commission (cf. Matt. 24:14; Mark 16:15).

Repent. God has pointed out man’s sinfulness, but His rich mercy has made it possible for him to find forgiveness, on condition of repentance.

At this point in Paul’s address the reaction of both Stoics and Epicureans, who had followed Paul’s thought, would begin to undergo a change. The Epicurean might regret the mistakes he had made in his search for enjoyment. But a change such as repentance implied—a change of mind, a loathing of one’s past and a resolve to live on a higher plane in the future—was altogether alien to his thoughts. The Stoics, on the other hand, accepted the consequences of their actions with serene apathy. They gave thanks that they were not as other men, that they had been able by their own efforts to attain to ethical perfection. But the idea of repenting had not as yet dawned on their thoughts (cf. Marcus Aurelius *Meditations* i. 1–16).

31. Because. Or, “inasmuch as.” Paul deduces the call to repentance from the fact of the coming judgment.

A day. That is, a certain time, not necessarily a literal day.

Will judge. Gr. *mellō krinein*, “to be about to judge,” or, simply as a future, “will judge,” “to intend to judge.” Paul, quoting from Ps. 9:8, is emphasizing the certainty, and possibly the proximity, of the judgment (cf. Acts 24:25; Rom. 2:5, 6, 16). The proclamation of a coming judgment is an integral part of Pauline and Christian doctrine (see on Rev. 14:6, 7). Christianity does not leave men in ignorance of what awaits them, but gives a comprehensive, though necessarily brief, survey of events to come. But the thought of a judgment is rarely welcome to mankind. Men do not like to face the prospect of coming before the judgment bar of God. The Greeks were no exception in this respect, and it is probable that, from this juncture onward, the Epicureans and Stoics strongly resisted Paul’s exposition.

World. Gr. *oikoumenē*, “the inhabited earth” (see on Matt. 24:14; Luke 2:1). The word was also commonly used to designate the Roman world, or the civilized world in contrast with barbarian regions.

In righteousness. That is, in a righteous atmosphere, justly (cf. Ps. 9:8; 96:13; 2 Tim. 4:8).

By that man. Literally, “by a man.” From what follows, it is clear to Christians that Paul is referring to Jesus, but the record of the speech does not show that the apostle had an opportunity publicly to identify the “man” (see on v. 32).

Whom he hath ordained. That is, appointed, particularly for the work of judgment. Compare on Acts 10:42; Rom. 2:16.

Given assurance. That is, has furnished grounds for confidence.

Unto all men. The word for “men” does not appear in the Greek, but Paul is again stressing the universal nature of the gospel call.

Hath raised him. The resurrection of Jesus is here introduced as an earnest of God’s intentions toward mankind, in respect to the judgment and, by implication, to His giving eternal life through Christ Jesus. Paul was denied the opportunity of developing his theme, for his mention of the resurrection aroused the scorn of his listeners and brought his speech to an abrupt end. Had the address been complete, Paul probably would have spoken in more definite language about the life and work of Jesus and His key position in God’s plan for mankind. Notice how his argument progresses. Paul first speaks of God as the Creator of the world and of man, and of the regulations He made for man’s abode on the earth. He then reasons that all this should inspire men to know that God is far exalted above men. This should lead them to seek after Him, knowing that such a Creator is never far away, and is awaiting the approaches of His creation. But now the days when unenlightened men had to depend on God’s revelation through nature are at an end. He has spoken through the Son of man, whom the resurrection proved to be the Son of God. Through this Son, God will judge the world, for which judgment men should prepare themselves by repentance.

32. When they heard. Respectful attention appears to have been granted the apostle until he broached the subject of the resurrection from the dead. That the dead should be raised appeared incredible to the Epicureans and Stoics, as well as to the Greeks generally, and even to the Sadducees (cf. Acts 23:8; 26:8; 1 Cor. 15:35). The world then, as now, was prepared to believe in the immortality of the soul, but was unwilling to accept the doctrine of the resurrection of the body.

Some mocked. The Greek tense implies that they began to mock, that is, at this point in Paul’s speech. The word “some” may include both Epicureans and Stoics.

Hear thee again. Some may have had a genuine desire to hear more on such a vital subject, but it does not appear that they ever again heard from the Apostle to the Gentiles. Compare the attitude of Felix (ch. 24:25).

34. Howbeit. That is, on the other hand, in happy contrast with those who rejected Paul’s message.

Clave. Gr. *kallaō* (see on chs. 5:13; 9:26). There was a drawing power in the apostle’s character and words that attracted men to him. Some have accounted Paul’s Athenian speech a failure, but such judgment is not fair in view of the converts he gained.

Dionysius the Areopagite. That is, a member of the council of the Areopagus (see on v. 19). In earlier times, at least, the constitution of the council required its members to have filled a high magisterial function, such as that of archon, and to be above 60 years of age. Probably, therefore, this convert was a man of some note. According to a tradition, ascribed by Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* iii. 4. 9, 10; iv. 4. 23) to a bishop of Corinth, this Dionysius became the first bishop of Athens. An elaborate treatise on *The Celestial Hierarchy* is extant under this man’s name, but is of a much later date, probably of the

4th or 5th century. The legend of the Seven Champions of Christendom has transformed Dionysius into the Saint Denis of France.

Damaris. Possibly, *Damalis*, “heifer,” a fairly common Greek name. There is no identification of this female convert. Chrysostom and others believed her to be the wife of Dionysius, but this has no basis in any known fact.

Others with them. The contrast between this and the “great multitude” at Thessalonica (v. 4) and the “many” at Berea (v. 12), is significant. No less striking is the lack of any mention of Athens in Paul’s epistles. The nearest to mention is the probable inclusion of the Athenian Christians among “the saints which are in all Achaia” (2 Cor. 1:1). When Paul came to Corinth, he found audiences of a lower intellectual level, and he preached to them accordingly. He “determined not to know any thing among” them, “save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). He concentrated his message upon the cross of Christ, and the Spirit of God gave him marked success. But at Athens, Paul was led of the same Spirit to talk to the philosophers, and adapted his address to their mental habits. He did not gain numerous converts, as above noted, but a church was founded, which remained a constant and honorable memorial to the power of the gospel to rescue men from slavery to sin and temptation and to make them free in Christ Jesus. Compare AA 240, 241.

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1–52T 695
1–34AA 221–242
2–5AA 229
3 GC 405; SR 373
6, 7, 10 AA 230
11 CSW 84; 1T 49; 2T 343
11, 12 AA 231; 2T 696
13 AA 232
14, 15 AA 233
16 AA 234
16–31MH 214
17, 18 AA 235
19, 20 AA 236
21 6T 70
22, 23 AA 237
23 Ed 67; 8T 257
23–26SR 312
24–28AA 238; PK 49, 50
25 ML 137; PP 525; SR 312
26, 27 AA 20; DA 403; Ed 67, 174; SR 313
27 DA 69; FE 440; TM 460
28 CS 17; MH 417; MM 9; PP 115; 8T 260
29–32AA 239
30 FE 111
31 DA 633; GC 548; 1T 54
32–346T 142
34 AA 240

CHAPTER 18

3 *Paul laboureth with his hands, and preacheth at Corinth to the Gentiles.* 9 *The Lord encourageth him in a vision.* 12 *He is accused before Gallio the deputy, but is dismissed.* 18 *Afterwards passing from city to city he strengtheneth the disciples.* 24 *Apollos, being more perfectly instructed by Aquila and Priscilla, 28 preacheth Christ with great efficacy.*

1. Paul departed. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of “Paul,” reading “he departed.”

To Corinth. About 40 mi. (64 km.) southwest of Athens. Paul could have journeyed along the Isthmus of Corinth, or by sea from Piraeus to Cenchreae. The city of Corinth was on the isthmus, and had a harbor on either shore—one at Cenchreae on the east and another at Lechaum on the west. It had been of commercial importance from very early Greek times. Commerce had brought luxury and vice. Here Paul entered upon his labors, with far more fruitful results than at Athens.

2. Aquila. A Latin name meaning “eagle,” of which the Greek equivalent is *Akulas*. Onkelos, probably another altered form, was borne by the traditional writer of one of the Jewish Targums (see Vol. V, pp. 95, 96). It was a common tendency of Jews, when living in heathen countries, to take names derived from animals.

Born in Pontus. Literally, “a man of Pontus by race.” The provinces of Asia Minor abounded with Jewish families of the Dispersion, as is seen throughout the book of Acts (see on Acts 2:9, 10; cf. 1 Peter 1:1). Some Jews from Pontus had been in Jerusalem at Pentecost (Acts 2:9). Pontus had come under Roman sway when its king Mithridates was conquered by Pompey about a century before this time.

Lately come from Italy. See below under “Claudius had commanded.”

Priscilla. The name appears elsewhere (2 Tim. 4:19; cf. the best-attested Greek text of Rom. 16:3; 1 Cor. 16:19) in the form *Prisca*; of which it is the diminutive. The name *Prisca* probably reflects a connection with the *gens*, or clan, of the *Prisci*, which, from earliest Roman times, provided the city-state with a long series of praetors and consuls. The marriage of Aquila and Priscilla might be an example, therefore, of the influence of educated Jews among the higher class of women at Rome. The placing of Priscilla’s name first (Acts 18:18; Rom. 16:3; 2 Tim. 4:19) would be explained if she were a highborn Roman. The fact that she participated in the instruction of Apollos (see Acts 18:26) suggests that she was a woman of culture.

The question as to whether these two people were converts of Paul cannot be finally settled, but certain facts suggest that they were not: (1) The record is silent concerning their ever listening to Paul, as did Lydia (ch. 16:14), a fact that Luke would scarcely have omitted had it occurred. (2) The fact that Paul unhesitatingly joined himself to them (ch. 18:3) even before he had begun preaching in the synagogue, could imply a sympathetic attitude on their part.

Claudius had commanded. The account of the expulsion of the Jews from the city of Rome (see p. 80) is given by Suetonius in these words: “Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he [Claudius] expelled them from Rome” (*Lives of the Caesars* v. 25. 4; Loeb ed., *Suetonius*, vol. 2, p. 53). A considerable colony of Jews were settled in the city of Rome at this time, at the base of the Janiculum Hill (see Paul at Rome). They exercised considerable influence over the upper classes in

Rome; they had their own synagogues and places of prayer (see on ch. 16:13); they were tolerated as a *religio licita* (a legally recognized religion); and they maintained their own cemeteries along the Appian Way. The command expelling them from Rome appears to have been sudden; Suetonius thought that a man called, in Latin, “Chrestus,” was connected with that command. Of this man, Suetonius reports nothing further. But at that time the sounds of the Greek “i” and “e” were hardly distinguishable, and Tertullian (*Apology* iii. 5) says that the Greek name *Christos* was often pronounced the same *Chrēstos* “good,” “useful,” or “kind.” A possible explanation of Claudius’ decree is that Christians had come to Rome after the Day of Pentecost, and tumults resulted such as those at Antioch in Pisidia (ch. 13:50), at Lystra (ch. 14:19), at Thessalonica (ch. 17:5–8), and at Beroea (ch. 17:13). The name of Christ was much on the lips of both those who received and those who rejected His claim to be the Messiah. Accordingly, Roman magistrates, who, like Gallio, seemed to care little about questions concerning names and words (ch. 18:15), would easily conclude that Christ was the leader of one of the parties, and might assume (as at Thessalonica, ch. 17:7) that He claimed to be a kingly pretender to an earthly throne. This explanation would account for the tumults, for the confusion of names, and for the decree of expulsion (see Vol. V, p. 71).

Aquila and his wife had been at Rome until expelled, and since many of the Jews in Rome, or their descendants, were freedmen (see on ch. 6:9), it is probable that Aquila, or his parents, belonged to that class. Aquila and Priscilla are later mentioned (Rom. 16:3) as though they had returned to Rome. If they did so, it was after they had been with Paul in Ephesus, because they were with him when he wrote from there the first Corinthian epistle (1 Cor. 16:19) and the house in which they lived there was placed at the service of Christians in Ephesus. If Timothy was at Ephesus when Paul addressed a second epistle to him, they were still in that city then (2 Tim. 4:19). Nothing more of their movements is known.

As to who were the first preachers of the new faith in Rome, an idea can be formed in terms of the following data: (1) Twenty-five years could not have passed since the Day of Pentecost without the Jews at Rome receiving some definite news about developments in Palestine, where the gospel was being preached with marked success. (2) Among those who were present at Pentecost were “strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes” (Acts 2:10). (3) Among the Hellenistic Jews who disputed with Stephen were freedmen of Rome, and Stephen himself may have belonged to that class (see on ch. 6:5, 9). (4) Andronicus and Junia, to whom Paul sent greetings, had been “in Christ” before him (Rom. 16:7). Among these, then, one should look for the founders of the church of Rome, and not to the apostle Peter, to whom tradition assigns the honor. Everything indicates that the theology of the Christians in Rome was like the great principles laid down by Stephen, whose understanding of the gospel influenced Paul. This would go far to explain why Aquila and Priscilla found it so easy to receive the apostle Paul in Corinth. It is possible that many of those named by Paul in Rom. 16:3–15 were expelled from Rome under Claudius, and then later returned.

3. Abode with them. According to the Talmud (*Sukkah* 51b; Soncino ed., p. 245), in Alexandria, at least, each craft sat together in the synagogue services. A stranger coming in could readily find his fellow artisans in the synagogue, and could secure lodging with

them. If this was also the practice in Corinth, as is probable, Paul readily found accommodation and employment with Aquila and Priscilla.

Tentmakers. The trade of tentmaking was one that Paul might easily have learned and practiced in his native city of Tarsus. That city was noted then and later for the rough goats' hair fabrics, in great demand for ship sails and tents, and known to the Romans from the name of the province as *cilicium*. The province of Pontus, from which Aquila came, was famous for the same kind of goods, the material for which was furnished by the goats that grazed on the slopes of the Taurus Mountains and the neighboring ranges. The hint of wealth in Paul's background and his receiving a high degree of education have no bearing upon the fact that he was required to learn a trade, for the rabbinical proverb, "He who does not teach his son a trade teaches him to be a thief," made such instruction almost universal in Hebrew families. For example, the great Hillel was a carpenter. Hence Paul was equipped to work for his livelihood in Corinth as he had done in Thessalonica, thus guarding himself against any charge of self-interest in preaching the gospel among the Greeks (1 Cor. 9:15–19; 2 Cor. 11:7–13; 1 Thess. 2:9). He began at Corinth as a new artisan working for wages, or perhaps as a partner, in the workshop of a Jew, not yet being known to the city of Corinth as anything else than a Jew.

4. Reasoned. Paul always went first to the Jews (see on ch. 13:5, 14). But at Corinth, as later at Ephesus (ch. 19:8, 9), he was not allowed to continue in the synagogue the full period of his stay in the city (cf. ch. 18:7).

Every sabbath. Paul was at Corinth at least a year and six months (see v. 11).

Persuaded. Or, "tried to persuade."

Greeks. Gr. *Hellēnai*, probably not Greek-speaking Jews, or proselytes in the technical sense of the word, but, as elsewhere (see on ch. 11:20), those who were pagans. Paul may have met some of these, if they were "God fearers" (see on ch. 10:2), in the synagogue, but many of them he doubtless contacted in his business and elsewhere.

5. When Silas and Timotheus were come. Or, "when Silas and Timothy came down," that is, "from Macedonia." 1 Thess. 3:2 indicates that Timothy, who apparently came to Paul at Athens, was sent back almost immediately to Thessalonica for further news of the church there. He returned with a good report of their faith and love (1 Thess. 3:6). It was perhaps at this time also that "the brethren which came from Macedonia" (2 Cor. 11:9) brought fresh proof of regard and love for Paul in the form of gifts.

Pressed in the spirit. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading "he was constrained [or "hard pressed"] by the word [or "message"]." The RSV is less emphatic; Paul "was occupied with preaching." Knowing God's Word, Paul felt impelled to give utterance to it (cf. Ps. 39:3). It is not certain whether there was any relationship between the arrival of Silas and Timothy and this impulse to preach. There is no indication that the gifts they may have brought made Paul less busy at his trade, and 1 Cor. 9 is against this idea, though it is possible that the gifts enabled him for a time to devote himself constantly to preaching. He was already under a compulsion to preach, and doubtless encouraging words from Silas and Timothy only strengthened that compulsion.

Testified ... Jesus was Christ. Or, "testifying ... Jesus to be the Christ," emphasizing that Jesus was the suffering Messiah, the Saviour, a truth that the Jews greatly needed to learn.

6. *Opposed themselves.* Or, “set themselves up in opposition.” The verb implies strong opposition, as a force drawn up in battle array. The opposition to Paul was well organized and determined.

Blasphemed. Gr. *blasphēmēō*, “to speak evilly [of someone],” “to reproach,” “to blaspheme.” The word comes from *blax*, “stupid,” and *phēmi*, “to speak.” Certainly unwarranted reproach is “stupid speech,” and blasphemy is much more. In the present instance, the Jews’ blasphemy doubtless involved evilspeaking not only against Paul, but also against Christ, which was blasphemy in its fullest sense. Compare the use of *blasphēmēō* in 2 Peter 2:2: “The way of truth *shall be evil spoken of.*” The same conduct, though the word is different, is described in Acts 19:9: “spake evil of that way before the multitude.” These disturbances reproduced what had doubtless already taken place at Rome (see on ch. 18:2) and what had occurred at many other places (see chs. 13; 14; etc.). An echo of the blasphemies may be found in the expression “Jesus be cursed!” (1 Cor. 12:3, RSV).

Shook his raiment. On the significance of the act see on Neh. 5:13; Matt. 10:14; Acts 13:51. As an act by a Jew to Jews, it registered the apostle’s indignation better than would any other action. It was Paul’s last recourse. His appeals to reason and conscience were met only by brute violence.

Blood. He uses the word “blood” in the sense of “destruction,” using figurative language (cf. Joshua 2:19). The thought and the form in which it is expressed are both essentially Hebrew (see on Matt. 27:25). Compare the language of Ezekiel that defined his responsibility as a watchman (Eze. 3:18, 19).

Unto the Gentiles. See on ch. 13:46. Obviously what Paul said about turning from the Jews had only a limited and local application. The apostle did not discontinue all work among the Jews, but simply gave up preaching to them at Corinth (cf. chs. 9:15; 19:8).

7. *A certain man’s house.* Paul used this house for teaching and worship. He probably still lived with Aquila and Priscilla.

Justus. This was a Roman surname (cf. on ch. 1:23). Textual evidence may also be cited (cf. p. 10) for the name Titius Justus. There is no reason to infer from this fact, however, that he is the same as the Titus of Gal. 2:3, whom Paul later left in Crete. The name Titus was among the more common Roman names. The Titus who was sent to Crete was, however, closely connected with the church at Corinth, as appears from 2 Cor. 7:14; 8:16, 23. The Justus here named was an uncircumcised Gentile like Titus and attended the synagogue as a “God fearer” (see below under “worshipped”).

Worshipped. Gr. *sebomai*, “to reverence,” “to worship.” The form of the word here used is applied to “religious proselytes” (ch. 13:43) and to “devout Greeks” (ch. 17:4; see on ch. 10:2). His house was therefore an appropriate place in which both Jews and Gentiles might meet, and to which Gentiles doubtless would be more ready to come than to one belonging to a Jew.

Joined hard. Or, “was adjoining”; “was next door” (RSV). Evidently, after Paul was opposed in the synagogue at Corinth, he chose a nearby place for meetings, so that it would be easy for any Jews who might change their feelings toward the gospel, to come. But this proximity would also be an additional cause for bitterness, especially when the number of Paul’s adherents began to increase, and when even a ruler of the synagogue accepted the gospel (v. 8).

8. Crispus, the chief ruler. Or, “Crispus, the ruler.” The word “ruler” includes the idea “chief.” This Crispus is alluded to in 1 Cor. 1:14 as one of the few whom Paul himself baptized. His leading position among the Jews, previous to his conversion, and the acceptance of the gospel by his entire family, made him noticeable among the Christians.

Believed, and were baptized. The Greek form of the two verbs suggests a process continuing for an unspecified period of time. Among the converts was Gaius (1 Cor. 1:14), perhaps a man of higher social position than others, who was noted among Christians for his hospitality, and who received Paul as a guest on his second visit (Rom. 16:23). The members of the household of Stephanas, the “firstfruits of Achaia,” were apparently among the earliest converts there (1 Cor. 16:15). These Paul himself baptized (1 Cor. 1:16). Also the following may be counted as converts then or soon afterward: Fortunatus and Achaicus (1 Cor. 16:17); Chloe, a prominent woman convert (1 Cor. 1:11); Quartus, a brother, and Erastus, the chamberlain of the city (Rom. 16:23); and Epaenetus, also among the “firstfruits of Achaia” (Rom. 16:5). Silas and Timothy were with Paul at this time, and doubtless they baptized most of the converts (see 1 Cor. 1:14–16).

9. Then spake the Lord. Or, “And the Lord said.” Here is another vision given to Paul. Apparently, judging from the Lord’s words, for some reason the apostle was losing his courage and was in danger of bodily harm. Paul received this message in the same way that he did the Macedonian call (ch. 16:9, 19), but here the Lord Himself appeared to His servant. Visions from God were given to him in various great crises of his life. He had first seen the Lord Jesus at the time of his conversion (ch. 9:4–6; cf. AA 115). He later heard the same voice and saw the same form in his vision in the Temple at Jerusalem (ch. 22:17–21). Now he both saw and heard his Lord once more.

Be not afraid. Or, “Stop being afraid.” The words imply that Paul was at the moment in some fear and depression, and felt heavily the burden of the task he was attempting for his Lord. For the most part his converts were from the class of slaves or freedmen; those of a culture corresponding to his own, whether Greeks or Jews, seemed slow to accept his preaching (cf. 1 Cor. 1:26, 27). Undoubtedly he was also in personal physical danger. He had already seen the reviling of the Jews break out in physical violence. It could easily happen again. Graciously the Lord addressed him with the words, “Stop being afraid.”

Speak. Or, “keep on speaking.”

Hold not thy peace. Or, “do not begin to keep silent.” The temptation at a moment of weakness was to take safety in silence when words seemed fruitless. But this was an exhortation to him to preach even more constantly than before. Nothing must stop Paul’s testimony. Elijah had passed through a like crisis of discouragement (1 Kings 19:4–14), and Jeremiah also more than once (Jer. 1:6–8; 15:15–21).

10. I am with thee. In the original, “I” is emphatic. The command that Jesus had just given was followed by a promise that met Paul’s need at the moment. Though men were against him Christ was with him. The promise once given to the church at large, “Lo, I am with you alway” (Matt. 28:20), was here repeated personally to Paul—“I am with thee.” Though it meant a life of suffering to obey this further command, there was with it the assurance that the evil designs of men would be restrained, and that Paul’s work would not permanently be hindered.

To hurt thee. Or, “to harm you,” “to maltreat you.” Christ did not promise Paul freedom from attack. But the enemy would not be allowed to do him violence. This assurance meant to the apostle what Elisha had learned and proclaimed centuries before, “They that be with us are more than they that be with them” (2 Kings 6:16).

Much people. The words are reminiscent of those spoken to Elijah in his moment of weakness, “Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel” (1 Kings 19:18). Even among those most deeply entangled in the vices of Corinth (1 Cor. 5:10, 11) there were honest souls yearning for deliverance and waiting for the call to repentance. This call Paul and his followers must give.

Since Corinth was one of the important centers of commercial activity at this period, it was, humanly speaking, vital that from the first the church make good its standing. The importance and extensiveness of the Christian community at Corinth can be seen from the epistles that Paul wrote afterward to the church there. By a vision the Lord gave Paul merciful assurance that his preaching would be abundantly blessed. He rose up comforted, ready for any task.

11. He continued. Gr. *kathizō*, “to sit down,” “to settle in a place.” The verb suggests permanence and continuance.

A year and six months. The time spent in Corinth gave Paul opportunity not only for founding and organizing a church but also for working in the neighboring districts, such as the port of Cenchreae (see Rom. 16:1). Besides his preaching and teaching to the Corinthians, Paul wrote probably at this time the two epistles to the Thessalonians, which are considered the earliest of his letters, and perhaps the earliest literature of the whole NT, unless the Epistle of James is dated earlier. The address of 2 Corinthians (ch. 1:1), “unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia,” clearly indicates the spread of the gospel beyond the limits of the city. This extensive fruitage Paul recognized as a fulfillment of the Lord’s promise given him in vision, which prepared him for the coming of the next persecution.

12. Gallio. His full name originally was Marcus Annaeus Novatus, but upon being adopted by a wealthy Roman named Lucius Junius Gallio, he was thereafter known as Junius Annaeus Gallio. He was the brother of the Stoic philosopher Seneca, the tutor of Nero. Seneca dedicated to his brother, the proconsul, two treatises, on “Anger” and the “Blessed Life.” Gallio was probably proconsul of Achaia sometime between A.D. 51 and 53 (see p. 98). After he retired from Achaia in consequence of an attack of fever (Seneca *Epistles* civ. 1), he returned to Rome. At first he enjoyed the favor of Nero, but eventually fell under the tyrant’s displeasure and, according to one tradition, was executed by him. Another tradition represents him as anticipating his fate by suicide. Tacitus, however, speaks of him only as “dismayed by the death of his brother Seneca” and pleading with Nero for his life (*Annals* xv. 73; Loeb ed., *Tacitus*, vol. 4, p. 333).

Deputy. Rather, “proconsul” (see on ch. 13:7). Here also Luke shows his characteristic accuracy in the use of official titles. Under Tiberius, Achaia, which included the whole of Greece south of the province of Macedonia, had been an imperial province, and was therefore governed by a procurator. But about A.D. 44 it had once more been made a senatorial province by Claudius, as it no longer needed direct military control (Tacitus *Annals* i. 76; Suetonius *Lives of the Caesars* v. 25. 3). Hence at the time of Paul’s visit it once more was ruled by a proconsul.

Jews made insurrection. Rather, “rose up.” The word “insurrection” has acquired, since the KJV was translated, the special meaning of a revolt of subjects against their rulers. This is not what took place here. The Jews evidently hoped that by appearing in a body against Paul, they could obtain the apostle’s expulsion from the city.

Judgment seat. It was customary for the Roman governors of provinces to hold court in the agora, or forum, that is, the market place, on certain fixed days (see on ch. 19:38), so that anyone might appeal to them to have his grievances satisfied. The Jews apparently took advantage of such an occasion. But to Gallio they would appear to be a company of Jews accusing one of their own race of some erroneous teaching. If he had only lately come from Rome, he had likely heard there of the troubles over “Chrestus” (see on ch. 18:2) and would consider that this was a quarrel about the same matter. See illustrations facing pp. 448, 449.

13. This fellow. Gr. *houtos*, “this,” or “this one,” a demonstrative pronoun well expressing the contempt that they wished to convey to the mind of Gallio.

The law. It seems obvious that in this appeal to the proconsul the Jews meant, not the law of Moses, but the law of Rome. Their line of thought would be that though, as a matter of policy, Jews had been banished from Rome, Judaism was still a *religio licita*, tolerated and recognized by the Roman state. Their charge would therefore not have been about some point of the Jewish religion, but that Paul was preaching a new religion, not recognized (cf. on ch. 17:7).

14. Open his mouth. A common formula used to introduce a formal discourse (cf. Matt. 5:2; 13:35; Acts 10:34). Paul was about to undertake a formal defense, but this proved to be unnecessary.

Gallio said. Gallio could scarcely have resided in Achaia for any length of time without hearing of the new Christian movement. He doubtless knew of the Jews’ difficulties. Also, he probably knew something of Paul. But from his standpoint—that of a philosopher and a statesman—this was not a matter for his judgment. He did not intend to draw a definite line between religions recognized by Rome, and those that were not.

A matter of wrong or wicked lewdness. Rather, “a matter of wrongdoing or wicked villainy.” The two things a magistrate would take into account were (1) any evil-doing (cf. ch. 24:20) or act of injustice, or (2) any unscrupulous conduct involving moral wrong. In adjudging such matters he would be carrying out his duty as an administrator of Roman law and equity. Both expressions here used point to acts of open wrong, such as robbery or assault; the second designates those in which a fraudulent cunning or adroitness is the chief characteristic.

Reason would. Or, “according to reason,” “as is right.”

I should bear with you. That is, I would hear your case out. The verb is also used as a technical term for taking up a complaint. Gallio showed by his language that the Romans considered themselves superior to the tolerated Jews. But if their case warranted, the Jews should enjoy the benefit of such toleration, and he would inquire into any matters that pertained to his office and Roman law.

15. Question. Rather, “questions.”

Words and names. Or, “talk and names.” Undoubtedly many points concerning Paul’s teachings would be brought forward by the Jews if they had opportunity. But whether Jesus was the Christ or not would be to the Roman a matter entirely of theological definition, on which Roman law would have no bearing. If Gallio had heard

the name “Chrestus” at Rome (see on v. 2), he would be all the more ready to follow the conduct of his royal master and get rid of the Jewish disputants as soon as possible (cf. ch. 23:29).

Your law. Literally, “the law which [is] according to you.” By his emphasis, Gallio intimated that he saw through their appeal to law. Jewish law rather than Roman law was concerned in their case, and he refused to become involved.

No judge. Gallio’s emphatic dismissal of the case reads literally, “A *judge* of these things *I* do not wish to be.” The Greek word for “judge” is emphatic, and the pronoun for “I” as well. Gallio waived jurisdiction over the case because it did not involve Roman law.

16. He drave them. Seated as he doubtless was in the agora, or forum, with his lictors and other officials about him, he now commanded the place to be cleared of the troublesome disputants about “words and names.” He had enough to do with matters that came properly within his jurisdiction in the busy commercial life of Corinth.

17. The Greeks. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading, “they all took Sosthenes.”

Took. Rather, “seized” (cf. chs. 16:19; 17:19). The same verb is also used in ch. 21:30 of the violent action of the mob at Jerusalem, and just afterward (v. 33), of the chief captain’s conduct in rescuing Paul.

Sosthenes. The name was common; he need not be identified with the Sosthenes mentioned in 1 Cor. 1:1, though it is possible that the leader of persecution was afterward converted, even as in the case of Paul himself.

Chief ruler. Omit “chief,” as in v. 8. Sosthenes was apparently made the ruler of the synagogue after Crispus’ conversion (v. 8). He may have been eager to show his zeal against the Christians by laying charges immediately against Paul before the proconsul. As spokesman, he would catch the eye of the surrounding crowd, many of whom would be Greeks. They evidently caught Gallio’s tone of contempt, and followed his adverse decision by a lesson of their own, and a rough one. Or it may be that the Jews turned on their new leader after his failure in the case (see above under “the Greeks”). Paul doubtless had not a few sympathizers among the Gentiles. In any case, the crowd singled out Sosthenes for their particular attention.

Beat him. Or, “began beating him.”

Gallio cared for none of those things. Rather, “none of these things was a care to Gallio.” Gallio’s declaration reflects the indifference of men of the world toward revealed truth. But the words did not mean necessarily that he was indifferent to religion. He recognized the bounds of his proper jurisdiction. His ruling must have set a precedent helpful to the spread of Christianity.

Concerning the way Jewish life was regarded by the Romans (cf. v. 14) see Vol. V, pp. 60–62; Vol. VI, pp. 59, 60.

18. Tarried ... a good while. Literally, “having remained many days.” Paul had lived and worked in reasonable quiet for a year and six months (v. 11). After this period, or perhaps during the latter part of it, he was haled before Gallio. Following this crisis, the apostle had another time of peace in which to labor.

Into Syria. The motives of his journey may have been the following: (1) As later (see on ch. 20:3, 4), he doubtless wished to deliver the gifts collected for the disciples at Jerusalem, in person (cf. Rom. 15:25, 26; Gal. 2:10). It is clear that when Paul resolved to

return, he wanted to reach Jerusalem as soon as possible, for he refused to stay in Ephesus even though his preaching was more readily received by the Jews there than in many other places. (2) His recent vow required a visit to the Temple. (3) He would wish to report the results of his labors among the Gentiles, especially in the yet distant regions of Macedonia and Achaia (cf. Acts 15:4).

Priscilla and Aquila. See on v. 2.

Cenchrea. The eastern harbor of Corinth, on the Saronic Gulf. Romans 16:1 implies that there was an organized church there. The gratitude with which Paul refers to Phoebe and to her Christian service (Rom. 16:2) indicates that he had had intimate contact with that church. Probably he had founded it.

A vow. There can be little doubt that the “vow” was a private vow, a modified form of the temporary Nazirite vow, described in Num. 6:1–21. The latter required a separation from the world and the ordinary life of men (the word “Nazirite” means “separated” or “consecrated” person). For the duration of his vow the Nazirite was to drink no wine or strong drink, nor to shave his head or face. At the close of the period of his vow he was to shave his head at the Temple and burn his hair in the altar fire, under his sacrifice. Having completed their vow, the Nazirites in Acts 21:24 shaved their heads. Persons at a distance from Jerusalem were apparently allowed to cut their hair short and bring the shorn locks with them to the Temple, to offer them up when the remainder of their hair was shaved from their heads. This is what Paul did at Cenchreae, before starting on his voyage to Syria. It is obvious from 1 Cor. 11:14 that Paul considered long hair on men effeminate, but the Nazirite vow necessarily produced long hair. Hence, though he was following the vow he did so in a modified form, having his head shorn before the journey for the sake of appearance and custom, unless the period of his vow ended as he reached Cenchreae.

The chief impulse out of which vows have grown has often been a marked thankfulness for deliverance from danger following upon fear. The fear, the promise, and the deliverance have been noted in the record of Paul’s work at Corinth, and a vow of consecration to the program of preaching the gospel would be a natural result. Paul neither despised nor condemned expressions of devout feeling, for he did not consider them legalistic, as he did certain other practices of the Jews.

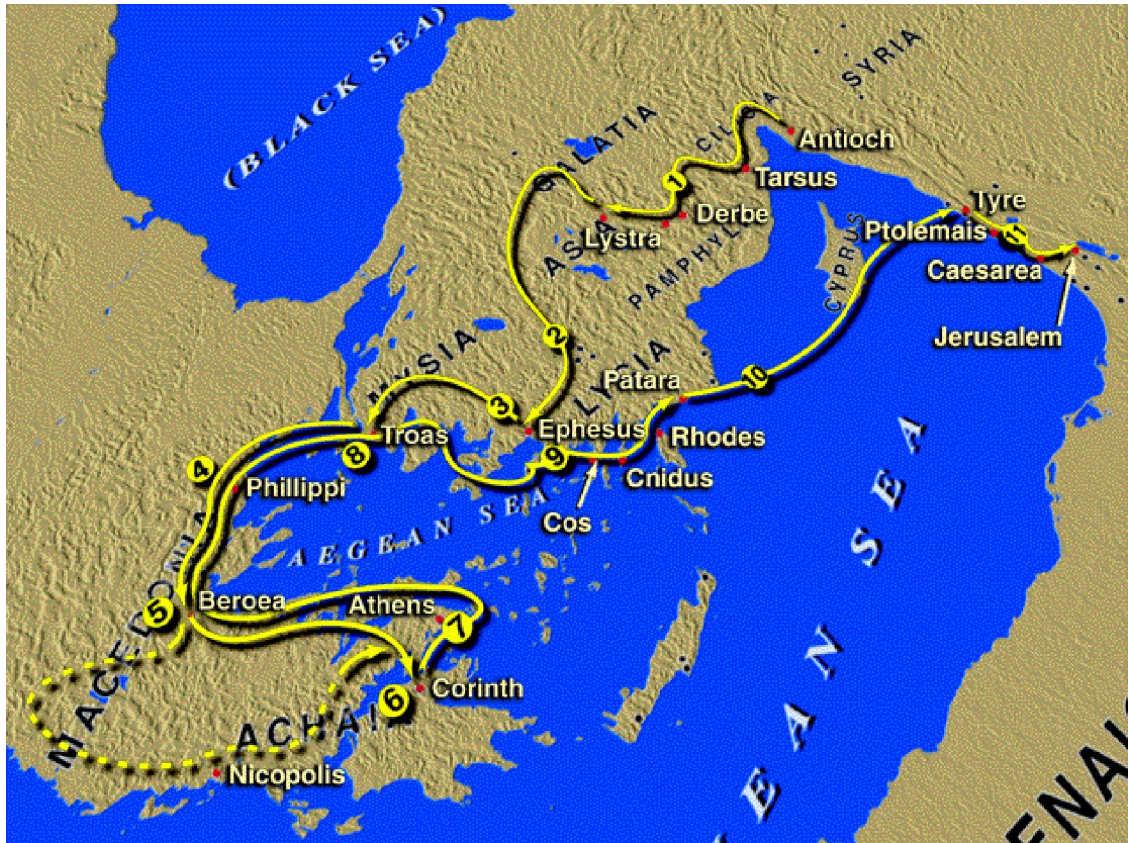
It is possible also that Paul was applying his principle of being “all things to all men” (1 Cor. 9:22), and therefore as a Jew was acting in sympathy with Jews (v. 20). A Nazirite vow would demonstrate to all his Jewish brethren that he, himself, was not despising the law, nor teaching other Jews to despise it (see on Acts 21:21–24).

19. He came to Ephesus. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading, “they came to Ephesus.” The Greek verb translated “he came” is a nautical term meaning, “coming to land.” Ephesus was a famous city, capital of the Greek district of Ionia and later of the Roman province of Asia. It became the scene of the apostle John’s later labors. The city stood not far from the sea, on hilly ground at the mouth of the Cayster, between the larger rivers Hermus and Maeander. Ephesus had been an early Greek settlement on the western coast of Asia Minor, but in the 6th century B.C. it fell under the power of the kings of Lydia. From the first it had been a center for the worship of Artemis (the Roman Diana; see on ch. 19:24) whose temple there was visited by pilgrims from all over the known world. For centuries East and West had come into close contact at Ephesus, and there the religion of Greece took on a more Oriental character and involved magic, mysteries, and

charms. In Paul's day Ephesus was by far the busiest and most popular city in proconsular Asia. There were enough Jews for at least one synagogue.

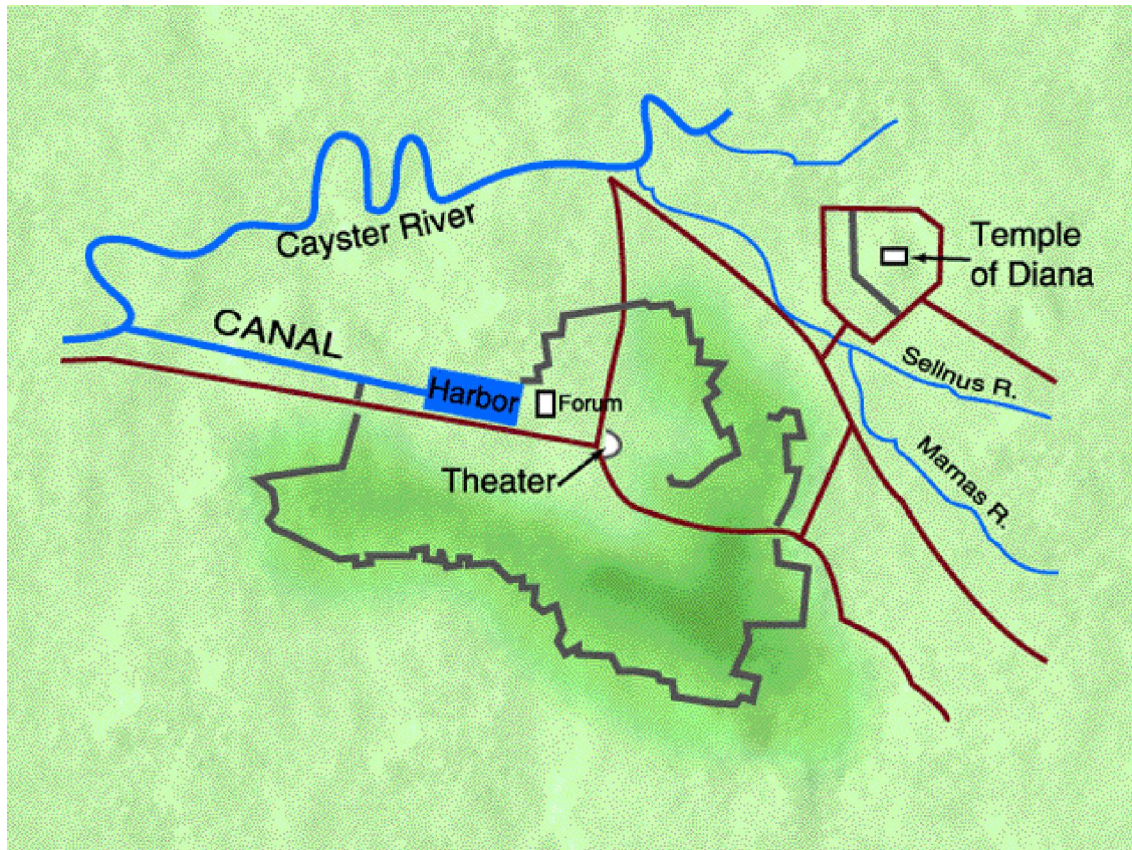
Paul's Third Missionary Tour, c. A.D. 53 to 58

15



The Environs of Ephesus

¹⁵Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Ac 17:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.



Left them there. Presumably Aquila and Priscilla settled for some time at Ephesus. For their various moves see on v. 2.

Into the synagogue. This was Paul's usual practice; he could not give up his own people, although constantly exposed to hard usage by them, but sought them out again here as soon as he arrived. However, what he preached here seems to have been received with less hostility, for the Jews of Ephesus begged him to stay longer (v. 20). It may be that the cosmopolitan character of the Ephesian population had something to do with this difference in attitude.

Reasoned. Gr. *dialegomai* (see on ch. 20:7).

20. Desired him. The verb here translated "desired" is most frequently rendered "asked." Their desire was a hopeful sign and promised good fruitage afterward. Nowhere, unless at Beroea, did Paul find a more receptive attitude toward the truth he was presenting. He looked upon the Corinthians as children needing to be fed with milk (1 Cor. 3:2), but later he found himself able to declare to the Ephesians "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27), for they were capable of sharing in his knowledge of the mystery of the gospel (Eph. 3:4).

With them. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of these words.

Consented not. Literally, "did not nod," that is, did not acquiesce.

21. Bade them farewell. Rather, "took his leave of them." Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of the words, "I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but." The words omitted are deemed an insertion suggested by ch. 20:16.

Acceptance of the validity of the omission makes unnecessary a discussion of which Jewish feast this may have been.

I will return. As soon as Paul had the opportunity, he redeemed his promise (ch. 19:1).

If God will. Paul and James agreed in resting in the will of the Father as ordering all things well, even to their use of almost the same expression (cf. James 4:15). To them it was much more than the formula *deo volente*, “God willing,” that formerly was so frequently on the lips of Christians. For the demonstration of the will of God through the Spirit’s prevention of what Paul had expected to do see Acts 16:6, 7.

22. At Caesarea. Evidently a great deal of action is covered in this verse. At Caesarea he doubtless renewed his contact with Philip the evangelist. He was a guest in Philip’s home in Caesarea on a later occasion (ch. 21:8).

Gone up. That is, from the coast town to the city of Jerusalem.

Saluted the church. Or, “greeted the church.” This is a brief notice indeed of a visit to what was then the center of all Christian life and action. This is Paul’s fourth visit to Jerusalem after his conversion (cf. chs. 9:26; 11:30; 15:4; 21:17). No mention is made of a gathering of the church as in ch. 14:27, or of a report of what Paul and his companions had been accomplishing. Even the name of the city is not given, nor is anything said about the fulfillment of Paul’s vow. Some suggest that Paul met with a cool reception and that his position concerning the law in relation to the Gentile Christians had alienated from him the Christians in Jerusalem, who were naturally zealous for the law. But this is little more than a speculation. Whatever the reason, the apostle hastened on as soon as possible to what must have been the congenial society of the Christians at Antioch.

To Antioch. Paul’s return to Antioch marks the end of the Second Missionary Journey. It was about A.D. 52 (cf. p. 102).

23. Spent some time. The visit must have been of some months’ duration. It is to this occasion that some refer the dissension that Paul relates in Gal. 2:11–14. The reasoning is that Paul had been long absent from Antioch, and that the Judaizing party had had time to organize a fresh attack on the freedom of the Gentiles. They brought renewed pressure to bear upon Peter, and a lingering element of instability in his character caused him to yield to them. However, others hold that the incident occurred before Paul and Silas had left Antioch after the Council of Jerusalem (see on ch. 15:39, 40).

He departed. Antioch is the starting point of the Third Missionary Journey, as with the two preceding ones (chs. 13:1–3; 15:36–40).

Galatia and Phrygia. Doubtless Paul took the same direction as before, visiting Lystra and Derbe, before he came to the more northern portion of Asia Minor (see Additional Note on Chapter 16).

Strengthening. Paul was not only an evangelist who raised up new churches; he was also a pastor in the sense that he maintained an active concern for the continuing welfare of his churches. For some of these churches, raised up on the First Missionary Journey, this was Paul’s fourth visit (see chs. 13:51; 14:6, 21; 16:1, 6).

24. Apollos. Probably a contraction of Apollonius or Apollodorus. The following verses are parenthetical and provide a background for what later occurred. The facts given in the NT concerning Apollos suggest that he had a prominent place in the early church. His influence as a Christian teacher made itself markedly felt in Corinth. Paul mentions a party of his followers there (see 1 Cor. 1:12; 3:5; 4:6).

Born at Alexandria. Literally, “an Alexandrian by birth.” It was in Alexandria, and by Jews, that the LXX translation of the OT had been made. Alexandria was a great center of learning, containing one of the greatest libraries of the ancient world. The philosopher Philo was an outstanding intellectual leader among the Jews there. Since he lived till about A.D. 50, Apollos might well have come under his influence.

Eloquent. Gr. *logios*, “learned,” “eloquent.” Either translation gives only half the idea of the word. He was learned, and could use his learning effectively.

Mighty. Gr. *dunatos*, “able,” “powerful.”

25. Was instructed. Gr. *katēcheō*, “to sound down upon,” and, by extension, “to teach orally.” The word, from which comes the English “catechize,” implies that Apollos had been taught by someone, in addition to his own study of the OT. We know from Josephus (*Antiquities* xviii. 5. 2) that the teaching and baptism of John produced a great effect among the Jews. It is not surprising, therefore, that Jews appeared at Jerusalem and Ephesus who had accepted the Baptist’s teaching about Jesus. But such instruction was undoubtedly brief. They would know that John baptized in preparation for the coming kingdom, and they would have heard of his pointing to Jesus as the Lamb of God, and of the voice from heaven when He was baptized. But John had been beheaded a little while after this, and Jesus had met death on Calvary. Many of John’s disciples might not have known what happened in relation to the message of Christ afterward—the establishing of His church, the ordinances of Christian baptism and the Lord’s Supper, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the teaching concerning conversion following repentance, and the reception of the gift of salvation by grace through faith. John the Baptist himself but dimly understood what Jesus was presenting along these lines, for there came a day when he sent to ask the Lord, “Art thou he that should come?” (Matt. 11:3).

The way. There was much that anyone walking in the “way” of John would need to know concerning the “way” of the Lord. The phrase is used in a half-technical sense, as in the phrase “any of this way” (see on ch. 9:2), as equivalent to what today would be called the Christian religion.

Fervent in the spirit. Or, “ardent in spirit” (cf. Rom. 12:11, where likewise the word “spirit” means the spirit of man, not the Holy Spirit of God).

Spake and taught diligently. Rather, “was [or “began”] speaking and teaching accurately.”

The things of the Lord. The expression “the way of the Lord” is a translation of OT words (Isa. 40:3), quoted by the gospel writers concerning John’s preaching (Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23). Apollos may have been very accurate in proclaiming what John had preached about the coming of the kingdom of heaven, illustrated from his own studies of the OT. He may have shown how John had pointed to Jesus, and may have related much of the works and words of Christ, as an evidence that God was sending greater prophets than the Jews had had for a long time, and that therefore Christ’s life was a testimony that redemption was near. But Apollos’ teacher, whoever he had been, had not carried his pupil beyond the message of the Baptist, who acknowledged Jesus as the Christ. The latter would therefore no doubt seem to Apollos to be the leader of a glorified Judaism, which would retain the distinctive features of the old religion. Doubtless he had not as yet learned that “circumcision is nothing” (1 Cor. 7:19; cf. Gal.

5:6), and did not realize that the sacrificial system was “ready to vanish away” (Heb. 8:13).

Knowing. Gr. *epistamai*, “to be versed in,” “to be acquainted with.”

The baptism of John. Under “baptism” must be included the idea of the religious knowledge and experience for which the baptism was the introduction. The words are full of interest, showing that the work of John the Baptist as a forerunner of Christ had reached farther than the gospel story indicates. Certainly it had reached to Alexandria. Concerning the limitations of this “baptism” see comment above on “was instructed.”

26. Speak boldly. It required boldness, for the Jews were by no means all ready to listen to announcements concerning the coming of the Messiah. The speaker must be prepared with learning and eloquence, as well as courage, to discuss this theme, concerning which the Jews had been deluded time and again by impostors.

Aquila and Priscilla. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading “Priscilla and Aquila,” as in v. 18 (cf. Rom. 16:3; 2 Tim. 4:19). She evidently took an active part in instructing Apollos, indicating that she was a woman of great power and zeal among the Christians. Aquila and Priscilla had apparently continued to attend the services of the synagogue. When Apollos appeared there in the character of a rabbi and delivered his message (cf. Acts 13:14, 15), they heard him and were attracted to him.

They took him. Having gone as far as he had in the message of John, Apollos would be much more in sympathy with Aquila and Priscilla, in their stand concerning Christ, than with the Jews who had not followed thus far. He was prepared to accept the Messiah, but did not understand in what way Jesus had fulfilled the terms of that title.

Expounded. Or, “set forth,” “explained.”

Way of God. What they “expounded” to Apollos was what they had learned from Paul, and perhaps also through earlier contacts with Christianity at Rome (see on v. 2). It would include the doctrines of salvation by grace, justification by faith, the gift of the Holy Spirit after conversion and baptism, and the meaning and necessity of the Lord’s Supper. It would doubtless follow, as in the case of the twelve men discussed in ch. 19:1–7, that Apollos, who formerly knew only John’s baptism, would be rebaptized into “the name of the Lord Jesus.”

More perfectly. Rather, “more accurately.”

27. Was disposed to pass. That is, wished to go.

Into Achaia. Probably to Corinth, the chief city of Achaia. The wording of ch. 19:1 and the reference to Apollos in 1 Cor. 1:12 make this a certainty. His training, natural ability, and recent instruction and experience qualified him to carry on there a work similar to what Paul had undertaken at Athens. There is no record of any apostolic commission to Apollos, but some of the Corinthians came to regard him as equal to Paul (1 Cor. 1:12). Out of this there arose a strong partisan feeling in that church, which Paul rebuked (1 Cor. 3:3–17). There is no reason to suppose that Apollos himself brought about this situation, for Paul speaks of Apollos as watering what he himself had planted (1 Cor. 3:6). It may be that Apollos’ knowledge of the existence of partisanship in the church made him unwilling to return to Corinth (1 Cor. 16:12).

The brethren wrote. This is the first record of what became known as “letters of commendation” (see on 2 Cor. 3:1; cf. Rom. 16:1, 2; Col. 4:10) written by one church to another on behalf of the bearer of the commendation. They were the “credentials” of that

time. The fact that the church at Ephesus was willing to give Apollos such a letter shows the excellent impression he had made while there.

Exhorting. Or, “encouraging.” This passage may also be translated, “encouraging [Apollos], the brethren wrote to the disciples.”

Helped them much ... through grace. This passage may also be translated, “through grace helped them much which had believed.” This translation seems preferable, for it was through the grace of God, cooperating with the gifts of wisdom and eloquence, that Apollos was able to lead men to a deeper experience in Christ. This exactly corresponds with what Paul said of Apollos’ relation to his own work: “I have planted, Apollos watered”; “I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon” (1 Cor. 3:6, 10).

28. Mightily convinced. Gr. *diakatelegchomai*, “to thoroughly argue down,” “to convince thoroughly.” Apollos brought the objections of the Jews to the test of Scripture and confuted them. He led the Jews to the same conclusion to which Paul had urged them. His method would probably be different from that of Paul, the difference being in his personality. His labors naturally attracted followers to the new preacher, and perhaps gave him a larger numerical success than had attended the efforts of Paul. As Apollos does not appear again in the Acts, note should here be made of what is known of his later history. Although his name was used at Corinth as the watchword of a party, Paul indicates no doctrinal differences between himself and Apollos, and since both had been in close contact congenially with Aquila and Priscilla, there probably was no disagreement. It would appear from 1 Cor. 16:12 that Apollos eventually returned to Ephesus, probably with letters of commendation from the church of Corinth (2 Cor. 3:1). Paul had confidence in him, as shown by his wish that he might return again to Corinth with Stephanas, Fortunatas, and Achaicus (1 Cor. 16:12, 17). Apollos drops out of sight after this until well toward the end of Paul’s career. We may believe that the intervening years were filled with earnest evangelistic labor such as he had performed at Ephesus and Corinth. Toward the close of Paul’s ministry (c. A.D. 67) Apollos is mentioned by Paul (Titus 3:13). He was in company with Zenas, the lawyer, that is, one who like Apollos had an established reputation for a deep knowledge of the law, either Jewish or Roman (see on Matt. 22:35; Vol. V, pp. 55, 56). Paul’s feeling toward Apollos evidently continued to be one of affectionate interest, for he asked Titus to give him all possible help. Apollos had been laboring at Crete, and there had apparently gathered around him a distinct company of disciples, whom Paul distinguishes from those who were associated with him (Titus 3:13, 14).

Jesus was Christ. Rather, “the Christ to be Jesus,” or “Jesus to be the Christ” (see on v. 5; ch. 17:3).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–3AA 243, 349

1–18AA 243–254

3 AA 347; CT 279; FE 97; PP 593; 4T 409

4, 5 AA 350

5 AA 247

5–7AA 248

8 AA 249

9, 10 AA 250; PK 277

11 AA 270, 298; Ev 327; 7T 268

12, 13 AA 252
14–17AA 253
18 AA 254
18, 19 AA 351
18–21AA 269–280
19–21AA 269
23 AA 281
24 AA 269
25–28AA 270

CHAPTER 19

6 *The Holy Ghost is given by Paul's hands.* 9 *The Jews blaspheme his doctrine, which is confirmed by miracles.* 13 *The Jewish exorcists* 16 *are beaten by the devil.* 19 *Conjuring books are burnt.* 24 *Demetrius, for love of gain, raiseth an uproar against Paul,* 35 *which is appeased by the townclerk.*

1. While Apollos was at Corinth. The parenthesis concerning Apollos having ended, the record now returns to Paul. Apollos found in Corinth a very effective center for his work in Achaia, and seems to have made this his headquarters for the time. At this juncture Paul was proceeding westward (ch. 18:23) across Asia Minor toward Ephesus.

Upper coasts. Or, “upper regions” of a larger area (see on ch. 13:50). These lay farther inland. The apostle’s journey was probably through Lycaonia, Galatia, and Phrygia, which he had visited before.

Came to Ephesus. This visit was in fulfillment of the promise made by him when he left the city before (ch. 18:21).

Certain disciples. They are called “disciples” because, like Apollos, they had learned some things concerning Jesus, upon the basis of which they had been drawn to listen to Paul, who could teach them more.

2. Since ye believed. Or, “having believed.” That is, either when you believed or inasmuch as you believed. Paul addressed the men as believers. Since he had recently arrived, he did not know the background of all who appeared among the members of the congregation. But Paul probably noticed in these men a want of the spiritual gifts, and perhaps a lack of the peace and joy and radiance that were revealed in those brought fully into the message of the gospel.

Whether there be any Holy Ghost. The position of these disciples is so like that of Apollos when he arrived at Ephesus that it is reasonable to think they were converts to his preaching. They must, of course, have known the Holy Spirit as a name in the OT and in the teaching of John the Baptist (Matt. 3:11), but beyond that they seemed to be in ignorance concerning the nature of the Spirit. They had received baptism as a token of repentance, and doubtless were leading upright lives, but had not entered upon the experience of “righteousness, and peace, and joy” which was theirs “in the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 14:17). It is evident that they were Jewish and not Gentile disciples.

3. Unto what? Rather, “Into what?” (see on chs. 2:41; 8:38). The NT phrase is “baptize in,” or “baptize into,” to express the close union with God into which men are brought by the symbolic act of immersion. The answers of the men so far had shown incomplete instruction, which fell short of what candidates for baptism ordinarily received, and also an incomplete spiritual experience, corresponding with their lack of

knowledge. They were doubtless unaware of their own lack, and probably considered themselves fully qualified to belong to the congregation of believers.

Unto John's baptism. Rather, "into John's baptism." The baptism may possibly have been by Apollos, administered before he had had his fuller instruction by Aquila and Priscilla, or by someone like him. Except for v. 4 this is the last NT reference to John the Baptist.

4. Baptism of repentance. Paul summarized what John taught—the baptism of repentance and faith on Him who should follow—but these Ephesian disciples knew nothing of the baptism of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit, and little of the doctrines of faith in Christ.

5. When they heard this. "This" is supplied by the translators, and probably should be omitted. What these converts heard, doubtless, was not the mere statement that Jesus was the Messiah, but the arguments, with OT scriptures, by which Paul proved this to be true, showing that in Him the OT was fulfilled. Though the description here is brief, their conviction was not necessarily sudden or without full instruction.

In the name. Rather, "into the name." for the significance of "name" see on chs. 3:16; 4:12. Here is an example of individuals rebaptized upon the reception of vital truth, new to them. But this gives no warrant for frequent rebaptizings. Rebaptism should rarely be administered. The cleansing from sins that come into the Christian's experience in his daily walk in a sinful world is provided by the forgiving grace of God through Christ (1 John 1:9; 2:1, 2) and witnessed to by the ordinance of foot washing, which symbolizes a washing away of sin (John 13:4–10). When one has been baptized into Christ, rebaptism is called for only if there has been a definite apostasy from the beliefs and standards that fellowship with Christ requires. Exceptions to this general rule would be cases like the one here described. Baptism into the name of Christ is the pledge of entrance into the covenant of salvation, and is intended to be a permanent and abiding experience.

6. Laid his hands. See on ch. 6:6.

The Holy Ghost came. This was an experience shared by all those whose baptism is recorded in the book of Acts. The Spirit came in this instance as a provision for the great work that was to change Ephesus from a city wholly devoted to the goddess Artemis (Diana) into a place sufficiently won to Christ to become a center of Christian life throughout this area, and that for several centuries to come.

Spake with tongues. Rather, "began speaking with tongues." This was a Pentecostal outpouring. As at Jerusalem the gift worked its effect upon the Jews gathered at the feast from every part of the empire, so now the Spirit, given in this center of Gentile activity, would have a like result, that the amazement of the people at such a power might attract attention to the message and gain converts to Christ. "Thus they were qualified to labor as missionaries in Ephesus and its vicinity, and also to go forth to proclaim the gospel in Asia Minor" (EGW RH Aug. 31, 1911).

Prophesied. Rather, "began prophesying." This signifies a more convicting presentation of the gospel, bringing in an exposition of OT prophecy and a greater power of preaching. The foretelling of future events would be of little help to the cause of Christ at this time and is not necessarily meant by this word.

7. Were about twelve. The narrative implies that these 12 formed a group, perhaps attending together the meetings of the church, but not until this time sharing fully in its life.

8. Into the synagogue. In keeping with apostolic custom (see on ch. 9:20). These visitations were doubtless mainly on the Sabbath days, in the first place because Paul was a Sabbathkeeper (see chs. 13:14; 16:13), and also because Paul labored with his hands during the week (Acts 18:3; 20:34; 1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8), and because Sabbaths presented the best opportunities for establishing contact with the Jews.

Spake boldly. See on ch. 9:27

Space of three months. These brief words cover the record of a period of heavy labor. Doubtless daily work as a tentmaker went on for Paul as before (cf. ch. 20:34), while on the Sabbaths at least he was in the synagogue preaching that Jesus is the Christ, and setting forth the nature of His work and the eternal laws of His kingdom.

Disputing. Rather, “reasoning,” as in chs. 17:2; 18:4, 19; see on ch. 20:7.

Persuading. Or, “attempting to persuade.”

Kingdom of God. See on ch. 1:6.

9. Divers were hardened, and believed not. Or, “Some were growing hardened and disobedient.” See on ch. 14:2.

Spake evil of that way. That is, of Christians and Christianity. The unbelieving Jews acted at Ephesus as their fellows had at Thessalonica. They probably displayed their hatred of Paul by attempting to turn the Gentiles against him. People of the lower classes were always ready to riot.

He departed. That is, he ceased to take part in the public services of the synagogue.

Separated the disciples. That is, the Christian part of the congregation in the synagogue was withdrawn, along with any of the Jews who had become interested in his teaching. This is the first recorded time when the entire group of Christian believers severed their connection with the Jewish synagogue. The process of withdrawal must have been accelerated during the period of the Jewish wars, A.D. 68–135, when it was not only uncomfortable, but in some places actually dangerous, to be associated with Jews (see Vol. V, p. 80).

Disputing. Some textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the alternate reading, “disputing daily in school of one Tyrannus from the fifth hour to the tenth.” Scholars disagree as to whether this reading is to be considered original. If it is, it suggests the interesting thought that since the period from the fifth to the tenth hour (about 11 A.M. to 4 P.M.) is the siesta hour in Eastern countries, Paul would have used this building for his teaching during “off hours,” when Tyrannus’ school would not have been in session.

Daily. How often Paul had taught in the synagogue during his first three months at Ephesus cannot be known, though he was there doubtless each Sabbath, and perhaps oftener. Now, at least, he entered upon an intensive program of public evangelism, to which he devoted part, at least, of each day. Presumably he continued at the same time to earn his own living (see on v. 8).

The school. Gr. *scholē*. This word has an interesting history. Originally it meant “leisure”; then it was applied to leisure as bestowed upon learned discussion and study; then, as here, to the place in which the study was pursued. Lastly it became a collective term for the followers of a particular teacher, as “the school of Zeno.” In this verse it probably indicates a lecture room, which, as the private property of the owner, was lent or rented to the apostle.

One Tyrannus. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) omitting the word “one,” which suggests that Tyrannus may have been a well-known person. Of this man nothing more is

known with certainty. He may have been a teacher of philosophy or rhetoric, but if so he could hardly have been an entirely unconverted heathen. Such a person would not likely permit his classroom to be used by a teacher of a new faith that was ridiculed in certain circles (see ch. 17:32).

Some therefore think this was a Jewish school, a *Beth–Hammidrash*, in which Paul’s Jewish hearers would be more likely to assemble. The listeners evidently were partly Jews and partly Greeks. No doubt there were enough Jews in Ephesus to make such “schools” necessary for their education, and the leader of such a school would very readily adopt a Gentile name in addition to his Jewish one. So Tyrannus may possibly have been a Jew.

10. The space of two years. When later he spoke to the Ephesian elders at Miletus, Paul stated that he had admonished the church of Ephesus for “three years” (ch. 20:31). There is no conflict between these two statements. To the two years mentioned here must be added the three months of v. 8 and the time which may have preceded his teaching in the synagogue (see AA 291).

All they ... in Asia. For “Asia” see on ch. 2:9. Evidently Ephesus became the center of Paul’s labors, and from there he doubtless visited neighboring towns also. Hence there is the possibility that the churches mentioned in Revelation (chs. 2; 3) owe their origin to Paul, though this possibility must be qualified by the statement that some had not seen Paul’s face (Col. 2:1; cf. on Acts 18:23). The growth of the new Christian community in Ephesus, which drew its members from both Jews and Greeks, became a conspicuous fact. The number of gifts to Artemis, and the sale of memorials of her, fell off markedly. Luke implies that the audiences drawn by Paul were made up not only of the settled inhabitants of Ephesus, but of those who visited the city, and who carried news of the preacher and his message to all corners of the district. Philemon from Colossae may have been one of Paul’s converts during this period (see Philemon 19).

11. Wrought. The tense of the verb in the Greek implies that these manifestations of God’s power were continuous during the apostle’s stay at Ephesus. This was no spasmodic manifestation resulting from some powerful, but lone, discourse.

Special miracles. Literally, “mighty [works], not [ones] happening by chance,” that is, not such as one might encounter any day (cf. on ch. 28:2). The Greek noun used here for “miracle” is *dunamis* (see Vol. V, p. 208). God did the work; Paul was the instrument.

By the hands. A literal reproduction of a familiar Hebrew idiom expressing agency (see on ch. 5:12).

12. From his body. The clause may read, “handkerchiefs or aprons were carried away from his body to the sick” (RSV). The Greek words for both “handkerchiefs” and “aprons” are transliterations from the Latin. The “handkerchiefs” (*sudaria*) were used to wipe sweat from the face; the “aprons” (*semicinctia*) were short aprons worn by artisans. It seems rather strange that, after dismissing two years of ministry in a few words, Luke should dwell at such length on these details. It may be that his interests as a physician naturally drew his attention to supernatural acts of healing. It appears that sincere persons came to the apostle as he labored at his craft, and were given the very handkerchiefs or aprons he was using. The effectiveness of these instruments of healing is comparable with that of the hem of the Lord’s garment (see on Mark 5:27, 28) and the clay He used

in healing the blind man (see on John 9:6). There are but two conditions universally required in supernatural acts of divine healing: divine power, and faith. Material things that may bridge the gap between divine power and human faith are mere vehicles for the exercise of the faith.

The diseases departed. In the city of Ephesus where, as this chapter reveals, exorcism and curious arts of witchcraft and incantation were paraded before the eyes of the people, God appears to have made the miraculous cures to stand as special evidences of the power of faith.

13. *Certain.* Rather, “some even,” “some also.”

Vagabond Jews, exorcists. Or, “itinerant Jewish exorcists” (RSV). Impostors were going about seeking to benefit themselves by employing the names of Paul and Jesus. These Jews professed to cure diseases by charms and spells (see on chs. 8:9; 13:6). The Jewish historian Josephus, writing of Solomon’s supposed skill against demons and of the use of exorcism, adds, “This kind of cure is of very great power among us to this day” (*Antiquities* viii. 2. 5 [46]; Loeb ed., vol. 5, p. 595).

To call over them. From a very early date the traditional literature of the Jews ascribed great results to the utterance of the incommunicable name of Deity. They claimed that it was with this that Moses slew the Egyptian, and that Elisha brought destruction upon the mocking children “by the name of Jehovah.” It is easy to understand that these “vagabond Jews,” having seen the results of Paul’s use of Jesus’ name, would attempt to effect healings by the same name (see on ch. 3:16).

We adjure you. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading, “I adjure you.” This is doubtless correct, for the words would be uttered by the particular person who was performing the act of exorcism.

14. *A Jew, and chief of the priests.* Or, “a Jewish chief priest.” This suggests that he may have been chief of one of the 24 courses into which the priests were divided (see on Matt. 2:4; Luke 3:2). If so, it is possible that this man had lost his place for some reason, but, having come to Ephesus, still called himself a chief priest, and is so described by Luke.

Which did so. The seven sons of Sceva adopted for their exorcisms the form of words quoted, a formula that would give them a seeming respectability.

15. *Answered.* The exorcists stand face to face with a demoniac, as frenzied and strong as he who met the Lord at Gadara (Mark 5:3, 4; cf. Matt. 8:28).

Jesus I know. Gr. *ton Iēsoun ginōskō*, “Jesus I recognize.” *Ginōskō* here implies not only personal knowledge but recognition of authority.

Paul I know. Gr. *ton Paulon epistamai*, “I am acquainted with Paul.” *Epistamai* may imply a familiar acquaintance, or the knowledge of a fact.

Who are ye? Literally, “but *you*, who are *you*?” The possessed man thus identified himself with the demon (cf. Mark 5:7–12). He stood in awe at the name of Jesus when spoken by a man like Paul, but he was not awed by these pretenders.

16. *Leaped on them.* Demoniac possession here, as in the case of the Gadarene, gave to its victim a more than normal strength. The impostors fled in dismay before the man’s demonic rage.

Overcame them. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading “overcoming both of them.” This variant reading might indicate that only two of the seven sons were involved

in this instance. However, there is evidence from the papyri that the Greek word here translated “both” might also have the sense of “all” (more than two).

Naked. This may not necessarily imply more than that the outer garment, or cloak, was torn from the men, leaving them clad only in their short tunics (see on Matt. 5:40). The record stops here. If the writer were inventing extraordinary things, he might have developed the story to a climax with the man’s healing at the hands of Paul after the failure of Sceva’s sons. But Luke’s record is factual.

17. Was known to all. Literally, “became known.” No doubt the story spread rapidly. The sons of Sceva probably had little to say about the incident themselves.

Jews and Greeks. Rather, “both Jews and Greeks.”

Lord Jesus was magnified. The tense of the verb implies continuous magnifying. The narrative shows that the name of Jesus stood out far above any of the names in the formularies the exorcists had used. It was also evidently a dangerous thing to use the name rashly, without faith in what it implied. As never before the people of Ephesus respected that name when they witnessed the punishment that befell those who profaned it.

18. Many that believed came, and confessed. Or, “Many of those who had believed began to come, confessing.” As in v. 2, the verb “believe” is probably used for the whole process of conversion, including baptism (cf. v. 3). These believers had made a profession, but it was clearly an imperfect experience into which they had come. Confessions were now made of wrongdoing, perhaps in some cases in relation to occult practices they had fallen into after they had been baptized. Under the Spirit, the church went through an experience of thorough heart searching. It is not clear whether the confessions were made privately to Paul and the other teachers, or publicly in the presence of the congregation. The latter is the more probable, even as was true of the confessions made to John the Baptist (see on Matt. 3:6). They had seen what the evil one could do with the misuse of the name of Jesus, and wondered whether they were not misusing the name by calling themselves Christians. They realized that they must face Christ as the Judge of all. Their consciences were roused to intense activity. They confessed their sins, thereby coming under the gracious provision of Christ’s forgiveness and intercession (1 John 1:9; 2:1). See AA 288.

19. Many of them. The clause reads literally, “Many of those who were practicing superfluous things,” meaning the superstitious, magical arts. These arts were almost a specialty in Ephesus. The magicians and astrologers were about in great numbers, and carried on a brisk trade in charms, books of divination, and rules for interpreting dreams. The so-called “Ephesian spells,” or “Ephesian writings” (*Ephesian grammata*), were small slips of parchment kept in silk bags, and on these slips were written archaic words of obscure meaning. Clement of Alexandria lists these words (*Stromata* v. 8), and despite their being so obscure as to defy linguistic analysis he interprets them as meaning darkness and light, the earth and the year, the sun and truth. They doubtless represent a survival of the old Phrygian nature cult, which antedated the Greek goddess Artemis, and which was later combined with superstitions that drifted in from other religions.

Brought their books together. This must mean the gathering together of the papers upon which the spells and incantations had been written, the “Ephesian writings,” and the books put out as treatises upon these occult “arts.” Some of these “writings” were

allegedly of great antiquity, perhaps going as far back as the days of Moses. Probably also charms, or amulets, were brought.

Burned them. There appears to be a relation between this burning and the healings through Paul that were followed by the overcoming of the pretended exorcists by the demon (see vs. 12, 16). Those who “believed” sensed clearly that the power of Christianity was superior to “curious arts.” Charms, mystic names, formulas, and “letters” stood exposed as empty pretenses. Accordingly, the written incantations, and the treatises containing them, were burned. The Greek verb form may imply either continuous burning, over a period of hours, as book after book was thrown on, or repeated acts of burning. Such a demonstration must have attracted considerable notice.

They counted the price. The sacrifice made by the believers consisted not only of the cost of the books, which is named by Luke, but also of the loss of potential income, which they might have received from practicing the “curious arts.”

Fifty thousand pieces of silver. Since this dramatic burning of books, esteemed by so many to be valuable, took place in the midst of a Greek population, it is probable that Luke was thinking of the Greek drachmas as the “pieces of silver.” If so, 50,000 of these united would be worth a little over \$5,000. Since, however, the drachma was about equivalent to a day’s wages at that time, it will be seen that the then-current market value was far greater than would be suggested by the equivalent figure in dollars. Some of the books would undoubtedly have brought a high price, if offered for sale. See Vol. V, p. 49.

20. Mightily grew the word of God. Literally, “Mightily the word of the Lord kept growing.” “Mightily” can be understood as “with overpowering force and strength, which nothing could resist.”

Prevailed. Or, “continued to strengthen.”

21. After these things. There had been at Ephesus a large gathering of souls into the church. Through striking incidents God had entered into the activities of church and city. Those who “believed” had experienced a reformation. There had been a spectacular destruction of the instruments of evil, attracting the attention of the entire city. The work was now well established, and Paul felt that he could leave the city.

Purposed in the spirit. In the Greek the expression is ambiguous; it may mean Paul’s own spirit, or it may mean that Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to purpose as he did (see on ch. 17:16).

Through Macedonia and Achaia. The First Epistle to the Corinthians gives the background of Paul’s purpose. There had been more or less frequent communication with the churches of Macedonia and Achaia during the years Paul spent at Ephesus, and he had cause for anxiety. It had been necessary for him to write to the Corinthians a letter, no longer extant, warning them against the gross sin of fornication among them (1 Cor. 5:9–11). Members of Chloe’s household had brought news of schisms; there was also report of grave disorders and lack of church discipline, and even of incestuous adultery (1 Cor. 1:11 5:1; 11:18–22). These matters needed Paul’s personal attention. Also, he wished to visit Jerusalem again, to bring the contributions of the Gentile churches to the needy Jewish Christian believers in Palestine (see 1 Cor. 16:1; 2 Cor. 8:1–4).

Go to Jerusalem. To carry the contributions referred to above. Paul had spoken of the “beasts at Ephesus” (1 Cor. 15:32), and of the “great door and effectual” that was “opened unto” him in Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:9). The serious troubles through which he had

gone in that city were undoubtedly both doors of opportunity and mortal threats to Paul. Now he can leave, visit the churches of Greece, and then go on to Jerusalem.

See Rome. This is the first recorded expression of Paul's desire to go to Rome. His proposed visit to Rome (see Rom. 1:13; 15:23) shows that he had held this desire for years, possibly from the time when he had first had been told that he was to be the apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 22:21). His desire to reach the capital city of the empire was doubtless strengthened also by the fact that he had a large number of friends at Rome, whom he had known elsewhere (Rom. 16:1–15). Paul's work would not seem to him complete until he had borne his testimony in the great center of the empire. But these hopes had thus far been frustrated; so he declared as he was about to leave Ephesus that he planned definitely to go to Rome and also to Spain (Rom. 15:28).

22. Sent into Macedonia. No doubt in order that the contributions to be gathered in the churches might be in readiness, and that, as he wrote to the Corinthians, there need be no gatherings when he himself came (1 Cor. 16:2).

Ministered. Gr. *diakoneō*, "to minister," "to serve." From this verb the noun translated "deacon" is derived. See p. 25.

Timotheus. Information on the mission of Timothy is provided in 1 Cor. 4:17. He was sent on ahead to warn and counsel the believers and thus spare Paul himself the need of being unduly severe when he should visit Corinth. Paul exhorted the Corinthian believers to receive Timothy with respect (1 Cor. 16:10). He was instructed to return to Paul (v. 11), and so was with the apostle when he wrote the second Corinthian letter (2 Cor. 1:1).

Erastus. A paving block has been found at Corinth dating from the middle of the 1st century A.D. and bearing the inscription, "Erastus, in return for the aedilship, laid [the pavement] at his own expense." Scholars generally identify this Erastus with the one here mentioned (see on Rom. 16:23; cf. 2 Tim. 4:20).

23. No small stir. A negative understatement for emphasis.

About that way. Literally, "the way," but the Greek article often has demonstrative force. See on ch. 9:2.

24. Demetrius. This man is not otherwise known. The name was common among the Greeks.

Shrines. Gr. *naoi* (singular, *naos*; see on Matt. 4:5). This word, commonly translated "temple" always refers to the inner sanctuary, where the divine presence was supposed to dwell, and here must, accordingly, mean the inner sanctuary containing the statue of the goddess. The small silver (or terra-cotta) representations of the temple probably contained a tiny statue of the goddess. These models could either be placed in a house or worn as a charm.

Diana. Gr. *Artemis*. There seems to have been no good reason for the KJV translators to use here the name of the Roman goddess Diana, who was identified only approximately with the Ephesian deity, instead of the name that appears in the Greek text. From early times the worship of Artemis, originally an Asiatic cult, had centered at Ephesus. When the Greeks sent colonies to Asia Minor they found this form of religion already established there, and, from some resemblance that they discovered in the worship, they gave to the Asian divinity the name of the Greek goddess Artemis.

The fourth temple to Artemis owed much of its magnificence to Croesus. It is said to have been burned down on the night of the birth of Alexander the Great in 356 B.C., by Herostratus, who was impelled by an insane desire to secure an immortality of renown, or rather notoriety, by this act. In the time of Alexander the Great the temple was rebuilt, more stately than ever, and came to be considered one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Its porticoes were adorned with paintings and sculptures by the great masters of Greek art. It had its coterie of priests, priestesses, and boy attendants. Children employed in the temple services were given an education, and priests and priestesses were pensioned after the age of 60 (cf. 1 Tim. 5:9). One class of priests, known as the *theologoi*, were assigned to interpret the mysteries of the cult.

Large contributions were made toward the support of the temple, whose benefactors were accorded the highest honors the city could bestow. Pilgrims from all parts of the world came to worship, and purchased memorials made of silver, bronze, marble, or clay. These represented the sanctuary, and the image of Diana that was within.

The upper part of the image of Diana was that of a female figure with many breasts. From the waist down it was simply a square column ornamented with mysterious symbols, including bees, ears of corn, and flowers strangely intermingled. It had been carved in wood, and was now black with age. There is a reproduction of this figure in the Vatican Museum, which seems more like that of some strange Oriental idol. Perhaps its very ugliness was the secret of its presumed power.

The first real blow that idolatry had received in Ephesus for centuries was that dealt by Paul during his residence in the city. Strangely enough, the next came from the hand of the insane Nero, who robbed the temple of Artemis as he had robbed others in Greece and Asia (Tacitus *Annals* xv. 45), in order to adorn his Golden House at Rome with their treasures of art. Trajan later sent its richly sculptured gates as a gift to a temple at Byzantium, the site of the later city of Constantinople.

As Christianity advanced the worship of Artemis naturally declined, and ere long her shrines were largely deserted. When the Goths devastated Asia Minor about A.D. 262 they plundered the temple of Diana, and its destruction was completed centuries later by the Turks. When the empire became Christian, the temple of Ephesus, in common with that of Delphi, supplied materials for the church of St. Sophia, erected by Justinian in Constantinople in honor of the Holy Wisdom. Since the Turkish invasion the church has served as a mosque. It is now a museum. The city of Ephesus fell into such a state of decay that the site of the temple was uncertain until within the last century. Excavations have since revealed the temple site and have brought to light many inscriptions connected with it.

Gain. Gr. *ergasia*, “work,” “business”; also “gain produced from works,” that is, profit. The word is used twice in ch. 16:16, 19, of the “gain” made by the Philippian masters from the ravings of the girl who was possessed. The craftsmen at Ephesus created the uproar because their profits were disappearing. Perhaps Demetrius himself, the fiercest of all the rioters, did none of the actual work, but through employing many workmen received a large share of the gains. All the imagery and symbolism of Artemis would furnish an abundant opportunity for the craft of the silversmiths.

25. Called. Rather, “gathered.” Demetrius’ craft was the carving and engraving of these shrines, as shown by the word translated “silversmith.” But before the work reached that higher stage, the materials had to pass through many hands in preparation, up to the

skilled artisan, who put on the final touches of adornment and polishing. All were concerned in the threatened loss of trade.

Sirs. Literally, “men.”

By this craft. The word here translated “craft” is the same as that translated “gain” in v. 24, and in both places it may mean “business.” With an almost naive simplicity the words of Demetrius reveal the fact that religion often threatens vested economic interests, and that persecutions may result. This situation greatly increased the difficulties under which Christian evangelists had to labor. Every city had its temples and priests, its oracles and sanctuaries. Sacrifices and feasts created a market for industry that would otherwise have been lacking. Thus in early Christian times, when the gospel was placed in conflict with paganism, the economic interference it presented not infrequently aroused the wrath of those whose incomes were affected.

26. Ye see and hear. The silversmith reminds them that they are eyewitnesses of what is taking place at Ephesus—the falling off in demand for the products surrounding the worship, as the preaching and preachers of Christianity spread far and wide.

Throughout all Asia. The speech of Demetrius, though doubtless colored by his own fears, confirms the statement of v. 10 concerning the success of Paul’s labors. As has already been noted, it is possible that Paul’s writings, if not his presence, reached Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis. Churches in the nearby cities of Pergamus, Smyrna, Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia are mentioned in the Revelation. In one way or another the gospel had spread widely throughout the region now called Asia Minor. Pliny, in his epistle to Trajan (*Letters* x. 96), nearly half a century later, uses language similar to that of Demetrius. He speaks of temples “almost deserted” and “but few purchasers” for sacrificial victims, in the region of Pontus just to the northeast of Ephesus.

This Paul. If the bodily presence of Paul was truly as unimpressive as he himself described it (see 2 Cor. 10:10; Gal. 4:13–15), we can easily imagine the scorn Demetrius threw into the words as he referred to “this Paul.”

Turned away much people. They were turned away from their devotion to Artemis, and so from the purchase of the shrines and other materials on sale in connection with the temple.

They be no gods. See on Acts 14:14, 15; 1 Cor. 8:4. In anger, Demetrius virtually committed himself to the opposite idea—that the idol was a god. Pagan philosophers always insisted that the images were merely symbolic and ideal representations.

27. Craft. Gr. *meros*, “part,” “portion,” that is, branch, of business. *Meros* is not the Greek word translated “craft” in v. 25.

Great goddess. The adjective “great” (*megas*) was especially used of Artemis of Ephesus. It appears on many of the coins and medals of the city.

Should be despised. Literally, “may be counted for nothing.” This would be the case if men began to think that the gods represented by the work of men’s hands were not truly gods. In his eagerness, Demetrius forgot to put forward what the town clerk mentioned afterward (v. 35), that the image was supposed to have come down from heaven. He was interested only in the matter of the income in connection with the worship of the goddess. The silversmith of Ephesus had become unconsciously a prophet of future doom for paganism.

Her magnificence ... destroyed. Rather, “to be about to be cast down from her greatness.” The great goddess was on the point of being robbed of her greatness. The

Greek word rendered “magnificence” is not infrequently used to express the majesty of God.

All Asia and the world. Asia was one of the proconsular provinces, and the word “world” is used conventionally, as in Luke 2:1, for the Roman Empire. Wealth from the East as well as from Greece, and even from the people of Rome, was bestowed on this gorgeous shrine.

28. Full of wrath. Demetrius had appealed to the people in such a way as to excite them more and more by each additional argument. Appeals were skillfully made to their self-interest first, and then to their pride and superstition.

Cried out. Or, “they began crying out.” The tense implies the beginning of continued or repeated action.

Great is Diana. The mob, incited by Demetrius’ oratory, apparently took up this cry as a rallying slogan, shouting it over and over again as their excitement grew and their better senses were lost in a flood of mass emotion.

29. The whole city. The city was apparently not so much interested in the gains of the silversmiths, as in the glory and magnificence that Ephesus enjoyed as the seat of the worship of Artemis. So the riot, which began in the meeting called by Demetrius, was taken up by the whole Ephesian population.

Gaius and Aristarchus. It may be that the crowd sought to find Paul, and not being able to do so, seized these two men. The inclusion of these Macedonian converts in the company of believers gives evidence of the permanent effect of Paul’s labors in that country on his previous journey. The brevity of the record in the Acts makes all the more meaningful these incidental indications, thrown in so undesignedly. “Gaius” represents the Roman name “Caius,” a common Latin name (see Acts 20:4; Rom. 16:23; 1 Cor. 1:14; 3 John 1). Aristarchus was from Thessalonica (Acts 20:4; 27:2), and may already have experienced violence of the sort he now suffered (cf. 1 Thess. 2:14). He appears as one of Paul’s companions in the journey to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4), probably as a delegate from the Macedonian churches. He may have shared the apostle’s imprisonment at Rome (Col. 4:10), either as a fellow prisoner or, more probably, in order to minister to Paul’s needs.

Paul’s companions. Just when Gaius and Aristarchus had been “Paul’s companions in travel” is not known. Perhaps they had been the ones who conducted him from Beroea to Athens (ch. 17:15). Possibly their travel with him had been in connection with some unrecorded missionary endeavor outside of Ephesus during the period of his stay there.

Into the theatre. That is, doubtless, the amphitheater of Ephesus. Its ruins still remain and give evidence that it could hold 24,500 people. There is no record of anything more being done to Gaius and Aristarchus than their being brought into the theater. Perhaps it was brought that they would reveal Paul’s hiding place. See illustration facing p. 353.

30. Paul would have entered. Or, “Paul desiring to enter.” Paul’s zeal could not suffer him to let his companions bear the brunt of the attack alone. He was ever ready for the forefront of the battle.

Suffered him not. Anxious fear for his safety led the brethren to prevent Paul’s taking a step that would have endangered his own life without helping his two friends. There is no way of knowing to what extremes of ferocity a mob may go when roused.

31. Chief of Asia. Or, “Asiarchs.” This official title was applied to those who were selected annually from the chief cities of the province to preside at the religious festivals

and public games. Ten Asiarchs were selected from the larger number of city representatives, and one of these the proconsul nominated as president. Their duties led them to the various cities where and when games or festivals were held. Since they were connected with the theater and the worship of Artemis, as well as the worship of the emperor, the Asiarchs were probably informed of the riot and its cause. The references to the Passover service in 1 Cor. 5:6–8 have been thought to suggest that Paul wrote that epistle about Passover time. As he probably left Corinth not many weeks later (2 Corinthians was written from Macedonia), and as his departure was soon after the uprising (Acts 20:1), it may well have been that the uprising occurred shortly after Passover, in the spring. In that event the people were keeping, or anticipating, the great festival in honor of Artemis, in the month named after her, Artemision (April–May). As a result they were more susceptible to Demetrius’ appeal. At that season of the year the Asiarchs would also be in Ephesus.

His friends. The tact and courtesy of Paul’s zeal and boldness apparently won the attention and respect of men in authority. This was true of the Asiarchs, as at other times of Sergius Paulus (ch. 13:7–12), Gallio (ch. 18:14–17), Festus (ch. 25:9–12), Agrippa (ch. 26:28, 32), and the centurion Julius (ch. 27:3, 43). The Asiarchs gave the same advice as that of the disciples, though from different motives. They realized that his presence could not help but excite the passions of the crowd still further.

Not adventure himself. Or, “not venture.” These friendly officials took a personal interest in Paul’s safety.

32. Cried. Or, “kept on crying.” The vividness of the narrative marks it as being an eyewitness account. Aristarchus and Gaius, companions of Paul en route to Jerusalem (ch. 20:4), may have related the story to Luke.

Assembly. Gr. *ekklēsia*, a group “called out.” The mob that had gathered in the amphitheater was not an *ekklēsia*, in the sense of a legal, governmental assembly, such as the word implied in classical usage (see on Matt. 18:17; cf. on Acts 19:39). Rather the word is used here in a looser sense for an unorganized crowd.

Confused. Literally, “poured together,” “mixed [violently].” An unthinking mob blindly follows its leaders.

Knew not wherefore. Were it not so tragic, in that the success of the gospel was at stake, Luke’s description of a large crowd shouting and milling around in the amphitheater, the majority not even knowing for sure why they were there, would be ludicrous.

33. They drew. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) a variant reading which, though difficult to translate, is here probably best rendered, “they prompted.” With this reading the whole clause may be translated, “some of the crowd prompted Alexander” (RSV).

Alexander. This Alexander was perhaps the “coppersmith” (2 Tim. 4:14) who worked “much evil” against the apostle in Ephesus.

Made his defence. Gr. *apologeomai*, “to justify oneself [in the eyes of another].” The uproar was essentially pagan—Demetrius was a heathen idol maker, and his charge against Paul would have significance only to pagans. Doubtless Paul was known to be a Jew, and the Ephesian Jews, who also refused to worship Artemis, apparently were fearful lest the riot become an anti-Semitic pogrom. Evidently, then, the “defence” that

Alexander sought to make was to dissociate the Ephesian Jews from any connection with Paul and his company, in the pagan mind.

34. Knew. Or, “perceived.” The man’s Jewish features and dress only seemed to arouse the mob further, knowing as they did the Jewish abhorrence of idolatry. Jews were accused of trafficking in goods stolen from the temples (see on Rom. 2:22). The language of the town clerk (Acts 19:37) suggests the same thought, for he could point to Aristarchus and Gaius and declare emphatically, “These men are not temple robbers.”

All with one voice. The mob now had one object upon which to focus their uproar, and for two hours they kept repeating the cry. It is evident from this that the Jews were not popular; the wrath aroused against the Jew, Paul, by Demetrius’ speech was now about to be turned against the whole body of Jews in the city.

35. Townclerk. Gr. *grammateus*, translated “scribe” in the Gospels. He was custodian of the city records, and was a highly influential man in Ephesus. Through him all public communications were made to the city and replies given. This part of his duties led to the English title “townclerk.” The Greek title appears in many inscriptions from Ephesus, often in conjunction with those of the Asiarchs, all of whom were citizens of Ephesus, and the proconsul. The language of the public officer is as gravely cautious as that of Demetrius had been inflammatory. Like the Asiarchs, he looked upon Paul and his companions with obvious respect. He was no fanatic, and had no intention of becoming a persecutor. He did not oppose the multitude, but sought to soothe them with a profession of fondness for their religion.

Worshipper. Gr. *neōkoros*, literally, “temple sweeper,” and, by extension, any devotee of a god and its shrine. The whole city is represented as consecrated to the service of the goddess. The word *neōkoros* is found on coins from Asia Minor, expressive of the devotion of certain cities to a god or an emperor. The people of Ephesus looked to Artemis as their guardian and protector. On one inscription the city claims the honor of being her “nurse.”

Great goddess Diana. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of the word “goddess.” In some of the inscriptions of Ephesus she is described as “the greatest,” “the most high.”

Image which fell down from Jupiter. Gr. *Diopetēs*, “fallen from Zeus [or heaven]”—a name often given to old, prehistoric images, as for example, to that of Pallas Athene at Athens and to the Palladium of the Trojans (Virgil *Aeneid* ii. 183). Here the word may have had a more literal meaning as applied to a meteoric stone that was worshiped in its original form or used in the earliest sculpture. Thus it may not refer to Artemis’ image (see on v. 24), which, according to various ancient authors, was made, not of stone, but of olivewood, ebony, cedarwood, or wood of the vine, if not of gold.

36. Spoken against. Rather, “contradicted.” The town clerk claimed that no one could gainsay what he had just said. His speech has more the tone of an official statement concerning the established cult than of personal devotion to it.

Ought to be quiet. Or, “ought to become orderly,” another form of the word translated “appeased” in v. 35.

Do nothing rashly. Literally, “perform nothing rash.” The Greek adjective well describes the headstrong, outrageous uproar for which there had been no real reason and

from which no good could come, as well as the impulsive conduct of the crowd in seizing two persons who were not offenders and against whom obviously they could take no proceedings.

37. *Robbers of churches.* Or, “spoilers of temples.” Since the fabulous temple at Ephesus had a large treasure chamber, the offense might not be unknown among the people. Anything placed in the temple would be under the guardianship of the goddess, and thus for the time would be the property of the temple; and to steal anything attached to the temple would be sacrilege. See on v. 34.

Your goddess. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading “our goddess.” In a popular address it would be natural that a speaker would identify himself with his fellow citizens. It may be understood from this verse that the language of Paul and his companions had been chosen with care when they had spoken about the special worship of Ephesus. They had inculcated the great principles that gods made with hands were not gods, and had allowed that statement to do its work (v. 26). Paul put the same restraint on himself at Athens, though he was greatly moved when he saw “the city wholly given to idolatry” (ch. 17:16).

38. *Have a matter.* That is, if any have any specific charges, let them bring them forth. If matters were as they claimed, there might be grounds for legal action. But there was no excuse for the riot staged by the coppersmith and his friends.

The law is open. This translation gives the general sense. The Greek words are in the plural and can mean either “court days are appointed”—that is, there are proper times fixed when such cases can be heard—or perhaps better, because the tense of the verb implies that the opportunity of legal action is even now open, “court meetings are now going on.” This sense the RSV adopted by translating “the courts are open.”

Deputies. Gr. *anthupatoi*, “proconsuls” (cf. chs. 13:7, 8, 12; 18:12, where “proconsul” is also the correct translation). Asia was a proconsular province (see on ch. 6:9). The difficulty in the present passage arises from the use of the plural number, for there was only one proconsul over a province at one time, and hence only one in Ephesus when the town clerk was speaking. There are several explanations: (1) The assessors (*consiliarii*) of the proconsul may properly have been described as “deputies.” (2) The clerk may have been reminding the people of the provision made by the institutions of the empire for obtaining justice in the case of wrong, as though he were saying, “Proconsuls are an imperial institution. In every province like ours there exists such a supreme magistrate, and so there is no fear about obtaining redress for real injuries.” (3) Silanus the proconsul had recently been poisoned (Tacitus *Annals* xiii. 1), and Celer and Helius, who had charge of imperial business in Asia, might be intended by this plural title. (4) There might have been present in Ephesus some other proconsul from a neighboring province, as Cilicia, Cyprus, Bithynia, or elsewhere. The second of the four explanations seems the more plausible.

Implead. Gr. *egkaleō*, “to bring a charge,” “to make an accusation.” Demetrius and his followers should lodge a formal statement of the charge they were bringing against the accused. The accused would put in a rejoinder, and with the issue thus joined, each side would produce its witnesses.

39. *If ye enquire any thing.* Or, “if ye seek for anything.”

Concerning other matters. Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the reading “further.” Apparently certain matters might be taken to the proconsul for judgment, and others to the assembly for consideration.

Lawful assembly. Traditionally the Greek cities had popular assemblies of their citizens, in which public business was transacted. Here the town clerk implies that the mob to whom he is speaking is no such “lawful,” legally constituted assembly. According to Chrysostom (*Homily* xlii, on Acts 19:21, 23) such assemblies met three times a month.

40. Called in question. Or, “accused.”

For this day’s uproar. Rather, “of riot on this day.”

Concourse. Gr. *sustrophē*, “a twisting together,” “a conspiracy,” “a commotion.”

41. Dismissed the assembly. This he could do in his official capacity. Probably the last argument that he used would have the most weight with his audience. If riotous conduct such as they had just engaged in were reported to Rome, it might lead to a curtailment of the privileges of their city. The town clerk had sobered the mob and brought them to the point of dispersing quietly to their homes.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 AA 281

1–41AA 281–297

2, 3 AA 282

5 AA 285

5, 6 AA 283

7 AA 282

8, 9 AA 285

11, 12 AA 286

13–16AA 287

17–20AA 288; MYP 275–278

21, 22 AA 291

23–27AA 292

27 AA 295

28 AA 286

28–31AA 293

32–41AA 294

CHAPTER 20

1 *Paul goeth to Macedonia. 7 He celebrateth the Lord’s supper, and preacheth. 9 Eutychus having fallen down dead, 10 is raised to life. 17 At Miletum he calleth the elders together, telleth them what shall befall to himself, 28 committeth God’s flock to them, 29 warneth them of false teachers, 32 commendeth them to God, 36 prayeth with them, and goeth his way.*

1. Uproar. Gr. *thorubos*, “noise,” “tumult.” The same word is used in connection with Jesus’ trial (Matt. 26:5; 27:24; Mark 14:2), with the raising of Jairus’ daughter (Mark 5:38), and with the assault on Paul in Jerusalem (Acts 21:34; 24:18).

Called ... the disciples. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the addition of “having exhorted them.” Paul called a meeting of the church members that he might bid them farewell.

Embraced them. The Greek word signifies “to take leave of,” “to make parting greetings” (cf. ch. 21:6). Paul evidently remained in Ephesus until he saw the church in quiet once more. He spent about three years at Ephesus (probably c. A.D. 54–57; see p. 102).

Into Macedonia. There is a gap here in the narrative of Acts that can be supplied with information from the Corinthian epistles. During this tour of Macedonia Paul wrote 2 Corinthians (see 2 Cor. 2:12, 13; 7:5; 9:2).

2. Over those parts. Undoubtedly Paul wished to visit again the churches he had founded at Thessalonica and Berea, as well as at Philippi. Paul doubtless followed the Roman road across Macedonia westward to the shores of the Adriatic, and proclaimed the gospel for the first time in Illyricum (see Rom. 15:19; cf. The Environs of Ephesus).

Greece. Gr. *Hellas*, Greece. Luke uses *Hellas* as synonyms with Achaia, the southern province. The journey brought Paul to Corinth, where there were many things to be set in order in the church. The believers there had already received his two epistles. In the first, sent from Ephesus, he had found it necessary to rebuke them for the partisan spirit shown in the church. Paul had also censured the disorders at the Lord’s Supper and had given his judgment against incest. The pastoral tasks confronting Paul would allow him little rest during his three-month stay in this area, even if all the time were spent in Corinth.

At Corinth, Paul may have missed seeing many of his friends. Claudius’ decree had either been revoked or was no longer enforced, and Aquila and Priscilla seem to have returned from Ephesus to Rome (cf. Acts 18:18, 19; Rom. 16:3). Doubtless others whom Paul had known in Corinth (see Rom. 16) had done likewise. All this would strengthen his earnest desire to go to Rome (Acts 19:21; Rom. 1:10, 11). Paul’s work in Greece was done, and he felt a more than human attraction drawing him westward. Therefore he contemplated making a rapid journey to Jerusalem for a short visit, and to leave the gifts from the Gentile churches, followed immediately by a journey to Rome and Spain (Rom. 15:24–28). The remainder of the book of Acts reveals how different a path was actually ahead of him.

3. Abode three months. Or, “when he had spent three months.” In the Greek, the phrase is connected with what follows.

The Jews laid wait. Or, “a plot having been made against him by the Jews.” The Jews had tried to entangle Gallio in their attacks upon Paul during his last visit to Corinth, and now they sought secretly to wreak their vengeance upon him. No doubt the intention was to kill him. When Paul heard of the plot he changed his plans and set out with his companions for Macedonia, to baffle the plotters.

To sail into Syria. Or, “to set sail for Syria.” Paul may have gone so far as to arrange for his passage and even to go aboard, but was warned before the ship sailed.

Through Macedonia. As the scheme for killing Paul was apparently to have been carried out while he was sailing to Syria, his quick change of plan that took him to the north made impossible the readjustment of the plot to the new circumstances.

4. There accompanied him. Timothy and probably also Sopater (perhaps a variant of Sospater) had been with Paul at Corinth (see Rom. 16:21). The size of the delegation can be explained by the fact that Paul was carrying a large sum designed for the churches in Judea. By taking with him a number of witnesses from the areas contributing, he could avoid any suspicion that the tongues of slanderers might direct against him (2 Cor. 8:19–21). Representatives were therefore chosen from the leading churches, and they could

testify that his conduct of affairs was beyond reproach. There were eight in Paul's party, including Luke (see on v. 5).

Into Asia. Or, "as far as Asia." Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of these words.

5. Tarried for us. The sudden change to the first person plural in this passage reminds us that Luke, who never names himself, should be added to the list of Paul's companions. He may have been included as a delegate from the church of Philippi, or as Paul's friend and physician. The tarrying enabled Paul to keep the Passover at Philippi, whence he departed "after the days of unleavened bread" (v. 6). The disciples who went on ahead would announce Paul's coming to the church of Troas, and so there would be a full gathering to receive him upon his arrival.

6. Days of unleavened bread. Paul seems to have stayed intentionally at Philippi because of the Jewish feast. The Passover season must have continued to be fraught with great religious sentiment for Paul, a Jew and a Pharisee (ch. 23:6). Perhaps also Christians were beginning to think of the Passover time as the anniversary of Christ's death and resurrection (cf. 1 Cor. 5:7, 8).

To Troas in five days. The westward voyage from Troas to Philippi (see on ch. 16:11, 12) had taken only three days, but the ship, now sailing east, had to meet the southwest current setting in from the Dardanelles, and probably also northeast winds that prevail in the archipelago in the spring (see Paul's Third Missionary Tour). Paul, Luke, and Timothy had been together at Troas when Paul saw the vision of the Macedonian calling for him to cross to Europe. Sopater, Aristarchus, and Secundus represented part of the fruitage that God had granted to their work in Macedonia.

Seven days. Paul and Luke spent a week in Troas. It is probable that they disembarked after the Sabbath, which would have concluded their five days' sail across the Aegean. The seven days, or one full week, that they spent at Troas terminated with the Sabbath. The next day, the first day of the week, Paul planned to start on foot to Assos (v. 13), while the remainder of his party continued by ship to Assos. Between the close of the Sabbath and their early morning departure, the missionaries spent the dark part of the first day of the week—that is, Saturday night—in an eventful, protracted meeting with the church at Troas.

7. First day of the week. In Greek the expression is the same as that in Matt. 28:1 (see comment there). There can be no doubt that this corresponds, in general, at least, to our Sunday. Commentators have been divided, however, as to whether the meeting in question took place on the evening following Sunday, or on that preceding it. Those who favor the view that it was a Sunday night meeting point out that Luke, who most probably was a Gentile, presumably used Roman time reckoning, which began the day at midnight. On such reckoning, an evening meeting on the first day of the week could only be on Sunday night. They point out also that the time sequence of the verse, "the first day of the week," "the morrow," implies that Paul's departure took place on the second day of the week; if so, then the meeting must have been on Sunday night. It may be noted, also, that John refers to Sunday night as "the first day of the week" (John 20:19), whereas, according to Jewish reckoning, it was already the second day of the week (see Vol. II, p. 101). It is possible that Luke uses the expression in the same sense here.

Other commentators, including Ellicott, Conybeare and Howson, and A. T. Robertson, have preferred to understand that the meeting took place on the evening

before Sunday. Inasmuch as Jewish reckoning began the day at sunset, by that system the dark part of the first day of the week would be the night preceding Sunday, our Saturday night. Such reckoning continued for centuries among Christians, and it is reasonable to think that Luke, whether Gentile or not, may have used it in his narrative. Accordingly, Paul's meeting at Troas would have begun after sunset on Saturday night, and would have continued through that night. The next day, Sunday, he would have walked to Assos.

Some writers have seen in this passage an indication of early Christian Sunday observance. Whether or not Luke used Jewish or Roman time reckoning is of relatively little importance to this question, for he says clearly that the meeting was on "the first day of the week." If he was using Jewish reckoning, then the evening before Sunday was considered the first day, and if he was using Roman time, the evening following Sunday was still the first day. The significant factor here, as regards the question of early Christian Sundaykeeping, is whether this first-day meeting represents regular Christian practice, or whether it happened to fall on the first day only because of Paul's visit.

A consideration of the whole narrative provides no support for the view that Paul held this meeting specifically because it was the first day of the week. He had been at Troas seven days; certainly he must have met with the believers there already more than once. Now he was to depart, and it was most logical that he would hold a final farewell meeting, and celebrate the Lord's Supper with them. Luke's remark that this occurred on the first day of the week, rather than being a notice of specific Sundaykeeping, is quite in harmony with the whole series of chronological notes with which he fills his narrative of this voyage (see chs. 20:3, 6, 7, 15, 16; 21:1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 15). Therefore the simplest way to view this passage would seem to be that the meeting was held, not because it was Sunday, but because Paul was "ready to depart" (ch. 20:7), that Luke includes an account of the meeting because of the experience of Eutychus, and that his note that it was "the first day of the week" is merely a part of his continuing chronological record of Paul's journey. In evaluating this passage as an evidence of early Christian Sundaykeeping, the eminent church historian, Augustus Neander, remarks:

"The passage is not entirely convincing, because the impending departure of the apostle may have united the little Church in a brotherly parting-meal, on occasion of which the apostle delivered his last address, although there was no particular celebration of a Sunday in the case" (*The History of the Christian Religion and Church*, tr. Henry John Rose, vol. 1, p. 337).

Preached. Gr. *dialogomai*, "to converse," "to discuss." In all instances in the NT, except here and in v. 9, this verb is translated "to dispute," "to reason," and once "to speak." Here and in v. 9 it would be better translated "to discourse." The meeting was evidently not a regular church assembly with a sermon, but an informal one in which reasoning and conversation were used to answer questions and clear away difficulties among the Christians at Troas, and to impart instruction.

Until midnight. They had gathered for an evening farewell service, but the joy of Christian fellowship, and the fact that the apostle was about to leave them, caused the discussion to be continued far beyond the usual limits. Doubtless the brethren were thoroughly enjoying the informal spiritual feast Paul was giving them before bidding them farewell.

8. Many lights. The “lamps,” or oil-fed “torches” (see on Matt. 25:1, 3), are doubtless mentioned for two reasons, (1) to account for the drowsiness of Eutychus, by suggesting the heat and smoky closeness of the room, and (2) to provide an indirect answer to the charge that at the night meetings of the Christians they practiced shameless license (Tertullian *Apology* 8). It would be natural for two or more lights to be placed near the speaker.

Upper chamber. In the ancient Orient the upper floor of a home was commonly the one used for social or devotional purposes. Luke writes with the vividness and detail of an eyewitness.

9. Window. In most ancient houses a window was only an opening in the wall, perhaps without a framework, and with no bars to prevent the accident here described, unless it was a fragile latticework.

Young man. Gr. *neanias*, strictly speaking, a man between 24 and 40 years of age. However, the word might be used with greater latitude, as perhaps it is here (see on v. 12).

Eutychus. Meaning “fortunate.” This name, like names of kindred meaning, such as Felix, Felicia, Fellicissimus, Fortunatus, Faustus, Felicitas, and Syntyche, occurs repeatedly on inscriptions, and apparently was common, especially among freedmen.

Sunk down with sleep. Literally, “overcome with sleep.” Doubtless the air became heavy with heat and the smoke of the oil lamps, and the young man could resist sleep no longer.

Third loft. Gr. *tristegos*, “third roof,” that is, the third story; perhaps what would be known today as the “fourth floor.”

Taken up dead. If there was any latticework in the window opening, it would have been set wide open to let cool air into the crowded room. The lad fell out and down to the ground, probably in the courtyard. There has been much debate whether the restoration of Eutychus was meant to be described as miraculous; whether “dead” may not be understood as “in a swoonlike state.” But Luke the physician’s expressions here and in v. 12 (“they brought the young man alive”) seem to leave no room for question. That life was snuffed out by reason of the fall and was restored by the prayer of the apostle is the natural reading of the story.

10. Went down. The access to Eastern houses was frequently by a staircase on the outside. Paul’s action recalls that of Elijah (1 Kings 17:21) and of Elisha (2 Kings 4:34). No doubt the apostle, like the OT prophets, accompanied his action with a cry to the Lord.

Trouble not yourselves. Literally, “Stop making a tumult,” “Stop distressing yourselves.”

11. Was come up. Or, “had gone up.” The apostle’s calmness, as well as his words, must have had an effect upon the disturbed congregation. Paul returned to the upper room and continued the meeting.

Had broken bread. “They partook of the communion” (AA 391). See Matt. 26:26–30; Acts 2:46; 1 Cor. 11:23–30; see on Acts 2:42. This was a planned feature of what apparently otherwise was an informal gathering (see on v. 7).

Talked. The Greek expression implies the talk of friendly intercourse as distinguished from formal discourse.

Break of day. Sunrise at that latitude and shortly after the Passover comes between five and six in the morning.

12. Young man. Gr. *pais*, a word that normally means “child,” but which could also refer to a young person, and, indeed, to a slave of any age. The “young man” here was probably adolescent or slightly older (see on v. 9).

Alive. There would be no reason to use this word if “taken up dead” (v. 9) did not signify an actual death. It is obvious that Luke the physician is narrating a miracle of restoration of life to one dead.

Not a little comforted. This expression is negative for emphasis, that is, they “were greatly comforted.”

13. We went before. The companions of Paul (see v. 4) including Luke, proceeded on their journey by sea, before Paul set out from Troas by foot. Whether these companions were present for the night meeting is not clear.

Minding himself. That is, intending himself. Except for ch. 23:24 there is no record of Paul’s traveling any other way but by ship or foot. Paul walked about 35 mi., doubtless on a paved Roman road, across a point of land from the city of Troas to Assos.

14. Came to Mitylene. The city, at one time called Castro, was the capital of the island of Lesbos, then beautiful for its natural situation and its splendid buildings. Lesbos is one of the largest islands in the Aegean Sea and seventh in size in the Mediterranean basin, being 168 mi. in circumference.

15. Over against Chios. Or, “opposite to.” Chios, or Coos, is an island lying between Lesbos and Samos. It required a day to sail there from Mitylene.

Samos. An island lying off the coast of Lydia, one more day’s sail from Chios (see Paul’s Third Missionary Tour).

Trogyllium. Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of the words, “and tarried at Trogyllium.” Trogyllium was a city lying on the Lydian coast of the mainland, between Ephesus and the winding river Maeander (see Paul’s Third Missionary Tour).

Miletus. A seaport (see Paul’s Third Missionary Tour and The Journeys of Paul). It had been early settled by colonists from Crete, and became in turn an active colonizing center and an important city politically and commercially. It was about 32 mi. (52 km.) from Ephesus. Paul’s party arrived here three days after leaving Assos.

16. Sail by Ephesus. That is, sail past, for to have stopped there would have meant unquestionably the expenditure of more time than Paul had to spare, in view of his intention to reach Jerusalem by Pentecost.

Pentecost.^b See on ch. 2:1. Just why Paul was so eager to be at Jerusalem for Pentecost is not recorded. Perhaps the gathering of Jewish Christians who would be there at that time from all over Palestine would make possible a more efficient distribution of the relief offering he was taking to Jerusalem. Or perhaps because of the outpouring of the Spirit at a previous Pentecost, this feast held a special place in Paul’s emotions. At all events, he had not completed his journey by Passover time (ch. 20:6), and as he was going to Jerusalem, it was only natural that he would wish to be there for the next feast.

17. He sent.^b Paul could not leave the region without some contact with the church of Ephesus, where he had suffered so much (see 1 Cor. 15:32) and had produced such good fruitage for his Lord. He therefore called the leaders of the church to make the journey to Miletus to meet him and talk over the problems of the church.

Elders. See on v. 28; chs. 11:30; 14:23.

18. He said. Here follows the tenderest address recorded from Paul's lips. It was not evangelistic, but hortatory, reminding the hearers of the self-sacrifice and integrity of Paul's own career and challenging them to accept fully and discharge faithfully the responsibilities of their office. The warnings are applicable to any age and locality of the church, and echo those of Eph. 5; 6, particularly ch. 6:10–18.

Ye know. As a fact, by personal acquaintance. An emphatic expression, which in Greek stresses the word "ye." Paul had been with them three years (v. 31) and had given "full proof" of his ministry, as he admonished a later leader of the church at Ephesus to give (2 Tim. 4:5). This appeal to their experience with him must be understood in the light of the aspersions cast by some upon his work.

From the first day. Paul's record was consistent throughout his sojourn at Ephesus.

Asia. See on ch. 2:9.

After what manner. Paul appeals to his way of life among them as proof of his spiritual and apostolic authority and as evidence that his call and appointment were of God.

At all seasons. That is, during the whole time of his labor there.

19. Serving. Gr. *douleuō*, "to serve [as a slave]." Paul often applies this word, and the noun *doulos*, "servant," "slave," to himself as related to Christ, thus denoting the absolute bondage of his mind and will to his Lord. Everything that he did was in servitude to his Christ, his only Master. Neither Paul's self-interest nor the interests of the world could compete with Christ in his devotion.

Humility of mind. The Paul who gloried only in the cross of Christ, by which he was crucified to the world (Gal. 6:14), could feel no pride of calling or office, nor any self-sufficiency in it. He might have had confidence in the flesh, but would not (Phil. 3:4–7). He could have gloried in his apostolic experiences and sufferings, but refused (2 Cor. 11:18–30). His was the humility of the Christian nobleman who measures his littleness and weakness by the greatness and the power of Christ.

Many tears. Like Jesus, Paul wept (2 Cor. 2:4; cf. John 11:35). He grieved at the loss to the kingdom of his Jewish brethren (Rom. 9:1–5; cf. Luke 19:41, 42). He grieved over the hindrances they put in the way of truth. He grieved because souls were being lost. He grieved at the hardness of men's hearts. So the Christian minister will sorrow for the lost around him, and will be aroused to godly zeal by their opposition to truth.

Temptations. Gr. *peirasmoi*, "provings," "tests." Compare 1 Peter 4:12, where the same word is translated "trial." Acts 19 gives a recital of some of these trials, which arose from the opposition of enemies.

Lying in wait. See on ch. 9:24.

20. Kept back. Gr. *hupostellō*, "to put under," hence, "to conceal," "to suppress." This word was early used for furling sails. Paul spared himself no endeavor or labor, missed no opportunity, held back no doctrine or admonition, suppressed no truth (cf. v. 27).

Profitable. Literally, "the things being brought together," or "the worth-while things." Like Paul, the minister of the gospel will give his flock what they need, palatable or unpalatable, if it is spiritually nutritious.

Have shewed. Gr. *anaggellō*, “to announce,” “to declare.” The word is commonly applied to the preaching of the gospel in public.

House to house. A more private and personal method of gospel ministry. With Paul, personal work did not take the place of public evangelism, but was an indispensable companion to it (6T 321–323; AA 250, 296). Concerning house-to-house work by God’s people in the last days see GC 612. No minister can adequately care for his flock without house-to-house visitation.

21. Testifying. That is, bearing witness, by teaching, exhorting, and challenging to a better life. The same word is translated “charge” and “charging” in 1 Tim. 5:21; 2 Tim. 2:14; that is, strongly urging or solemnly entreating.

Jews, and ... Greeks. Paul always approached his Jewish brethren first with the gospel (see Acts 13:5, 14; 14:1; 17:1, 2; 18:4; 19:8; cf. Rom. 1:16; 2:9, 10; 3:1, 2).

Repentance. Gr. *metanoia* (see on Matt. 3:2 for a definition of the verb from which this noun is derived).

Toward God. Rather, “unto God.” Repentance is “unto God” because (1) sin is always an offense primarily against God; (2) though man can manifest a forgiving spirit, only God can pardon, through Jesus Christ the Sin Bearer (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24), and on the basis of sincere acknowledgement of guilt.

Faith. Acceptance of the atoning grace of Jesus Christ, “whom having not seen” we “love” (1 Peter 1:8), can only be by faith (see on Rom. 4:3). Indeed, “whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23). The peace that the sinner has with God through Jesus Christ comes by faith (Rom. 5:1, 2). “Without faith it is impossible to please” God (Heb. 11:6).

22. Bound in the spirit. Paul may have meant here that he was pressed in his human spirit by the influence of circumstances or that he was forced by his own will; or else that he was constrained by the Spirit of God. In view of v. 23, some hold the former view, saying that the presence of the word “Holy” in that verse suggests a contrast with this verse where it is absent. Others incline to the latter view, believing that the presence of “Holy” in v. 23 identifies “Spirit” in both verses. See on ch. 16:6, 7, where the Holy Spirit prevents Paul from taking a certain course of action. The verb (which here is emphatic by its position) is usually applied to restraint by ropes or fetters (Matt. 13:30; 21:2), or, figuratively, to the pressure of a strong obligation (Rom. 7:2), or to any strong urge or impulsion (cf. the noun in Philemon 13). Paul was a man of strong convictions of duty. When the impulsion of the Spirit’s leading was added, the “binding” would be strong indeed. Duty must be done; the results, left to God.

Shall befall me. Paul knew that on this visit to Jerusalem dangers awaited him (Acts 20:23; cf. Rom. 15:30, 31), but he did not know the nature, the seriousness, or the outcome of what threatened. But his ways were committed to God, and, whatever the dangers, Paul would go where the Spirit led him.

23. Save that. Rather, “except that.”

Holy Ghost witnesseth. The record does not state whether this was by direct revelation (see on ch. 16:6, 7); by the predictions of prophets, as in ch. 21:4, 11; or by a deep and repeated impression on Paul’s mind.

Bonds and afflictions. Paul had a deep conviction that calamities were to come upon him, but he did not know the details.

Abide me. That is, await me, or remain for me.

24. None of these things. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) reading the first part of v. 24 as follows: “But I do not count my life of any value or as precious to myself.”

Count I my life. Literally, “I do not make my life of any account.” That is, Paul did not reckon matters of self as worth anything (see Phil. 3:7, 8). This was the Lord’s attitude when He condescended to the incarnation (Phil. 2:7, 8).

Dear unto myself. That is, valuable for my own desires. No personal choices or wishes distracted Paul from the arduous privileges of his ministry. He was not his own man; he was a slave of Christ (Rom. 1:1). Nothing was of enough importance to tempt him to a neglect of duty. This was the spirit of the Saviour and of the early Christians.

Course. Gr. *dromos*, “race,” “racecourse”; “span of life” or “term of office”; “career.” Paul was making of himself a living offering (Rom. 12:1), in order that the course laid out for him might be finished successfully. Such a course he claimed, in his valedictory epistle, to have finished (2 Tim. 4:7). So he exhorted the Hebrews to “run with patience [perseverance] the race” that was set before them (Heb. 12:1). Paul wanted so to run his life course that at the end he would not have to regret any neglect or failure from carelessness or indifference. He wished to end his career in the contentment of a clear conscience.

With joy. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of these words.

The ministry. The Gr. *diakonia*, “service,” from which comes the English term “deaconate.” Here it means, not an ecclesiastical office, but a service rendered to God. To do faithful service was the ruling principle of Paul and he admonished his “son” Timothy to equal devotion (2 Tim. 4:5).

Of the Lord Jesus. Paul’s strong sense of the reality of his call to the gospel ministry was a consequence of his unique conversion, when Christ Himself commissioned him and told him through Ananias of the work he was to do (chs. 9:15–17; 22:14, 15; 26:16–18). Paul never doubted his calling, though others apparently did so (2 Cor. 3:1–6; Gal. 1:10–24).

To testify. Or, “thoroughly to bear witness to.”

The gospel. See on Mark 1:1. The gospel is the good news of God’s mercy to sinful men through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cross. Such a witness can be borne only by those who have known themselves to be sinners alienated from God, and have, by faith, experienced for themselves the saving grace and power of Jesus Christ.

25. Kingdom. See on Acts 1:1; Matt. 4:17. This was the kingdom on which centered Paul’s hopes, and which at great personal danger to himself, he proclaimed in the face of the absolutism of the Roman emperors.

Of God. Important textual evidence (cf. p. 10) may be cited for the omission of this phrase.

See my face no more. Paul believes, for reasons he does not here reveal, that these elders from Ephesus, and doubtless the churches of Miletus and Ephesus, will never see him again. This could have been because of the dangers he knew awaited him (Acts 20:22, 23; Rom. 15:30, 31), and also because of his firm intention to visit Rome and Spain (Acts 19:21; Rom. 15:23–28). It is probable, however, that Paul did return to Macedonia and Asia, though perhaps not to Miletus or Ephesus, between his first and second imprisonments in Rome (Phil. 1:25–27; Philemon 22). But of this, Paul had at the moment no information from the Spirit of God.

26. Take you to record. That is, I testify to you, I make a solemn declaration to you.

I am pure. Gr. *Katharos*, “clean.” Paul is not here claiming final perfection of Christian character (see Phil. 3:12–14), but he is clean in respect to the prosecution of his duty to bring men to Christ for salvation.

The blood. This is a clear reference to the responsibility of the watchman, stated in Eze. 33:6. Paul had discharged his duty to the Ephesians. His thought is clearly a repetition of that which he expressed when he left the synagogue of the Jews in Corinth. He had done for them all that he could. Their blood—that is, their death that must follow if they rejected the saving gospel message—must rest upon them (Acts 18:6; cf. Matt. 27:25).

All men. Rather, “all.” Paul had preached to both Jews and Gentiles. He had done his best, in the power of the Holy Spirit. None could accuse him of neglect. Here is an inspiring and challenging example for the gospel minister.

27. Shunned. See on v. 20. No fear or unworthy desire for popularity, resulting in suppression of unpopular truths, marred Paul’s ministry. There was no disguising or withdrawing of truth.

Counsel of God. That is, the plan of God for saving men. This plan Paul had probably first heard through the preaching of Stephen (see ch. 7:54–58) and then had learned from Christ Himself (Acts 9:4–6; Gal. 1:15–20). He laid before the people the purpose in Christ’s death upon the cross, His resurrection and ascension, His work as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary, and His promise to return at the close of His mediatorial work to take His people to Himself. This is the plan that Paul outlined clearly in the Epistle to the Romans.

28. Take heed. In view of Paul’s departure and of what he is about to tell them, the elders are to watch with care, first of all in regard to themselves (see v. 30), and then to the flock. Peculiar dangers and temptations beset religious leaders, in personal conduct, in respect to religious stability and constancy in doctrine, and even to dangers from without (cf. 2 Cor. 11:23–28), which will increase as time moves to its end.

The flock. The church is the body of Christ (Cor. 12:12–27; Eph. 4:12), the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16, 17), and the bride of her Lord (Eph. 5:23–32). But it is also, and very intimately, the flock of God (John 10:11–16; cf. 1 Peter 5:4; Heb. 13:20). As such, it is to be led, not driven (John 10:26–30), to be fed, not exploited (Ps. 23; John 10:7–14; 1 Peter 5:2).

Pastor is a Latin word coming from the verb *pascō*, “I feed.” The appealing picture of the Good Shepherd, so clearly presented in Scripture, is an example to the gospel minister. The “all” means the whole flock and every part of it, for there must be no respect of persons (James 2:1–9).

The Holy Ghost. The third person of the Godhead. The elders of Ephesus were men appointed, doubtless, under the eye of the apostle Paul (see on ch. 14:23). But the apostle considered them selected by the Holy Spirit through the elective, or appointive, process, and Spirit filled (cf. ch. 6:3). Here again is revealed the strong belief in the apostolic age that the Spirit of God was in, and functioning through, the church (see chs. 2:2–4; 4:31; 5:3, 4; 6:3, 5; 8:39; 10:45; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6, 7).

Overseers. Gr. *episkopoi*, literally, “overseers,” but the term used technically for “bishops.” Comparison with v. 17 shows that in Paul’s day the “elders” (*presbuteroi*) and

“bishops” (*episkopoi*) were the same (see on Acts 11:30; cf. Acts 1:20; Titus 1:5–7). These officers, known as elders, functioned as “overseers” in the church.

To feed. Gr. *poimainō*, “to tend a flock,” “to be a shepherd.” It is the duty of the shepherd to care for his flock and bring it to good pastures. So the pastor in the church is to feed his flock from the pastures of God’s Word. This was what Peter was thrice admonished by his Lord to do (John 21:15–17), a commission that Peter passed on later to his own converts (1 Peter 5:2). The pastoral duty is fivefold: (1) To preach to the flock the Word of God, to bring them to an understanding of the gospel (1 Cor. 2:4–7; Eph. 3:8–11) and to an experience in the power of truth (John 3:11; 2 Cor. 4:13), rightly presenting to them the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15), thus prudently to enhance their spiritual condition. (2) To pray for the flock (John 17:9–17; Rom. 1:9; Eph. 1:16; 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:3). (3) To administer the ordinances of the Lord’s house in their deep spiritual meaning: baptism (Rom. 6:3–6), foot washing (John 13:3–17), the Lord’s Supper (Matt. 26:26–30; 1 Cor. 11:23–30). (4) To preserve the truth of the gospel in the church (Jude 3; 1 Tim. 1:3, 4; 4:6, 7, 16; 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:14; 2:25; 3:14–17). (5) To seek the conversion of souls, adding them to the flock (Acts 2:47; 11:24; cf. Luke 14:23).

Church of God. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 10) among the readings “church of God,” “church of the Lord,” and “church of the Lord and God,” the latter being a characteristic combination of the two earlier readings. Paul often refers to Jesus Christ as God (Rom. 9:5; Titus 2:13; cf. Col. 1:15–20; 2:9; Phil. 2:5–11). On this textual problem see also *Problems in Bible Translation*, pp. 205–208.

Purchased. Christ purchased the redeemed, who constitute the church, with His own blood (1 Peter 1:18, 19). He who knew no sin, was made to be sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21). He has taken us who were dead in trespasses and sins, and has raised us into heavenly places (Eph. 2:1–6). We have been “bought with a price” (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; cf. 2 Peter 2:1).

With his own blood. The Greek phrase is ambiguous and may also be translated “with the blood of his own [Son].” This translation would suit the reading “church of God” earlier in the verse, whereas the other translation either ascribes deity to Christ (a concept that other references make plain) or suits the reading “church of the Lord.” “The blood is the life” (Deut. 12:23). When the blood was shed, life ceased. The sacrificial animal died, its blood flowing upon the ground, prefiguring the death of Christ for sinners. So Christ’s death on Calvary’s cross, when blood with water issued from His heart, broken by separation from His Father (Matt. 27:46; John 19:34, 35), is spoken of as saving blood (1 Cor. 1:17, 18), purchasing blood (Acts 20:28), and cleansing blood (1 John 1:7). Since the death of Christ was the atoning sacrifice that made salvation possible, the church should be supervised by its pastors with particular devotion and care. As Christ loved the church and sacrificed Himself for it, so must the minister in the church love it and sacrifice himself in service for it.

29. I know. By his knowledge of human nature and by experience, as well as by the light given him by the Spirit of God.

After my departing. Paul had been a guardian to the churches he had gathered together. Their danger would increase in his absence. So Israel was faithful during the days of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him (Judges 2:7), but afterward came apostasy.

Grievous wolves. Here Paul is paralleling Christ's allegory of the good shepherd. The hireling is no match for the wolf (John 10:12), but the true shepherd of the flock stands his ground in defense of the helpless sheep. Christ, knowing the acute danger of such attacks, warned of it (Matt. 7:15). The elders of Ephesus are to guard the sheep against the wolves that Paul foresees will enter from outside the sheepfold of the church. His warning to these elders does not stand alone. He had already written to the Thessalonians that a great apostasy was to come (2 Thess. 2:1–12), and wrote later to Timothy, alerting him to coming dangers of the same sort (1 Tim. 4:1–3; 2 Tim. 3:1–15). The apostle John, in the last moments of the first apostolic century, saw apostasy as a danger current in his day (1 John 4:1), and in the Revelation he relates visions he was given of appalling decay and paganizing of the church (Rev. 2:12–24; 6:3–11; 17; 18). See pp. 64–67.

30. Of your own selves. The wolves of the previous verse, which were to attack the flock without, represent the Judaizing and paganizing influences that by A.D. 400 had radically changed popular Christianity. Now Paul warns of apostatizing influences coming from within, like Demas (2 Tim. 4:10), and Hymenaeus and Philetus (2 Tim. 2:17), whose words ate “as doth a canker,” and who overthrew “the faith of some.”

Draw away. Gr. *apospaō*, “to draw off,” “to tear away.” Those members of the Christian church who themselves had fallen away, would draw off others to share their apostasy.

31. Watch. The words seem a meaningful repetition of the admonition of the Lord (Matt. 24:42; 25:13), of which Paul must have been aware. It was particularly appropriate addressed to the elders of Ephesus, whom Paul had just called “overseers” (see on Acts 20:28). Paul emphasizes the vigilance that is to characterize those who guide and pastor the church.

Three years. For three years Paul had set an example of watchfulness before the Ephesian church. The history in Acts accounts for three months of preaching in the synagogue (ch. 19:8), two years in the school of Tyrannus (v. 10), and an unspecified period immediately preceding and following the riot of Demetrius. This and the well-known Jewish method of inclusive reckoning (see Vol. I, p. 182) sufficiently account for Paul's general statement of “three years.” See pp. 101, 102.

To warn. Gr. *noutheteō*, literally, “to put in mind,” “to exhort,” “to admonish.” Paul set danger and duty clearly before them.

With tears. Paul's deep sympathy, in the literal sense of “sharing in the feelings,” is evident in much that he writes (see Acts 20:19; 2 Cor. 11:29). Paul is here making high claims of pastoral efficiency and solicitude, yet none of the elders dispute his statement.

32. Commend. Gr. *paratithēmi*, “to place beside,” “to entrust,” here used in the sense of “commit” (cf. 1 Peter 4:19). So Paul has teachers “committing” to others the truth they have received (cf. 2 Tim. 1:14), which becomes a “commitment,” or “deposit” (*parathēkē*) of faith (2 Tim. 1:12) against the day of Christ.

To God. Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the reading “to the Lord.” The readings are equivalent in spiritual significance.

The word of his grace. This may be considered an adjectival phrase meaning “his gracious word.” A parallel expression is “the word of his power” (Heb. 1:3), or “his powerful word”—the word that has the power to uphold the universe. Similarly, “the word of his grace” is able to accomplish the salvation of those who believe on Him (Jude

24). The word “grace” (*charis*) is often closely connected with the word “power” (*dunamis*), as in 2 Cor. 12:9. The “word” (*logos*) is not personalized here as meaning Jesus Christ; but when He speaks, His word is full of grace as well as power (cf. James 1:21; Heb. 4:12; Jer. 23:29). For a discussion of the word *charis* see on Rom. 3:24.

To build you up. God is the great Master Builder. The foundation is Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:11). The gifts of the Holy Spirit working through men spiritually endowed are provided for this “edifying” or upbuilding (Eph. 2:20; 4:11–13). The result is the completion of the church or the assembly of the saints (1 Peter 2:5, 9, 10; Heb. 12:22–24; Eph. 5:27), and of the character of Christ in each one of those believing in Him (Phil. 3:8–14; Eph. 3:14–21; 2 Peter 1:3–8).

An inheritance. Rather, “the inheritance.” The figure refers to the apportionment of land among the Israelites (Joshua 14–19). But the people of God failed through lack of faith to occupy their land successfully (Judges 1; 2; Heb. 3; 4). The inheritance of the children of God is to be as definitely considered a possession as was that held out to the Hebrews, and it is to be claimed with certainty in Christ. Compare Paul’s development of the thought of inheritance in Ephesians. There is the “earnest of our inheritance” (Eph. 1:14), which is the pledge of salvation brought by the Holy Spirit; the “inheritance in the saints” (Eph. 1:18), the present spiritual possession of the Christian; the “inheritance in the kingdom” (Eph. 5:5), to be entered into at the second advent of Christ (Matt. 25:34; Luke 12:32). At the second advent the saints of God will enter heaven, and reign for 1,000 years (1 Thess. 4:16, 17; Rev. 20:4, 5), then they will inhabit the earth made new (Rev. 21:1–4).

Them which are sanctified. Rather, “those who have been sanctified,” for the sanctification of the children of God is to be completed, in Christ, before the ultimate inheritance is entered upon. To be sanctified is to be a saint, a holy one (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1), and the expression is applied to the whole body of believers. “Sanctification is the work of a lifetime” (COL 65), but since no one knows what his life span will be, the work of sanctification should be in the believer’s experience a prompt and unhindered work. Sanctification is at the hand of God (Ex. 31:13; Eze. 37:28; 1 Thess. 5:23; Jude 1), according to His will (Heb. 10:10), in Christ (1 Cor. 1:2; 6:11; Eph. 5:26; Heb. 13:12), by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:11; Rom. 15:16), through the Word of God (John 17:17).

¹⁶

as, “therewith to be content” (Phil. 4:11). He never made “a gain” of the Corinthians (2 Cor. 12:17). He desired no “gift” of the Philippians (Phil. 4:17). Rather than accept support, Paul labored with his own hands, and he puts forth this fact in the next verse as his defense against the charge that his efforts to spread the gospel were actually motivated by covetousness for other men’s wealth.

Silver, or gold, or apparel. Oriental wealth was frequently reckoned in terms of such possessions. It was so with Naaman (2 Kings 5:5) and with others (Gen. 24:53; 45:22; 2 Kings 7:8; cf. Matt. 6:19; James 5:2, 3).

¹⁶Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Ac 18:20). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

34. *Ye yourselves know.* Paul's contact with the Ephesian believers had been of such intimacy and duration that they knew that what he was saying concerning himself was true.

These hands have ministered. This expression points to Paul's custom of working to support himself, and is introduced as part of his defense against the charge of covetousness. Paul had worked at his trade of tentmaker with Aquila and Priscilla at Corinth (ch. 18:1–3). He had previously labored at Ephesus (1 Cor. 4:12) and at Thessalonica (1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8). The present verse gives evidence that he had labored thus at Ephesus. Paul had worked not only to provide for himself but also to provide for some who were with him and who needed his help. Perhaps Timothy, with his "often infirmities" (1 Tim. 5:23), was one of these. Paul did not feel that it was in the least to his discredit that he should work to meet his expenses while preaching the gospel, when the church had not yet learned to support its ministers.

Necessities. Gr. *chreiai*, "needs," "necessities." As Paul and his companions went from place to place they were content when their bare needs had been met, the while they ministered the riches of divine grace to others. For the luxuries this world had to offer they had no desire.

35. *Have shewed.* Gr. *hupodeiknumi*, "to show [by example]."

All things. Paul's instruction to the Ephesian believers had been not only in doctrine but also in matters of practical godliness—self-reliance, with faith in God, and Christian charity.

Support. Gr. *antilambanō*, "to take hold of, opposite," a graphic expression of the idea "to help." The admonition comes in the setting of Paul's physical labors for others.

The weak. Or, "the sick," "the afflicted." The word can be applied to one who is "weak in the faith" (Rom. 14:1), but since Paul has just referred here to bodily labor (Acts 20:34, 35), the conclusion is inescapable that here the "weak" are those who are literally poor and infirm. The remainder of the verse leads to the same conclusion. This responsibility the members of the apostolic church were more ready to meet than were those at some later times (see on ch. 6:1, 2).

To remember. Paul reinforces his admonition to the elders to care for the needy, by quoting an otherwise unrecorded saying of his Lord. The quotation comes from Paul's lips with inspired apostolic authority, which cannot be said of the various statements that tradition has attributed to Christ. Whether Paul heard the statement from one who had heard Jesus say it, or from Jesus Himself during one of His direct revelations to Paul, is not stated. "Remember" implies a previous general knowledge of the saying. This statement is one of the "many other things" (John 21:25) that Jesus said and did, that are not recorded in the Gospels.

How he said. Literally, "that he himself said." In the Greek this expression is emphatic.

Blessed. The blessing is a two-way benediction. The receiver is blessed or made happy, whether the need is spiritual or physical. But the greater blessing is upon the giver. There is a joy in sharing. The giver is drawn away from his own interests, gives play to the better part of his nature, and receives the approval of God (Matt. 25:34–40). Since God is the unlimited Provider (Gen. 22:8–13; Ps. 23; John 3:16, 34), giving is a Godlike act.

36. Kneeled down. A normal posture in prayer (Ps. 95:6; Dan. 6:10), appropriate as a mark of humility before the Divine Majesty to whom prayer is addressed, and assumed especially in solemn moments (2 Chron. 6:13; 1 Kings 8:54; Luke 22:41). Paul is described as kneeling also when he bade farewell to the brethren at Tyre (Acts 21:5; cf. Eph. 3:14).

Prayed with them all. Luke, though giving full summarizations of public addresses and even conversations, did not record the words of Paul's prayer with the elders of Ephesus. Its theme may be suggested by Eph. 3:14–21. Paul's burden of prayer for his companions and converts appears in Acts 28:8; Rom. 1:9, 10; Eph. 1:16–19; Phil. 1:4, 5; 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:3; Philemon 4–6.

37. They all wept sore. Literally, "there was much weeping by all." No more impressive evidence could have been given of their high esteem and tender affection.

Fell on Paul's neck. An Eastern form of embrace at meeting or parting (see Gen. 33:4; 45:14; 46:29; Luke 15:20). Paul's friends loved him.

38. Sorrowing. Or, "being in anguish," "being tormented," "distressing themselves."

See his face no more. See on v. 25.

Accompanied him. Literally, "sent him forth." The same Greek words are translated "brought on ... way" in chs. 15:3; 21:5. The elders of Ephesus remained with him as long as possible, going with him to the ship in which he was to sail. See on ch. 15:3.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1 AA 295
- 3 AA 389
- 3–6AA 390
- 3–38AA 389–396
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- 20, 21 AA 364; ChS 116; GW 188; WM 64
- 21 4T 395
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30 CW 152; Ev 593; MM 98; 5T 291
31 Ev 434; WM 78
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33 CH 410; 4T 574
33–35AA 352
34 Ed 66
35 AA 342; 3T 401; 4T 57
35–38AA 396
36 GW 178

CHAPTER 21

1 *Paul will not by any means be dissuaded from going to Jerusalem. 9 Philip's daughters prophetesses. 17 Paul cometh to Jerusalem: 27 where he is apprehended, and in great danger, 31 but by the chief captain is rescued, and permitted to speak to the people.*

1. *Were gotten from them.* The Greek verb suggests parting with an effort, and the phrase may be translated “having torn ourselves away from them.”

Straight course. Evidently with a favoring wind and tide.

Cos. Rather, Cos, a small island off the coast of Asia Minor, at the entrance to the Greek Archipelago (see Paul's Third Missionary Tour). Anciently there was on the island a temple to Aesculapius, with a medical school. It was noted too for its wine, silk production, and fabrics.

The day following. Luke, with his evident interest in sea travel, is careful to keep note concerning the days required for the journey (cf. ch. 20:6, 7, 15).

Rhodes. The noted island at the southwest corner of Asia Minor (see Paul's Third Missionary Tour) which became famous during the Peloponnesian War. An ancient name of the island was Asteria, the place of stars. The name Rhodes was acquired because of the profusion of roses that grew on the island. Its timber, useful for shipbuilding, enabled its citizens to develop a strong navy. A crossroads point, important commercially and for military purposes, it also had a great sun temple, and its coinage bore the head of Apollo as the sun-god. A huge metal statue of Helios, the sun-god, more than 100 ft. high, was known as the Colossus of Rhodes and was called one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Erected by Chares about the year 280 B.C., it was thrown down by an earthquake in 224 B.C., and lay supine for nearly 900 years. In the 7th century A.D. it was sold by the conquering Saracens to a Jew, who is reported to have used 900 camels in hauling it away piecemeal.

Patara. There is slight textual evidence (cf. p. 10) for the addition of “and Myra,” perhaps by transference from Paul's voyage to Rome (ch. 27:5). Patara was a city on the coast of the province of Lycia (see Paul's Third Missionary Tour), and was noted for the worship of Apollo. Lying near the mouth of the river Xanthus, it was the port for the city of that name. Here Paul and his company transferred from the coastal vessel to a ship bound for Phoenicia.

2. *Phenicia.* The Maritime region, north of Palestine (see Palestine During the Ministry of Jesus). Its chief cities were Tyre and Sidon.

3. *Had discovered.* Preferably, “had sighted.”

Cyprus. See on ch. 13:4–6.

Syria. The ancient land lying north of Palestine, west of the Euphrates river. Luke includes Tyre of Phoenicia in greater Syria.

Tyre. A very ancient seaport of Phoenicia, about five days' sail from Patara. It is noticed as having been a strongly fortified place in Joshua's day (Joshua 19:29). It was famous in connection with the building of Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 7:13–45; 2 Chron. 2:11–16). The city was besieged by the Assyrians and by the Babylonians, and was taken later by Alexander the Great.

To unlade her burden. Or, "unloading its cargo."

4. Finding disciples. Literally, "having looked up the disciples." This can scarcely mean disciples who happened to be there, but an aggregation of Tyrian Christians. Hence this is the first specific mention of a church at Tyre, though one had probably existed there for many years (see chs. 11:19; 15:3).

Seven days. Paul was desirous of being at Jerusalem for Pentecost (ch. 20:16), but realizing that he had time, and doubtless under the urging of the church at Tyre, he spent a week there.

Who said. Or, "who kept telling." Perhaps these prophetic warnings were given on the Sabbath or at other meetings of the church of Tyre, and evidently by men possessing the gifts of the Spirit (see Gal. 6:1; cf. pp. 26, 40).

Through the Spirit. This cannot mean the human "spirit" of the men, but the Holy Spirit of God, so prominent a Personage in the Acts (cf. chs. 2:2–4; 5:3; 8:39; 10:44, 45; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6, 7).

Should not go up. This must evidently not be understood as a prohibition by the Holy Spirit of continuing his journey to Jerusalem, such as prevented him from entering Asia and Bithynia (ch. 16:6, 7), for Paul would not have disobeyed a direct forbidding of the Holy Spirit. Rather, it must be viewed as a warning, more definitely given by Agabus at Caesarea a little later (ch. 21:10, 11).

5. Accomplished those days. The "seven days" of v. 4. The Greek verb here rendered "accomplished," and translated "furnished" in 2 Tim. 3:17 (RSV, "equipped"), has the primary sense of making ready, equipping, or fitting out, as of a ship. Hence some conclude that the ship required a week of refitting at Tyre. However, in a time expression, as here, it is better translated, "to complete," "to finish."

Departed and went our way. Literally, "having departed, we were going on our way."

They all brought us. The whole church of Tyre, including wives and children, escorted Paul and his companions out of the city to the shore (see on chs. 15:3; 20:38).

Kneeled ..., and prayed. See on ch. 20:36.

6. Taken our leave. Literally, "saluted ourselves off," that is, said our farewells to one another.

Home again. Gr. *eis ta idia*, "to the own [things]," that is, to their own homes (see on John 1:11).

7. Course. Gr. *ploos*, "voyage"; here either the voyage from Tyre or the entire voyage from Macedonia. Paul and his company apparently accomplished the remainder of their journey, from Ptolemais to Jerusalem, by land.

Ptolemais. The name given by Greek and Roman rulers to the town anciently known as Accho (Judges 1:31). Later it was named by the crusaders St. Jean d'Acre, or simply Acre. In OT times it was an important town, but was surpassed when Caesarea was built by Herod the Great.

The brethren. There was a church also at Ptolemais. Since the city lay on the great highway connecting the coastal cities, early believers who were dispersed during the

persecution following Stephen's death doubtless visited the city and won converts (see ch. 11:19).

8. Paul's company. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading, "and leaving the next day, we came to Caesarea."

Unto Caesarea. See on ch. 10:1. The inference is that the journey was by land (see on v. 7). There was then an excellent highway between Ptolemais and Caesarea. For Paul's seeming preference for land travel cf. ch. 20:13.

Philip the evangelist. Philip was one of the original "servers of tables," or deacons, and in the list of deacons his name follows Stephen's (ch. 6:5). For Philip this work had merged or perhaps disappeared in that of the "evangelist" (see ch. 8:5–13, 26–40). The designation is not to be thought of as a title, but as a description of his current work, the result of his reception from the Holy Spirit of that particular gift (see Eph. 4:11; see on Acts 13:1). The importance of this gift is indicated by Paul's exhortation to Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim. 4:5) and to "stir up the gift of God, which is in thee" (2 Tim. 1:6).

Philip's labors as an evangelist doubtless took him far beyond the limits of Caesarea, where he was last seen (Acts 8:40). He may have preached up and down the coasts of Palestine and Phoenicia, along with others who were scattered abroad during the persecution following Stephen's death (see ch. 11:19). This is probably the first time Philip and Luke had met, and likewise also the first time Philip and Paul had crossed paths.

One of the seven. The Seven of ch. 6 are still looked upon as a distinct group. Whether Luke meant this in the organizational sense, or commemoratively, the fact is that the church has maintained the order of deacons ever since then.

Abode with him. Philip's residence was evidently at Caesarea. Luke, the historian of the early church, doubtless made the most of this opportunity to gather valuable information concerning the state of the church from Philip and his family.

9. Four daughters. These women had the gift of prophecy (see on Acts 13:1; cf. 1 Cor. 14:1, 3, 4; Eph. 2:20; 4:11). The verb "prophesy" means to "speak forth," that is, for God (see on Gen. 20:7; Matt. 11:9). A prophet may, or may not, foretell events. The Bible presents a number of instances where women have been entrusted with this most desirable of the gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 14:1). Miriam, the sister of Moses, was a prophetess (Ex. 15:20), as was Deborah, with whose inspired aid Barak conquered the Canaanites (Judges 4:4). Isaiah's wife was a prophetess (Isa. 8:3), also Huldah, who aided Hilkiah the priest in the reforms of Josiah, king of Judah (2 Kings 22:14; 2 Chron. 34:22). Anna the prophetess greeted her infant Lord (Luke 2:36–38). False prophetesses are also mentioned (Neh. 6:14; Rev. 2:20). Joel foretold the pouring out of the gift of prophecy in the latter times upon the "handmaids" (Joel 2:28, 29).

10. Many days. Or, "more days," implying a longer stay than first planned.

Judæa. In the restricted sense; the former territory of Judah, not the Roman province of Judea that included Caesarea.

Agabus. Doubtless he is the same man who had prophesied the famine (cf. ch. 11:28). The coincidence of the unusual name and the unusual gift hardly allows recognition of two different persons.

11. Girdle. The girdle was a band or sash of linen, wool, or leather, worn about the waist to draw together the loose folds of the Oriental robe, particularly if work was to be

done or a walk taken. It was made ample enough in size to provide pouchlike room for carrying money, writing tablets, stylus, etc.

Bound. Here was a dramatic way to present a prophecy, a method used under divine direction by Isaiah (Isa. 20), Jeremiah (Jer. 13:1–11; 18:1–10; 19:1–3; 27:2, 3; 28), and Ezekiel (Eze. 4:1–13; 5:1–4).

The Holy Ghost. The men of the apostolic church were conscious of the direct, personal, dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit in their thinking, saying, and doing. His presence was as real to them as that of Jesus had been to His disciples. Compare John 16:7; Acts 2:2–4; 5:3; 13:2.

So shall the Jews. This was fulfilled. See v. 33; ch. 24.

The Gentiles. The Romans into whose hands Paul would come when Agabus' prophecy was fulfilled, had both the military and the civil administration of conquered Palestine. Paul was undaunted by the warning and undeterred by the danger.

12. We, and they. Both Paul and his company, including Luke, and the church of Caesarea, heard the prophecy, which must have been publicly made, perhaps in a Sabbath meeting.

Besought. Or, "kept entreating."

13. What mean ye? The clause reads, literally, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart?" Here "to break mine heart" means not so much to break Paul's spirit by sorrow, but to weaken his resolve to fulfill his mission at Jerusalem.

I am ready. In the Greek, the pronoun "I" is emphasized. This indicates Paul's inflexible determination to do what he deemed right, and to account the cost in suffering worth while (cf. Acts 20:24; also Jesus' attitude [Luke 9:51]).

To die. This expresses the true spirit of the martyr.

For the name. Compare Phil. 3:7, 8. The apostles and their fellows did exploits in the name. Compare Acts 4:12; 5:41; see on ch. 3:16.

14. Will ... be done. The church saw that no appeal would avail and that Paul's face was set to go to Jerusalem. The divine will was made clear in Paul's own resolve to proceed to Jerusalem in spite of threatening dangers. Doing the will of God brings inward peace, though it may result in external turmoil and suffering. Compare Luke 22:42.

15. Took up our carriages. Rather, "equipped ourselves," or "took up our baggage."

Went up. Or, "began going up," or "were going up," that is, were continuing the journey to Jerusalem.

16. Brought with them one Mnason. Rather, "bringing [us] to one Mnason." This early (rather than "old") disciple, of whom nothing else is known, had left Cyprus and made his home either at Jerusalem or at a village on the way to Jerusalem. The name was common among the Greeks, and he may have been an early Hellenistic convert.

Should lodge. This verse indicates that some of the Caesarean believers accompanied Paul and his friends all the way to Jerusalem (64 mi.) in order to introduce Paul to their friend Mnason, an early disciple whom Paul had never met, who was to be his host. This was not Paul's first visit to Jerusalem; he was not unknown to the church there and needed no introduction to a stranger in order to have a lodging place in Jerusalem. This apparent discrepancy in the story may be understood and harmonized by consideration of factors of geography and social custom of the day.

The 64-mi. distance from Caesarea to Jerusalem was too far for one day's journey, but could be covered in two or three days. Hospitality customs would not have required

the Caesarean believers to accompany Paul and his group all the way to Jerusalem in order merely to introduce him to their friend, who was to be his host. It is far more likely that they escorted him one day's journey, to the home of their friend Mnason in a village on the way, where Paul and his company lodged that one night.

This proposed solution to the problem is supported by a variant textual reading. Instead of "and brought ... lodge," there is some textual evidence (cf. p. 10) for the reading, "and these brought us to the one with whom we should lodge; and being brought to a certain village, we came to a certain Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple." Verse 17 logically follows this reading, indicating the progression of the journey and Paul's reception by the brethren in Jerusalem.

17. Received us gladly. The members of the Jerusalem church, whom Paul had met on his previous visits, were delighted to welcome him.

18. James; and all the elders. As quickly as possible Paul called upon James, apparently the presiding elder, and the other leaders of the church at Jerusalem. These may have been those of the apostles who were still resident there, rather than elected "local" church elders (cf. ch. 14:23). But cf. ch. 15:2, 4, 6, where both apostles and elders are specifically mentioned. This James, doubtless "the Lord's brother," had been chairman of the Council of Jerusalem (see on Acts 12:17; see Acts 15:13; Gal. 1:19).

19. He declared particularly. Literally, "he kept relating one by one." Compare Acts 15:3; Prov. 15:30. Paul's report would inform the elders of what had occurred in his experience since his Jerusalem visit of Acts 18:22, and would include reference to the gifts the apostle was bringing from the Gentile Christians to the needy Jewish Christians of Palestine.

20. Glorified. Or, "they began glorifying," apparently by a general expression of thanksgiving as Paul concluded. There is rightly no mention of praise for Paul.

The Lord. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading "God."

Paul, a Prisoner, Taken to Caesarea, c. A.D. 58–60

17

¹⁷Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Ac 20:33). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.



Paul's Arrest and Hearings at Jerusalem c. A.D. 58–60¹⁸

¹⁸Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Ac 21:21). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.



How many thousands of Jews. Literally, “how many tens of thousands.” This gives an idea of the remarkable progress the gospel had made among the Jews. But these round numbers may include more than the Jewish converts living at Jerusalem, for thousands of Jews could well have come in for Pentecost, as had Paul. For the “multitudes” of believers see chs. 6:1, 7; 9:31; 11:21, 24; 14:1; 17:4.

Zealous of the law. These Christian Jews had not been liberated by the Council of Jerusalem, as had the Gentile Christians, from the ceremonies of the Jewish religion (see on ch. 15:19–21). They were still carrying on, at least in some measure, the OT ritual, and doubtless were following, also, many of the traditional requirements of the Pharisees. Regarding the latter, see Vol. V, pp. 51, 52, 55. Paul describes himself as having lived “after the most straitest sect” of his religion, that is, as a Pharisee (ch. 26:5). It is evident that it was from this class that most of the early converts to Christ had come, but they, unlike Paul, were still legalists.

21. Are informed. Preferably, “were told,” or possibly, “were taught.” Paul’s Judaizing opponents had not only been “zealous of the law” (v. 20), but apparently had also been zealous in spreading exaggerated and damaging reports concerning his theological teachings. No wonder Paul admonishes so earnestly against judging one another concerning performance of ceremonies in religion (Rom. 14:1–10; Col. 2:16). He himself suffered severely at the hands of zealous legalistic critics. Although professing to be Christians, these self-appointed judges had no experience in the gospel of Christ, for they lacked faith. And to do the works of religion without faith, is sin (Rom. 14:23).

Thou teachest ... to forsake Moses. Literally, “you are teaching apostasy from Moses.” This was the charge circulated against Paul, and no more serious charge could be

laid before Jews, earnest in their religion. It aroused resentment on the grounds of patriotism, partisanship, historical tradition, social relationships, and public law, as well as the deepest religious feelings. The very fact that these multitudes (see v. 20) of Jews had accepted Jesus as the Messiah, who should restore all things, evidently made them the more eager to maintain the requirements and rites of Judaism, and to fear and repudiate Paul the more completely as an apostate from both race and religion.

Ought not to circumcise. This was a specific charge, illustrating the preceding generalization. According to this charge Paul was contravening, not a tradition, but the covenant sign of the Jews, embedded in the law itself.

Walk after the customs. Compare on ch. 6:14. Here Paul was alleged to have attacked the detailed observances growing out of the law, and the traditional practices that had come in as inevitable accretions. These were serious charges, believed earnestly by the multitude. As applied to Paul's teaching of the Jews themselves, and as regards his personal conduct in religion, the charges were easily refuted (chs. 22:3; 23:1, 6; 24:11–16; 25:10, 11; 26:4–7, 22), though refutation was unsuccessful because of violence growing out of prejudice. Paul's attitude toward the maintenance of the ceremonial requirements by Jews was that of the Council of Jerusalem (ch. 15); namely, let the Jewish Christians continue to practice whatever rites their conscience demanded of them. But Paul insisted that the Gentile converts be free. The man who was justified by faith would in no way be helped heavenward by legalistic practices (Rom. 2:24–29; Gal. 4:1–11; 5:1–6; Col. 2:16–22).

His own rule of personal adaptation (1 Cor. 9:19–23) led Paul to continue to live like a Jew, particularly among Jews. He allowed the Jew in the Christian church liberty to continue his ceremonial practices until he saw their meaninglessness in the presence of the gospel of faith (Rom. 14:1–10; 1 Cor. 7:17–24). Paul himself had taken the Nazirite vow (Acts 18:18). He had had Timothy circumcised (ch. 16:3). There was no basis for the charge that Paul taught the Jewish Christians “not to circumcise their children.” The charge was a fabrication of his enemies.

However, his teaching of the gospel could not but result eventually in the Jews' also giving up performances and ceremonies as no longer meaningful. Christ's teaching was the foundation for that of the apostle. Our Lord instructed His followers to have a righteousness that should “exceed” that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 5:20); He condemned outward practices of religion for their own sake (Matt. 6:1–7); and He insisted that God must be worshiped “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23). Paul negated a religion of “touch not; taste not; handle not,” as developed and enforced by men (Col. 2:20–22); of rules and scruples concerning things that had no real moral and spiritual significance (Rom. 14:1–10; Gal. 4:9–11; Heb. 9:9, 10), and which in view of the life and sacrifice of Christ had ceased to have meaning (Col. 2:8–17).

Sacrifices and circumcision had been instituted by divine command. The sacrifices ceased to have meaning when He to whom they pointed died as the guilt bearer for men. The Temple as the place of offering, and the priests as the offerers (Dan. 9:24–27; Matt. 27:51; Heb. 8:13; 9:11–15), likewise lost their significance. Circumcision was an outward sign of a covenant relation between a nation, or people, and their God (Rom. 4:11). Although the rite was individually applied, the reception was not by faith on the part of the infant recipient, and circumcision was only a tribal or national sign. Hence it lost its meaning when the worship and service of God, in Christ, was shown to be no longer a

matter of tribe or nation (Gal. 3:28, 29; Col. 3:11), but one of individual acceptance, by faith, of Christ Jesus the Saviour (Rom. 3:22–24; Gal 3:26, 27; Eph. 2:8). Again, with the revelation in Christ of the new covenant of salvation, the way of faith (Jer. 31:31–34; 2 Cor. 3:6–9; Heb. 8:6–13), the old covenant sign, circumcision, was no longer significant. The Jew who would “follow on to know the Lord” (Hosea 6:3) by faith must inevitably cease to regard circumcision as having any meaning in the spiritual life.

Hence “circumcision is nothing,” Paul taught, so far as a man’s relationship to God is concerned (1 Cor. 7:19; cf. Rom. 3:31; 8:4; 1 John 2:3). In the presence of the gospel of Christ, circumcision (and, for that matter, any performance for its own sake) has no reason for being (Gal. 5:6; 6:12–17). Jew and Gentile are all one in Christ (Gal. 3:16, 27–29; Col. 2:9–14), who has broken down the “middle wall of partition” between them (Eph. 2:11–17). All must be saved by Christ alone, “by grace . . . through faith” (Eph. 2:4–10; cf. Rom. 3:26–30). Paul did not tell the Jew not to practice circumcision, but if the Christian Jew of faith and spiritual insight should ask, “Why, being a man of faith, saved by Christ through grace, should I circumcise my child?” the answer would have to be, “For no reason, in Christ, but only for the sake of your brethren who do not yet understand.” So Paul believed and practiced. It can be said, therefore, that the accusations of the Judaizers against Paul were false, but that their fears concerning the future of all Jewish rites were justified.

22. *The multitude.* Rather, “a multitude.” Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for omitting the clause “the multitude must needs come together.” Without this, the context gives no hint of any gathering.

They will hear. Word of Paul’s arrival would go out, not necessarily through a meeting of the saints, but by the news spreading among the numerous Jewish believers (cf. v. 20).

23. *Do therefore this.* The Jerusalem leaders believed that the advice they were giving was for the best. There was no intent to involve Paul in trouble, but rather to counteract the prejudice against him, for which they seemed to think he was in some way to blame (AA 403). They should rather have recognized that God had worked mightily through Paul, and endeavored, themselves, to counteract the opposition to him.

Four men. These four men were evidently members of the Jewish Christian community, another illustration of the hold that the Jewish ceremonies still had upon the converts in Judea. The four Jewish brethren were already part way through the accomplishment of their vows, but another was permitted to join them under such circumstances, particularly if he bore the expenses of those already performing their vows.

24. *Purify thyself with them.* This part of the counsel, when carried out, would be a tacit admission by Paul that he stood in need of cleansing before God. This might be a hindrance to him, not a help, in winning acceptance by the Jews. It would mean entering into the Nazirite abstinence and shaving his head at the close of the time (see on ch. 18:18).

Be at charges. Paul was to assume the expenses of the men who were performing their vows. It meant the cost of the ceremonial shaving, for which the Levite barber would make a charge, and of the sacrifices: two doves or pigeons, a lamb, a ewe lamb, a ram, a basket of unleavened bread, a meal offering, and a drink offering (Num. 6:9–21).

Shaves their heads. At the conclusion of the vow the head was shaved, and when the offerings were made, the hair was burned in the fire lighted under the ram of the peace offering.

All may know. This participation of Paul in the ceremonies of the vows was to convince the Jews that Paul was not an “apostate” from Moses (see on v. 21), and that the things said against him were “nothing.”

Keepst the law. The “Law,” or Torah, was the center of Jewish thinking, life, and religion. The Torah, or teaching, compassed all the instruction given in the writings of Moses. Paul was reputed to have gone against the Law. The only way he could win Jewish approval, the leaders at Jerusalem thought, would be to show that he was faithful to it.

25. Touching the Gentiles. James, the Lord’s brother, who was spokesman for the elders in making to Paul the suggestion to purify himself, also had presided at the Council of Jerusalem (ch. 15:13). He assured Paul that there was no question now of the freedom of the Gentiles: they did not need to follow the Jewish observances, and he reminded Paul of the terms of the liberating decision (see on v. 20).

And from strangled. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for omitting these words.

26. Paul took the men. Paul thought that he was doing a wise thing in being a Jew among Jews (1 Cor. 9:19–23). But actually he was inconsistent here, for he participated, not to reveal his own belief, but to satisfy others who were “zealous of the law” (Acts 21:20). Compare AA 405, 406.

Signify the accomplishment. That is, to declare to the officiating priests of the Temple when the vows would be fulfilled. Seven days were required for the completion of the term of the four men (v. 27). According to Josephus (*War* ii. 15. 1 [313]) the whole period for such vows was 30 days; there were now only 7 days remaining.

27. Jews ... of Asia. Paul’s preaching of the gospel in and around Ephesus had aroused the Jews (as in ch. 19:22, 23). It was some of these who, having come to Jerusalem for the feast, recognized Paul in the Temple and aroused the people against him. They seized him, with the marks of the purification process upon him, while he was quietly waiting for the last day of the seven to come (ch. 24:18).

Stirred up. Or, “began stirring up.”

All the people. Rather, “all the multitude.” Not the “thousands of Jews ... which believe” (v. 20), but the crowds, who, as the day of Pentecost approached, filled the precincts of the Temple.

28. Crying out. The cry was raised as though Paul were guilty of some serious crime of disorder.

Against the people, ... law, ... place. The same charge that had been leveled against Stephen (ch. 6:13, 14), and doubtless against Paul on many previous occasions (see chs. 13:45; 14:2; 17:5, 6; 18:6, 12–15; 19:9). Saul, who had once brought charges against Stephen and consented to his death (ch. 26:10; AA 98, 102, 116), is now Paul, standing courageously in the face of a similar accusation, under threat of a similar death.

Brought Greeks. He was thought to have brought uncircumcised Gentiles into the holy precincts, inside the “middle wall of partition” (Eph. 2:14), which separated the outer court of the Gentiles from the area where only Jews were allowed to enter (Josephus *Antiquities* xv. 11. 5). Inscriptions in Greek and Hebrew placed on that

partition wall warned non-Jews not to proceed farther (see Vol. V, p. 67). See illustration facing p. 449.

29. Trophimus an Ephesian. Trophimus was a companion of Paul, having traveled out of Macedonia with him (ch. 20:4). Some of the accusing Jews probably had known Trophimus in his home city. They had now seen him with Paul in Jerusalem, but there is no reason to believe that Paul had brought the man into the precincts forbidden to Gentiles. His freedom in the gospel never led Paul to ignore the scruples of others (Rom. 14:3–10; 1 Cor. 9:19–23; 10:27–31), nor did his courage degenerate into recklessness. The charge against him was false.

30. City was moved. Luke indicates that this was a tumult of large dimensions, with the reports of Temple desecration spreading like wildfire and the Jews ready to act on what was to them a genuine provocation. The year was about A.D. 58. About eight years later the revolt of the Jews against Rome would begin. The city was already restive.

Took Paul. Or, “seized Paul.”

Drew him. Or, “were dragging him.” Those who seized Paul immediately pulled him out of the sacred area he was supposed to have profaned.

Doors were shut. The Levite gatekeepers shut the gates promptly, not only to guard against further desecration, but to prevent the Temple from becoming the setting of the riot itself, as it sometimes was.

31. To kill him. The men who had seized Paul intended to take his life, even as they had taken the life of Stephen (ch. 7:54–60). In the meantime they beat him (ch. 21:32).

Tidings. Gr. *phasis*, “a disclosure [of secret crime],” “information by report.”

Chief captain. Gr. *chiliarchos*, “leader of a thousand men,” the term for the Roman military tribune, commander of a cohort.

Band. Gr. *speira*, “a cohort” (see on ch. 10:1). This Roman garrison, then considered sufficient, with its armament and strict discipline, to restrain even the turbulent Jews, was lodged in the tower built on a rock at the northwest side of the Temple area. This tower had been built by Herod the Great and named Antonia in honor of the triumvir Mark Antony, notorious for his infatuation with Cleopatra and his defeat at the Battle of Actium. The Tower of Antonia had a turret at each corner and two flights of stairs leading to arcades on the northern and western sides of the Temple. The garrison would be kept on the alert especially at a time like Pentecost, when thousands of strangers were in the city. See Jerusalem in Time of Christ.

An uproar. Although not yet a riot, the tumult was involving the entire city and could easily get out of hand.

32. Soldiers and centurions. The chiliarch, or tribune, took down into the disturbed crowd several hundred soldiers, with a centurion, somewhat like a sergeant, heading each platoon.

Left beating of Paul. Or, “at once stopped beating Paul.” See on v. 31. The presence of the Roman soldiers cowed Paul’s Jewish captors. The incident was not worth a revolt, as even the excited Jews realized.

33. Took him. Or, “arrested him,” “took him into custody.” The idea was not to rescue Paul, but to learn what the trouble was, and to prevent a chief actor in it from being killed before the affair could be properly investigated. But for Paul it was a rescue, as at Corinth (ch. 18:14–17).

Bound. In keeping with Roman practice, a chain was doubtless fastened to each of his arms, with the two ends of the chain held by soldiers guarding Paul (see ch. 12:4, 6). Thus held, Paul was brought before the tribune Lysias (cf. chs. 23:26; 24:7, 22) for a preliminary examination.

Demanded. Rather, “began to inquire,” “began to investigate judicially.”

34. Some cried. Or, “some were crying.” Such a confusion of accounts and accusations was to be expected from an agitated mob, as had previously happened at Ephesus (ch. 19:32).

Castle. Gr. *parembolē*, “that which is cast up,” that is, an encampment (Heb. 13:11, 13; Rev. 20:9) or “the army encamped” (see Heb. 11:34). The transition from these meanings, as military field terms, to the meaning here of “a fortified tower” is similar to the transition from the Latin *castra*, “camps,” to *castellum*, “a fortified place,” “castle.” Paul, though a prisoner, was at least safe in the shelter of the tower. The rescue occurred just in time.

35. Upon the stairs. The soldiers took him as far as one of the stairways leading up from the Temple to the Tower of Antonia (see on v. 31).

Borne of the soldiers. The guard actually had to carry Paul in order to take him out of the hands of the furious Jews, now clearly bent on killing him.

Violence of the people. The agitation of the crowd and the eagerness of the ringleaders to kill Paul became intensified as they saw their victim being taken from them.

36. Away with him. Expressing the mob’s own intent concerning Paul, and their hope that the soldiers would kill him. So the Jewish leaders a generation before had demanded the death of Jesus (Luke 23:18; John 19:15).

37. May I speak? Paul wished to establish his identity with Lysias, the chief captain or tribune, and doubtless to make known the fact that he was a Roman citizen (cf. v. 39; ch. 22:26).

Canst thou speak Greek? The tribune thought Paul could speak only Hebrew (Aramaic), and was surprised to hear him talk Greek. On the other hand, the people were apparently surprised to hear him speak their language (see ch. 22:2). Paul’s Greek was the Koine, the common form of the Greek language that was spoken by the whole Mediterranean world. The NT was written in Koine.

38. That Egyptian. As phrased in Greek, this question anticipates “yes” as an answer. The man here mentioned, notorious with the Roman authorities, was an Egyptian Jew, a professed prophet who, shortly after Felix became procurator, had led a crowd of 30,000 men (if the traditional figure is true) to the Mount of Olives to see the walls of Jerusalem fall down, that they might enter triumphantly (Josephus *Antiquities* xx. 8. 6; *War* ii. 13. 5 [261–2263]). Felix’ soldiers had routed them with great loss, but the leader had escaped.

Four thousand. Either this number should be substituted for Josephus’ 30,000, or understood to indicate the number of those who, having escaped, rallied again to their leader.

Murderers. Gr. *sikarioi*, literally “daggersmen,” that is, cutthroats, assassins. Compare the Latin *sicarii*. These were members of an extremist organization of Jews, the assassins among the Zealots (see Vol. V, pp. 54, 55), who decimated small Roman garrisons where they could do so in sneak attacks at night, and assassinated Jews who refused to lend them support (Josephus *War* ii. 13. 3 [254–258]). Among festival crowds they committed

many murders in broad daylight. In the later siege of Jerusalem they greatly aggravated, by their atrocious and bloody deeds, the horrors of that bitter time.

39. *A Jew of Tarsus.* See on ch. 9:11. For comment on Paul as a Roman citizen see p. 94.

No mean city. Or, “no unmarked city,” “no inconsiderable city.” A legitimate boast, from the cultural as well as the commercial viewpoint. Coins of Tarsus have been found bearing the designation *metropolis autonoma*, “self-governing city.”

Speak unto the people. Paul still hoped, doubtless more for the sake of the gospel and the church than for himself, to make the Jews understand his true attitudes and activities.

40. *Had given ... licence.* Gr. *epitrepō*, “to permit,” “to allow,” “to give leave.” The word is used in the papyri in this sense.

On the stairs. A position above the crowd and comparatively safe, in case they should again react unfavorably—which they did (ch. 22:22–25).

Beckoned with the hand. A gesture designed to silence the mob, implying that Paul wished to speak.

In the Hebrew tongue. That is, in the Aramaic tongue, literally, “dialect.” Now Paul will make a brief defense, upon which his freedom to preach the gospel, if not his very life, may depend. How calm he is, in contrast with the turbulent mob below See Vol. I, p. 30.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–5AA 396
1–40AA 396–408
5 GW 178
8, 10–16AA 397
13 ML 193
17, 18 AA 399
19, 20 AA 402
20–25AA 403
26–28AA 406
29–32AA 407
33–40AA 408

CHAPTER 22

1 *Paul declareth at large, how he was converted to the faith, 17 and called to his apostleship. 22 At the very mentioning of the Gentiles, the people exclaim on him. 24 He should have been scourged, 25 but claiming the privilege of a Roman, he escapeth.*

1. *Brethren, and fathers.* A courteous form of address (see on chs. 1:16; 7:2). Paul purposed to conciliate the turbulent crowd.

Defence. Gr. *apologia*, a speech made in defense against a charge.

2. *Hebrew.* That is, Aramaic, the spoken language of the Jews of that time (see on ch. 21:40).

More silence. His beckoning hand (ch. 21:40), his Aramaic speech, and his courteous language secured for Paul the close attention of the turbulent audience. The sea of human emotion sank suddenly to rest and gave place to an expectant calm.

3. *I am verily.* The word “I” is emphatic. See on ch. 21:39.

Tarsus. See on chs. 6:9; 9:11; 21:39.

Brought up. Probably not as a child, but as a young man. Although born abroad, Paul reached maturity in the conservative atmosphere of the citadel of Judaism.

At the feet. In Paul's day both teacher and pupils sat, the former at a higher level than the latter.

Gamaliel. See on ch. 5:34.

Perfect. Gr. *akribeia*, "exactness," "strictness." Paul assures the crowd that his background is thoroughly Jewish. He fully understands their point of view. See on chs. 23:6; 24:14; 26:3–5.

The law. That is, the Jewish system of religious belief and practice.

Zealous. See on ch. 21:20. Paul knew from personal experience what it meant to be "zealous" for "the law."

As ye all are. Paul assures the listening Jews that they and he have a common ground for reaching an understanding. In a sense, he commends them for their desire to preserve the Temple sacred and inviolate.

4. I persecuted. See on chs. 7:58; 8:1–4; 9:1, 2, 13, 14; 26:10.

This way. See on ch. 9:2.

Unto the death. Paul had once been as "zealous" as they now prove to be.

Into prisons. The plural implies that Saul's persecuting activities were carried on in various cities (see ch. 26:11).

5. The high priest. That is, Ananias (ch. 23:2). According to the chronology of Paul's life adopted by this commentary, Caiaphas (see on Luke 3:2) was still high priest at the time (A.D. 35) of Paul's conversion. Ananias was the seventh high priest since Caiaphas.

Estate of the elders. Gr. *presbuterion*, "presbytery," here probably the Sanhedrin. Although perhaps 23 years had intervened since Paul's conversion, some of "the elders" then living probably had joined in sanctioning Paul's persecution of the Christians (chs. 8:3; 9:1, 2).

Letters. See on Acts 9:2; cf. 2 Cor. 3:1–3.

Brethren. Paul thus tactfully refers to his fellow Jews (see on Acts 22:1; cf. Deut. 18:15).

Went. Literally, "was going," that is, was on my way (see on ch. 9:3).

Damascus. Paul's religious zeal had led him to foreign lands, first to persecute Christians and later to proclaim Christianity.

Bound. Or, "in bonds."

6. About noon. The brightness of the divine presence dimmed the glare of the noonday Syrian sun (see ch. 26:13).

7. Heard a voice. See on ch. 9:4–6; cf. ch. 22:9.

Why persecutest? See on ch. 9:4. For a comparison of the various accounts of Saul's conversion see on ch. 9:3.

8. Who art thou? See on ch. 9:5.

9. And were afraid. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of these words. There can be no doubt, however, that the men were afraid.

Heard not the voice. See on ch. 9:7.

10. What shall I do? See on ch. 9:6.

11. Could not see. See on ch. 9:8.

12. Devout man. That is, Ananias was faithful in observing the requirements of the Jewish religion. He is not so described in ch. 9:10. There he is simply called "a certain

disciple.” Here, Paul apparently seeks to conciliate his listeners (see on ch. 22:1–4). A devout Jew, presumably, would not have received Paul had he then been a profane person, guilty of blasphemous conduct as Paul was now supposed to be.

Good report. Ananias’ integrity as a pious Jew was beyond question. He was widely known to be loyal to the faith. His acceptance of Paul testified to the genuineness of Paul’s experience on the Damascus road.

13. Came unto me. See on ch. 9:11–17.

14. The God of our fathers. See on ch. 7:32. Neither Stephen nor Ananias had the least thought that in becoming Christians they had forsaken the God of their fathers. Jewish Christians apparently had no thought of abandoning Judaism. In fact, they considered themselves the most devout of the brethren. Like Paul, they ardently longed for their blind fellow countrymen to see Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah (see Rom. 9:1–3; 10:1–3).

Chosen thee. Or, “appointed thee” (see on ch. 9:15).

Know his will. Prior to conversion Paul had been ignorant of God’s will. As a Pharisee he had thought that he knew it well and was doing it conscientiously (see chs. 23:1; 24:14). There is an intimate relationship between knowing God’s will and doing it (see on Matt. 7:21–27; John 7:17; 13:17). Again and again Paul refers to the will of God (see 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1).

Just One. Or, “righteous one,” that is, Jesus (cf. Acts 3:14; 7:52; 1 John 2:1). The Twelve had both seen the Lord and associated with Him day after day (1 John 1:1, 3). Paul, now the recipient of a special call to apostleship, was also privileged to see his Lord (see Acts 22:17–21; 1 Cor. 15:3–9; 2 Cor. 12:1–5).

The voice. Probably a reference to the vision near Damascus; possibly also to the special instruction he received from the Lord at a later time (2 Cor. 12:1–5; Gal. 1:11, 12).

15. Be his witness. Like the Twelve, Paul had seen the Lord, heard His voice, and knew His will (v. 14). Also like them, he was commissioned to proclaim the gospel (cf. ch. 1:8). His credentials and authority were not inferior to theirs (1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 11:5; Gal. 2:8, 11).

Unto all men. As yet, cautiously avoids mentioning his special commission to the Gentiles (cf. v. 21).

Seen and heard. Power to witness comes from personal experience (cf. 1 John 1:1–3; 2 Peter 1:16–18). Paul had met the living Saviour, and had received from Him an intimate, clear, and systematic knowledge of truth, even as had the Twelve.

16. Why tarriest thou? The evidence was sufficient; why delay formally becoming a Christian (cf. ch. 8:36)?

Be baptized. See on Matt. 3:6; Acts 2:38; 9:18; Rom. 6:1–6; cf. Acts 8:36.

Wash away thy sins. Baptism is a divinely appointed ordinance (see Matt. 3:15; Mark 16:15, 16; John 3:3, 5; Titus 3:5). Nevertheless, in and of itself it does not avail to “wash away” sin. Belief, repentance, and the reception of the Holy Spirit must accompany the outward act in order to make it efficacious (see Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:36, 37). It was the death of Christ that made possible the removal of the guilt of sin (2 Cor. 5:20, 21; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:21; 1 John 1:7, 9).

Calling on. That is, accepting salvation through Christ and entering His service.

The name of the Lord. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading “his name.”

17. To Jerusalem. This is the visit of ch. 9:26 (see comment there).

In the temple. Probably at the time of the morning or the evening hour of prayer (see on Luke 1:9; Acts 3:1). Because God had honored Paul with a vision in the very place he was now accused of desecrating, the Jews would do well to investigate the facts before deciding to kill him.

A trance. The message imparted in this vision is related in vs. 18–21. This occurred on the visit to Jerusalem recorded in ch. 9:26–30.

18. Make haste. Chapter 9:29, 30 states only that the disciples sent him away. The plot against Paul's life (v. 29) convinced them that Paul should leave the city without delay. With a burden on his heart for the unbelieving Jews (cf. Rom. 9:1–3; 10:1) and with his characteristic unconcern for his personal safety (cf. Acts 19:30; 20:22–24; 2 Cor. 4:7–9; 11:24–27), Paul apparently felt it his duty to remain in the city (AA 130). There are times when the gospel messenger should disregard threatening circumstances, but there are other times when, persecuted in one city, he should flee to another (see on Matt. 10:23). When pressed, seemingly beyond measure, he must look to God for a clear understanding of duty. Thus it was with Paul upon this occasion, for, to the counsel of the brethren, God added direct and specific instructions. Paul had not been called to labor primarily for Jews, but for Gentiles (Acts 22:21; Gal. 2:7–9), and the purposes of God would best be served by his departure. For similar instances of divine guidance added to the counsel of the brethren, compare Ex. 18:17–25 with Num. 11:16; Acts 15:2 with Gal. 2:2; see Acts 13:2–4; 15:28.

Quickly. Paul had been there only 15 days (Gal. 1:18).

19. They. The Greek is emphatic and might be rendered, “these very ones.” The same ones who, upon that former occasion, had sought his life well knew Paul's former zeal in persecuting Christians.

I imprisoned and beat. Paul probably did not administer the beatings himself. The tense of verbs indicates action extending over a period of time. Paul had made persecution his occupation. His purpose now, before this angry mob eager for his blood, was to find common ground by making clear that he knew exactly how they felt. Perhaps then they would be willing to listen to what more he might have to say.

In every synagogue. Concerning the synagogue as a place where charges against heretics and troublemakers were heard and where punishment was administered, see Matt. 10:17; 23:34; Mark 13:9; Luke 12:11. Tertullian, about A.D. 225, wrote that in his day Jewish synagogues were still “fountains of persecution” against the Christians (*Scorpiace* x).

Believed on thee. See on ch. 15:21.

20. Martyr. Gr. *martus*, “witness.” In NT times the word *martus* had not yet acquired the meaning now attached to our word “martyr,” which is derived from it. But as Christians increasingly were called upon to give the ultimate witness of laying down their lives, such witnesses came especially to be known as martyrs.

Unto his death. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of these words. Obviously, however, such is Paul's meaning (see on chs. 7:58; 8:1).

21. I will send. Paul's departure from Jerusalem was not the fulfillment of this declaration of the divine purpose for Paul. Some seven years were yet to pass before Paul and Barnabas set out on their First Missionary Journey (see pp. 29, 100, 102).

Far hence. Or, “afar,” “far away.”

Gentiles. Paul's work would be primarily for non-Jews (see on ch. 9:15).

22. Unto this word. Or, "up to this statement." Silent in angry curiosity until now, the Jews could contain themselves no longer. The idea that salvation could be for the Gentiles enraged them (cf. Luke 4:25–29; Acts 7:51–54). Hence they clamored for Paul's death immediately, without even the formality of a trial. In their narrow opinion Paul was obviously an apostate from Judaism.

23. Cast off their clothes. To cast off the loose outer robe (Gr. *himation*; see on Matt. 5:40; see Vol. V, p. 47) reflected great excitement. The mob was ready for action. Compare 2 Kings 9:13.

Threw dust. A gesture of loathing and repudiation.

24. Chief captain. Gr. *chiliarchos*, "commander of a thousand" (see on John 18:12). This officer, Claudius Lysias (Acts 23:26), doubtless ignorant of Aramaic, probably understood nothing of what Paul was saying and could only conclude from the tumult that he must be guilty of some serious offense.

The castle. That is, the Castle, or Tower, of Antonia, north of the Temple area (see Jerusalem in Time of Christ; see on ch. 21:31).

Examined by scourging. Not for the purpose of inflicting punishment, but to extract a confession.

Cried so. Or, "shouted" (cf. ch. 12:22).

25. Bound him with thongs. The Greek may imply that they stretched him forward with straps, in a posture ready for flogging.

Centurion. Gr. *hekatontarchos* (see on Acts 10:1; Luke 7:2). This was the officer in charge of the squad of soldiers detailed to administer the scourging.

Is it lawful? Roman law forbade the scourging of a Roman citizen (Livy *Roman History* x. 9. 4, 5).

A Roman. It would have been a grave offense for Paul to claim to be a Roman citizen if he were not. The centurion realized at once that he had more on his hands than a troublemaking Jew. Roman citizenship was highly prized (see v. 28; p. 94; cf. Vol. V, p. 36), for it ensured to its possessors many privileges. Upon various occasions Roman citizenship proved to be a protection to Paul (see on ch. 16:37–39).

26. Take heed. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of the words "take heed," and the understanding of the following clause as a question, "What are you about to do?"

27. Art thou? The emphasis in the officer's question, as stated in Greek, is upon the pronoun "thou": "art *thou* a Roman?" Obviously the officer was surprised at the thought that a man who had just raised a Jewish mob to a pitch of frenzy by a speech in Aramaic should be a Roman citizen.

28. Freedom. Gr. *politeia*, here meaning "citizenship." Compare Phil. 3:20. The word "freedom" was probably used by the translators in the same sense as when speaking of the "freedom" of the city, meaning the privileges granted by a city to an honored guest or hero.

Free born. Literally, "so born," that is, born a Roman citizen.

29. Should have. That is, were about to.

Examined. A euphemism for the torture to which Paul was about to be subjected.

Afraid. The fear of the “chief captain” was not that he had put Paul in shackles. Paul had often experienced such treatment (Acts 28:20; Phil. 1:7, 13, 14, 16; Col. 4:18; Philemon 10, 13), for Roman citizens might be bound. Paul was still kept in chains (Acts 22:30). The captain’s fear was because of having had Paul placed in thongs for a flogging.

30. Would have known. Or, “desired to know.” As a careful Roman officer the chief captain was determined to get to the root of the problem and ascertain why the Jews were so eager for Paul’s life.

From his bands. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of these words.

All their council. That is, the Sanhedrin. Lysias saw that it was a matter of the Jewish religion. Concerning the council chamber where the Sanhedrin met see on Matt. 27:2; see Jerusalem in Time of Christ.

Brought Paul down. That is, from the tower of the Castle of Antonia (see on v. 24; ch. 21:34). The presence of the Roman guard guaranteed Paul’s personal safety.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1, 2 AA 408
1–30AA 408–410
3 Ed 64
3–15AA 409
14–16AA 126
17 AA 159
17–21AA 130; EW 206; SR 279, 303
20 EW 199
21 AA 159, 233, 409; COL 36; GC 328; GW 112
22–30AA 410

CHAPTER 23

1 *As Paul pleadeth his cause*, 2 *Ananias commandeth them to smite him*. 7 *Dissension among his accusers*. 11 *God encourageth him*. 14 *The Jews’ laying wait for Paul* 20 *is declared unto the chief captain*. 27 *He sendeth him to Felix the governor*.

1. Earnestly beholding. Gr. *atenizō*, “to fix one’s eyes upon,” “to look steadfastly at,” “to behold earnestly” (see Acts 1:10; 7:55; Luke 4:20; 22:56; see on Acts 13:9). Luke often uses the word to describe the expression on the face of one about to speak earnestly. It is used appropriately of Paul’s expression as the apostle gazes intently upon the highest Jewish assembly for the first time in a quarter of a century. There had no doubt been many changes in personnel during the years, but some faces Paul may have recognized (see ch. 23:5; see on ch. 23:5).

Men and brethren. See on ch. 1:16.

In all good conscience. This would be a very inclusive claim for any man to make. For Paul to make such a claim after years of disputing with Judaizers and their victims makes evident his own convictions with respect to his course of action. His conduct had been altogether in keeping with the will of God and with the law and the prophets (see chs. 24:14; 28:17). If Paul was right, his accusers were obviously wrong. Paul often refers to the conscience (Acts 24:16; Rom. 2:15; 13:5; 1 Cor. 10:25; 1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 1:3).

2. Ananias. A son of one Nebedaeus, appointed to the high priesthood by Herod, king of Chalcis (Josephus *Antiquities* xx. 5. 2).

Smite him. Paul's declaration was equivalent to charging the Sanhedrin with hypocrisy. If Paul's conduct was conscientious theirs obviously was not. Compare 1 Kings 22:24; Matt. 26:67; Luke 22:63, 64.

3. God shall smite. Some have thought that Paul spoke hastily, and that v. 5 was intended to be an apology. Under provocation Jesus remained silent (Matt. 26:63; 1 Peter 2:23). It is possible, however, that Paul spoke by inspiration, and, without realizing that it was the high priest to whom he spoke (see v. 5), foretold his fate. Ananias was assassinated (Josephus *War* ii. 17. 6, 9) in A.D. 66, seven or eight years later, probably by the Sicarii (see Vol. V, pp. 70, 73; see on ch. 21:38). Compare Jer. 28:15–17.

Thou whited wall. That is, thou hypocrite (cf. Matt. 23:27). Like a whitewashed wall, this holder of a high office of justice might wear the outer trappings of his rank, but he was not the righteous or judicious person such a leader should have been.

Sittest thou? In Greek the pronoun is emphatic: “and dost *thou* sit?” That is, How can you, a whited wall of hypocrisy, sit in judgment upon others?

After the law. That is, according to the law, meaning Jewish law.

Contrary to the law. Beating was permitted by Jewish law, but only after right judicial procedure resulting in the conviction of the accused (Deut. 25:1, 2; cf. John 7:51). As a former member of the Sanhedrin (see AA 112, 410) Paul knew the law and proper judicial procedure, and asserted his right to enjoy due process of law. Compare Vol. V, p. 539.

4. God's high priest. As the highest religious and civil official of the Jews, the high priest was supposedly God's representative. In the OT judges were sometimes called *'elohim*, literally “gods” (see Vol. I, p. 171; see on Ps. 82:1).

5. I wist not. That is, I did not know (cf. ch. 3:17). Paul's statement has been variously explained: (1) that because of defective eyesight (see on ch. 9:8, 18) he did not recognize Ananias as the high priest, (2) that he did not realize that it was the high priest who gave the command to smite him, (3) that he was speaking ironically, as if incredulous that the high priest could have given such an order, and thus indirectly challenging Ananias' right to the position he occupied, (4) that he “did not consider” before speaking, though he knew that the speaker was Ananias, the high priest. Of these the first explanation seems most probable. The second, perhaps also suggesting a limitation in Paul's vision, also seems possible. The last two seem out of keeping with Paul's character, and with the seriousness of the situation that now confronted him.

Not speak evil. Paul cites Ex. 22:28, where the Heb. *'elohim*, “gods,” is used to refer to human judges (see on Acts 23:4). Paul doubtless quoted the passage in Hebrew, while Luke reproduces it from the LXX. Paul's sincerity at this point cannot be questioned. Heralds of the gospel are to recognize and give due honor to those in authority even when they abuse their authority.

6. When Paul perceived. Having once been a member of the Sanhedrin, Paul of course knew that some were Sadducees and some Pharisees. Perhaps, also, he may have recognized particular persons as belonging to one party or the other.

I am a Pharisee. Concerning the Pharisees see Vol. V, pp. 51, 52; see on ch. 5:34. In the Greek the pronoun “I” is emphatic. As a Christian, Paul still claims to be a Pharisee. Nicodemus, a Pharisee, was a follower of the Lord (John 3:1; AA 104, 105). Under the preaching of the apostles many Pharisees had been converted (see Acts 15:5). Some Bible students have suggested that the majority of converts from Judaism to Christianity were

Pharisees. Because of certain similarities between the teachings of Jesus and those of the Pharisees, some have even considered Jesus a Pharisee. Both Christians and Pharisees acknowledged the authority of the Inspired Word, both stressed righteousness and separation from the world, both believed in the resurrection and a future life. It was primarily concerning the *method* of attaining righteousness that Christians differed from Pharisees (see on Matt. 5:20; Mark 7:5–13; Luke 18:9–14; Gal. 2:16–21). Paul could thus honestly say, “I *am* a Pharisee,” without meaning that he necessarily agreed with all the beliefs and practices of this sect.

7. *A dissension.* It is significant that Paul should have made this declaration so early in the hearing. He knew that he had no hope of a fair hearing before the Sanhedrin, and no doubt intended to reveal its incompetence to pass judgment on him. Therefore he brought the trial to a close by setting his judges against one another (v. 7). The subject chosen—the resurrection—was basic to Christianity (see 1 Cor. 15:12–23) and almost certain to produce the desired result (see on Matt. 22:23–33).

Divided. Gr. *schizo*, “to rend,” “to cleave asunder,” “to split [into factions].” The English word “schism” is from the Gr. *schisma*, the noun cognate to *schizo*.

8. *The Sadducees.* Concerning the Sadducees see Vol. V, p. 52; see on ch. 4:1. They acknowledged the authority of the writings of Moses, but had reservations when it came to the prophets, and rejected the literary portions of the OT and tradition altogether. They considered angels as only manifestations of celestial glory, and denied the reality of a future life. It has been said that the Pharisees were the Jewish counterpart of the Stoics, and the Sadducees, of the Epicureans; within broad limits this is true (see on ch. 17:18).

9. *Cry.* Gr. *kraugē*, “an outcry,” “a clamor.” The sedate and learned members of the Sanhedrin proved to be as excitable and irrational as the fickle and illiterate mob (see ch. 22:22, 23).

The scribes. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading “some of the scribes.” Not all the scribes of the Pharisees participated.

Strove. Gr. *diamachomai*, “to contend fiercely.”

No evil. Compare the decision of Pilate with respect to the Lord (John 18:38; 19:4, 6). In each instance the supreme court of Judaism blindly sought the destruction of a just man.

A spirit or an angel. The Sadducees believed in neither. Perhaps reference is here made to the vision on the way to Damascus (ch. 22:6–10) or the trance in the Temple (vs. 17–21). Paul’s witness had not been in vain. The attitude of the Pharisees here is reminiscent of that of Gamaliel upon an earlier occasion (ch. 5:33–40).

Let us not fight against God. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of these words. They may have been borrowed from a similar passage in ch. 5:39.

10. *The chief captain.* It would seem that Lysias, who was concerned not only with public order but with the safety of a Roman citizen, was present (cf. ch. 22:30).

Pulled in pieces. Evidently a physical struggle had broken out between Sadducees and Pharisees, on the one hand to get possession of, and on the other to protect, the person of Paul.

Commanded the soldiers. Judging by Lysias’ rank of *chiliarchos* (see on ch. 22:24; cf. on John 18:12; Acts 21:31, 32), the garrison may have consisted of about 1,000 men,

which was the maximum strength of a military cohort of auxiliaries. Such a body of troops was commanded by a *chiliarchos*. See on chs. 21:31; 27:1. For his own safety Paul was escorted to the Tower of Antonia (see on ch. 22:24).

11. The Lord stood by him. This Being was apparently Christ Himself (cf. chs. 9:5, 6; 22:17–21). The outlook was dark indeed, and Paul doubtless remembered the servile acquiescence of Pilate to the wishes of the Jews in the case of Christ. Divine assurance at this juncture would mean much to Paul and give him courage for the trials of the next few years.

Be of good cheer. No doubt as Paul reflected upon the events of the past two days he must have begun to question the wisdom of his fixed purpose to visit Jerusalem (ch. 20:24) in the face of repeated warnings of what was to happen to him there (vs. 22, 23), of his consenting to participate with other Jewish Christians in ritual purification (ch. 21:20–28), and of his conduct before the Sanhedrin (ch. 23:1–10). His thoughts must also have turned to the future. Was his work for Christ ended? Was his desire to witness to the gospel in Rome to be thwarted (Acts 19:21; Rom. 1:13)? As he poured out his heart in prayer the Lord appeared personally, with comfort and assurance.

Also at Rome. Paul already had purposed to visit Rome (see ch. 19:21).

12. Certain of the Jews. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for reading simply “the Jews.” According to v. 13 there were about 40 of them. They were apparently in deadly earnest, and certain that their plot would succeed. Compare the murder committed by Mattathias, the old priest of Modin, at the time of the Maccabean revolt (1 Macc. 2:24; Josephus *Antiquities* xii. 6. 2 [268–278]), and the attempt to assassinate Herod the Great when he built an amphitheater and introduced gladiatorial games into Jerusalem (Josephus *Antiquities* xv. 8. 3).

Bound themselves under a curse. Gr. *anathematizō*, “to anathematize,” “to declare accursed,” “to bind under a curse [if an oath is not fulfilled].” These men invited upon themselves the most severe divine penalties if they failed to achieve their objective.

Compare the Hebrew *charam* (see on 1 Sam. 15:3).

Neither eat nor drink. By such a vow the would-be assassins demonstrated both their fanaticism and their determination to kill Paul quickly.

13. More than forty. The size of this fanatical group meant that Paul’s life was in extreme jeopardy.

14. The chief priests. Neither the conspirators nor “the chief priests” would seem to have been Pharisees (see on vs. 6–9), but they were all fanatics. The leaders of the nation were ready to cooperate with anyone, however unscrupulous, in order to secure their objectives.

15. The council. That is, the Sanhedrin. It seemed necessary to resort to a plot such as this because: (1) The Sanhedrin could not inflict the death penalty (see on John 18:31; Acts 7:58). (2) Even if it could have done so it might have had little or no jurisdiction over Paul as a Roman citizen. (3) Even if it had had jurisdiction, the influence of the Pharisees would now probably have made it impossible to secure a verdict against Paul.

To morrow. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of this word.

As though. This clause reads literally, “as though you would examine matters concerning him more accurately.”

We. Emphatic in the Greek.

Ready to kill him. They would see that Paul never reached the council chamber, and thus, presumably, no suspicion of complicity would attach to any members of the council. His assassination would be attributed to fanatics. Perhaps indeed these 40 plotters were fanatical “daggersmen,” or Sicarii (see on ch. 21:38). Here, as in his Gospel, Luke makes evident that the Jews and not the Romans were chiefly responsible for difficulties that arose over the proclamation of the gospel (see Luke 23:2, 4, 14, 22). Josephus records a similar Jewish plot against Herod (*Antiquities* xv. 8. 1–4), and there were plots against Christ (John 7:19; 8:40; 10:39).

Philo justified the assassination of apostates: “It is well that all who have a zeal for virtue should be permitted to exact the penalties offhand and with no delay, without bringing the offender before jury or council or any kind of magistrate at all, and give full scope to the feelings which possess them, that hatred of evil and love of God which urges them to inflict punishment without mercy on the impious. They should think that the occasion has made them councilors, jurymen, high sheriffs, members of assembly, accusers, witnesses, laws, people, everything in fact, so that without fear or hindrance they may champion religion in full security” (*The Special Laws* i. 9. 55; Loeb ed., vol. 7, p. 131).

16. Paul’s sister’s son. This is the only reference to relatives of Paul in Jerusalem. He did have relatives in Rome (Rom. 16:7, 11), and apparently in Corinth (v. 21). It has been suggested that Paul’s nephew was studying in Jerusalem, as Paul had done before him (see on Acts 22:3). There is no evidence that either the sister or the nephew was a Christian.

He went. Literally, “having come near,” possibly “having been present.” Some have suggested that this applies to Paul’s nephew’s *hearing* the plot rather than to his *reporting* it to Paul. Possibly he was present when the plot was laid, or accidentally overheard it.

Entered into the castle. Being detained as much for his own protection as for anything else, the apostle was apparently privileged to receive his friends. Roman law provided for three kinds of custody: (1) confinement of ordinary men in the public jail, (2) assignment of men of high rank to the personal custody of a magistrate or senator, who became responsible for their appearance on the day of trial, and (3) military custody, the accused being placed in charge of a soldier who was held responsible with his life for the prisoner’s safekeeping, and whose left hand normally was secured by a chain to the prisoner’s right. Paul was now under military custody (see on v. 18).

17. Paul called. His faith in God and in His guidance (see on v. 11) did not require him to sit idle. He recognized divine providence in the message brought by his nephew, and found it consistent with his own faith to take steps to avert the threatening danger.

Young man. Gr. *neanias* (see on ch. 20:9).

18. The prisoner. Gr. *desmios*, “[one] in bonds,” “a captive,” “a prisoner.” The word does not necessarily mean that Paul was bound with chains, though ordinarily a prisoner in military custody would have been bound to his attending soldier (see on chs. 21:33; 23:16).

Prayed. That is, asked.

19. Took him by the hand. To hear the message of the nephew more privately and to encourage him to speak freely. He had come to Lysias as an emissary of a Roman citizen under accusation. Evidently the “chief captain” thought better of Paul than he did of

Paul's accusers (see vs. 26–33). The Romans routinely treated Paul with greater fairness and consideration than did the Jews.

Privately. This may be understood as referring to the asking rather than to the taking aside.

20. The Jews. Because its leaders were party to the plot, the nation as such was involved in it.

21. With an oath. Or, “under a curse” (see on vs. 12–14).

Looking for a promise. That is, awaiting Lysias' consent to send Paul down to the place where the Jews purposed to examine Paul (cf. v. 15).

22. So the chief captain. Because Paul was a Roman citizen, because it appeared that the Jews had unjustly accused him, because the Jewish leaders were divided among themselves, and because they were apparently bent on circumventing Lysias' attempts to guarantee Paul a fair hearing, the “chief captain” was increasingly favorable to Paul and the more determined to protect him.

Tell no man. If the Jews should learn that Lysias knew of their plot, his efforts to protect Paul might yet be thwarted. Also, for his own sake, the informer should say nothing.

Shewed. Or, “made known.”

23. Two hundred soldiers. These infantrymen were assigned to protect Paul, 100 for each of the centurions who had been summoned.

To C[sarea]. The seat of Roman government in Palestine and the usual residence of the procurator, or governor (see on chs. 8:40; 10:1). The distance by road was about 63 mi.

Spearman. Gr. *dexiolaboi*, literally, “holders by the right [hand].” The Latin Vulgate translates *dexiolaboi* as *lancearii*, “lancers.” The meaning “spearmen,” or “lancers,” is inferred from the fact that a spear is commonly held in the right hand. So large a force—470 men—assigned to protect a single prisoner from violence is evidence of a turbulent state of affairs in Judea, of the strength of the garrison in Jerusalem, and of the importance Lysias apparently attached to the safeguarding of Paul's person. Lysias realized that the Jews would go to any length to accomplish their objective. There must also have been many angels at hand, sent by the Lord of hosts (cf. 2 Kings 6:17; Dan. 6:22; Matt. 26:53).

Third hour. About 9:00 or 10:00 P.M. (see on chs. 2:15; 3:1).

The night. In order to make it impossible for bystanders to identify Paul as being among them.

24. Provide them beasts. Note that the word “them” is supplied by the translators. These beasts were not for the whole company, but for Paul and perhaps the officers. His status as a Roman citizen and as a protected prisoner gave him privileges that would not have been accorded either an ordinary Jew or a common prisoner. Doubtless such transportation was a luxury Paul had not often enjoyed on his journeys.

Bring him safe. The safety of a prisoner who claimed Roman citizenship, the lives of the centurions and the soldiers, and the ability of Roman arms to keep order were all at stake in this transfer of Paul from Jerusalem to Caesarea.

Felix. See Vol. V, pp. 70, 234. Felix' term of office extended from about A.D. 52 to about A.D. 60. Tacitus (*Annals* xii. 54; Loeb ed., vol. 3, p. 393) says of Felix that he “considered that with such influences behind him all malefactions would be venial”

because his brother was a favorite of the emperor Claudius. Suetonius (*Lives of the Caesars* v. 28) describes Felix as the husband of three wives, whom he married in succession. One of these was Drusilla, daughter of Herod Agrippa I, and thus a descendant of both Herod the Great and the Maccabees (see *The Herods*; Acts 24:24). Despite incipient revolt by the Jews against Rome, Felix was able to preserve a measure of order in Judea (cf. ch. 24:1) notwithstanding his maladministration (Tacitus *Annals* xii. 54).

Governor. Gr. *hēgemōn*, “procurator” (see on Matt. 27:2).

25. A letter. In ch. 21:15, 18 Luke includes himself among Paul’s companions at Jerusalem (see Vol. V, p. 663). The letter probably was written in Latin, the language of official intercourse, in which case the version Luke here gives is a Greek translation.

After this manner. Literally, “having this form,” that is, to the following effect. Luke’s reproduction of the letter is probably not a verbatim copy, but closely resembles the original. It gives the substance.

26. Excellent. This and the word “greeting” reflect good Greek literary usage of the day (see on Luke 1:3; cf. Acts 1:1; 15:23; James 1:1).

27. Man. Gr. *anēr*, “man” as distinct from woman. This may imply a degree of respect, perhaps in view of the fact that Paul had proved to be a Roman citizen.

Taken. Gr. *sullambanō*, “to take,” “to seize” (cf. Matt. 26:55; Acts 12:3).

Should have been killed. Literally, “was about to be killed.” The letter omits the details of the religious controversy that prompted the attack upon Paul, perhaps because of the ignorance of Lysias concerning such matters and because he knew this would be stated before Felix (see v. 30).

Rescued him. That is, when Paul was first attacked (ch. 21:32).

Having understood. Or, “having learned,” “having been informed.” Lysias so phrased his account as to give Felix the idea that he had rescued Paul because he already knew him to be a Roman. This was, of course, contrary to fact (see ch. 22:25–29).

28. Would have known. Literally, “desiring to know.” Lysias had intended to secure the desired information by scourging (see ch. 22:24), a fate from which his claim to Roman citizenship (v. 25) saved Paul.

29. Questions of their law. These included Temple regulations (see on ch. 21:28) and theological questions (ch. 23:6). These matters would seem of little consequence to Lysias (cf. ch. 18:15), except as they might lead to a disturbance of the peace.

His charge. Roman law made no provision for such affairs. The lenient treatment Paul enjoyed in Caesarea and later at Rome was no doubt due in part to Lysias’ favorable report.

30. The Jews. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of these words. The statement would then read, “It was shown me that there would be a plot against the man.”

Straightway. Or, “at once.” By sending the prisoner promptly to Felix, Lysias implies a compliment both to the governor’s superior position and to his wider knowledge of Jewish customs.

Farewell. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 10) between omitting and retaining this word.

31. Brought him by night. That is, they left Jerusalem at night and were well on their way to Caesarea by daybreak (see on v. 23).

Antipatris. Identified with modern *Ras el-‘Ain*. This town was built by Herod the Great upon the site of Chapfar Saba (south of the modern *Kefr Saba*) according to Josephus (*Antiquities* xvi. 5. 2.), and named after his father Antipater (see Vol. V, p. 38). Antipatris means “belonging to Antipater.” The town was beautifully located in the Plain of Sharon, wooded and well watered. It was on the Roman road from Jerusalem to Caesarea (see Palestine During the Ministry of Jesus). For an older city on the same site, possibly the Aphek of OT times, see Josephus *War* i. 4. 7; ii. 19. 1; iv. 8. 1; cf. 1 Macc. 7:31; Palestine In Biblical Times.

32. On the morrow. Antipatris lay some 39 mi. from Jerusalem. Leaving early in the evening (see on v. 23) and traveling with foot soldiers, Paul’s company would reach Antipatris sometime the following day.

They left. Considering that Paul was now out of danger, the foot soldiers returned to Jerusalem.

The castle. That is, the Tower of Antonia in Jerusalem (see ch. 21:34), where the garrison was quartered. The Jerusalem garrison must have been of considerable size to spare so large a detachment of soldiers in such troublesome times as these (see Vol. V, pp. 70, 71).

33. Delivered the epistle. The commander of the detachment turned over to the governor the letter, the prisoner, and the problem. His mission was completed without incident.

34. The governor. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading “he.”

Cilicia. See on chs. 6:9; 15:41. At this time both Cilicia and Palestine were probably attached to the Roman province of Syria.
19

35. I will hear thee. Literally, “I will hear thee through,” that is, I will give you a full hearing. Felix accepted jurisdiction of the case. The accusers did not reach Caesarea until five more days had passed (ch. 24:1).

Judgment hall. Gr. *praitōrion* (see on Matt. 27:27), from the Latin *praetorium*. These words were applied to the tent of a commanding officer, to the barracks of the imperial guard at Rome, and as here, to the palace of a provincial governor of the Roman Empire.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–9AA 411

1–35AA 411–418

10 AA 412

11–15AA 413

16–22AA 414

23–31AA 415

35 AA 416

CHAPTER 24

¹⁹Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Ac 21:21). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

1 Paul being accused by Tertullus the orator, 10 answereth for his life and doctrine. 24 He preacheth Christ to the governor and his wife. 26 The governor hopeth for a bribe, but in vain. 27 At last, going out of his office, he leaveth Paul in prison.

1. After five days. That is, after Paul's arrival at Caesarea (see on v. 11). Five days would be none too long to prepare formal charges and to instruct a professionally competent spokesman to present the case (cf. chs. 21:17, 18, 27; 24:11).

Ananias. See on ch. 23:2. The high priest would not feel kindly toward Paul, who had called him a "whited wall" (ch. 23:3).

Descended. Or, "came down," that is from Jerusalem, high in the mountains, to the Roman capital at Caesarea, on the seacoast.

The elders. See on ch. 23:14. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading "certain elders." It is unlikely that Ananias, a Sadducee, would have brought many Pharisees from the council at Jerusalem, for Pharisees had championed Paul (see on ch. 23:9).

Orator. Gr. *rhētōr*, "a speaker," "an orator." A *rhētōr* was an advocate, a professional pleader. This title is never used in the NT for the "preacher," or "herald" (Gr. *kērux*, 1 Tim. 1:7), of the gospel message, nor for Christ our "advocate" (Gr. *paraklētos*, 1 John 2:1; see on Matt. 5:4).

Tertullus. The name is Latin, a diminutive of Tertius, meaning "third." Compare Secundus, "second" (ch. 20:4). At every provincial court there were men available, versed in Roman ways, to speak for non-Roman provincials. Tertullus may have been a Jew versed in Roman legal procedure, or a Roman familiar with Jewish lore. If he was a Roman, his use of "we," "us," and "our" may imply that he was a proselyte to Judaism, or he may have used these pronouns simply to emphasize that he was speaking on behalf of his clients.

Who informed. The Greek is plural, thus including Ananias, the elders, and Tertullus. The entire deputation joined in bringing the charge against Paul. As in ch. 25:2, 15, the Gr. *emphanizō*, "informed," is used for the laying of a formal charge.

2. Called forth. Probably a reference to Paul's being summoned from his confinement to appear for the hearing.

Began to accuse. Tertullus' speech, though opening with inordinate flattery, was a speech of accusation. It was the usual thing to begin speeches such as this with flattery (see Cicero *De Oratore* ii, 80). Luke's report of the speech (vs. 2–8) is doubtless a brief summary, in which only the high points of the address are preserved.

Great quietness. Literally, "much peace." During this twilight period of Jewish history Palestine enjoyed anything but peace. Revolt was simmering under the surface, and in seven or eight years this was to break forth in open rebellion (see Vol. V, pp. 70–73). What peace the land enjoyed was a Roman peace, imposed by force of arms. Felix had repeatedly suppressed political messiahs and broken the back of incipient revolts against Roman authority (see Josephus *Antiquities* xx. 8. 6, 7; *War* ii. 13. 2 [253]).

Worthy deeds. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading "reforms." According to Tacitus (*Annals* xii. 54), Felix enjoyed a handsome income from the bandits of Palestine in return for ignoring their activities. It has been said that when Felix suppressed rapine, it was only in order that he might thereby increase his own wealth. For such maladministration he was recalled during the time of Paul's imprisonment.

Nation. Gr. *ethnos*, the common term by which the Jews referred to Gentiles. The NT writers usually call the Jews “people,” Gr. *laos* (see chs. 10:2; 26:17, 23). When *ethnos* is used by Jews of their own nation it is usually in the presence of, or with respect to, Gentiles (see Luke 7:5; 23:2).

Providence. Gr. *pronoia*, “forethought,” “provident care.”

3. Most noble. Gr. *kratistos*, “noblest,” “most illustrious,” a word also used of Felix by Lysias in his letter (ch. 23:26), and rendered “most excellent.” The word does not denote character, but social position. It is similarly applied by Paul to Festus (ch. 26:25).

4. Be ... tedious. Gr. *egkoptō*, “to hinder,” “to detain.” Tertullus credits Felix with being busy at preserving the peace and promoting reforms (see on v. 2), and that he has little time for insignificant matters such as the present problem. He thus implies the desirability of prompt decision in favor of his clients.

Clemency. Gr. *epieikeia*, “mildness,” “fairness,” “gentleness” (see 2 Cor. 10:1). Here, “considerateness” would be a good translation. Tertullus purposes to blind the eyes of Felix to the facts in the case by saturating the air of the courtroom with flattery.

5. We have found. The statement implies careful investigation resulting in evidence that Paul is the depraved fellow they claim him to be.

Pestilent fellow. Gr. *loimos*, “pest,” “plague,” literally, “a pestilence.” In 1 Macc. 10:61 *loimos* is used of criminals.

A mover of sedition. Or, “an agitator,” a grave charge that would, his accusers hoped, place Paul in direct conflict with Roman law. Paul was “pestilent” in the eyes of the Jews, but not of the Romans. However, Felix was known to deal harshly with insurrectionists (see on v. 2), and if Tertullus could convince him of this allegation, Paul’s fate would be settled. Compare the charges brought against our Lord before Pilate (see on Luke 23:2).

Among all the Jews. With thousands of Jews from abroad gathered at Jerusalem for the annual feasts, reports of the turmoil that had accompanied Paul’s labors in such places as Philippi (ch. 16:16–24), Thessalonica (ch. 17:5–9), Corinth (ch. 18:12–17), and Ephesus (chs. 19:8–10, 13 to 20:2) had certainly come to the ears of the leaders. These disturbances could be interpreted as resulting from seditious conduct on Paul’s part, and thus appear to lend substance to the charge brought against him. Tertullus may have cited specific incidents, and made the most of them by putting the worst possible interpretation upon them (cf. ch. 24:18).

World. Gr. *oikoumenē*, here meaning the Roman Empire (see on Luke 2:1).

Ringleader. Gr. *prōtostatēs*, “one who stands in the front rank,” “a front-rank man,” and thus “a leader.” In Thucydides’ *History* v. 71 the *prōtostatēs* at the right wing is responsible for the direction followed in advancing or attacking. Here the word is used metaphorically.

Sect. See on ch. 5:17.

Nazarenes. Applied to Christians here only in the NT, evidently as followers of Jesus of Nazareth. During the 2d and 3d centuries there was a Jewish Christian sect called Nazarenes, but reference here is to Christians simply as such, whether Jew or Gentile (see Vol. V, p. 55). See Matt. 2:23, where the term “Nazarene” is applied to Jesus as a

resident of Nazareth. The word has no known connection with the term Nazirite (see on Num. 6:2; Matt. 2:23), nor can it be shown to be related to the Hebrew word *naṣar*, “to observe,” “to watch,” “to keep.”

6. *Gone about.* Literally, “attempted.” Paul’s enemies now introduce the supposed crime that had led to his arrest (see ch. 21:21, 28).

Profane. Gr. *bebēloō*, “to profane,” “to desecrate.” It is related to a word meaning “threshold.” The verb thus means “stepping over a threshold.” Paul was charged with taking Gentiles across the boundary in the Temple courtyard beyond which only Jews were permitted (see Vol. V, p. 67), and thus desecrating it. The charge here made against Paul was very serious under Roman as well as under Jewish law. See illustration facing p. 449.

We took. Gr. *krateō*, “to take,” “to seize,” implying the use of force. They pictured Paul as a dangerous criminal taken by main force.

Would have judged. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of these words and all that follows, down to and including the words “come unto thee” in v. 8. However, this passage recapitulates events, although from Tertullus’ standpoint, that Luke has already recorded as having happened (chs. 21:32 to 23:30). Verses 6–8 portray Tertullus as explaining why it had become necessary to trouble Felix with this case. His clients had intended to deal with Paul themselves; Lysias had interfered.

According to our law. Jewish law did not provide for executing a man for being a “pestilence,” that is, a public nuisance. The laws of the OT are fair, noble, explicit. But the best law, like the best doctrine, can become an instrument of persecution in the hand of willful and intolerant men. However, in a case of Temple profanation Roman law permitted the Jews to execute the violator, even though he was a Roman (see Vol. V, p. 67).

7. *The chief captain.* See on ch. 22:24.

With great violence. The facts were that the Jews themselves had been guilty of violence. However, they would naturally interpret any interference with their plans as “violence.”

8. *Commanding his accusers.* Lysias had not so commanded until it had become evident that the Jews were plotting to murder Paul (see on ch. 23:30).

By examining of whom. That is, Paul, as the singular form of the Greek word for “whom” makes clear. The antecedent obviously cannot be Lysias of v. 7, who had already declared himself in favor of releasing Paul (ch. 23:29) and had previously made evident his purpose to protect Paul from harm (see chs. 21:31–40; 22:24; 23:23–31). Instead, the antecedent is the word “man” (Paul) of v. 5, as it is of the “who” and “whom” of v. 6. A careful examination of the pronouns of vs. 6–8 tends to support the conclusion that a portion of these verses was not in the original text of Acts (see on v. 6).

9. *Assented.* Or, joined in the charge. Tertullus was the Jews’ spokesman, and they confirmed the supposed truth of what he had stated.

10. *Then Paul.* Paul’s defense is a categorical denial of the charge brought against him (see vs. 12, 13). He makes four points: (1) He had come to Jerusalem to worship, and to bring “alms” and “offerings” (vs. 11, 17). (2) He had made no disturbance (vs. 12, 18). (3) He challenges his accusers to prove their accusations by producing witnesses (vs. 13, 19). (4) He insists that his only offense is obeying God and His law, and believing in the

resurrection (vs. 14, 15, 21). The first half of his defense is evidently a general statement (vs. 11–16); and the last half a detailed repetition of the points made in that statement (vs. 16–21). The proceedings were probably conducted in Greek. If Paul had spoken in Latin, Luke would doubtless have noted it, as he did when Paul used Hebrew (ch. 21:40).

Many years a judge. Felix had probably been procurator some six or eight years by this time, longer than most of the procurators of Judea (see Vol. V, p. 70). Besides serving his own term as governor, Felix probably had been for some time joint procurator with Cumanus (Tacitus *Annals* xii. 54).

Answer. Gr. *apologeomai*, “to make one’s defense.” Paul “cheerfully” assumes that Felix is worthy of his trust. He knew, also, that Felix understood Jewish ways. But his courage was based on the abiding pledge of divine protection (ch. 23:11).

11. Thou mayest understand. Felix could easily verify this statement. There had not been time to raise an insurrection. Indeed, Paul’s purpose in coming to Jerusalem had been altogether different (see vs. 11, 17), and Felix knew that Jews from all over the world came to Jerusalem to worship and to bring gifts.

Twelve days. By inclusive reckoning, the whole period since Paul reached Jerusalem appears to have been 14 days, which may be enumerated as follows: Day 1, arrival in Jerusalem and reception by the brethren (ch. 21:17); day 2, meeting with the apostles in Jerusalem (vs. 18–25); days 3 to 7 (approximately; cf. AA 406), five of the seven days of purification (vs. 26, 27); day 7 (approximately), attack by the Jews, rescue by Lysias (vs. 27–33); day 8, Paul’s defense before the Sanhedrin (chs. 22:30 to 23:11); day 9, the plot to kill Paul made and discovered (vs. 12–22) and Paul’s departure for Caesarea by way of Antipatris (v. 31); day 10, arrival in Caesarea and appearance before Felix (vs. 32, 33); days 10–14, the five days of ch. 24:1. It is probable that Paul did not count the day of his arrival in Jerusalem or the day of his trial before Felix, but refers to the 12 intervening days.

To worship. This was Paul’s primary reason for going to Jerusalem. It was absurd to think that a man would enter the Temple in order to worship his God, and immediately turn around and desecrate it.

12. They neither found me. Here Paul begins a flat denial and thorough refutation of the charges, first in general and then in more detail (see on v. 10). No one could say he had seen Paul doing any of the things of which his enemies were accusing him. Paul’s statements were also capable of proof. There were no witnesses who could prove that Paul had spoken or otherwise conducted himself in an offensive way.

Raising up the people. Literally, “stirring up a crowd.” It was the Jews who had gathered the mob to attack Paul (ch. 21:27, 28).

13. Prove. Gr. *paristēmi*, here meaning a formal setting down of evidence point by point. Josephus uses *paristēmi* of his array of proof that the Jews had been incited to revolt by Roman misrule (*Life* 6).

14. Confess. Gr. *homologeō*, “to declare,” “to profess.” Paul did not “confess” in the sense of admitting any aspect of the charge brought against him.

The way. Virtually a technical term for Christianity (see on ch. 9:2).

Heresy. Gr. *hairesis*, here meaning “sect” (see on ch. 5:17; cf. ch. 24:5).

So worship I. Paul acknowledges that he worships God in “the way” of the “Nazarenes” (v. 5). But there was at this time no law, Roman or Jewish, against being a Nazarene, or Christian. The Jews had not asked for a verdict on the basis that Paul was a Christian.

God of my fathers. Paul insists that he has not departed from the faith of Israel by becoming a Nazarene. He still worships the same God. He denies that he is heterodox.

Believing all things. Not only does Paul still worship the same God, but he still has full faith and confidence in the OT, the Jewish Scriptures. Paul here gives the lie to the contention that the OT is of inferior value for Christians. All who, like Paul, look to Christ for salvation do well to emulate his example of “believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets” (see on Luke 24:27).

In the law. Literally, “according to the Law” (see on Luke 24:44). As used here in combination with “the prophets,” the “Law” is a technical term for the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses. The Law and the Prophets constitute two of the three divisions of the Hebrew OT, and when used, as here, in a general way, the expression is virtually equivalent to “the OT.” The Law pointed out the true way, and the Prophets illustrated and amplified the Law. Paul believes all this. He is not a heretic. Paul implies that the OT—the supreme authority of Judaism—fully validates his belief and practice as a Christian.

15. Hope. See on Rom. 5:4, 5. Without the hope of the resurrection and a future life, both Christianity and Judaism lose their meaning (see 1 Cor. 15:14, 32; Titus 2:13; 1 John 3:3). Hope is one of the great Christian virtues (Ps. 146:5; Zech. 9:12; 1 Cor. 13:13; Gal. 5:5; Heb. 6:19; 1 Peter 1:3). For those who have no hope and are “without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12), life can at best be but a futile experience.

Allow. Gr. *prosdechomai*, “to admit,” “to expect.” Apparently Paul speaks of his accusers—the Pharisees among them, at least—present in the courtroom (see ch. 23:6). The Jews, generally, believed in the resurrection (see Isa. 26:20; Dan. 12:2, 13; cf. 2 Macc. 7:9; Enoch 91:10; Psalms of Solomon 3:16 [see Vol. V, pp. 86, 87, 90]).

Of the dead. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of these words. The Jews were almost unique among the people of that day for the certainty with which they taught the resurrection of the body. The idea of a future life was less distinct in some ways to the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Persians, and the Greeks (see ch. 17:32). The Platonists, and even the Roman Stoics, had no clear-cut teaching concerning life after death, and the Cynics and the Epicureans rejected the idea.

Unjust. Paul’s doctrine was not only that the just, or righteous, should be raised (1 Cor. 15:51–54; 1 Thess. 4:16), but also the unrighteous (cf. Dan. 12:2). The resurrection would be separate for each category, even as the rewards were distinct (Rom. 2:5–10). John points out that the two resurrections are separated by 1,000 years of time (Rev. 20:3–10). Paul’s mention of the resurrection of the unjust must have challenged the conscience of Felix (see on Acts 23:24; 24:2).

16. Herein. That is, in view of the faith, hope, and godly service of which he has already spoken (vs. 14, 15).

Exercise. Gr. *askeō*, “to exercise,” “to strive,” “to take pains.” Paul takes his religious beliefs and practices seriously. To him religion is more than a philosophical system; it is a way of life. He strives earnestly to attain success in spiritual matters, which he considers vital to his happiness (see Matt. 7:24–27; Phil. 2:12, 13; 3:7–15).

A conscience. To Paul, conscience, the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, was of supreme importance (1 Tim. 1:5; 3:9; Heb. 9:14). Again he claims a clear conscience before God to the present moment (Acts 23:1; cf. Rom. 9:1; 2 Tim. 1:3; Heb. 13:18).

Void of offence. Gr. *aproskopos*, literally, “having nothing to strike against.” Throughout life all that Paul had done had been intended as service to God. Even as a persecutor Paul had conscientiously thought he was serving God (Acts 26:9, 10; cf. John 16:2). Thus, his life illustrates the fact that it is hardly less important to have an enlightened conscience than it is to be conscientious. The conscience, no matter how “good” it may already be, must be attentive to the voice of God (Isa. 30:21) and to His Word (Isa. 8:19, 20; 2 Tim. 3:15–17; cf. Matt. 24:21–27).

17. After many years. Paul’s last previous visit to Jerusalem had been about A.D. 52, at the close of his Second Missionary Journey (ch. 18:21, 22). Some six years had intervened (see p. 102).

To bring alms. Paul now specifically explains his purpose in returning to Jerusalem. His coming had been in harmony with his fixed purpose to serve God and his fellow men (see on v. 16). He had not come to do harm to his people, but to benefit them (cf. Acts 11:29, 30; 20:35; Rom. 15:25–27; 1 Cor. 16:1–4; 2 Cor. 8:1–4).

My nation. Though by citizenship a Roman, Paul was still a Jew at heart, and here unhesitatingly identifies himself with his people (cf. ch. 22:3). His purpose, to say nothing of the “alms” and “offerings” themselves, proved that he had had no intention of profaning the Temple or interfering with its services.

18. Whereupon. Literally, “in which things,” that is, apparently, while he was occupied with presenting the “alms” and “offerings.” Perhaps he was not actually transferring the gifts at the precise moment the Jews from Asia noticed him, but was engaged in activities related to this.

Jews from Asia. Probably from Ephesus, the principal city of the Roman province of Asia (see The Journeys of Paul), where Paul had experienced a great deal of trouble, partly because of the Jews (cf. Acts 19:13–16; 21:27; 1 Cor. 15:32).

Found me purified. When apprehended, Paul was engaged in arranging for the sacrifices required, not in raising a tumult (cf. AA 406).

Neither with multitude. Paul’s only companions were the four men with whom he had associated himself to complete his vows (chs. 18:18; 21:23, 24). There was no factual basis for charging that this was a seditious act (ch. 24:5).

19. Who ought. That is, the Jews from Asia (v. 18).

Object. Literally, “to make accusation.” Apparently, their accusation consisted of a clamorous, rabble-rousing appeal to the throng in the Temple courtyard (see ch. 21:27–30). The riot thus occasioned (vs. 30–32) and the wild charges subsequently brought against Paul depended exclusively upon the testimony of those men. But they were apparently not now available, and with no direct witnesses to the only specific charge on which Paul had been arraigned (see on ch. 24:5, 6), the case against him should be dropped.

20. Let these. If the accusers from Asia were not to appear (v. 19), Paul challenges the Jews present to state specific charges of which they had personal knowledge or for which they could present acceptable evidence.

In me. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of this phrase. The statement would then read, “what wrong act they found.”

Before the council. The supreme council of the Jews had been unable to agree on charges against him; in fact, many members of the council had sided with him and thereby precipitated a near riot (ch. 23:1–10). If many of the Jewish leaders thought Paul innocent, and were ready to use force to protect him, what case could Paul’s present accusers make before Felix?

21. Except. Some have read into the statement of v. 21 the idea that what Paul says here constitutes an admission of improper conduct. This is not so. Had there been anything reprehensible in his declaration before the council (ch. 23:6) his accusers would have been sure to make a point of it. Instead, they studiously avoided mentioning the incident, which was actually embarrassing to them. Not only so, a narration of the incident would prove that they themselves were divided as to Paul’s guilt or innocence, and that the real issue was a point of Jewish theology. If Paul related the entire incident, as is likely, he thereby proved that they had no case against him that a Roman court would even consider. For Felix’ reaction see on v. 22.

22. When. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of the words “when” and “heard these things.” However, the context makes evident that this is the sense of the passage. The testimony of Paul (vs. 10–21) made it obvious that his accusers had no case against him, and Felix therefore dismissed court. He wished, however, to hear what more Lysias might have to say about Paul.

More perfect knowledge. Felix had served in Palestine for several years (see on v. 10), and must have learned much concerning both Judaism and Christianity during that time. Also his wife Drusilla, a sister of Herod Agrippa II (see on v. 24), was a Jewess (see on ch. 23:24).

That way. That is, the Christian faith (see on chs. 9:2; 24:14).

He deferred. Without more information Felix could not render an intelligent decision, and therefore continued the case.

I will know. That is, I will find out, or I will determine.

23. A centurion. Literally, “the centurion,” probably one of the two who had escorted Paul from Jerusalem.

To keep. Gr. *tēreō*, “attend to,” “to guard,” “to keep.” The verb does not necessarily imply close detention, but safekeeping. Felix appears well disposed toward Paul, partly because of an awakened conscience (see vs. 14–16, 24, 25) and partly because he hoped for a bribe (v. 26).

Have liberty. That is, privileges a common prisoner would not enjoy (cf. on ch. 23:16, 17). He would be under arrest but not suffering the discomforts of the common jail.

Acquaintance. Gr. *idioi*, “own [relatives or intimate friends]” (see on John 1:11). These would perhaps include Philip (Acts 21:8) and other Christians living in the vicinity of Caesarea, and possibly Luke, who had accompanied Paul to Jerusalem (v. 17).

To minister. Gr. *hupēreteō*, “to subserve,” literally, “to underrow” (see on ch. 13:5). This would include the kindness of social contact, the comforts of clothing and food, and the conveyance of messages. Perhaps, also, Felix intended to make it easy for Paul to make arrangements with his friends to provide a ransom (see ch. 24:26).

Or come. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of these words.

24. Certain days. See on ch. 9:19.

Felix came. Perhaps Felix was absent from Caesarea for a time, and upon his return prepared to question Paul further.

Drusilla. The second wife of Felix. She was a daughter of Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great and Mariamne, of the former Jewish royal house, the Hasmonaeans (see Vol. V, p. 40). Herod Agrippa II was therefore her brother, and Berenice her sister. She had left her first husband, King Azizus of Emesa, a proselyte to Judaism, to marry Felix (Josephus *Antiquities* xx. 7. 1, 2). She was now a woman about 22 years of age. She was six years old when her father put James to death (ch. 12:1, 2), and may have known of that tragic event. Perhaps she knew also of Peter's escape from prison (vs. 3–19), and certainly of her father's unhappy death (vs. 21–23). Her complicated marital situations indicate that she did not take Jewish scruples seriously. Perhaps she was curious to see and hear this man whom the Jewish leaders sought to have put to death.

Sent for Paul. Perhaps Felix intended to secure further information, to gratify Drusilla's curiosity, and to impress Paul with the realization that he was willing to release him—for a price (see v. 26).

Christ. Paul would have urged belief in the Messiah and in Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah (see on Matt. 1:1), in His death for sinners and His saving grace, in His resurrection, in the certainty of His return, and in the judgment of all men. "Faith in Christ" here denotes the things "most surely believed" (Luke 1:1) concerning Him.

25. He reasoned. Paul's training, particularly under Gamaliel in Jerusalem, had no doubt developed the natural powers of his mind and his skill in public address. His personal contact with the Lord by vision, near Damascus, and in the Temple in Jerusalem (chs. 9:4–6; 22:17, 18), and the energizing power of the Holy Spirit had provided him with a clear concept of truth that made possible a logical presentation of the vital gospel truths that were so dear to his heart. Years of experience in preaching had made his presentation of the gospel a powerful force to win men to God.

Righteousness. Gr. *dikaïosunē* (see on Rom. 1:17). Here Paul no doubt speaks of a right attitude and right conduct toward both God and one's fellow men. In this word Luke sums up Paul's exposition of the great truths of the law and the gospel (see on Micah 6:8; Matt. 22:36–40). Felix' conscience must have stirred uneasily as he reflected upon his own conduct (see on Acts 24:2). Little wonder that he trembled when Paul spoke and imagined himself standing at the judgment bar of God.

Temperance. Gr. *egkrateia*, "self-control," or mastery of the appetites and passions (see on Gal. 5:23). This trait of character is of particular importance in a leader, and Paul doubtless explained to Felix how he might attain to it.

Judgment. Gr. *krima*, the sentence resulting from judgment (see on John 9:39), here, the final judgment. Felix now sat as a judge; then he would stand as the accused before the bar of God. The rapacity, cruelty, and profligacy of Felix (Tacitus *Annals* xii. 54; *History* v. 9) made Paul's message particularly appropriate. Paul either knew the character of the man to whom he was speaking or was led by the Holy Spirit to stress the very things Felix needed. Paul was not merely an ethical teacher; he did not confine himself to abstract arguments on the beauty and utility of justice and temperance. His

words were intensely practical, and constituted Heaven's invitation to Felix and his wife to turn to the true God.

Trembled. Gr. *emphobos*, "terrified," "affrighted." The word denotes not physical but mental agitation. The Holy Spirit was working on the troubled conscience of the procurator, reproving him "of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8). Like the devils, Felix believed and trembled (James 2:19)—in spirit. The governor, who was denying Paul justice in the hope of earning a bribe for his release, trembled at the thought of accounting for his deeds before the Judge of the universe.

A convenient season. Felix stilled his conscience by postponing a personal decision. He did not reject the call of the Holy Spirit outright, but, vacillating in the face of a decision for the right, determined to put off the painful business of setting his personal affairs in order. The most "convenient season" for this often unpleasant task is always the present, but for the man of guilty conscience the present is always a most inconvenient and troublesome time.

I will call. Felix called Paul again and again (v. 26), but never came to the point of decision. He never found the "convenient season" of which he spoke.

26. Should have been given. Rather, "would be given." If Paul was important enough to stir up so much opposition from the Jewish leaders, his freedom, Felix thought, must be worth a substantial bribe. Since Paul had been a bearer of gifts to the Jews of Jerusalem (v. 17), Felix may well have concluded that he had wealthy friends who would purchase his release. Perhaps Felix thought that among the friends he permitted to visit Paul (v. 23) there might be some who would do so.

That he might loose him. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of these words. However, the context makes clear that this was his intent.

The oftener. Felix continued to talk with Paul both because he still felt restlessness of mind concerning "righteousness, temperance, and judgment" (v. 25) and because he hoped for a bribe—a strange combination of motives indeed. He obtained neither the bribe nor peace of mind.

Communed. The Greek implies friendly discussion. The contrast between Paul and Felix is dramatic. As Saul of Tarsus, Paul had sought to please those who were advancing him to a high position in his own nation. But he turned his back on all a young Hebrew could wish for (cf. Phil. 3:8, 10), and allied himself, instead, with a hated sect and experienced the shame and suffering Christians met on every hand. Felix, hoping to advance himself by evil methods among *his* people, found himself treating the despised Paul with fairness and envying Paul's bold honesty in his convictions. He must have debated in his heart taking Paul's teachings seriously, for he seems to have enjoyed—in a sense—talking with a man so able, forthright, and conscientious as Paul.

27. After two years. Literally, "when two years were fulfilled," or "had elapsed." This seems to infer two full years' time, not parts of two years, by inclusive reckoning (see Vol. I, p. 182; Vol. VI, pp. 99, 101, 102).

Porcius Festus. See Vol. V, p. 71. Josephus paints the character of this procurator in kinder colors than he does that of Felix (*War* xi. 14. 1), but shows him in as much difficulty with sedition and assassins as his predecessor (*Antiquities* xx. 8. 9, 10).

Came into Felix' room. Literally, "Felix received a successor," that is, Felix was succeeded by Festus. The year was about A.D. 60 (see p. 102).

Shew the Jews a pleasure. Literally, “gain favor with the Jews.” Leaving Paul a prisoner, a hostage to fortune, Felix hoped to lighten complaints the Jews pressed against him at Rome. Even in disgrace he played with Paul’s fortunes for his personal benefit.

Bound. That is, in bonds, a strong expression, suggesting that the indulgent treatment Paul at first received as a prisoner (see v. 23) may have terminated at the governor’s orders, prior to his departure. No information is given as to how Paul occupied himself during the two years of detention by Felix.

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1–3AA 419

1–27AA 419–427

5–10AA 420

12–21AA 421

14 1T 43

15 GC 544

16 CT 337; ML 216; TM 120; 2T 327, 585

22–24AA 422

25 AA 423; COL 224; CT 358, 393; FE 434; GC 164; 4T 108

25, 26 AA 426

25, 27 AA 427

CHAPTER 25

2 *The Jews accuse Paul before Festus. 8 He answereth for himself, 11 and appealeth unto Caesar. 14 Afterwards Festus openeth his matter to king Agrippa, 23 and he is brought forth. 25 Festus cleareth him to have done nothing worthy of death.*

1. Festus. See on ch. 24:27.

Was come. That is, either to the district he was to govern or to his office to take up its responsibilities. See Josephus *Antiquities* xx. 8. 9; *War* ii. 14. 1.

Cæsarea. The seat of Roman administration in Palestine (see on ch. 8:40).

To Jerusalem. This was the metropolis of the subprovince of Judea. Festus was no doubt inspecting the territory over which he had become procurator, intent on learning its problems. That he allowed but three days to pass before he set out on this tour speaks well of him as an administrator. In ability and integrity he seems to have greatly excelled Felix (see Vol. V, p. 71).

2. High priest. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading “chief priests.” Ismael was now high priest, having recently been appointed by Agrippa II (Josephus *Antiquities* xx. 8. 8). Paul’s accusers intended to take advantage of Festus before he had time to see Jewish affairs in their true perspective.

Chief. Or, “leaders,” “principal men.” The most wealthy and notable Jews were members of the council, and for the most part were Sadducees. It seems to have been the Sadducees who, because they denied the resurrection, were chiefly responsible for pressing the charges against Paul (see on Acts 23:6–9; cf. on John 11:46).

3. Desired favour. They sought special consideration of the charges against Paul. They were among the great men of the nation; Paul was not. Their honor and integrity as leaders of the people were at stake in this matter. By their animosity toward Paul they had maneuvered themselves into a difficult position. It has been suggested that the “favour” (*charis*) the Jews sought might have been an official order transferring Paul to their jurisdiction.

Laying wait. The earlier plot against Paul (see on ch. 23:12–15) had not been abandoned. Jewish public opinion and common law approved of direct measures in dealing with persons supposed to be guilty of violating certain religious regulations (cf. Mishnah *Sanhedrin* 9. 6, Soncino ed. of the Talmud, p. 542). Perhaps some members of the council had also bound themselves with an oath, as certain fanatics had done two years earlier.

4. Kept. That is, in custody. There Paul had been sent by Felix, there he was safely in Roman hands, and there he would remain because there was no good reason to move him elsewhere.

Shortly. That is, some 10 days later.

5. Able. Gr. *dunatoi*, literally, “mighty [ones],” “powerful [ones],” that is, men of authority, or men of ability, men qualified to represent the Jewish nation. The same word is translated “mighty” in Luke 24:19; Acts 7:22; 1 Cor. 1:26; Rev. 6:15. They would be men of leadership and standing, probably members of the Sanhedrin.

Go down with me. The Jewish delegates should be men worthy to travel with the Roman governor. Festus was honoring these leading Jews and at the same time recognizing the importance of Paul’s case. The zeal of the Jewish leaders against Paul had not cooled perceptibly in the two years since his previous hearing (ch. 24:1, 27).

Any wickedness. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading “anything improper,” “any impropriety,” “any wrong.” The word for “wickedness” is not in the Greek text, but apparently was inserted by the translators from the Latin Vulgate, which reads *crimen*.

6. More than ten days. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for reading “not more than eight or ten days.” This reading stresses the brevity of Festus’ stay in Jerusalem (v. 4) rather than its length. Doubtless many problems left from Felix’ administration were pressing for attention, and Festus could not be absent from the seat of government (see on v. 1).

The next day. Or, “on the morrow.” The Jews had apparently convinced Festus that the proper settlement of Paul’s case was of utmost importance to satisfactory relations between the Roman administrator of Palestine and the Jewish people.

On the judgment seat. The procedure was that of a formal trial.

7. Jews which came. Festus’ request for a delegation of able and influential men had been met (v. 5), and the Jewish leaders were on hand when Paul was summoned for the hearing.

Round about. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading “round about him.” Some of those who brought complaints against Paul had doubtless known him as a bitter persecutor of Christians a quarter of a century before, and they hated him as a traitor to the Jewish nation.

Many and grievous complaints. During the two intervening years (ch. 24:27) the Jews had apparently been busy collecting all sorts of reports and rumors. Presumably they now had a far stronger case against him. It seems strange that a copy of this bill of particulars was not later transmitted to the Jews in Rome (see ch. 28:21).

Against Paul. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of this phrase.

Could not prove. It must have been apparent to Festus that the evidence for the case against Paul would not stand up in court (cf. ch. 24:13, 19; cf. on ch. 25:1). He was apparently no novice in such matters.

8. While he. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading “while Paul.”

Answered. Literally, “made his defense.” Probably he did not answer in detail the trivial charges recited against him (v. 7), but only those that, if sustained, would be held against him even by a Roman court. These were his supposed desecration of the Temple and contempt for Jewish law, and his alleged participation in seditious riots. Rome took notice of such things, and Festus might be misled into thinking Paul guilty of insurrection against Roman authority. Luke reports Paul’s defense under these three heads.

Against the law. Perhaps the Jewish leaders knew of Paul’s teaching that circumcision was merely a symbolic act (see Rom. 2:23–29), and construed this as an attempt to break down the law. They had brought this charge against Jesus (see on Matt. 5:17; Mark 2:16; 7:1–5). The Jews never challenged Paul respecting the Sabbath as they had formerly challenged Jesus (John 5:16–18).

Against the temple. The old charge of bringing Gentiles into the Temple (ch. 21:27, 28) was probably reviewed during the course of the hearing.

Against Caesar. If Paul had done nothing “against Caesar,” no Roman court would convict him. The superficiality of the accusations and the candor of Paul’s defense must have impressed Festus, an able and honest administrator (see Vol. V, p. 71).

9. A pleasure. Or, “a favor” (see on ch. 24:27). At first Festus had refused the Jews’ request that Paul be brought to Jerusalem (ch. 25:3, 4). Whether or not he had been influenced against Paul by the charges brought against him, he at least realized more than before the intensity of Jewish feeling against him. All that Festus could reasonably do to please the Jews would, of course, contribute to the success of his administration.

Wilt thou go? It was apparent that the charges against Paul were matters of Jewish, not Roman, law, and it therefore seemed reasonable to Festus to investigate the matter in Jerusalem, the Jewish metropolis.

Before me. The presence of Festus at the hearing was a guarantee that Paul would still be in Roman custody and under Roman protection. However, the Jewish leaders would be in charge of the judicial procedure, and Festus would be more in the role of an interested observer. He was not transferring Paul to Jewish jurisdiction, although the proposal implied a tentative willingness to make such a transfer. This proposal virtually declared Paul innocent of any offense “against Caesar.” Any charges possibly worthy of consideration had to do with Jewish law and custom. Though, as the representative of Rome, Festus had no further direct interest in the case, his desire to win the favor of the leaders of his new administrative district made him willing to comply with their desires as far as possible. Apparently the proposal was not based on the suspicion that Paul was actually guilty of any overt act or of any intention to commit such an act, but solely as a political expedient.

10. I stand. Literally, “I [have stood and] am standing.” From the first Paul had been detained by the Romans. He had been saved from a brutal flogging by virtue of the fact that he was a Roman citizen. Perhaps Paul had in mind the divine promise of ch. 23:11, though he gives no hint of it here. He had been held prisoner for two years by Romans acting under Caesar’s authority. Of this he reminds the Roman governor, and declines to stand trial before men whose complicity in a plot to assassinate him was already known (see chs. 23:12–15, 30; 25:2, 3).

Judgment seat. Or, “tribunal.” Paul preferred the comparative fairness of Roman law to the capricious animosity of his hotheaded countrymen, who knew no law but that of their own selfish, irresponsible prejudices.

Ought to be judged. That is, as a Roman citizen.

To the Jews. Paul summarily denied the whole gamut of charges preferred against him. No injury had come to Jewish persons, property, character, or religion because of him.

Thou very well knowest. Paul knows that Festus’ motive in the proposal of v. 9 was to conciliate the Jews.

11. For if. Literally, “if indeed then.” Paul has already denied any offense against the Jews, and by proposing to submit him to a Jewish trial Festus has implied that he is innocent with respect to Roman law. But if in spite of this there was any lingering suspicion that Paul was guilty of some crime, he chose to exercise his prerogative as a Roman citizen to be tried under Roman law.

I refuse not to die. Literally, “I do not plead to avert death.” Compare Josephus *Life* 29. Paul declares his willingness to face the results of a just trial, whatever the verdict might be.

Deliver. Gr. *charizomai*, “to do a favor,” “to gratify.” Paul was unwilling to be turned over to his accusers merely as a favor to them. He knew that Festus was trying to win the favor of the Jews. He refused to yield his rights as a Roman citizen merely to please his accusers and make it easier for them to achieve their evil designs on his life. He well knew that the Sanhedrin would accord him neither justice nor mercy.

I appeal unto Caesar. Paul closes his appeal with another assertion of his rights (see on ch. 22:25–29). He is ready to risk what may be laid to his charge at Rome, and Caesar’s fairness in reaching a decision on the basis of the evidence. He had long purposed to visit Rome, though not in bonds (Rom. 1:9–12; 15:23, 24). The emperor was the final court of appeal from all subordinate tribunals throughout the empire.

Ever since his appointment as the apostle to the heathen, Paul had suffered and his ministry had been hindered by both Jews and Gentiles (see 2 Cor. 11:24–27). This opposition he willingly endured if by it the cause of Christ might be advanced (Acts 20:22–25; 2 Cor. 4:5–18; Gal. 6:14; Phil. 1:12). However, he had now been confined in Caesarea for two years, uncondemned and without the prospect of a new trial. Lysias (Acts 22:29), Felix (see on ch. 24:23–27), and Festus (see on ch. 25:8, 9, 25) had all concluded that he was innocent of any violation of Roman law. Felix had nevertheless detained Paul, for personal reasons and to please the Jews, and Festus now apparently proposed to continue the policy of conciliating the Jews at Paul’s expense. Thus, as long as Paul remained under the jurisdiction of the Roman procurator of Judea there appeared to be no prospect of acquittal and release, and it made little difference whether he was detained as a condemned prisoner or merely as a political pawn. Either way he was not free to preach the gospel, and to one for whom life held no other ambition or interest such a prospect must have seemed insufferable. Other ambassadors of the cross were no doubt finding their ministry hindered in similar ways.

In NT times Christianity did not enjoy the status of a recognized religion before Roman law, and the practice and promulgation of unrecognized religions was prohibited. Rome tolerated Christianity only because it was at first considered to be a sect of Judaism, which was recognized. By pressing the case against Paul and Christianity the

Jews could eventually deprive them of even this benefit, and make their position legally untenable under Roman law. See pp. 47, 93.

It has been suggested that by appealing his case to Caesar, Paul purposed not only to secure a decision in his own case, which had come to a standstill, but also, perhaps, to secure at least a measure of recognition for Christianity as a legal religion in its own right. This might well be expected to afford the ambassadors of the cross greater freedom wherever they might go, and to overcome local opposition the more readily. Even while Paul was still in prison at Rome the very fact that he was not hindered from preaching the gospel in the imperial court, and that at least some “of Caesar’s household” (Phil. 4:22) became Christians, had the effect of making other Christian workers “much more bold to speak the word without fear” (see Phil. 1:12–14). And when it should become known that the emperor had decreed the acquittal of the foremost of Christian evangelists, there would be greater freedom throughout the empire to proclaim the gospel. Paul’s acquittal at the hands of the emperor would thus constitute, or at least prepare the way for, official permission to preach the gospel.

12. Council. Gr. *sumboulion*, the procurator’s own “group of councilors.” Luke consistently uses the word *sunedrion* when speaking of the Jewish “council,” the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:21; 6:12; 22:30; 23:1; 24:20; etc.). The appeal to Caesar was not automatically granted, but consultation confirmed the fact that since Paul was a Roman citizen his appeal could not be denied.

13. Certain days. Clearly a brief period of time (see on ch. 9:19).

King Agrippa. That is, Herod Agrippa II, son of Herod Agrippa I (whose death is described in ch. 12:20–23), and thus great-grandson of Herod the Great (see Vol. V, pp. 39, 69, 234). Like his sister Drusilla (see on ch. 24:24), this monarch was a Jew by virtue of descent from Herod the Great’s wife Mariamne. Agrippa II was considered too young to take the kingship of Palestine when his father died (A.D. 44; Josephus *Antiquities* xix. 9. 2), but upon the death of an uncle soon afterward, he was consoled with the rulership of Chalcis (*ibid.* xx. 5. 2). Later Agrippa received the provinces to the north, formerly under Philip and Lysanias (*ibid.* 7. 1), with the title of king. Still later Nero gave him certain other cities. In the Jewish war of A.D. 68–73 Agrippa sided with the Romans against the Jews, whom he tried to dissuade from rebellion (Josephus *War* ii. 16. 4 [345–401]). He retired to Rome, where he died in A.D. 100. Festus would naturally turn to Agrippa II for counsel concerning the handling of Paul’s case. Agrippa had custody of the Temple treasure and the privilege of appointing the high priest. He was therefore in a sense a religious colleague of the Roman governor, and in a position to give sound advice with respect to the case.

Bernice. Or, Berenice; the eldest daughter of Agrippa I, and a sister of Agrippa II and of Drusilla, wife of Felix. She had first been married to her uncle, Herod, king of Chalcis (see Vol. V, p. 40), whom Agrippa II had succeeded (see Vol. V, p. 234). Both Jewish and Roman writers speak of her relations with her brother Agrippa II as sinful. Later she married Polemo, king of Cilicia, but soon left him and went to Rome to be with her brother. She became the mistress of the emperor Titus, who grieved greatly when the Senate compelled him to dismiss her (Suetonius *Titus* vii. 2; Tacitus *History* ii. 81; Josephus *Antiquities* xx. 7. 3).

To salute Festus. This was the first courtesy visit of Agrippa II to the new procurator, for the purpose of welcoming him. Agrippa II was, of course, a vassal king of Rome.

14. Many days. Paul was brought before Agrippa and Berenice when their protracted stay gave opportunity for it. Festus mentioned Paul's case, not so much as an item of business that was of mutual concern, but rather in the course of conversation.

15. Chief priests. See on v. 2.

Desiring to have judgment. See on vs. 1–3.

16. Deliver. Gr. *charizomai* (see on v. 11). A Roman official was not supposed to surrender an accused man to others for punishment, merely as a favor. However, that is precisely what Pilate had done with Christ. Festus' record was more honorable (see Vol. V, p. 71).

To die. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of these words. The meaning is not altered.

Licence. Gr. *topos*, literally, "place," meaning "opportunity," not "license" in the sense of permission (see Rom. 15:23). Festus was determined to give Paul opportunity to make his defense.

17. Come hither. See on vs. 6, 7.

18. Things. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading "evil things."

19. Certain questions. That is, points of dispute, not inquiries to be raised and answered. See on vs. 7, 8.

Their own. This expression may also be translated "his own," in which case it would refer to Paul.

Superstition. Gr. *deisidaimonia*, "reverence for the gods," "religion," and sometimes, though probably not here, "superstition," unless reference is made to Paul's religion. Festus could hardly have described Judaism as a "superstition," without giving offense to Agrippa, himself nominally a Jew.

Jesus. This is the first recorded direct reference to Jesus in interviews with either Felix or Festus, but it would be incredible to think that His name had not been earlier mentioned. Paul had talked of the resurrection, of which Christ's experience was the one great triumphant illustration, and had "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come" (ch. 24:25). Paul could not thus have spoken without telling of the Christ. In naming Jesus, Festus reflects Paul's witness to the Saviour.

20. I doubted. Festus confesses his ignorance of Jewish beliefs and customs. In Jerusalem, the headquarters of Judaism, it would presumably be easier to ascertain the facts of religious questions (see on v. 9). But Paul had refused to go to Jerusalem (see on v. 10). When Paul went to Rome it would be necessary for Festus to send with him a report on his case, and Agrippa, an informed Jew, could assist the procurator in knowing what to say. Also, this request to Agrippa carried with it an implied compliment that would be of value to Festus in future relations with Agrippa.

21. Reserved. Gr. *tēreō* (see ch. 24:23).

Hearing. Gr. *diagnōsis*, literally, a "through-knowing," indicates a thorough examination. It was probably a technical legal term. See on ch. 23:35.

Augustus. Gr. *Sebastos*, "worshipful," "reverend," "venerable," equivalent to the Latin *Augustus*, "majestic," "august," "worthy of honor" (see Vol. V, pp. 37, 38; Vol. VI, p. 72). This was not Caesar Augustus, who ruled from 27 B.C. to A.D. 14 (see Vol. V, p.

234), but a title equivalent to Caesar. The Romans spoke of their ruler as Augustus, not as emperor.

Caesar. The emperor at this time was Nero (A.D. 54–68). See pp. 81–84.

22. Would ... hear. That is, was desiring to hear. Agrippa had evidently heard of Paul and was curious concerning him and his teachings. Compare the desire of Agrippa's great-uncle, Herod Antipas, to see Jesus (Luke 23:8).

23. With great pomp. Perhaps to impress Festus and overawe Paul. Here was Paul's first opportunity to testify to his faith before royalty (see ch. 9:15).

Place of hearing. Gr. *akroatērion*, "audience chamber." This was probably a large room set aside for special audiences of a more or less public nature.

Chief captains. See on ch. 22:24. Such was Lysias, who placed Paul under arrest. Festus now assembled the high officers of the garrison for this special audience, perhaps to lend color and importance to the occasion in honor of Agrippa.

Principal men. That is, the prominent men of Caesarea.

24. The multitude of the Jews. That is, the Jewish people as a nation, as represented, of course, by the chief priests and members of the Sanhedrin.

Dealt with me. Or, "made suit to me," "petitioned me" "interceded with me" (see Rom. 8:27, 34; 11:2; Heb. 7:25).

Also here. The leaders of Jerusalem had obviously stirred up an anti-Paul party in Caesarea which had joined in urging the new governor to put Paul to death.

Crying. The pleas of the Jews for Paul to be killed were apparently vehement and vociferous (cf. ch. 22:22, 23).

25. Nothing worthy of death. See on v. 11. A Roman would consider outrageous the idea of putting a man to death for an offense against the Jewish religion. But Paul had appealed to Caesar, and Festus would welcome suggestions on preparing his report to the emperor.

Augustus. See on v. 21.

26. No certain thing. Festus knew so little of the Jewish religion that he felt at a loss to know how to present an informed indictment against Paul on a charge concerned exclusively with matters of the Jewish religion.

To write. Festus must send a bill of particulars to the imperial throne.

My lord. Gr. *ho kurios*, "the [or "my"] lord," here the emperor, Nero. When used of the emperors as when applied to Christ this title bore an implication of divinity. Augustus had forbidden anyone to call him lord, as had his successor Tiberius (Suetonius *Augustus* iii. 53. 1; *Tiberius* xxvii), but their less modest successors accepted the title from friends and flatterers. Caligula styled himself *dominus*, the Latin equivalent of *kurios*, and Domitian adopted the title *dominus deus*, "lord god." Pliny the Younger addressed his patron, the emperor Trajan, frequently as *dominus*. See pp. 61, 62.

Specially before thee. Festus was looking to Agrippa for special help in solving this difficult case. At the same time Agrippa would be pleased if his counsel should be held in esteem.

27. Unreasonable. Roman justice was fair in principle although the judges who administered it were too often venal. Festus was a man of some integrity (see on v. 1).

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CHAPTER 26

20

2 *Paul, in the presence of Agrippa, declareth his life from his childhood, 12 and how miraculously he was converted, and called to his apostleship. 24 Festus chargeth him to be mad, whereunto he answereth modestly. 28 Agrippa is almost persuaded to be a Christian. 31 The whole company pronounce him innocent.*

1. Agrippa. See on ch. 25:13. The young king stands in striking contrast to Paul. This last scion of a decayed line of Jewish kings, the Maccabees, and of the house of Herod, Agrippa professed to be a Jew but was at heart a Roman. His reign marked the end of a dynasty and of an era. From the first the Herodian dynasty had been captive to Rome, and had certainly made no brilliant record. Before him stands Paul, old now, but strong in his convictions, and confident despite the circumstances. Agrippa is cynical, indifferent to real values; Paul is ardent for truth, no matter what the cost to himself.

Stretched forth the hand. Mention of this spontaneous gesture suggests that Luke may have been an eyewitness (cf. ch. 21:40).

Answered. That is, made his defense (see on ch. 25:8). In making this defense before Agrippa, Paul addresses himself to one who is nominally a Jew, yet apparently not hostile. Confident that he will be better understood, he no doubt spoke with greater freedom, and perhaps in more detail than at his earlier hearing before Felix and Festus.

2. Happy. Gr. *makarios*, “happy,” “fortunate,” “blessed” (see on Matt. 5:3). Paul is more at ease with Agrippa than with anyone before whom he has appeared since his arrest. Agrippa could evaluate far more accurately and quickly than a pagan magistrate the emotions felt by both accusers and accused. Paul doubtless hoped to reach the Roman mind of Festus through that of Agrippa. Although Paul spoke in his own defense, his thoughts were no doubt chiefly of proclaiming Christ to those assembled before him. Their conversion, their release from the bonds of sin, would mean more to him than his own release from the chains that bound him (see Acts 26:29). Paul was altogether sincere in his opening statement, “I think myself happy.”

Touching. Or, “regarding.”

3. Especially. This word probably refers to Paul’s happiness (v. 2) to tell all to Agrippa, rather than to Agrippa’s being expert above other prominent and well-informed Jews (cf. ch. 25:26).

Customs and questions. See on chs. 6:14; 21:21.

4. Manner of life. Paul’s conduct, his principles of living, and his philosophy of life.

²⁰Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Ac 23:35). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

At the first. Rather, “from the beginning.” Paul had come to Jerusalem as a youth. Even in Tarsus from the days of childhood he had been immersed in Jewish ways. At Jerusalem he had spent the years so formative of character, and all who knew him from that time could testify to his way of life among them.

At Jerusalem. Or, “and at Jerusalem.” This translation would suggest that even in Tarsus Paul had associated primarily with his own people, who doubtless formed a self-contained colony in that pagan city (see on ch. 9:11). Paul was thoroughly imbued with Jewish customs and prejudices, and would be unlikely to go against them. His further studies in Jerusalem as a youth would deepen his childhood experiences and loyalties.

Know all the Jews. Many leading Jews had known Paul, and more had known of him, chiefly as a young man admitted to the Sanhedrin (ch. 8:1, 3; AA 102) and from the reputation he had earned as an ardent persecutor of the hated Nazarene sect. Because of the confidence of the leaders in him he had been entrusted with the special mission to Damascus (ch. 9:1, 2).

5. From the beginning. Or, “from the first,” an expression Luke uses similarly concerning his knowledge of the gospel story (Luke 1:3).

If they would testify. But they were unwilling to speak in Paul’s favor the things they personally knew to be true.

Most straitest. Literally, “most strict.” The Greek does not have the double superlative. Compare Phil. 3:4–6.

Sect. The word may mean either “heresy” or “sect” (see on chs. 5:17; 15:5; 24:14). Here it designates the Pharisees as a sect.

A Pharisee. See Vol. V, pp. 51, 52.

6. Am judged. Or, “to be judged,” that is, in spite of his loyalty to the fundamental principles of Judaism (vs. 4, 5). As a Christian, Paul believed “none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come” (v. 22).

The promise. That is, the promise of a coming Messiah, in which all other promises to Israel centered, for which the twelve tribes had ever been looking, and which Paul declares met its fulfillment in Jesus. Implicit in the promise of a Messiah is His resurrection (see on Isa. 53:10–12), for of what help could a dead Messiah be to Israel? To Paul, the resurrection of Jesus was the great central fact that justified all his hopes for the future (1 Cor. 15:12–23; Phil. 3:10, 11; 1 Thess. 4:13–18; Titus 2:13). The chief difficulty with Jewish thought concerning the Messiah was that the Jews had so concentrated on OT promises of national greatness and the coming of a Messiah destined to defeat their enemies—all envisioned by the prophets, to be sure (see Vol. IV, pp. 27–32)—that they lost sight of the fact that Messiah must first suffer and die for their sins (see on Luke 4:19). Paul knew that the promises of glory would be fulfilled in Christ’s second advent (1 Cor. 15:51–54; Heb. 9:28).

Our fathers. Including, particularly, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

7. Unto which promise. That is, the blessing promised to Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3) and repeated to his descendants from generation to generation. To Paul, Jesus was the personification, the instrument, and the realization of this blessing (Rom. 4:12, 13; 1 Cor. 1:30).

Twelve tribes. Though ten of the tribes were largely scattered among the nations whither they had been driven as captive migrants, nevertheless they were still considered as inheritors of the promises. No doubt a remnant from these tribes had remained faithful

to God (cf. 1 Kings 19:18). James addressed his epistle “to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (James 1:1). Anna the prophetess was of the tribe of Asher (Luke 2:36). Through the years after the restoration many of the exiles must have drifted back to their homeland. In the Talmud (*Berakoth* 20a, Soncino ed., p. 120) Rabbi Johanan is said to be “from the seed of Joseph.”

Instantly. Gr. *en ekteneia*, “earnestly.” The word “instantly” no longer conveys the meaning expressed by the Greek.

Day and night. This expression intensifies the idea of the zeal and earnestness with which devout Jews practiced their religion.

Agrippa. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of this word.

I am accused. Paul has been challenged for two basic aspects of the Messianic hope: (1) that Jesus is the Messiah, and (2) that the Messiah has risen from the dead (see on v. 6). Paul, a Jew of the Jews and a Pharisee of the Pharisees, is thus charged by his fellow countrymen on the grounds of the very hope in which Judaism centers. He, the strictest of the strict, branded an apostate—the most ardent patriot declared a traitor!

Of the Jews. That is, by the Jews. They of all people should have championed his cause before the Gentiles, instead of appearing in the role of accusers!

8. A thing incredible. To Paul, a Pharisee and a Christian, belief in the resurrection of the dead generally, and of Jesus in particular, was inevitable. Without the hope of the resurrection the whole fabric of Jewish faith (see ch. 24:15)—to say nothing of that of Christianity (see 1 Cor. 15:12–22)—ravels out. Without the hope of a resurrection, faith in God loses its meaning (see on Matt. 22:32; 1 Cor. 15:14, 17, 19).

You. The pronoun is plural, thus including the entire audience.

9. Contrary. Once Paul had fought Christianity “in all good conscience” (ch. 23:1), but it was a conscience made insensitive by the years of Jewish environment and instruction.

The name. A common expression in the Acts designating the Resurrected One (see on ch. 2:38), who was in very truth the incarnation of all the hopes of Israel (see on John 1:14).

10. I also did. It seems strange to think that Paul, the great hero of the early church, Apostle to the Gentiles and author of nearly a third of the NT, was at one time a bright star in the firmament of Judaism, well esteemed among the Jews (see chs. 7:58; 8:1; 9:1, 2; 22:4, 5). He had once been promoted to high honor (cf. AA 102) and entrusted with important responsibilities (ch. 9:1, 2) by the very men who now so vehemently accuse him, or by their immediate successors. His work as persecutor had not resulted from a burst of anger, but was the planned campaign of a devout man, ambitious to serve his nation and church and utterly ruthless in attaining his ends. Furthermore, these activities had centered in Jerusalem, where his enemies, the more bitter because they had once been friends, were now scheming to put him to death (ch. 25:1–3).

Put to death. Only the death of Stephen is mentioned specifically by Luke. Evidently there were others for whose death Paul had been responsible.

Gave my voice. That is, cast my vote.

11. In every synagogue. Apparently the early believers did not separate themselves from the synagogues, but continued to worship with their Jewish brethren there and in the Temple (ch. 2:46). For the synagogues as places of punishment see Matt. 10:17; 23:34;

Mark 13:9; Luke 12:11; Vol. V, p. 56. About A.D. 205 Tertullian called the Jewish synagogues fountains of persecution (*Scorpiace* 10).

Compelled. Literally, “kept compelling,” or “was trying to force.”

To blaspheme. That is, to renounce belief in Christ as the Messiah (cf. Lev. 24:11–16). Pliny (c. A.D. 108) found Christians preferring death to denouncing Christ (*Letters* x. 96).

Mad. Literally, “angry,” “furious.” Paul had been a religious fanatic, perhaps partly in an attempt to smother the pleadings of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Tim. 1:13).

Strange cities. That is, foreign cities, meaning cities beyond the borders of Palestine.

12. Whereupon. Literally, “in [pursuit of] which things,” meaning “on which errand.”

With authority. Paul was the Sanhedrin’s roving commissioner against heresy. He was the inquisitor-general of Judaism.

13. At midday. The blinding light was not that of the sun, for Paul had been traveling for hours under its increasing brightness, without distress. In the brightest sunlight, a supernatural light, even brighter than that of the sun, blinded him. In vs. 13–18 only points in the narrative of Paul’s conversion not commented on in ch. 9:1–22 are discussed (see p. 228).

14. A voice speaking. All heard the sound; only Paul understood the words (see on Acts 9:4, 5; cf. Dan. 10:7; John 12:28, 29).

Kick against the pricks. This appears to have been a well-known Greek proverb, which might well have been current among any agricultural people, even the Jews. The figure is drawn from the Eastern plowman’s custom of using an iron goad to hasten the slow gait of his oxen. It is possible that the scene was actually being enacted beside the Damascus road, and that the Lord took it as an apt illustration for His message to the persecutor. (For Jesus’ use of current proverbs see on Luke 4:23.) The form of the verb translated “to kick,” may be understood as meaning “to keep on kicking,” and the word translated “pricks” (*kentra*) means “goads” (cf. 1 Cor. 15:55, where it appears in the singular and is translated “sting”). The divine message suggests that Paul’s conscience had been vigorously resisting the appeals of the Holy Spirit (cf. on Acts 8:1). The spirit of Gamaliel, Paul’s teacher (ch. 22:3), was more tolerant than that which Paul was now exhibiting. This educational background, and also the fact that before his conversion Paul already had relatives who were Christians (Rom. 16:7), doubtless were factors in his spiritual crisis.

15. I am Jesus. Gr. *egō eimi Iēsous* (see on ch. 9:5).

16. Make thee a minister. See on ch. 9:10, 15, where God instructs Paul through His representative, Ananias of Damascus.

Which thou hast seen. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 10) between this and the reading “in which you have seen me.” Paul actually saw his Lord (Acts 22:17, 18; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8). It was on the basis of this direct commission that Paul laid his claim to apostleship. He knew by personal experience that Christ was risen indeed (cf. Gal. 1:15–18; 1 Tim. 2:7). To be genuine, a witness must have firsthand knowledge of that concerning which he testifies.

I will appear. Christ appeared to Paul upon repeated occasions, to guide and to intervene (see Acts 18:9, 10; 22:17–21; 23:11; 1 Cor. 11:23; 2 Cor. 12:1–5). Paul was an

eyewitness of the risen Lord, and knew from personal experience the truth of the resurrection.

17. Delivering thee. This and other details of the experience are not mentioned in previous accounts (ch. 9:22). This was not a promise that the Lord would keep Paul out of danger, but that He would be with him in times of danger.

The people. That is, the Jews, as contrasted with the Gentiles (cf. v. 23).

I send thee. The pronoun “I” is emphatic. No less a personage than Jesus Himself invests Paul with apostleship.

18. Open their eyes. See on Luke 4:18. A promise of success in his mission. Paul knew that the devil had blinded men’s spiritual eyes (Rom. 1:20–32; 2 Cor. 4:4). Even while Jesus spoke to him Paul was suffering physical blindness. How well he could appreciate the need for the opening of the eyes!

Turn them. Or, “that they may turn.” Now, having their eyes opened, they could see certain death at the end of the road they were traveling. This should lead them to turn about.

From darkness to light. See on John 1:4–9.

Power of Satan. Satan had led all men into sin. He was, indeed, the author of sin. Only the superior power of Christ can release men from his clutches.

Forgiveness of sins. Jews and Gentiles alike could not rid themselves of sin. The gospel made accessible to them the good news of the remission—the sending away—of sin (John 1:7–9; 1 Peter 2:24).

Inheritance. Instead of the vanities of this temporary world, aging in wickedness, Paul was to offer the Gentiles “an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away” (1 Peter 1:4).

Sanctified by faith. Paul often mentions sanctification, the process of character transformation through which the saints must go. To instantaneous freedom from the guilt of sin, through justification (see on Rom. 4:8), it adds a repeated and continuous dedication of the mind and the life to the goal of perfection in Christ. It is the “work ... of a lifetime” (see AA 560–562). See on Matt. 5:48. As all Christians must, Paul was experiencing a continuing dedication, proceeding from victory to victory in Christ (Phil. 3:12–14; see on Rom. 8:1–4).

19. I was not disobedient. Paul did not “kick against the pricks” (see on v. 14). He made a full surrender, in response to the vision Christ accorded him. So complete was this dedication that henceforth he never hesitated once the path of duty became plain. He asked only to know what his Lord required, and then did it (see ch. 16:6–12). Throughout life his only question was, “What shall I do, Lord?” (ch. 22:10). He could still have chosen to disobey, but the “love of Christ” constrained him (2 Cor. 5:14).

The heavenly vision. See on ch. 9:3–7. This was not a dream. Saul literally met his Lord on the Damascus road and came to know Him personally—in a sense more personally than those who had known Him in the flesh. To Paul this vision remained a living reality. Paul knew in whom he had believed (2 Tim. 1:12).

20. Shewed. Literally, “declared,” or “announced.” Paul was God’s evangelist, His herald of good news.

Them of Damascus. Paul set to work immediately, where he was at the time of his conversion, the very place where he had intended to inflict grave injury upon the church (see on ch. 9:19–22).

At Jerusalem. Paul returned to Jerusalem some three years later (Gal. 1:18). There, at the risk of his life, he witnessed with such boldness that the Jews, particularly the Hellenistic Jews (see on Acts 6:1; 14:1), were infuriated (ch. 9:29).

All the coasts. That is, all the region. Just when Paul carried on this evangelization in Judea is not clear, though it was done perhaps at the time of one of one or more of his several trips to Jerusalem (see Acts 11:29, 30; 12:25; 15:3, 4; 18:22; 21:8–15; cf. Gal. 1:22).

The Gentiles. Paul's mission to the Gentiles began some nine or ten years later at Antioch in Syria (chs. 11:25, 26; 13:1–4).

Repent. Gr. *metanoēō*, “to change [one's] mind” (see on Matt. 3:2; Acts 3:19–21).

Do works. See on Matt. 3:8. Paul is not here advocating righteousness by works, but the kind of “works” that characterize a life that has attained to righteousness by faith in Christ. He does not mean that it is possible to earn righteousness by the performance of certain deeds, but rather that true righteousness automatically produces deeds commensurate with, and that attest to, the presence of the grace of God in the life. No evangelist has ever emphasized more than Paul the glorious fact of righteousness by faith through God's saving grace (Rom. 3:21, 22, 27; Eph. 2:5–8). But whenever Paul mentions the free gift of salvation, he also dwells, as here, upon the good works that follow (see Rom. 8:1–4). The man of faith establishes the law (Rom. 3:31), for he is “created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Eph. 2:10). Whenever there is true righteousness by faith, that righteousness is evident in good works. “Faith without works is dead” (see James 2:14–24).

21. Caught me. See on ch. 21:27–31.

22. Help of God. See on chs. 21:31, 32; 23:11, 12, 30. To human eyes it was Lysias and his soldiers who had rescued Paul, but he knew that God had sent the help (see ch. 23:11).

Witnessing. See on chs. 9:15; 26:1.

The prophets and Moses. That is, the OT (see on Luke 24:44). Paul repeatedly affirms his confidence in, and loyalty to, the Scriptures (see on Acts 24:14). Prophecies of the Messiah, fulfilled in Jesus, are sprinkled through the pages of the OT.

23. Christ. Literally, “the Christ” (see on Matt. 1:1).

Should suffer. The sufferings, death, and resurrection of Christ were the very points at issue between the Jews and Paul. In Jewish Messianic thinking there was no room for a suffering and dying Messiah, and thus no reason for the Messiah to rise from the dead (see on v. 6). Paul's statement here is almost identical with that of Jesus on the way to Emmaus (see on Luke 24:25–27). “Christ crucified” has ever been “a stumblingblock” to the Jews (1 Cor. 1:23). See on Acts 13:27–37.

First that should rise. Christ is “the first-fruits of them that slept” (1 Cor. 15:20), the “firstborn from the dead” (Col. 1:18). He was also first to proclaim that the dead shall live through faith in Him (John 5:21–29; 11:23–26). Christ was not first in point of time to rise from the dead. Moses comes first in that sense (Luke 9:28–30; Jude 9). Christ was the “first” in prominence and as the author of life (Col. 1:15, 16; 3:4). Having conquered death (Acts 2:24; Rev. 1:18), He guaranteed life to all who trust in Him and in His power. His resurrection was a pledge of the general resurrection of the just (1 Cor. 15:12–22). It is He who has “brought life and immortality to light” (2 Tim. 1:10).

Shew light. Or, “proclaim light.” The gospel, as old as man’s need of a Saviour, is proclaimed with new force in the light of His death and resurrection. See on John 1:4–9.

The people. That is, the Jews. Simeon called the infant Jesus “a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of” His “people Israel” (Luke 2:32).

The Gentiles. To whom Paul was Heaven’s chosen messenger to proclaim the light of truth (see on ch. 9:15).

24. Spake for himself. That is, made his defense.

Festus said. He had heard more than he was able to understand, or perhaps cared to listen to. His protest was vociferous. The preaching of the cross is “foolishness” to ears attuned to earth (1 Cor. 1:23).

Beside thyself. That is, mad, as later here and in v. 25. Festus was probably sincere in believing that Paul’s obsession with lofty themes had affected his mind. What Agrippa could understand, if he would, was completely beyond the Roman, Festus.

25. Most noble. That is, excellent, a title of honor in common use, and appropriate to Festus’ high official position (see on Luke 1:3; Acts 23:26; 24:3).

Soberness. The opposite of the madness charged against him.

26. The king knoweth. Paul appeals to Agrippa to acknowledge the historical accuracy of his statements concerning Christ.

Speak freely. The account of Paul’s conversion recorded in this chapter is given in more detail than the versions of the same narrative in chs. 9; 22. Paul did speak freely, partly because he had in King Agrippa an informed listener, and perhaps partly because he realized this was probably his final hearing in Palestine. Much depended upon it, both for himself and for his listeners.

None of these things. That is, the life and ministry of Jesus, His death and resurrection, the experience at Pentecost, the miracles performed by Peter, John, and the other apostles, the amazing conversion of Paul, the remarkable results that followed the preaching of the gospel.

Not done in a corner. The Pharisees had complained that “the world is gone after” Jesus (John 12:19), and the Jews told the magistrates in Thessalonica that the apostles had “turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6). The interest and excitement, as well as controversy, that attended the proclamation of the gospel, confirm what Paul has said.

27. Believest thou? Presumably, as a Jew, he did. The prophets had foretold all that Paul related about Jesus. See on v. 22.

I know. Not wishing tactlessly to place Agrippa in a difficult position, Paul anticipates his answer. Agrippa realized that all Paul said was true, but, for him, knowledge and conviction failed to produce action (see on Matt. 7:21–27).

28. Almost. Gr. *en oligō*, literally, “in a little,” possibly “in a little [time],” but never “almost.” The ambiguity of the Greek text of this verse has resulted in various attempts at translation and exegesis. Commentators, generally, have concluded that Agrippa spoke in irony, as if to make light of Paul’s serious appeal of vs. 26, 27. If so, his irony was a mask to conceal his real feelings (see AA 438). Like Agrippa, those who are under deep conviction oftentimes speak and act in an indifferent way, particularly in the presence of unbelieving associates. Though under deep conviction, Agrippa perhaps wished to give those assembled in the procurator’s audience chamber the impression that he thought Paul naive to think a prisoner could convert a king in so short a time, or with so brief an explanation.

29. *Not only thou.* Nothing daunted, Paul still presses his appeal.

Were. Literally, “might become.”

Both almost, and altogether. Literally, “whether in little or in much,” with reference to the “in a little” of Agrippa’s exclamation (v. 28). However little or much Paul has given by way of evidence, it is enough upon which to base an appeal to an informed Jew like the king.

Except these bonds. As Paul gestures with his hands he remembers the chains with which he is bound.

30. *When he had thus spoken.* Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of these words.

The king rose up. The interview ends with no visible results from Paul’s able but brief presentation and his earnest plea. How deep Paul’s disappointment may have been can only be guessed.

31. *Talked between themselves.* Rather, “they spoke one with another,” exchanging views on Paul’s case.

Nothing worthy of death. Paul might be “mad” (vs. 24, 25), but he was not dangerous. Festus and Agrippa were apparently willing to concede that Paul was sincere, informed, and afire with zeal for God.

32. *Set at liberty.* See on ch. 25:11.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–3AA 435

1–32AA 435–438

5 GC 213

8–19AA 436

9–11AA 103

10, 11 SC 41; 5T 641

12 AA 123

12–14AA 114

16–18AA 126

18 AA 159; MB 109

20 AA 125

20–27AA 437

28 EW 207; GC 164

28, 29 Ed 67; SR 313

28–32AA 438

CHAPTER 27

1 *Paul shipping toward Rome, 10 foretelleth of the danger of the voyage, 11 but is not believed. 14 They are tossed to and fro with tempest, 41 and suffer shipwreck, 22, 34, 44 yet all come safe to land.*

1. *Sail into Italy.* Finally, although under much different circumstances than he had intended, Paul was to realize his long-cherished desire to “see Rome” (Acts 19:21; see Rom. 1:15; 15:22–24; maps p. 444 and facing p. 33).

They delivered Paul. The soldiers in charge of Paul during his stay at Caesarea turned him over to an officer for the voyage to Rome.

Other. Gr. *heteroi*, implying a class of prisoners different in some way from Paul.

Julius. A characteristically Roman name.

Centurion. A Roman officer commanding 100 men (see on ch. 10:1).

Band. Gr. *speira*, “a cohort.” A Roman auxiliary cohort, such as this apparently was, consisted probably of 1,000 men (see on chs. 21:31; 23:10). Various suggestions have been made regarding the identity of this Augustan “band.” There is inscriptional evidence that a cohort named Augusta was stationed in Syria in the first century, and the cohort mentioned here may possibly be identified with it.

2. Entering. Gr. *epibainō*, here a technical term meaning “to embark,” “to go on board.”

Adramyttium. A seaport on the northwest coast of Mysia in Asia Minor, 50 mi. east of Troas. It was a commercial center of some importance. Its modern name is Edremit. This was apparently the home port of the ship, and its destination on the present voyage.

Meaning to sail. Literally, “about to sail,” with reference to the ship. The centurion purposed to touch at various ports along the way until he should find a ship on its way to Rome.

Aristarchus. A traveling companion of Paul. He had been with Paul at Ephesus (ch. 19:29), then with him in Macedonia and Greece (ch. 20:4). He was with Paul during his first imprisonment at Rome (Col. 4:10; Philemon 24).

Being with us. These words imply that both Aristarchus and Luke, the writer of the narrative, were in Paul’s company. Roman law provided that Roman citizens traveling as prisoners might be accompanied by a slave and a personal physician. Perhaps Aristarchus served as Paul’s servant and Luke as his physician.

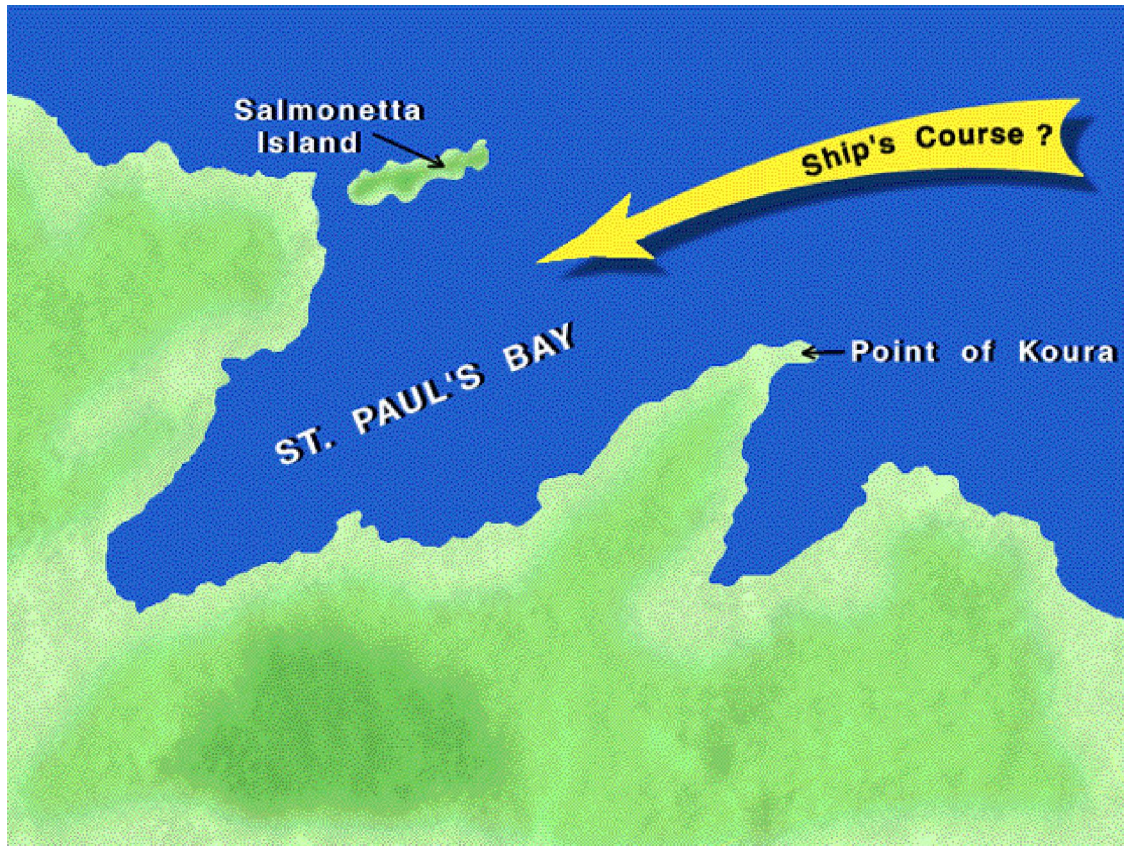
Paul’s Journey to Rome as a Prisoner, c. A.D. 60–61

21

²¹Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Ac 26:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.



Island of Malta, St. Paul's Bay.



3. Sidon. The well-known seaport on the coast of Phoenicia frequently mentioned with Tyre (see Vol. II, pp. 67–69; see on ch. 12:20).

Courteously. Gr. *philanthrōpōs*, “humanely,” “kindly.”

Entreated. Gr. *chraomai*, “to use,” “to deal with,” “to treat” (cf. ch. 7:19). Paul had made a favorable impression upon all who came in close contact with him.

To refresh himself. Or, “to receive hospitality.”

4. Launched. That is, put to sea, set sail (cf. Luke 5:4).

Under Cyprus. That is, on the landward, or leeward, side, between the island and the mainland. In favorable weather the course would doubtless have been somewhat to the south of Cyprus (see on ch. 21:1–3).

5. Sea of Cilicia. Or, “the sea off [the coast of] Cilicia and Pamphylia.”

Myra. A city some 2 mi. (3 km.) from the coast, on the river Myros. It is now called Dembre by the Turks. This was not a usual port of call for ships sailing from Palestine to Rome. An ancient inscription names Myra as a storage place for grain, and the ship, being from Alexandria, may have been routed to unload grain there (v. 38). Egypt was the granary of the Roman Empire.

6. Ship of Alexandria. Myra was far distant from the direct course between Alexandria and Rome.

7. Sailed slowly. Evidently because of strong head winds.

Scarce. Gr. *molis*, “with difficulty” (cf. v. 8).

Cnidus. Then a busy seaport at the extreme southwest corner of Asia Minor, now in ruins. It was famous as a center of worship of Aphrodite. A Jewish colony had been there

at least from the time of the Maccabees (1 Maccabees 15:15–24). The winds apparently forced the ship close to the coast. Now, out in the Aegean, it felt the full force of the gale and headed toward Crete.

Suffering. Or, “allowing us.” At this season the winds were usually from the northwest, and were known as the Etesian winds (however, see v. 14).

Under Crete. That is, to the leeward of Crete, protected from the wind (cf. v. 4). Here the sea would be less rough.

Salmone. Probably Cape Sidero, a promontory at the eastern end of Crete, seaward from which the ship was protected from the wind.

8. Hardly. That is, with difficulty (cf. v. 7).

The fair havens. In the Greek there is no definite article. The town is not mentioned elsewhere in literature but still bears the same name. It is on the southern coast of Crete, about 5 mi. (8 km.) east of Cape Matala, the chief headland on the south coast of the island. It is now known as *Limenes Kali*.

Lasea. The ruins of this city have been identified a few miles east of Fair Havens.

9. Much time was spent. That is, awaiting a favorable wind and debating what should be done.

Sailing was now dangerous. Winter was approaching. Navigation on the Mediterranean was attempted only in favorable weather.

The fast. Evidently the Day of Atonement, on the 10th day of the 7th month of the ecclesiastical calendar, Tishri (see Vol. II, p. 108; Josephus *Antiquities* iii. 10. 3 [240]). It was now probably the latter part of October, and severe storms were to be expected.

10. I perceive. Gr. *theōreō*, “to discern” (cf. John 4:19). Paul’s perception of threatened danger was not necessarily by supernatural insight, but from his own observation and judgment as an experienced traveler. He did not appear to speak as a prophet. Note that the “hurt” he feared to the lives of those on board did not come to pass (Acts 27:44).

Hurt and much damage. Or, “injury and much loss.” Paul had evidently won the respect of those in charge of the ship, for him to feel free to give advice as he did. He had already made a number of voyages on the Mediterranean and the Aegean seas. Some years before this particular voyage he had written, “Thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep” (2 Cor. 11:25). For an explanation of Paul’s voyage and shipwreck on the island of Malta see Additional Note at end of chapter.

11. Believed. Literally, “was persuaded.” When it came to such matters the centurion had more confidence in the captain and the shipowner than in Paul. As an officer of the imperial guard the centurion would have influence with the ship’s men.

Master. Gr. *kubernētēs*, “helmsman,” “sailing master,” the one in charge of navigating the ship. The centurion naturally preferred the judgment of an expert navigator to that of an itinerant Jewish rabbi.

The owner. Probably both of the ship and of the cargo, which was Egyptian wheat (v. 38) bound for Rome. This staple accounted for much of the lively and profitable trade between Alexandria and Rome (see on v. 5).

12. Not commodious. Or, “not suitable,” “not fit.” Perhaps the harbor did not seem to afford sufficient protection for the ship through the winter, or perhaps Fair Havens was too small a port to furnish adequate provisions.

Depart. Gr. *anagō*, here meaning “set sail.”

Phenice. Or, “Phoenix,” generally identified with the present Cretan port of Lutro, the best all-year port on the southern coast of Crete. It is mentioned by Strabo (*Geography* x. 4. 3), the Greek geographer. A tablet dedicated to Serapis and Jupiter as a thank offering for preservation at sea, by the agent of a ship outbound from Alexandria, has been found nearby.

South west and north west. The clause reads literally, “looking down the southwest and northwest.” Lutro harbor faces the east, and a person aboard a ship entering the harbor would be facing west. On the other side of the promontory that forms the harbor of Lutro is the less-protected harbor of Phineka, which faces west.

13. South wind. This would represent a complete change of weather, for the pilot had held the ship’s course south of Crete to escape the north wind (vs. 7, 8).

Obtained their purpose. That is, waited long enough for the weather to change.

Loosing thence. Or, “weighing anchor.”

Sailed. Literally, “were sailing.”

Close. Gr. *asson*, “nearer.” Long ago considered a place name, this word now generally is taken to mean “nearer.” No such place has been identified. It was the captain’s purpose to stay close inshore until he should reach Phenice, about 40 mi. to the west.

14. Arose against it. Literally, “beat down from it,” that is, from the mountainous island of Crete. There was another abrupt change, from the gentle south wind to a strong north wind, and this forced the ship southward toward the island of Clauda (v. 16; see Paul’s Journey to Rome as a Prisoner and The Journeys of Paul).

Tempestuous. Gr. *tuphōnikos*, an adjective derived from the name of the god Typhon, who personified the tempestuous forces of nature, and especially violent winds. The rapid changes in the wind indicate that this was a major cyclonic storm.

Euroclydon. Gr. *eurokludōn*, from two words meaning “east wind” and “[great] wave,” or “rough water.” *Eurokludōn* would thus designate an east wind that raises great waves. However, important textual evidence may also be cited (cf. p. 10) for the reading *eurakulōn*. This hybrid word, the first part of which is Greek and the second Latin, indicates an east-northeast wind.

15. The ship was caught. While the ship had been coasting close inshore east of Cape Matala it was protected from the shifting wind. But as it started across the open bay on its way to Phenice the violent northeaster struck with all its fury and drove the ship to the southwest, in the direction of Clauda.

Bear up into the wind. That is, could not face the wind.

Let her drive. Literally, “we gave way [to the wind] and were driven.” It was impossible to steer the ship. There was nothing to do but run before the wind, in a southwesterly direction.

16. Running under. That is, sailed to leeward of (see on v. 4).

Clauda. Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for reading Cauda. The island’s modern name is Gozzo or Gaudio. Ptolemy (*Geography* iii. 15. 8) called it *Claudos*. The islet lies about 45 mi. (72.5 km.) to the southwest of Cape Matala, near which the northeaster bore down upon the little ship.

Come by the boat. The archaic idiom of this clause means, “we were able with difficulty to bring the [life] boat [or “dinghy”] under control.” This small boat was normally kept in tow for emergency use. In the rough seas it was no doubt rapidly filling with water and becoming unmanageable. The crew were trying to hoist it aboard the ship, lest it be lost.

17. Taken up. Or, “hoisted up.”

Helps. Strong ropes drawn completely around the hull of the ship, to keep the timbers from being forced apart by the force of the wind and the waves. This procedure for undergirding a wooden vessel is known today as frapping. Obviously the ship was hardly seaworthy, and must have been leaking so badly that the seams in the planking threatened to split wide open. The ship was in danger of foundering at sea. Compare Thucydides (*History* i. 29. 3) and Horace (*Odes* i. 14).

Fall. Gr. *ekpiptō*, here meaning “to be cast [ashore],” or “to be driven [onto].”

Quicksands. Gr. *surtis*, the name of the eastern arm of the large gulf that indents the northern shore of the African continent and is known today as Syrtis Major to distinguish it from Syrtis Minor, the western arm of the same gulf. The waters of both Syrtis Major and Syrtis Minor are shallow and hide sandy shoals, or quicksands, which have made them the graveyard of countless ships since the dawn of navigation. Paul’s ship was being driven by the wind in the direction of Syrtis Major. See Lucan *The Civil War* ix. 303–310; cf. Milton *Paradise Lost* ii. 939.

Strake. Gr. *chalaō*, “to loosen,” “to let down,” “to lower.”

Sail. Gr. *skeuos*, “equipment,” “tackle,” “gear,” here the “rigging” of the ship. The crew brought down everything from aloft that they could spare, particularly the heavy mainsail and its gear. They evidently left enough sail and gear to keep the ship under control, and so avoid the Syrtis, with its much-feared shoals.

The various precautions taken (vs. 16, 17) were completed while the ship enjoyed the momentary comparative calm to the lee of Clauda. For a description of this part of the voyage see Additional Note at end of chapter.

So. Or, “thus,” that is, with the dinghy aboard, with cables secured around the hull of the ship, and nonessential gear removed.

Were driven. In a day or two the northeaster would drive the ship west-southwest into the Syrtis. To avoid this, the sailors rigged the ship for stormy weather, hove it to, and took a starboard tack. Thus, with the bow of the ship pointed nearly north and the northeaster striking the ship on its starboard beam, it would be driven, largely sideways, in a west-northwest direction. The distance from Clauda to Malta is about 475 mi.

18. Exceedingly tossed. The storm increased in fury.

The next day. That is, the second day of the storm. The ship was now past the momentary shelter provided by the island of Clauda.

Lightened the ship. They set about throwing the cargo of wheat (v. 38) overboard. The ship was still leaking badly in spite of the ropes secured around its hull to keep it from coming apart (see on v. 17).

19. Tackling. Or, “gear.”

We cast out. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading “they cast out.”

Our own hands. Literally, “own hands,” that is, the hands of the crew (see previous comment). The gear was not washed overboard or blown away, but deliberately thrown overboard.

Tackling. See on v. 17. All equipment that could be removed from the ship, particularly what was on deck, was cast overboard.

20. Neither sun nor stars. Before the invention of the compass, navigators on the high seas were dependent upon observing the sun by day and the stars by night in order to plot their direction and to know their position. It is evident from v. 27 that the officers of the ship did not know their nautical position. They were lost.

Many days. Nearly two weeks, as events turned out (v. 27).

Then. Gr. *loipon*, “at last,” “finally.” As the storm continued to make positional observations impossible, and with momentary danger of foundering at sea or being blown upon the Syrtis or upon a rocky shore, the crew at last abandoned hope.

21. Long abstinence. That is, on the part of the crew and probably most of the passengers as well, as the Greek makes clear. The excitement and difficulty of operating the ship during the storm had made the regular preparation and use of food difficult. No doubt also many were seasick.

Paul stood forth. Since the rejection of his advice while at Fair Havens, apparently Paul and his companions had left the captain and the crew to their own devices.

Hearkened unto me. Paul’s “I told you so” was not by way of censure or unpleasant nagging, but to persuade the ship’s officers to heed what he was now about to say. If his advice (v. 10) had been followed, the danger and fear of the past several days could have been avoided. They would do well to listen to the further counsel he now had to give.

Gained. Or, “incurred.”

Harm and loss. They had lost the cargo and the rigging of the ship (vs. 18, 19), and now appeared about to lose the ship itself and their own lives (v. 20).

22. Be of good cheer. Or, “be of good courage,” “take heart.” In due time all would be well. Contrast Paul’s words of courage with their loss of “all hope” (v. 20). Compare John 16:33; Acts 23:11. Paul’s attitude and tone of voice must have been in keeping with his cheering admonition. So it should be with the Christian bringing the good news of salvation through Christ Jesus to a troubled world.

Any man’s life. Earlier Paul had personally anticipated that lives might be lost (v. 10), but God revealed that there was to be no loss of life.

Of the ship. That is, only of the ship.

23. Stood by me. Paul no doubt remembered the visit of the angel to his prison cell in Jerusalem, when he was told that he would yet appear before Caesar (ch. 23:11).

The angel. Literally, “an angel.” For the intervention of angels on behalf of the children of God see Acts 5:19; 8:26; 12:7; cf. Heb. 1:13, 14.

Whose I am. Religion is a personal thing, a personal consecration, worship and service given to a personal God. To the fearful heathen on the doomed vessel with him, Paul brings a ringing testimony. He knows the God who is about to intervene on behalf of those aboard the ship, for He belongs to Paul and Paul to Him in the mutual fellowship of service. Paul had taken upon himself the yoke of service and had become intimately acquainted with his divine yokefellow (see Matt. 11:28–30; cf. Rom. 1:9; 2 Tim. 1:3, 12).

24. Fear not. How often celestial visitors have greeted human beings with these words (see Luke 1:13, 30; 2:10; Rev. 1:17).

Brought before Cæsar. A renewal of a previous promise (ch. 23:11), which had ever since sustained the apostle. Paul would come through the ordeal safely, and eventually reach Rome.

Given thee. That is, granted thee, probably as an answer to prayer. Paul must have been often in prayer during this time of peril. All aboard the ship must have known by now that their fellow traveler was no ordinary prisoner. Paul and his Christian companions were proving to be a “savour of life unto life” (2 Cor. 2:16; cf. Gen. 18:23–32; Matt. 5:13).

25. I believe God. Paul’s faith grew stronger as the danger and hopelessness of the situation increased. All reason for confidence in the sturdiness of the ship or the skill of the captain and the crew had long since vanished (cf. v. 20).

26. A certain island. Melita (ch. 28:1), or Malta.

27. Fourteenth night. The final act in the stormy drama came at the end of two weeks (cf. vs. 18, 19, 33). During this time they had drifted helplessly, knowing nothing of their position at sea. They had covered a distance of about 475 mi., at about 36 mi. per day (see Additional Note at end of chapter).

Adria. That is, the Adriatic Sea, or more exactly, that portion of the Mediterranean Sea lying to the south of what is known today as the Adriatic Sea (cf. Strabo *Geography* ii. 5. 20; Josephus *Life* 3 [15]).

The shipmen deemed. Perhaps they detected the spray of the breakers dashing against the rocks of Point Koura, at the eastern extremity of St. Paul’s Bay, on the northeastern shore of the island Malta (ch. 28:1). See Island of Malta.

28. Sounded. Literally, “heaving [the lead].” They sounded by means of a weight, perhaps lead, suspended at the end of a rope. Anciently this was the only method of determining a ship’s position relative to the shore at night or in fog.

Twenty fathoms. The Greek “fathom” was considered to be the length of the outstretched arms, from tip to tip of extended fingers, and closely approximated the English “fathom” of 6 ft. (see Vol. V, p. 50). The sounding was therefore about 120 ft. The depth of the sea 1/4 mi. off Koura Point (see on v. 27) is 120 ft. (see Additional Note at end of chapter).

Gone a little further. Literally, “a little space intervening.”

Fifteen fathoms. Or, about 90 ft. So marked a decrease in depth after so short an interval of time and distance indicated that the ship was rapidly approaching the shore.

29. Rocks. Literally, “rough places” (see on v. 27).

Cast four anchors. The darkness of night made it impossible to select the best part of the shore on which to beach the ship. The anchors were thrown out from the stern in order to hold the ship’s bow toward the shore.

Wished. Literally, “were praying” (cf. Jonah 1:4, 5).

30. Were about to flee. Rather, “were seeking to flee.” To save their own lives the crew had decided to abandon the ship and its passengers. This testifies to the apparent hopelessness of the situation.

Colour. Gr. *prophasis*, “pretext,” “appearance.”

31. Paul said. He had had enough experience at sea (see on v. 10) to know that the proposed operation was unnecessary, and accordingly surmised that the sailors could have no other intention than to abandon ship.

Except these abide. Only the sailors had the skill necessary to beach the ship and save the passengers.

32. The boat. That is, the dinghy, drawn aboard near the island of Clauda two weeks before (see on v. 16).

33. While the day. It was about six hours from the time the sailors sensed their proximity to land (vs. 27–29) till dawn. Nothing could be done in the darkness.

Meat. Gr. *trophē*, “food” of any kind (see on Matt. 3:4). Nourishment was essential in view of the exertion and exposure all were certain to experience when they should abandon the ship.

The fourteenth day. See on v. 27.

Continued. Literally, “tarried,” or “waited.”

Having taken nothing. Probably a reference to regular meals. The routine of life aboard ship had been completely upset, and it had been impossible to obtain more than snatches of food now and then. No doubt, also, many had been seasick.

34. Meat. See on v. 33.

Health. Gr. *sōtēria*, “salvation,” here in the physical sense (cf. v. 31).

Shall not an hair fall. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the reading “not a hair shall be lost,” or “not a hair shall perish.” This figure of speech is a familiar Biblical expression for complete deliverance (see Luke 21:18; cf. 1 Sam. 14:45; 2 Sam. 14:11; 1 Kings 1:52).

35. Gave thanks. Paul acknowledged God as the giver of food and the preserver of life. Then he set an example consistent with his admonition to his shipmates.

36. Good cheer. Paul’s hopefulness, faith, and courage were contagious. All took heart despite a realization of the danger that lurked on the rocks along the shore.

Meat. See on v. 33.

37. In the ship. The ship must have been of considerable size. Ships more than 200 ft. in length are known to have plied the Mediterranean in Paul’s day. It has been estimated that this ship was of about 1,200 tons’ weight (see Additional Note at end of chapter). The fact that the ship had four anchors at the stern (v. 29) and others at the bow (v. 30) suggests a large ship. Since the number on board is stated at this point, and for the first time, it may be that a count was made in anticipation of the abandonment of the ship.

38. Lightened the ship. Probably much or all of the cargo had been thrown overboard (v. 18). The rigging had already been reduced to a minimum (see on v. 17), and everything from the deck and quarters of the ship had also been disposed of (v. 19). Now they did the same with what may have remained of the cargo, and also surplus food.

Cast out the wheat. This was apparently an Egyptian wheat ship on its way to Rome. The people of Italy, and especially of Rome, were dependent upon shipments of Egyptian wheat (Juvenal *Satires* v. 118, 119; see on v. 5).

39. Knew not the land. Only upon reaching shore did they learn the identity of the island (ch. 28:1). Malta (Melita) was, of course, well enough known. But St. Paul’s Bay, probably the site of the landing, was remote from the usual port of call, and thus not well known.

Creek. Gr. *kolpos*, “gulf,” “bay,” literally, “bosom.” The English word “gulf” is derived from *kolpos* through the French and Italian. Here was a break in the rocky shore

they so greatly feared, and an opportunity to beach the ship with comparative safety. See illustration facing p. 448.

Were minded. Literally, “purposed,” or “planned.”

To thrust in. That is, to drive the ship in.

40. Taken up the anchors. Literally, “taken away [cut loose] the anchors,” here possibly meaning simply, “weighed anchor.”

Committed themselves. The word “themselves” has been supplied. Reference could be to the anchors, if they were cut loose, otherwise, probably to the ship itself.

The rudder bands. That is, the ropes that lifted the rudders out of the water and secured them to the sides of the ship. Ships of that day often had two rudders, one on each side. Now, to steer the ship to the beach, the rudders are let down again into the water.

Mainsail. Gr. *artemōn*, “foresail.” It seems that the mainsail, together with its tackle, had been jettisoned (see on vs. 17, 19).

41. Where two seas met. Probably the crosscurrents forced the ship aground, in spite of the action of the rudders.

The hinder part was broken. Or, “the stern began to break up.” With the bow of the ship held fast, the violent crosscurrents gradually broke up the stern.

Of the waves. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the omission of this phrase. Obviously this is meant, however.

42. Kill the prisoners. See on chs. 12:19; 16:27.

43. Willing to save. Literally, “desiring to save.” The centurion had great personal respect for Paul and his traveling companions. He realized, also, that all on board owed their lives to Paul (see vs. 9, 10, 21–26, 31, 34–36).

They which could swim. The ship apparently ran aground close to the shore. Those able to swim were permitted to swim ashore first, leaving the available planking of the ship for those who could not swim.

44. Some on boards. Literally, “some on any [parts].” This is a vivid description of escape from a sinking ship, of survivors seizing pieces of the ship as it broke to pieces in the waves or as it was torn apart by hand.

Escaped all safe. That is, all escaped safely, in keeping with God’s promise to Paul, and Paul’s assurance to those on the ship (v. 24).

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON CHAPTER 27

Various details of the narrative of the storm and shipwreck of ch. 27 have been obscure because: (1) the exact technical meaning of certain nautical terms remains uncertain, and (2) few if any Bible commentators have had an adequate personal knowledge of nautical matters. Obviously a person able to combine a measure of competence in NT Greek with personal experience in navigation, particularly in that region of the Mediterranean that forms the locale of the narrative, could be expected to give a more intelligent explanation of it than one who lacks these qualifications.

Such a person was Lieut. Edwin Smith, a minister of the Avondale Presbyterian church of Tillsonburg, Ontario, Canada, who served as a naval officer in the Mediterranean in 1918 and 1919. In the *Homiletic Review* for August, 1919 (Vol. LXXVIII, No. 2, pp. 101–110), Lieutenant Smith explained the shipwreck narrative of Acts 27, in terms of his experience and observations as a naval officer on duty in the Mediterranean. This article, entitled “The Last Voyage and Shipwreck of Saint Paul,”

was written on board his ship in the harbor of Valletta, on the island of Malta, approximately 8 mi. from the traditional site of the shipwreck—St. Paul's Bay.

Without necessarily endorsing every statement in the article, this commentary herewith reproduces it in part. The facts cited and the conclusions based upon them confirm the Bible narrative and attest Luke as an informed, accurate, and reliable historian.

The author begins by taking note of the need of bringing a knowledge of ancient ships, navigation, and seamanship, of waters, harbors, and lands adjacent to the region, and of Paul and Luke to bear on the story of the shipwreck. He follows this with a general statement on the knowledge of the ancients about "going to sea." He then observes that Luke's description of what the captain and crew did to cope with the various emergencies that arose "is almost word for word what the most modern works on seamanship tell us that we should do if we were placed in similar circumstances."

After mentioning the description of an Alexandrian grain ship by the Greek author Lucian, from the time of the emperor Commodus A.D. 180–192), the author continues: "Who would ever have thought of going to Pompeii to find out anything about the ships of the ancients, or the ships of St. Paul's comparatively modern day? And yet, it is there we get the most real help, for the marbles and frescoes of Pompeii afford valuable details and have the added advantage of synchronizing perfectly with the voyage of St. Paul; the catastrophe to which they owe their preservation having happened less than twenty years after his shipwreck.

"I will next endeavor to reconstruct one of these ancient ships, giving, I trust, a tolerably correct idea of a merchant ship of the first century of the Christian era.

"In general outline they did not differ so much from sailing ships of fifty years ago, especially in their under-water parts, with the exception that the bow and stern were very much alike. The sheer, or contour of the top-sides, was nearly straight in the middle, but curved high at both ends, the stem and stern post rising to a considerable height and terminating in some ornament, generally the head and neck of a waterfowl bent backward. Lucian, in describing the Alexandrian ship, mentions that the stern rose gradually in a curve, surmounted by a golden *cheniscus* [a goose-necked projection], and that the prow was elevated in a similar manner. The fresco of the ship on the tomb of Naevolia Tyche at Pompeii shows a ship of similar construction, with her high stem terminating with the head of Minerva.

"The bulwarks were open rails, and cabooses or galleries were built at both ends. In the ship of Theseus, represented in one of the paintings found at Herculaneum, we see a capstan with a hawser coiled around it; and in a figure of the ship of Ulysses (said to be taken from an ancient marble) in an edition of Virgil (3 vols., Rome, 1765) we see the cable coiled round a windlass.

"Perhaps the greatest difference between these ancient ships and all classes of modern ships is in the steering arrangements. The ancient ships were not steered as those in modern times, by a single rudder hinged to the stern post, but by two great oars or paddles (*παδαλία*), one on each side of the stem; hence the mention of them in the plural number by St. Luke. They were operated through two hawse holes, one on either side, which were used also for the cables when the ships were anchored by the stern. Indeed, it was not until about the close of the thirteenth century that the modern hinged rudder came into general use.

"But the point of greatest interest in connection with these ancient ships is their size. Many of the wheat ships plying between Egypt and Italy in St. Paul's day must have been upward of one thousand tons burden. We reason that they must have been of considerable size to make them pay. Small ships are profitable only for short voyages. But we are not left to our own reasoning unaided by any statements of facts as, e.g., the ship in which Luke and Paul sailed on this occasion had a cargo of wheat and 276 souls in all. If the crew numbered as many as 26, the passenger list would still stand at 250. To accommodate that many people on board for weeks at a time, in addition to the cargo and crew, the ship must needs be considerably larger than an ordinary fishing vessel. The ship in which Josephus was wrecked in his voyage to Italy contained six hundred people, a very good passenger list for a five or six thousand-ton transatlantic liner of the present day. But the best account we have of the size of some of these ships is that given by the carpenter (*ναυπηγός*) of the *Isis*, the Alexandrian wheat ship which was driven by contrary winds to Athens. According to the data supplied, and after making full allowance for difference in construction, this

ship must have been between eleven and twelve hundred tons burden. I find that some writers using the same data would make her upward of 1300 tons.

“The rigging of these ancient ships was very simple. For the most part it consisted of one principal mast, which carried a very long yard, probably as long as the ship itself, spreading a great square sail, which was furled on the yard aloft. These large corn ships, in addition, carried topsails. They generally had another smaller mast close to the bow, on which they spread a small square sail, called the *artemon*. In addition they carried triangular sails for the purpose of making the ship steer easily under different circumstances, and for the purpose of ‘tacking’ or ‘wearing ship.’ They were also made use of in a storm when the larger sails had to be taken in.

“We must not forget that the ship in which St. Paul sailed was also fitted for emergencies. Failure to understand the construction and rigging of these ships is why so many commentators have made such unhappy blunders when dealing with the incidents recorded in this twenty-seventh chapter of Acts.

“What do we know about the former sea experience of either Luke or Paul or both? No other evidence than the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth chapters of Acts is necessary to prove conclusively that Luke, the author of the gospel which bears his name, as well as of the Acts of the Apostles, had a thorough knowledge of ships and of shiphandling that could be gained only in one way, viz., by experience. No amount of reading or observation of ships from the shore would fit him for the writing of the narrative of St. Paul’s shipwreck and his own. Such knowledge and insight as is here displayed comes only by experience. I do not mean to say that he must have followed the sea as a sailor, in fact, the same evidence shows that he did not, but that he went to sea nevertheless, and that, too, for more than two or three short voyages. ...

“And of Paul my own opinion is that he, too, had considerable experience in going to sea; Paul, you will notice, is not quite so reticent about himself and his past as is Luke. ...

“Turn next to [2 Cor. 11:25](#): ‘Thrice I suffered shipwreck.’ Now, a man does not get shipwrecked every voyage, and the mention of three shipwrecks would seem to indicate that he had not only long but bitter experience with the sea. ...

“We will pass over the details of the voyage until the vessel arrives at Fair Havens on the south coast of Crete. It is from this port that the vessel sailed on what proved to be her last voyage, the narrative of which I now propose to examine.

“Tho St. Luke fails to make any reference to the condition of the ship, an omission which a real sailor would not have made, I am persuaded that her condition was none too good, for reasons that will appear as we go along. We gather from the narrative that after a long and tedious voyage down the coast they had remained windbound in Fair Havens for some considerable time. The season was getting late and the nights would be dark and cloudy, so that it would be no easy matter to navigate the ship a distance of nearly six hundred English miles to the Strait of Messina without a compass; it was, therefore, decided by the skipper that they would abandon the idea of continuing the voyage and would spend the winter in the Island of Crete. Paul, it appears, favored this decision. But when, a little later, the skipper announced his intention of putting to sea and running up the coast about thirty-eight or forty miles to Phenice, because he said the harbor was a better one to winter in, i.e., safer for the ship, we find Paul objecting and urging them to remain where they were. He assured them that such a move was fraught with danger ‘not only of the lading and the ship, but also of our lives.’ We are told that it was when ‘the south wind blew softly,’ so that the danger did not manifest itself in the threatening condition of the weather; but we may feel sure that since the move suggested by the skipper was one which promised greater safety and comfort to all hands, St. Paul would not have opposed it without good reasons. No reasons are given, however, another characteristic of St. Luke’s narrative and a second proof that he was not, after all, a real sailor, for a real sailor never fails to give his reasons; indeed, he is liable to become tedious in that respect. Nevertheless, no sailor can read this narrative and fail to discover what those reasons were. Briefly, I believe they were these: The ship was none too safe even in the best of weather, and he for one would not run the risk of being caught out in a gale in her at this season of the year if it could be avoided. Paul had been in this ship some weeks already; they had had a hard beat to windward in working down to Crete, and in those weeks Paul had made some observations and indulged in some reflections. He noticed, for example, that the ship was leaking considerably, and when the squalls blew hardest, he also noticed that, she strained and worked in a manner far from reassuring. ... Paul’s contention then was simply this: ‘Tho I concede that Phenice (modern Lutro) is a better harbor than Fair Havens to winter in, yet I maintain that the risk we run in putting to sea at this time of the year in this ship is too great to make it worth while; and besides this, I

don't like to see this balmy south wind at this season, for it generally backs round to the East North East and blows a gale, and if it catches us while crossing the Bay of Messara, it will blow us off the land altogether, and then—!'

"But the centurion gave more heed to the opinion of the owner and master 'than to those things which were spoken by Paul,' and so they put to sea, when the very thing that St. Paul feared came to pass.

"After clearing the harbor, their course, till they had passed Cape Matala, was close to the land. From the anchorage at Fair Havens to Cape Matala the distance is three or four miles; and as the course is W.N.W., the south wind was a favorable one, being two points abaft the beam. They had every prospect, therefore, of reaching their destination in a few hours. They had not gone far, however, when a sudden change in the weather took place. ...

"The ship was caught in a typhonic gale which blew with such force that they could not face it and were compelled to run before it. We know that it blew them out of their course toward the island of Clauda about twenty-three miles W.S.W. from Crete. If, therefore, we know whereabouts the ship was when the gale overtook her, we can form a tolerable estimate of the direction of the wind which drove them thither.

"According to the narrative, it was not long (οὐ πολὺ) after they had left Fair Havens, that the gale rose against her. Grammarians tell us that the term οὐ πολὺ is a relative term and signifies less than half. Hence the ship must have been somewhere between Cape Matala and a point on the ocean bearing W.N.W. distant seventeen miles. ...

"The first thing to be done is to make the ship snug for riding out the gale. The large square sail must be furled aloft and storm try-sails hoisted; and next to that they must at once resort to frapping the ship. What, undergirding already! Alas! then, the worst fears of St. Paul are now confirmed. The ship is weak and shows signs of excessive straining, tho you will notice they had been running before it only about three hours: no time must be lost in strengthening her. That these typhonic winds subject a ship's hull to great strain is well known. Pliny, e.g., calls them 'the chief pest of seamen, destructive not only to the spars but to the hull itself.' Do you wonder then that Paul had scruples about putting to sea in the winter season, in a ship which he knew to be almost unseaworthy? St. Luke tells us that they frapped her after she had gone only twenty-five miles—a sure indication that she was straining and leaking badly. It would not be difficult to multiply instances where this mode of strengthening ships has been put in practice in comparatively modern times, but in every instance it has been where the ship was old and weak, or, in consequence of having sustained some damage.

"I wish to point out here, what nearly all the commentators have failed to recognize, which is, however, of the utmost importance, viz., that the real danger before the ship in which Luke and Paul sailed was the danger of foundering in mid-ocean owing to the leaky condition of the ship, and that if they had not providentially made the land, and been thereby enabled to save their lives by running the ship ashore, she must have foundered at sea, and all on board perished.

"We are next told that being apprehensive of being driven toward the Syrtis 'they lowered the gear' (see [RV, verse 17](#)). It is not easy to imagine a more erroneous translation than that given in our or A.V., 'Fearing lest they should fall into the quick-sands, strike sail, and so were driven.' That would indeed have been fatal. It is equivalent to saying, that fearing a certain danger, they deprived themselves of the only possible means of avoiding it. It is not by striking mast or sail that such dangers are to be avoided. To strike sail and run under bare poles would be to drive in the direction to which the wind was blowing. But, as we have seen when considering the direction of the wind, and the course which the ship took when she ran before it to Clauda, that would be to run straight in the direction of the Syrtis—the very thing which Luke says they were so anxious to avoid. Notice that according to the A.V. Luke says, 'Fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands strike sail and so were driven.' Well, if that had been done, they would have fallen into them in about one day and this story, probably, never would have been written; for the Syrtis lay to the W.S.W., i.e., directly ahead of them, and distant about two hundred miles.

"Since we know now that they did not fall into the quicksands, we are sure that they did not strike sail and run before the gale, but adopted some other plan. Even my readers who know nothing about the sea will follow my logic here. ...

"To a ship placed in the circumstances in which this ship was placed, there are only two things I know that the skipper might do: the first is to anchor her where she was, and the other is to heave her to under storm rig, and so change the direction of her drift as to drive away from the danger instead of driving straight toward it. From the narrative we know that the first expedient was not adopted, and the fact that she did avoid the danger is sufficient proof, notwithstanding the tantalizing silence of St. Luke, that this second plan was the one which was adopted. When a ship is hove-to, she has a tendency to forge ahead in the

direction in which she is pointing, headreaching—sailors call it—but her principal motion will be her drift, that is the distance she will cover in a broadside direction, and which, comparatively speaking, will not be great. When a ship is being hove-to, in proximity to any danger, the proper thing to do is to lay her to on the tack, which, considering her forward motion, will always carry her away from the danger, rather than toward it. In this instance they would lay the ship to on the starboard tack, that is, with her right hand side facing the wind. She would thus be pointing about North, that is, away from the African coast and the Syrtis, and any headway she might make while hove-to would be carrying her on her course toward Italy, while her broadside motion would be, speaking generally, to the westward. Nearly all the commentators have fallen into the error of believing that the expression in the A.V., ‘strake sail,’ was Luke’s way of expressing the adjustment of the sails on that occasion, whereas the expression which Luke used has no reference to the sails at all, as I will show later. The mere heaving of a ship to under such circumstances was so necessary and such a common thing to do, that Luke, with his usual habit of mentioning only the most important features, omits it altogether, and proceeds to tell us of the further steps that were taken to make her lie properly, and to keep her from falling off into the sea, and to take the strain off her hull as much as possible. And the first step was what in the A.V. is called ‘strake sail,’ but which in the R.V. is translated ‘lowered the gear.’ Ah! that is better. Finding that even while hove-to the ship was laboring heavily in the sea, and the weight of that big yard with the sail now furled upon it, together with the additional weight of all the ropes, blocks, &c., which were attached to it, occasioned too great a strain, they at once decided that it must come down and be accommodated on deck. ...

“We understand then that when St. Luke informs us that they were thus borne along (οὕτως ἔέοντο), it was not only with the ship undergirded and made snug, but that she was properly hove-to on the starboard tack, which was the only course by which she could avoid falling into the Syrtis. With this notice concludes the first eventful day.

“On the following day, the gale continuing unabated, ‘they lightened the ship.’ Every step hitherto taken indicates skillful seamanship, and so here, for all works on seamanship recommend this as one of the things that should be done. The deckload must be thrown overboard along with all other gear not necessary now to the working of the ship. On the third day, they threw overboard ‘the tackling of the ship’ (verse 19), and from the expression ‘with their own hands,’ we gather that this means ‘the gear’ which was lowered—the big mainyard with sails, blocks, &c., attached, which would probably require the united efforts of passengers and crew to launch overboard. The relief which a ship would experience by this would be the same as when a war-ship throws her guns overboard, viz., she would ride lighter and make less water.

“A dreary interval of eleven days succeeds; the gale continues with unabated fury; neither sun nor stars can be observed; and at length we are told that ‘all hope of being saved was taken away.’ But why was all hope taken away? An ancient ship without compass and without celestial observations, had no means of keeping a reckoning. This was, no doubt, a situation of danger, but not necessarily one of despair, for she might have been drifting into safety. The true explanation, as I have already indicated, is this: their exertions to subdue the leak had been unavailing; they could not tell which way to make for the nearest land, in order to run their ship ashore, the only recourse for a sinking ship; but unless they did make the land, they must founder at sea. Their apprehensions, therefore, were caused not so much by the fury of the tempest as by the state of the ship. ...

“At length on the fourteenth night of their being driven through the sea of Adria, toward midnight the seamen suspected that land was near. St. Luke does not tell us what the indications were, but in all probability they saw the breakers on the shore, for with a strong onshore wind and rocky coast they would be visible for quite a distance on even a starless night at sea.

“If we take then St. Paul’s Bay, Malta, as the actual scene of the shipwreck, we can have no difficulty in stating what these indications must have been. No ship can enter it from the eastward without passing within a quarter of a mile of the point of Koura; but before reaching that point, the land is too low and too far back from the track of ships driven from the eastward to be seen in a dark night. When she comes within this distance, it is impossible to avoid observing the breakers; for with northeasterly gales the sea breaks upon it with such violence that one is reminded of Campbell’s line—

‘The white wave foaming to the distant sky.’ The writer recently visited the spot, where he remained all night. A Euroaquo was in progress, and the white spray rose from forty to fifty feet in the air, and on the shore the noise was deafening. No ship could have entered St. Paul’s Bay that dark night without the shipmen having seen these breakers on the shore.

“During a second visit he took a boat and sailed out into the bay and made further observations from the sea, and took a line of soundings, with the result that there is now no doubt in his own mind that the point of Koura is the land which drew near them on that eventful night.

“But could the sailors see the breakers on a dark night at a quarter of a mile? After what I saw with my own eyes on the very spot, I would say they could, and perhaps during the lull in the storm hear them too.

“We have some evidence in the Admiralty records that confirms my opinion here. On a dark night, August 10, 1810, the *Lively* frigate was wrecked on this very point of Koura. In his sworn testimony during the court-martial of her officers, the quartermaster on the lookout, who gave the alarm of rocks to leeward, says he did not see the land, but ‘the curl of the sea’ upon the rocks, at a distance of about a quarter of a mile; and I may add, there was only an ordinary breeze blowing at the time, and not a gale like the one which was in progress when Luke and Paul passed that way. ...

“St. Luke says that they were wrecked on Malta (Melita), and I have shown that her drift would carry her in that direction.

“The next point is interesting. How far would she have driven from Clauda about midnight when the fourteenth night was come? The answer to that question depends upon the rate of drift and the time elapsed. Since coming to Malta, I have interviewed a good many captains who have sailed the Mediterranean for many years, and during the war have been running regularly between Malta and Crete, as to how far such a ship, as I have supposed Paul’s ship to be, would drift per hour. The general consensus of opinion was from one to two miles per hour, probably one and a half miles per hour, or thirty-six miles in twenty-four hours.

“I come now to the time elapsed. St. Luke counts the time from the day the ship left Fair Havens. We hear of the third day, [verse 19](#); the preceding day is termed ‘the next day,’ which brings us to the ‘first’ day both of the gale and the voyage. It would appear that the events described in the first day must have occupied a considerable portion of it. The time consumed in driving through the sea of Adria from the time they left the island of Clauda till they became aware of the vicinity of land, at midnight of the fourteenth day, is therefore thirteen days complete and a fraction of a day. Taking then the calculated rate of drift as thirty-six miles per day and the time elapsed as say $13\frac{1}{4}$ days, all we have to do is to multiply 36 by $13\frac{1}{4}$ to get the calculated drift which is 477 miles, and the course as above N. 82 W.

“How does this compare with the actual course and distance between the Island of Clauda, and the entrance to St. Paul’s Bay, Malta, as a navigator of the present day would determine them? Taking any recent Admiralty chart of the Mediterranean we find that the course from a point ‘under the lea of Clauda’ to St. Paul’s Bay, Malta, is N. 82, 17 W. and the distance is 476.6 miles. Hence according to these calculations a ship starting late in the evening from Clauda would by midnight on the fourteenth day be anywhere from one-quarter of a mile to one mile from the entrance to St. Paul’s Bay, Malta. I admit, that a coincidence so very close as this may be to a certain extent accidental, but it is an accident that could not have happened had there been any inaccuracy on the part of the author of the narrative with regard to the numerous instances upon which the calculations are founded, or had the ship been wrecked anywhere but at Malta, for there is no other place agreeing either in name or description within the limits to which we are tied down by calculations founded upon the narrative.

“The ship now approaches the termination of her disastrous voyage. Land has not yet been sighted, but to the watchful senses of the ‘shipmen’ the sound or appearance of breakers tells them that it is near, or in the nautical language of St. Luke that it is approaching. Such indications are the usual harbingers of destruction; here they call forth a display of presence of mind, promptitude, and seamanship which could not be surpassed in the present day, and by this, under Providence, the lives of all on board were saved. The hope which was taken away is now restored. They can now adopt the last resource of a sinking ship and run her ashore; but to do so before it was day would have been to have rushed upon certain destruction. They must bring the ship to anchor if it be possible, and hold on till daybreak, when they may perhaps discover some creek into which they may be able to thrust the ship. ...

“When the day broke, they did not recognize the land, but seeing a creek they determined, if it were possible, to thrust the ship into it; they now cut their cables and left their anchors in the sea; and, loosing the lashings of the rudders and hoisting up the *artemon* (foresail), they prepared to beach the ship.

Selecting a spot where ‘two seas met,’ they ran the ship aground bow on, which explains ‘the anchoring by the stern’ for this held the ship in the proper position for beaching. ...

“Now that all have landed safely, there remains only to see if the place corresponds with St. Luke’s description of it. The first circumstance mentioned is that at midnight the shipmen suspected the vicinity of land, evidently without seeing it. Now, a vessel on that course on entering St. Paul’s Bay would pass within

a quarter of a mile of a low rocky point which juts out and forms its eastern entrance on which the breakers could be seen at that distance, in fact, were seen at that distance by the quartermaster of the *Lively* tho the land could not be seen.

“Fearing lest they should fall upon rocks, which were now close to leeward, they anchored by the stern, and waited for the day. In this, as in the other instances, good seamanship and wise foresight was manifested, for when the day broke, all they had to do was hoist the foresail, cut away the anchor cables and the ship was under command and could be beached quite easily. The place where the two seas met was doubtless the opening between Salmonette Island and the mainland, and the two seas continue to meet there until this day.

“The second circumstance mentioned by St. Luke was the depth of water at the time when they deemed that they were near to some land. They sounded and found twenty fathoms, and a little later sounded again and found fifteen fathoms. The writer found twenty fathoms off the point of Koura at the place where the ship was supposed to be and on her course, fifteen fathoms within a quarter of a mile of the shore at the place where they anchored the ship by the stern. ...

“We have seen in our examination that every statement as to the movements of this ship from the time when she left Fair Havens until she was beached at Malta, as set forth by St. Luke has been verified by external and independent evidence of the most exact and satisfying nature; and that his statements as to the time that the ship remained at sea correspond with the distance covered; and finally, that his description of the place arrived at is in conformity with the place as it is, all of which goes to prove that Luke actually made the voyage as described and has moreover shown himself to be a man whose observations and statements may be taken as reliable, and trustworthy in the highest degree. The twenty-seventh chapter of the Acts of the Apostles is a simple statement of facts. I, therefore, conclude with Bres: ‘Either there is no moral certainty in historic facts, or it must be admitted that St. Paul was shipwrecked in Malta.’”

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1, 2 AA 439
- 1–44AA 439–445
- 3–9AA 440
- 10–17AA 441
- 18–20AA 442
- 21–30AA 443
- 22–24CG 43; Ed 256
- 22–26ML 334
- 31–41AA 444
- 34 CG 43; Ed 256
- 43, 44 AA 445
- 44 CG 43; Ed 256

CHAPTER 28

1 *Paul after his shipwreck is kindly entertained of the barbarians.* 5 *The viper on his hand hurteth him not.* 8 *He healeth many diseases in the island.* 11 *They depart towards Rome.* 17 *He declareth to the Jews the cause of his coming.* 24 *After his preaching some were persuaded, and some believed not.* 30 *Yet he preacheth there two years.*

1. They were escaped. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the readings “we were escaped” and “we knew.”

Melita. That is, Malta, a small island to the southeast of Sicily. Some have assigned the shipwreck to the island of Meleda, in the Adriatic Sea near the Yugoslavian (Illyrian) coast. They hold that the mention of Adria, in ch. 27:27, indicates that the ship had left the Mediterranean Sea and was in what is known today as the Adriatic Sea. They note also that the people of Meleda were at that time non-Roman and non-Greek, and hence barbarians (see ch. 28:2), and that today no vipers are found on Malta. Perhaps it is

sufficient to observe that this explanation is highly improbable and is not taken seriously by any competent scholar today. See further on chs. 27:27; 28:2.

2. Barbarous people. Gr. *barbaroi*, an onomatopoeic word applied to people whose speech—to Greek and Roman ears—sounded like rude babbling (see on Rom. 1:14). The natives of Malta may have been related to the Phoenicians, or, as a result of contact with the Phoenicians, spoke a dialect of the Phoenician language, which was related, in turn, to the Hebrew. The island of Malta had been ruled by the Romans ever since the Second Punic War (see Vol. V, p. 27; Livy *Annals* xxi. 51), when they took it from the Carthaginians.

No little. Or, “no ordinary” kindness. See ch. 19:11, where the same Greek expression is translated “special.”

Received us. That is, welcomed us. The weather apparently continued rainy and windy.

3. Paul had gathered. Again Paul was active in making his companions comfortable.

Sticks. Brushwood, perhaps driftwood also.

Viper. Snakes are said no longer to exist on Malta, but this is no proof that they did not in Paul’s day. In recent years, for example, snakes have been eliminated from the Hawaiian Islands.

Out of the heat. Numbed by the cold, perhaps already hibernating, the snake now became active and aware of danger.

4. Venomous beast. Literally, “creature.”

Hang on his hand. The snake had not merely bitten Paul’s hand, but remained hanging there.

Vengeance. Gr. *dikē*, “justice,” “punishment.” To the Maltese, Paul was a wrongdoer whom the gods now punished with the lethal bite of a serpent.

5. He shook off. Paul remained calm and composed in the presence of this new danger. Had God not promised that he would appear before Caesar?

No harm. He experienced no ill results, either psychological or physical. See Mark 16:18; Luke 10:19.

6. Looked a great while. The islanders awaited the moment when Paul’s poisoned flesh would begin to swell, but nothing happened.

He was a god. See on ch. 14:11.

7. In the same quarters. That is, in that vicinity.

Possessions. That is, land.

Chief man. Gr. *prōtos*, or “first,” that is, primate. This title is attested in inscriptions as designating the Roman ruler of the island, though the title itself appears to be non-Roman in origin.

Publius. A thoroughly Roman name.

Received us. Probably the primate received the centurion, out of consideration for his rank, and with him Paul.

Lodged us three days. The hospitality of the primate continued until more permanent arrangements could be made.

8. It came to pass. That is, probably, later on during the winter.

Bloody flux. Gr. *dusenteria*, “dysentery.”

Prayed. See on James 5:14, 15. However, this seems to be a manifestation of the gift of healing (1 Cor. 12:9).

Healed him. Paul had exhibited the same power of the Spirit at Lystra (ch. 14:8–10), at Philippi (ch. 16:18), at Ephesus (ch. 19:11, 12), and at Troas (ch. 20:9, 10).

9. Others also. That is other islanders.

10. Many honours. Not as fees but as gifts, perhaps of money, food, and clothing, appropriate to the needs of men who had lost all their luggage.

Departed. Gr. *anagō*, here meaning “sailed” (cf. ch. 27:12).

Laded us. That is, “put on board [for us].” The bounty was probably inaugurated by Publius, and others followed his example.

11. After three months. That is, after the stormy season had passed and it was safe to resume the journey.

Ship of Alexandria. Probably another Egyptian grain ship (cf. ch. 27:6, 38).

Wintered in the isle. Probably in the harbor of Valletta, some 8 mi. to the southeast of St. Paul’s Bay.

Sign. Probably a reference to the figurehead on the prow of the ship, beneath the bowsprit.

Castor and Pollux. Gr. *Dioskouroi*, literally, the “Twins,” the legendary sons of Jupiter, borne him by Leda. The Latin names of the two boys were Castor and Pollux, who were called the Gemini.

12. Landing. The ship sailed northward to Sicily, the ancient Greek city of Syracuse being its next port.

Syracuse. The chief city of Sicily, on the southeastern coast of the island. It was once a Greek colony, and the scene of a major Athenian naval disaster during the Peloponnesian War. Probably the three days were spent here awaiting favorable winds.

13. Fetched a compass. Gr. *perierchomai*, literally, “to go about,” “to make a circuit,” here probably a tacking maneuver to make headway against unfavorable winds.

Rhegium. The modern Reggio, at the southern tip of Italy, on the Strait of Messina. The emperor Claudius once planned to construct harbor facilities here for unloading Egyptian wheat ships, but the project was never carried out.

South wind. It was now possible to sail directly north, instead of tacking, as had been necessary from Syracuse to Rhegium.

Puteoli. The modern Pozzuoli, near Naples, Italy. Though it was about 140 mi. (224 km.) south of the capital, it was then a principal port for Rome, especially for the wheat ships from Egypt. Ostia, at the mouth of the Tiber, later replaced it (cf. p. 80).

14. Found brethren. It is encouraging to know that only about 30 years after the crucifixion a group of Christian believers was to be found in faraway Puteoli, a major port for the city of Rome. Here there was a large Jewish colony, and it is probable that at least some of these Christians were Jewish converts. Lacking definite information, we may reasonably suppose that this church, like that at Rome itself, was raised up as the result of the labors of Italian Jews converted, perhaps, at Pentecost in the year A.D. 31, or upon some later pilgrimage to Palestine.

Were desired. That is, were entreated, or urged. Paul remained with the church at Puteoli a week, and thus spent at least one Sabbath there.

We went toward Rome. Rather, “we came to Rome.”

15. Heard of us. The week's pause at Puteoli had given time for word of Paul's arrival to reach the believers at Rome, with which Puteoli, as a seaport, was in constant communication. Ships' arrivals would be promptly reported, doubtless with word of both the lading and the passenger lists.

Came to meet us. According to Rom. 16:3–15 Paul had both relatives and friends among the believers in Rome. Doubtless some of those whose names are recorded there were on hand to greet Paul.

Appii forum. Literally, "the market place of Appius," from whose family the famous *Via Appia*, the Appian Way, running from Rome to Brundisium, was named. The Latin word *forum*, "market," came to approximate the English word "borough" ("burgh"), as indicating a town. The name of the town and the highway both probably refer to Appius Claudius, the noted Roman censor. Appii Forum was on the Appian Way, about 40 mi. (64 km.) south of Rome. Horace speaks slightly of the place as abounding in tavernkeepers of bad reputation and frequented by sailors (*Satires* i. 5, 3, 4). Here a deputation from Rome awaited Paul.

Three taverns. The Latin *taberna* meant more than a "saloon" or "public house"; it included shops of any sort. The location of this village is not certain, but it is said to have been approximately 30 mi. (48 km.) south of Rome (see p. 50). Here another group of Christians met Paul, probably having left Rome later than the former group. This small town is mentioned by Cicero (*Letters to Atticus* ii. 10).

Thanked God. Paul's gratitude for a safe journey can readily be appreciated by all Christians who have been through trying experiences.

Took courage. For years Paul had longed to visit Rome and preach the gospel there (Rom. 1:11–13). He must have reflected on the sharp contrast between that eager expectation and the realities of his arrival. But out of the shocking contrast Paul found reason to take courage, and fresh assurance of God's leading. Paul was skilled at finding reasons for great hope in what appeared to be the most discouraging circumstances (see 2 Cor. 4:7–10; AA 449). He was a confirmed and incurable Christian optimist.

16. Came to Rome. The reader of the closing chapter of the book of Acts fervently wishes that a more complete account of Paul's experiences in Rome might have been given. Perhaps Luke intended to add further details, or to begin another volume with Paul's arrival there.

The centurion delivered. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of the entire clause beginning with these words. The fact stated, however, is certainly true.

Captain of the guard. Probably the *praefectus praetorii*, the chief of the Praetorian, or Imperial, Guard. It was his duty to take custody of those brought in from the provinces to appear before the emperor (see Pliny *Letters* x. 57). At this time the Praetorian prefect was Burrus, a man of good reputation. In A.D. 62, while Paul was doubtless still a prisoner, Burrus' place was taken by Tigellinus, an infamous favorite of Nero.

Dwell by himself. The consideration shown in housing Paul was no doubt due in part to the centurion Julius, who was probably still in charge of Paul at the time of his arrival at Rome. Paul had largely been responsible for the success of the emergency landing at Malta, and this, together with other evidences of his high character, marked wisdom, and

spiritual power, had earned for him the favor and gratitude of the centurion. All this was no doubt included in the report concerning Paul, along with the statement of his case from Festus.

Kept him. That is, guarded him. The soldier would probably be chained to Paul (see v. 20), the fetter running from a wrist of the guard to a wrist of Paul. To this chain Paul makes frequent allusion in the epistles written during his imprisonment at Rome: Eph. 6:20; Phil. 1:7, 13, 14, 16; Col. 4:3, 18; cf. Acts 28:20. What must have been the effect upon a heathen soldier of being chained hour after hour to the apostle Paul? What would be the effect upon a heathen, thus chained to one of us? As the guards were frequently changed, whatever effect Paul's life produced during the two years of his imprisonment must have spread widely through the whole corps of guards (see on Phil. 1:13).

17. After three days. Doubtless Paul first renewed old acquaintance with Christians he had met elsewhere and made new friends in the community of believers at Rome. Next, he desired to meet the non-Christian Roman Jews.

Chief of the Jews. Paul's rule had always been, "to the Jew first" (Rom. 1:16; 2:9; cf. Acts 13:5, 14, 46; 17:1, 2, 10; 18:4; etc.). He now invites the elders of the Jews to listen to a direct account of how he happens to be in Rome. Apparently Claudius' decree banishing all Jews from Rome (ch. 18:2) had been lifted or had otherwise become ineffective.

Men and brethren. See on ch. 1:16.

Committed nothing. Paul repeats the plea of innocence he had already made in Jerusalem and at Caesarea (see chs. 23:1; 24:12, 13; 25:8, 11; 26:4–7).

Against the people. The difficulties Paul encountered were usually brought about by the Jews themselves, as at Antioch in Pisidia (ch. 13:50), at Lystra (ch. 14:19), at Thessalonica (ch. 17:5–8), at Beroea (ch. 17:13, 14), and at Corinth (ch. 18:12–17).

Customs of our fathers. Paul sincerely believed what he was teaching as the gospel of Jesus Christ to be a correct interpretation of the truths of Judaism (see on chs. 23:1, 6; 24:14–16; 26:5–7). Compare the charge against Stephen (ch. 6:13, 14).

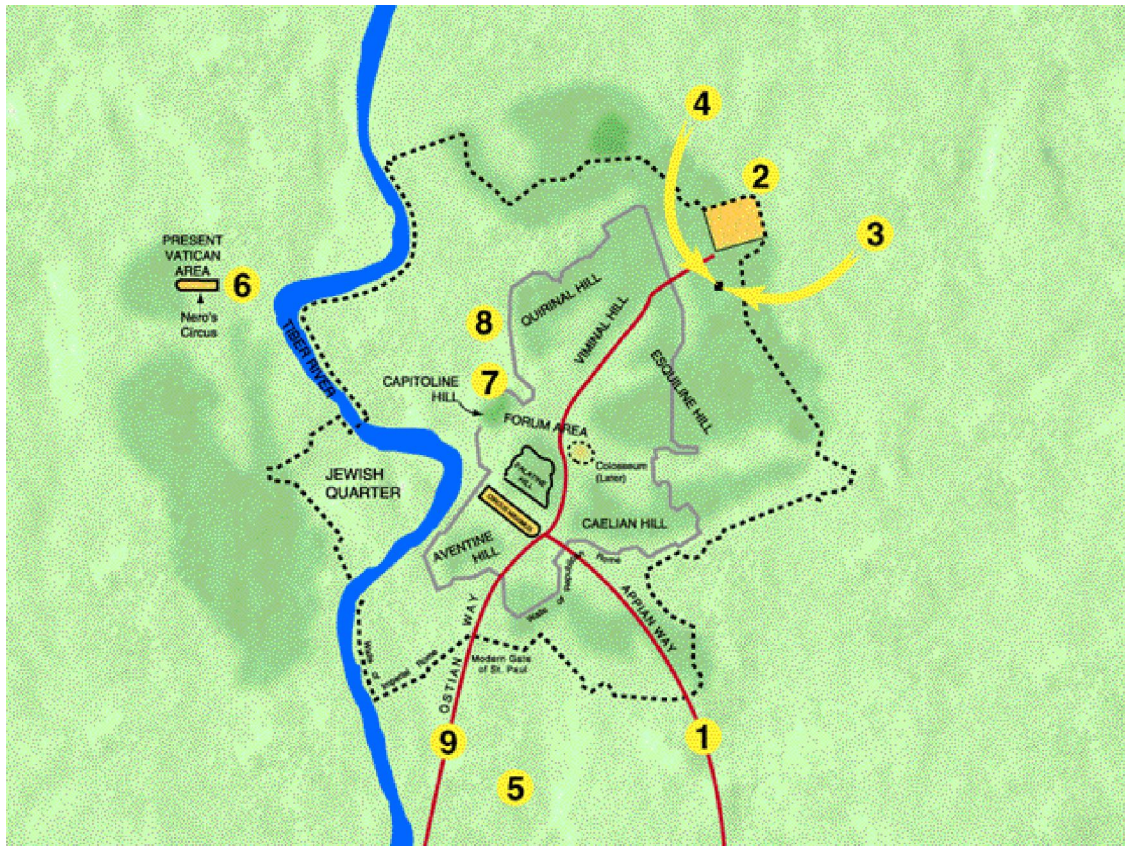
Delivered prisoner. Without giving the details of all that had happened since the riot in Jerusalem (ch. 21:27–36), Paul pointed out the humiliating and frustrating result. For the past two years and more he had been a prisoner of the Romans, and in bonds. The Jews had brought about his arrest and their continued accusations had kept him a prisoner.

18. Let me go. Or, "set me at liberty." Compare chs. 25:25; 26:32. If bribes had been forthcoming as Felix hoped, that corrupt governor would doubtless have released Paul (ch. 24:26). All the officials before whom Paul had stood, and doubtless the tribunes of the guard, were convinced of his innocence.

Paul at Rome

22

²²Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Ac 27:3). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.



19. Ought to accuse. Paul loved the Jewish people (see Rom. 9:1–3; 10:1), and his affection for them had not been diminished by his suffering at their hands. In spite of the injustice he had suffered he did not blame them, nor had he at any time made an accusation against them. He had appealed to Caesar, not to make trouble for the Jews at Rome or elsewhere, but solely because he had no other recourse.

20. I called for you. He could not go to the Jews in their synagogues, or privately, but as his custom was he sought first to establish a basis of understanding with them. Therefore he invited them to come to him (see on v. 17).

The hope of Israel. That is, the expectation of the Messiah. Paul believed Jesus to be the complete fulfillment of this expectation. His faith was the faith held by all Jews. The only problem, and the great one, was the application of that faith to Jesus of Nazareth.

Bound with this chain. It was, actually, his firm belief in Judaism that had occasioned his arrest. He would rather suffer bonds and death than give up the hope of Israel.

21. Neither received letters. This was not strange. No ship leaving Caesarea after Paul had appealed to Caesar was likely to have reached Rome before he did. Thus their minds had not been prejudiced against him. Luke gives no hint of the arrival of any letters from Jerusalem against Paul during the two years (v. 30) he spent at Rome, or of other possible steps the Jewish leaders may have taken against him (cf. AA 453).

22. We desire to hear. Perhaps this profession of open-mindedness was altogether sincere. The Jews of Rome had no doubt heard a little about Paul and his message, and were anxious to hear more.

This sect. See on chs. 5:17; 24:5, 14.

We know. There were already a few Christians in Rome (see on v. 15), through whom a limited knowledge no doubt reached the Jewish leaders there. There were doubtless also reports, or at least rumors, from Judea, brought by returning pilgrims.

Spoken against. Among the Jews there must have been many uncomplimentary reports about Christians. Tacitus wrote most disparagingly of the new sect (*Annals* xv. 44), and Suetonius (*Nero* xvi. 2) is equally condemnatory. Justin Martyr (died c. A.D. 165) speaks of calumnies against Christians, evidently from Jewish sources (*Dialogue With Trypho* 17). Perhaps these Roman Jews had heard not only of various situations in which Christians had become involved, and rumors of their evil character, but also of their astonishing increase in numbers. But as yet nothing these Roman Jews had heard prejudiced them completely against Christians as such, and they were willing to hear more.

23. Many. Literally, “more.” At the next meeting the Jews were present in greater numbers than upon the first occasion.

His lodging. See on v. 16; cf. v. 30.

Expounded. Though bound, Paul was still able to preach the gospel to his Jewish hearers. This must have been a carefully thought out theological presentation, comparable to that made by Stephen (ch. 7:2–53) and to the sermon by Paul himself at Antioch in Pisidia (ch. 13:14–41).

Testified. He bore witness to the Messianic hope, now incarnate in Jesus, and to the certainty of Christ’s return.

Kingdom of God. See on Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 5:2; Luke 4:19; Acts 8:12.

Moses. See on Luke 24:27, 44.

Morning till evening. Evidently some of the Jews were firmly resisting the gospel, and some were hungering for more of the word of truth. Thus for varied reasons the Jews remained all day long.

24. Some believed. The usual response to Paul’s preaching (see chs. 14:4; 17:4; 19:9). This is, indeed, the experience of every Christian evangelist. Recognizing that every man’s conscience is free, he must thank God for those who have believed and never lose heart on account of the fact that “some believed not.”

25. Agreed not. Possibly some favored the Sadducees and some the Pharisees (cf. ch. 23:6–10).

Esaias. That is, the prophet Isaiah.

Our fathers. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading “your fathers.” The unbelieving Jews no doubt affirmed their adherence to the “fathers.” Paul here challenges them to recognize the fact that these same “fathers” censured the unbelief they now manifested (see on Luke 16:31; John 8:39, 56).

26. Saying. Paul cites Isa. 6:9, which Jesus Himself had used against the Jews (Matt. 13:14; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:40).

Hearing. For comment on this OT passage see on Isa. 6:9, 10; cf. Matt. 7:21–27.

27. Be converted. Literally, “turn again” (see on Matt. 3:2; Acts 2:38; 3:19, 20).

28. Salvation of God. That is, as it was revealed through Jesus Christ (see on Matt. 1:21).

They will hear. Paul is addressing, in particular, those Jews who refused to “hear” (see on vs. 24–26). When the Jews thus refused, Paul turned to the Gentiles.

29. And when. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of v. 29. The fact stated, however, is unquestioned.

30. Two whole years. It seems that Luke was not led by the Spirit or by his own inclination to set down the events of these two years. Perhaps he had planned to write a third volume to supplement Luke and Acts. Our only information for these two years is from the four so-called prison epistles, generally thought to have been written from Rome during this period: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. We know that Paul felt the burden of imprisonment, both psychologically and physically (Eph. 3:1; 4:1; Phil. 1:16; Col. 4:18; Philemon 1, 9, 10). He felt concern for the outcome of his trial (Phil. 2:23, 24). We know that Luke and Aristarchus (Acts 27:2) were with him, as well as Tychicus (Eph. 6:21), who carried the epistle to Ephesus, and Timothy, whose name was joined with his in letters to Philippi (Phil. 1:1), to Colossae (Col. 1:1), and to the converted slaveowner, Philemon (Philemon 1). Epaphroditus brought Paul material aid from Philippi (Phil. 4:18). Onesimus, who had fled from his master Philemon, became acquainted with Paul while he was in Rome (Col. 4:9; Philemon 10). Mark, the relative of Barnabas, and Jesus called Justus, a convert, and Epaphras from Colossae were also with Paul (Col. 4:10–12). Demas was there also (Col. 4:14; cf. 2 Tim. 4:10). Although he was a prisoner, yet Paul's testimony to the gospel was so effective during these years that probably toward the end of his imprisonment he could declare that "the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel" (Phil. 1:12).

Own hired house. Financial support must have come from friends in Rome and elsewhere, perhaps especially Philippi (Phil. 4:18), for Paul was no longer able to labor with his hands to defray his personal expenses.

All that came in. Paul enjoyed freedom of intercourse.

31. The kingdom of God. From the beginning, the Christian message had been one concerning "the kingdom" (Matt. 3:2; Mark 1:14).

Concern the Lord Jesus. This was the center and circumference of all Paul's conversation.

Confidence. Literally, "freedom," "fearless confidence," "cheerful courage."

No man forbidding him. Neither emperor, tribune, guard, nor Jew forbade Paul to proclaim the gospel. The evangelist himself was bound, but not the gospel message.

This closes the Biblical history of the early church. If Luke wrote a further account, it is no longer extant. For the years following Paul's release and for his second imprisonment and death we have only hints in the so-called pastoral epistles, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus, and in early Christian tradition. See also pp. 101, 102, 107.

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1–31AA 445–453

2, 3 AA 445

2–5ML 334

4–10AA 446

11–14AA 447

15 AA 448, 449

16 AA 485

16–20AA 450

22, 23 AA 451

30, 31 AA 453; GC 208

²³Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Ac 28:19). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.