

# FREE BIBLE COMMENTARY

**YOU CAN UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE!**

## ***Luke the Historian: Acts***

By Dr. Bob Utley, retired professor of hermeneutics (Biblical interpretation)

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# A Word From the Author: How Can This Commentary Help You?

Biblical interpretation is a rational and spiritual process that attempts to understand an ancient inspired writer in such a way that the message from God may be understood and applied in our day.

The spiritual process is crucial but difficult to define. It does involve a yieldedness and openness to God. There must be a hunger (1) for Him, (2) to know Him, and (3) to serve Him. This process involves prayer, confession and the willingness for lifestyle change. The Spirit is crucial in the interpretive process, but why sincere, godly Christians understand the Bible differently is a mystery.

The rational process is easier to describe. We must be consistent and fair to the text and not be influenced by our personal or denominational biases. We are all historically conditioned. None of us are objective, neutral interpreters. This commentary offers a careful rational process containing three interpretive principles structured to help us overcome our biases.

## First Principle

The first principle is to note the historical setting in which a biblical book was written and the particular historical occasion for its authorship. The original author had a purpose, a message to communicate. The text cannot mean something to us that it never meant to the original, ancient, inspired author. His intent—not our historical, emotional, cultural, personal or denominational need—is the key. Application is an integral partner to interpretation, but proper interpretation must always precede application. It must be reiterated that every biblical text has one and only one meaning. This meaning is what the original biblical author intended through the Spirit's leadership to communicate to his day. This one meaning may have many possible applications to different cultures and situations. These applications must be linked to the central truth of the original author. For this reason, this study guide commentary is designed to provide an introduction to each book of the Bible.

## Second Principle

The second principle is to identify the literary units. Every biblical book is a unified document. Interpreters have no right to isolate one aspect of truth by excluding others. Therefore, we must strive to understand the purpose of the whole biblical book before we interpret the individual literary units. The individual parts—chapters, paragraphs, or verses—cannot mean what the whole unit does not mean. Interpretation must move from a deductive approach of the whole to an inductive approach to the parts. Therefore, this study guide commentary is designed to help the student analyze the structure of each literary unit by paragraphs. Paragraph and chapter divisions are not inspired, but they do aid us in identifying thought units.

Interpreting at a paragraph level—not sentence, clause, phrase or word level—is the key in following the biblical author's intended meaning. Paragraphs are based on a unified topic, often called the theme or topical sentence. Every word, phrase, clause, and sentence in the paragraph relates somehow to this unified theme. They limit it, expand it, explain it, and/or question it. A real key to proper interpretation is to follow the original author's thought on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis through the individual literary units that make up the biblical book. This study guide commentary is designed to help the student do that by comparing modern English translations. These translations have been selected because they employ different translation theories:

1. The United Bible Society's Greek text is the revised fourth edition (UBS4). This text was paragraphed by modern textual scholars.

2. The New King James Version (NKJV) is a word-for-word literal translation based on the Greek manuscript tradition known as the Textus Receptus. Its paragraph divisions are longer than the other translations. These longer units help the student to see the unified topics.
3. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is a modified word-for-word translation. It forms a mid point between the following two modern versions. Its paragraph divisions are quite helpful in identifying subjects.
4. The Today's English Version (TEV) is a dynamic equivalent translation published by the United Bible Society. It attempts to translate the Bible in such a way that a modern English reader or speaker can understand the meaning of the Greek text. Often, especially in the Gospels, it divides paragraphs by speaker rather than by subject, in the same way as the NIV. For the interpreter's purposes, this is not helpful. It is interesting to note that both the UBS4 and TEV are published by the same entity, yet their paragraphing differs.
5. The Jerusalem Bible (JB) is a dynamic equivalent translation based on a French Catholic translation. It is very helpful in comparing the paragraphing from a European perspective.
6. The printed text is the 1995 Updated New American Standard Bible (NASB), which is a word for word translation. The verse by verse comments follow this paragraphing.

### **Third Principle**

The third principle is to read the Bible in different translations in order to grasp the widest possible range of meaning (semantic field) that biblical words or phrases may have. Often a Greek phrase or word can be understood in several ways. These different translations bring out these options and help to identify and explain the Greek manuscript variations. These do not affect doctrine, but they do help us to try to get back to the original text penned by an inspired ancient writer.

This commentary offers a quick way for the student to check his interpretations. It is not meant to be definitive, but rather informative and thought-provoking. Often, other possible interpretations help us not be so parochial, dogmatic, and denominational. Interpreters need to have a larger range of interpretive options to recognize how ambiguous the ancient text can be. It is shocking how little agreement there is among Christians who claim the Bible as their source of truth.

These principles have helped me to overcome much of my historical conditioning by forcing me to struggle with the ancient text. My hope is that it will be a blessing to you as well.

Bob Utley  
June 27, 1996

# A GUIDE TO GOOD BIBLE READING: A PERSONAL SEARCH FOR VERIFIABLE TRUTH

What follows is a brief explanation of Dr. Bob Utley's hermeneutical philosophy and the procedures used in his commentaries.

Can we know truth? Where is it found? Can we logically verify it? Is there an ultimate authority? Are there absolutes which can guide our lives, our world? Is there meaning to life? Why are we here? Where are we going? These questions—questions that all rational people contemplate—have haunted the human intellect since the beginning of time (Eccl. 1:13-18; 3:9-11). I can remember my personal search for an integrating center for my life. I became a believer in Christ at a young age, based primarily on the witness of significant others in my family. As I grew to adulthood, questions about myself and my world also grew. Simple cultural and religious clichés did not bring meaning to the experiences I read about or encountered. It was a time of confusion, searching, longing, and often a feeling of hopelessness in the face of the insensitive, hard world in which I lived.

Many claimed to have answers to these ultimate questions, but after research and reflection I found that their answers were based upon (1) personal philosophies, (2) ancient myths, (3) personal experiences, or (4) psychological projections. I needed some degree of verification, some evidence, some rationality on which to base my worldview, my integrating center, my reason to live. I found these in my study of the Bible. I began to search for evidence of its trustworthiness, which I found in (1) the historical reliability of the Bible as confirmed by archaeology, (2) the accuracy of the prophecies of the Old Testament, (3) the unity of the Bible message over the sixteen hundred years of its production, and (4) the personal testimonies of people whose lives had been permanently changed by contact with the Bible. Christianity, as a unified system of faith and belief, has the ability to deal with complex questions of human life. Not only did this provide a rational framework, but the experiential aspect of biblical faith brought me emotional joy and stability.

I thought that I had found the integrating center for my life—Christ, as understood through the Scriptures. It was a heady experience, an emotional release. However, I can still remember the shock and pain when it began to dawn on me how many different interpretations of this book were advocated, sometimes even within the same churches and schools of thought. Affirming the inspiration and trustworthiness of the Bible was not the end, but only the beginning. How do I verify or reject the varied and conflicting interpretations of the many difficult passages in Scripture by those who were claiming its authority and trustworthiness? This task became my life's goal and pilgrimage of faith. I knew that my faith in Christ had brought me great peace and joy. My mind longed for some absolutes in the midst of the relativity of my culture and the dogmatism of conflicting religious systems and denominational arrogance. In my search for valid approaches to the interpretation of ancient literature, I was surprised to discover my own historical, cultural, denominational and experiential biases. I had often read the Bible simply to reinforce my own views. I used it as a source of dogma to attack others while reaffirming my own insecurities and inadequacies. How painful this realization was to me!

Although I can never be totally objective, I can become a better reader of the Bible. I can limit my biases by identifying them and acknowledging their presence. I am not yet free of them, but I have confronted my own weaknesses. The interpreter is often the worst enemy of good Bible reading! Let me list some of the presuppositions I bring to my study of the Bible so that you, the reader, may examine them along with me:

## I. Presuppositions

1. I believe the Bible is the sole inspired self-revelation of the one true God. Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of the intent of the original divine author through a human writer in a specific historical setting.
2. I believe the Bible was written for the common person—for all people! God accommodated Himself to speak to us clearly within a historical and cultural context. God does not hide truth—He wants us to understand! Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of its day, not ours. The Bible should not mean to us what it never meant to those who first read or heard it. It is understandable by the average human mind and uses normal human communication forms and techniques.
3. I believe the Bible has a unified message and purpose. It does not contradict itself, though it does contain difficult and paradoxical passages. Thus, the best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible itself.
4. I believe that every passage (excluding prophecies) has one and only one meaning based on the intent of the original, inspired author. Although we can never be absolutely certain we know the original author's intent, many indicators point in its direction:
  - a. the genre (literary type) chosen to express the message
  - b. the historical setting and/or specific occasion that elicited the writing
  - c. the literary context of the entire book as well as each literary unit
  - d. the textual design (outline) of the literary units as they relate to the whole message
  - e. the specific grammatical features employed to communicate the message
  - f. the words chosen to present the message

The study of each of these areas becomes the object of our study of a passage. Before I explain my methodology for good Bible reading, let me delineate some of the inappropriate methods being used today that have caused so much diversity of interpretation, and that consequently should be avoided:

## II. Inappropriate Methods

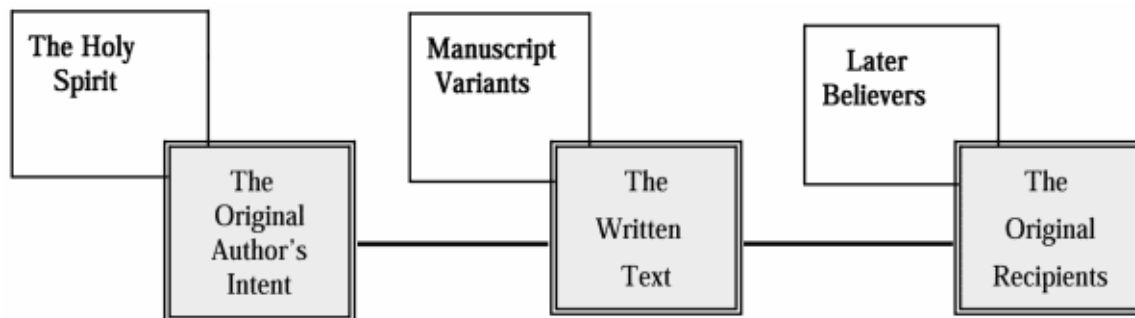
1. Ignoring the literary context of the books of the Bible and using every sentence, clause, or even individual words as statements of truth unrelated to the author's intent or the larger context. This is often called "proof-texting."
2. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by substituting a supposed historical setting that has little or no support from the text itself.
3. Ignoring the historical setting of the books and reading it as the morning hometown newspaper written primarily to modern individual Christians.
4. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by allegorizing the text into a philosophical/theological message totally unrelated to the first hearers and the original author's intent.
5. Ignoring the original message by substituting one's own system of theology, pet doctrine, or contemporary issue unrelated to the original author's purpose and stated message. This phenomenon often follows the initial reading of the Bible as a means of establishing a speaker's authority. This is often referred to as "reader response" ("what-the-text-means-to-me" interpretation).

At least three related components may be found in all written human communication:



In the past, different reading techniques have focused on one of the three components. But to truly affirm

the unique inspiration of the Bible, a modified diagram is more appropriate:



In truth all three components must be included in the interpretive process. For the purpose of verification, my interpretation focuses on the first two components: the original author and the text. I am probably reacting to the abuses I have observed (1) allegorizing or spiritualizing texts and (2) "reader response" interpretation (what-it-means-to-me). Abuse may occur at each stage. We must always check our motives, biases, techniques, and applications. But how do we check them if there are no boundaries to interpretations, no limits, no criteria? This is where authorial intent and textual structure provide me with some criteria for limiting the scope of possible valid interpretations.

In light of these inappropriate reading techniques, what are some possible approaches to good Bible reading and interpretation which offer a degree of verification and consistency?

### III. Possible Approaches to Good Bible Reading

At this point I am not discussing the unique techniques of interpreting specific genres but general hermeneutical principles valid for all types of biblical texts. A good book for genre-specific approaches is *How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth*, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, published by Zondervan.

My methodology focuses initially on the reader allowing the Holy Spirit to illumine the Bible through four personal reading cycles. This makes the Spirit, the text and the reader primary, not secondary. This also protects the reader from being unduly influenced by commentators. I have heard it said: "The Bible throws a lot of light on commentaries." This is not meant to be a depreciating comment about study aids, but rather a plea for an appropriate timing for their use.

We must be able to support our interpretations from the text itself. Five areas provide at least limited verification:

1. historical setting
2. literary context
3. grammatical structures (syntax)
4. contemporary word usage
5. relevant parallel passages
6. genre

We need to be able to provide the reasons and logic behind our interpretations. The Bible is our only source for faith and practice. Sadly, Christians often disagree about what it teaches or affirms. The four reading cycles are designed to provide the following interpretive insights:

1. The first reading cycle
  - a. Read the book in a single sitting. Read it again in a different translation, hopefully from a different translation theory
    - (1) word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
    - (2) dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
    - (3) paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)

- b. Look for the central purpose of the entire writing. Identify its theme.
  - c. Isolate (if possible) a literary unit, a chapter, a paragraph or a sentence which clearly expresses this central purpose or theme.
  - d. Identify the predominant literary genre
    - (1) Old Testament
      - a) Hebrew narrative
      - b) Hebrew poetry (wisdom literature, psalm)
      - c) Hebrew prophecy (prose, poetry)
      - d) Law codes
    - (2) New Testament
      - a) Narratives (Gospels, Acts)
      - b) Parables (Gospels)
      - c) Letters/epistles
      - d) Apocalyptic literature
2. The second reading cycle
- a. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify major topics or subjects.
  - b. Outline the major topics and briefly state their contents in a simple statement.
  - c. Check your purpose statement and broad outline with study aids.
3. The third reading cycle
- a. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify the historical setting and specific occasion for the writing from the Bible book itself.
  - b. List the historical items that are mentioned in the Bible book
    - (1) the author
    - (2) the date
    - (3) the recipients
    - (4) the specific reason for writing
    - (5) aspects of the cultural setting that relate to the purpose of the writing
    - (6) references to historical people and events
  - c. Expand your outline to paragraph level for that part of the biblical book you are interpreting. Always identify and outline the literary unit. This may be several chapters or paragraphs. This enables you to follow the original author's logic and textual design.
  - d. Check your historical setting by using study aids.
4. The fourth reading cycle
- a. Read the specific literary unit again in several translations
    - (1) word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
    - (2) dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
    - (3) paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
  - b. Look for literary or grammatical structures
    - (1) repeated phrases, Eph. 1:6,12,14
    - (2) repeated grammatical structures, Rom. 8:31
    - (3) contrasting concepts
  - c. List the following items
    - (1) significant terms
    - (2) unusual terms
    - (3) important grammatical structures
    - (4) particularly difficult words, clauses, and sentences
  - d. Look for relevant parallel passages
    - (1) look for the clearest teaching passage on your subject using a) "systematic theology" books b) reference Bibles c) concordances

- (2) look for a possible paradoxical pair within your subject. Many biblical truths are presented in dialectical pairs; many denominational conflicts come from proof-texting half of a biblical tension. All of the Bible is inspired, and we must seek out its complete message in order to provide a Scriptural balance to our interpretation.
- (3) look for parallels within the same book, same author or same genre; the Bible is its own best interpreter because it has one author, the Spirit.
- e. Use study aids to check your observations of historical setting and occasion
  - (1) study Bibles
  - (2) Bible encyclopedias, handbooks and dictionaries
  - (3) Bible introductions
  - (4) Bible commentaries (at this point in your study, allow the believing community, past and present, to aid and correct your personal study.)

#### **IV. Application of Bible Interpretation**

At this point we turn to application. You have taken the time to understand the text in its original setting; now you must apply it to your life, your culture. I define biblical authority as "understanding what the original biblical author was saying to his day and applying that truth to our day."

Application must follow interpretation of the original author's intent both in time and logic. We cannot apply a Bible passage to our own day until we know what it was saying to its day! A Bible passage should not mean what it never meant!

Your detailed outline, to paragraph level (reading cycle #3), will be your guide. Application should be made at paragraph level, not word level. Words have meaning only in context; clauses have meaning only in context; sentences have meaning only in context. The only inspired person involved in the interpretive process is the original author. We only follow his lead by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. But illumination is not inspiration. To say "thus saith the Lord," we must abide by the original author's intent. Application must relate specifically to the general intent of the whole writing, the specific literary unit and paragraph level thought development.

Do not let the issues of our day interpret the Bible; let the Bible speak! This may require us to draw principles from the text. This is valid if the text supports a principle. Unfortunately, many times our principles are just that, "our" principles—not the text's principles.

In applying the Bible, it is important to remember that (except in prophecy) one and only one meaning is valid for a particular Bible text. That meaning is related to the intent of the original author as he addressed a crisis or need in his day. Many possible applications may be derived from this one meaning. The application will be based on the recipients' needs but must be related to the original author's meaning.

#### **V. The Spiritual Aspect of Interpretation**

So far I have discussed the logical process involved in interpretation and application. Now let me discuss briefly the spiritual aspect of interpretation. The following checklist has been helpful for me:

1. Pray for the Spirit's help (cf. I Cor. 1:26-2:16).
2. Pray for personal forgiveness and cleansing from known sin (cf. I John 1:9).
3. Pray for a greater desire to know God (cf. Ps. 19:7-14; 42:1ff.; 119:1ff).
4. Apply any new insight immediately to your own life.
5. Remain humble and teachable.

It is so hard to keep the balance between the logical process and the spiritual leadership of the Holy Spirit. The following quotes have helped me balance the two:



1. from James W. Sire, *Scripture Twisting*, pp. 17-18:  
 "The illumination comes to the minds of God's people—not just to the spiritual elite. There is no guru class in biblical Christianity, no illuminati, no people through whom all proper interpretation must come. And so, while the Holy Spirit gives special gifts of wisdom, knowledge and spiritual discernment, He does not assign these gifted Christians to be the only authoritative interpreters of His Word. It is up to each of His people to learn, to judge and to discern by reference to the Bible which stands as the authority even to those to whom God has given special abilities. To summarize, the assumption I am making throughout the entire book is that the Bible is God's true revelation to all humanity, that it is our ultimate authority on all matters about which it speaks, that it is not a total mystery but can be adequately understood by ordinary people in every culture."
  
2. on Kierkegaard, found in Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, p. 75:  
 According to Kierkegaard the grammatical, lexical, and historical study of the Bible was necessary but preliminary to the true reading of the Bible. "To read the Bible as God's word one must read it with his heart in his mouth, on tip-toe, with eager expectancy, in conversation with God. To read the Bible thoughtlessly or carelessly or academically or professionally is not to read the Bible as God's Word. As one reads it as a love letter is read, then one reads it as the Word of God."
  
3. H. H. Rowley in *The Relevance of the Bible*, p. 19:  
 "No merely intellectual understanding of the Bible, however complete, can possess all its treasures. It does not despise such understanding, for it is essential to a complete understanding. But it must lead to a spiritual understanding of the spiritual treasures of this book if it is to be complete. And for that spiritual understanding something more than intellectual alertness is necessary. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and the Bible student needs an attitude of spiritual receptivity, an eagerness to find God that he may yield himself to Him, if he is to pass beyond his scientific study unto the richer inheritance of this greatest of all books."

## **VI. This Commentary's Method**

The Study Guide Commentary is designed to aid your interpretive procedures in the following ways:

1. A brief historical outline introduces each book. After you have done "reading cycle #3" check this information.
2. Contextual insights are found at the beginning of each chapter. This will help you see how the literary unit is structured.
3. At the beginning of each chapter or major literary unit the paragraph divisions and their descriptive captions are provided from several modern translations:
  - a. The United Bible Society Greek text, fourth edition revised (UBS4)
  - b. The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update (NASB)
  - c. The New King James Version (NKJV)
  - d. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)
  - e. Today's English Version (TEV)
  - f. The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB)

Paragraph divisions are not inspired. They must be ascertained from the context. By comparing several modern translations from differing translation theories and theological perspectives, we are able to analyze the supposed structure of the original author's thought. Each paragraph has one major truth. This has been called "the topic sentence" or "the central idea of the text." This unifying thought is the key to proper historical, grammatical interpretation. One should never interpret, preach or teach on less than a paragraph! Also remember that each paragraph is related to its surrounding paragraphs. This is why a paragraph level outline of the entire book is so important. We must be able to follow the logical flow of the subject being addressed by the original inspired author.

4. Bob's notes follow a verse-by-verse approach to interpretation. This forces us to follow the original author's thought. The notes provide information from several areas:
  - a. literary context
  - b. historical, cultural insights
  - c. grammatical information
  - d. word studies
  - e. relevant parallel passages
5. At certain points in the commentary, the printed text of the New American Standard Version (1995 update) will be supplemented by the translations of several other modern versions:
  - a. The New King James Version (NKJV), which follows the textual manuscripts of the "Textus Receptus."
  - b. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which is a word-for-word revision from the National Council of Churches of the Revised Standard Version.
  - c. The Today's English Version (TEV), which is a dynamic equivalent translation from the American Bible Society.
  - d. The Jerusalem Bible (JB), which is an English translation based on a French Catholic dynamic equivalent translation.
6. For those who do not read Greek, comparing English translations can help in identifying problems in the text:
  - a. manuscript variations
  - b. alternate word meanings
  - c. grammatically difficult texts and structure
  - d. ambiguous texts Although the English translations cannot solve these problems, they do target them as places for deeper and more thorough study.
  - e. At the close of each chapter relevant discussion questions are provided which attempt to target the major interpretive issues of that chapter.

# ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS COMMENTARY

AB	Anchor Bible Commentaries, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary (6 vols.), ed. David Noel Freedman
AKOT	Analytical Key to the Old Testament by John Joseph Owens
ANET	Ancient Near Eastern Texts, James B. Pritchard
BDB	A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament by F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs
IDB	The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (4 vols.), ed. George A. Buttrick
ISBE	International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (5 vols.), ed. James Orr
JB	Jerusalem Bible
JPSOA	The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text: A New Translation (The Jewish Publication Society of America)
KB	The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament by Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner
LAM	The Holy Bible From Ancient Eastern Manuscripts (the Peshitta) by George M. Lamsa
LXX	Septuagint (Greek-English) by Zondervan, 1970
MOF	A New Translation of the Bible by James Moffatt
MT	Masoretic Hebrew Text
NAB	New American Bible Text
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NET	NET Bible: New English Translation, Second Beta Edition
NRSV	New Revised Standard Bible
NIDOTTE	New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis (5 vols.), ed. Willem A. VanGemeren
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
OTPG	Old Testament Passing Guide by Todd S. Beall, William A. Banks and Colin Smith
REB	Revised English Bible
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SEPT	The Septuagint (Greek-English) by Zondervan, 1970
TEV	Today's English Version from United Bible Societies
YLT	Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible by Robert Young
ZPBE	Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia (5 vols.), ed. Merrill C. Tenney

# INTRODUCTION TO ACTS

## OPENING STATEMENTS

- A. Acts forms an indispensable link between the accounts of Jesus' life (Gospels) and His disciples' interpretation, preaching, and application of His acts and words in the Letters of the New Testament.
- B. The early church developed and circulated two collections of New Testament writings: (1) the Gospels (four Gospels) and (2) the Apostle (Paul's letters). However, with the early Christological heresies of the second century, the value of the book of Acts became obvious. Acts reveals the content and purpose of Apostolic preaching (*kerygma*) and the amazing results of the gospel.
- C. The historical accuracy of Acts has been accentuated and confirmed by modern archaeological discoveries, especially in relation to the title of Roman governmental officials
1. *stratēgoi*, Acts 16:20,22,35,36 (also used of temple captains, Luke 22:4,52; Acts 4:1; 5:24-26)
  2. *politarchas*, Acts 17:6,8; and *prōtō*, Acts 28:7, cf. A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*  
Luke records the tensions within the early church, even the fight between Paul and Barnabas (cf. Acts 15:39). This reflects a fair, balanced, researched historical/theological writing.
- D. The title of the book is found in slightly different forms in the ancient Greek texts:
1. Manuscript  $\chi$  (Sinaiticus), Tertullian, Didymus, and Eusebius have "Acts" (ASV, NIV)
  2. Manuscripts B (Vaticanus), D (Bezae) in a subscription, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Cyrian, and Athanasius have "Acts of the Apostles" (KJV, RSV, NEB)
  3. Manuscripts A<sup>2</sup> (first correction of Alexandrinus), E, G, and Chrysostom have "Acts of the Holy Apostles"  
It is possible that the Greek words *praxeis*, *praxis* (acts, ways, behavior, deeds, practice) reflect an ancient Mediterranean literary genre which denotes the lives and actions of famous or influential people (e.g., John, Peter, Stephen, Philip, Paul). The book probably originally had no title (like Luke's Gospel).
- E. There are two distinct textual traditions of Acts. The shorter one is the Alexandrian (MSS P<sup>45</sup>, P<sup>74</sup>,  $\chi$ , A, B, C). The Western family of manuscripts (P<sup>29</sup>, P<sup>38</sup>, P<sup>48</sup> and D) seem to include many more details. It is uncertain whether they are from the author or were later insertions by scribes, based on early church traditions. Most textual scholars believe that the Western manuscripts have later additions because they
1. smooth out or try to fix unusual or difficult texts
  2. add additional details
  3. add specific phrases to accentuate Jesus as the Christ
  4. are not quoted by any early Christian writers any time in the first three centuries (cf. F. F. Bruce, *Acts: Greek Text*, pp. 69-80)  
For a more detailed discussion consult *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* by Bruce M. Metzger, published by the United Bible Societies, pp. 259-272.  
Because of the vast number of later additions, this commentary will not deal with all the textual options. If a textual variant is crucial to interpretation, then and only then will it be dealt with in this commentary.

## AUTHOR

- A. The book is anonymous, but Luke's authorship is strongly implied.
1. The unique and surprising "we" sections (Acts 16:10-17 [second missionary journey at Philippi]; Acts 20:5-15; 21:1-18 [end of third missionary journey] and Acts 27:1-28:16 [Paul sent as prisoner to Rome]) strongly imply Luke as the author.
  2. The connection between the third Gospel and Acts is obvious when one compares Luke 1:1-4 with Acts 1:1-2.
  3. Luke, a Gentile physician, is mentioned as a companion of Paul in Col. 4:10-14, Philemon 24, and 2 Timothy 4:11. Luke is the only Gentile writer in the NT.
  4. The unanimous witness of the early church was that the author was Luke.
    - a. the Muratorian Fragment (a.d. 180-200 from Rome says, "compiled by Luke the physician")
    - b. the writings of Irenaeus (a.d. 130-200)
    - c. the writings of Clement of Alexandria (a.d. 156-215)
    - d. the writings of Tertullian (a.d. 160-200)
    - e. the writings of Origen (a.d. 185-254)
  5. The internal evidence of style and vocabulary (especially medical terms) confirms Luke as author (Sir William Ramsay and Adolph Von Harnack).
- B. We have three sources of information about Luke.
1. The three passages in the NT (Col. 4:10-14; Philemon 24; 2 Tim. 4:11) and the book of Acts itself.
  2. The second century Anti-Marcion prologue to Luke (a.d. 160-180)
  3. The early church historian of the fourth century, Eusebius, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, 3:4, says "Luke, by race, a native of Antioch, and by profession, a physician, having associated mainly with Paul and having companioned with the rest of the apostles less closely, has left us examples of that healing of souls which he acquired from them in two inspired books, The Gospel and The Acts of the Apostles."
  4. This is a composite profile of Luke.
    - a. a Gentile (listed in Col. 4:12-14 with Epaphras and Demas, not with the Jewish helpers)
    - b. from either Antioch of Syria (Anti-Marcion prologue to Luke) or Philippi of Macedonia (Sir William Ramsay on Acts 16:19)
    - c. a physician (cf. Col. 4:14), or at least a well educated man
    - d. became a convert in middle adulthood after the church was started at Antioch (Anti-Marcion prologue)
    - e. Paul's traveling companion ("we" sections of Acts)
    - f. unmarried
    - g. wrote the third Gospel and Acts (similar introductions and similar style and vocabulary)
    - h. died at the age of 84 at Boeotia
- C. Challenges to Luke's authorship
1. Paul's preaching on Mars Hill in Athens uses Greek philosophical categories and terms to form a common ground (cf. Acts 17), but Paul, in Romans 1-2, seems to regard any "common ground" (nature, inner moral witness) as futile.
  2. Paul's preaching and comments in Acts depict him as a Jewish Christian who takes Moses seriously, but Paul's letters depreciate the Law as problematic and passing away.
  3. Paul's preaching in Acts does not have the eschatological focus that his early books do (i.e., 1 and 2 Thessalonians).
  4. This contrasting of terms, styles, and emphasis is interesting, but not conclusive. When the same criteria are applied to the Gospels, the Jesus of the Synoptics speaks very differently than the Jesus of John. Yet, very few scholars would deny that both reflect the life of Jesus.

D. When discussing authorship of Acts it is crucial that we discuss Luke's sources because many scholars (e.g., C. C. Torrey, ) believe Luke used Aramaic source documents (or oral traditions) for many of the first fifteen chapters. If this is true, Luke is an editor of this material, not an author. Even in the later sermons of Paul, Luke only gives us a summary of Paul's words, not verbatim accounts. Luke's use of sources is as crucial a question as his authorship of the book.

## DATE

- A. There is much discussion and disagreement as to the time of the writing of Acts, but the events themselves cover from about a.d. 30-63 (Paul was released from prison in Rome in the middle 60's and rearrested and executed under Nero, probably in the persecutions of a.d. 65).
- B. If one assumes the apologetic nature of the book concerning the Roman government, then a date (1) before a.d. 64 (the beginning of Nero's persecution of Christians in Rome) and/or (2) related to the Jewish revolt of a.d. 66-73.
- C. If one tries to relate Acts to Luke's Gospel in sequence, then the date for the writing of the Gospel influences the date of the writing of Acts. Since the fall of Jerusalem to Titus in a.d. 70 is prophesied (i.e., Luke 21), but not described, seems to demand a date before a.d. 70. If so, then Acts, written as a sequel, must be dated sometime after the Gospel.
- D. If one is bothered by the abrupt ending (Paul still in prison in Rome, F. F. Bruce), then a date related to the end of Paul's first Roman imprisonment, a.d. 58-63, is favored.
- E. Some historical dates related to the historical events recorded in Acts.
1. widespread famine under Claudius (Acts 11:28, a.d. 44-48)
  2. death of Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:20-23, a.d. 44 [spring])
  3. proconsulship of Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:7, appointed in a.d. 53)
  4. expulsion of Jews from Rome by Claudius (Acts 18:2, a.d. 49 [?])
  5. proconsulship of Gallio, Acts 18:12 (a.d. 51 or 52 [?])
  6. proconsulship of Felix (Acts 23:26; 24:27, a.d. 52-56 [?])
  7. replacement of Felix by Festus (Acts 24:27, a.d. 57-60 [?])
  8. Judea's Roman officials
    - a. Procurators
      - (1) Pontius Pilate, a.d. 26-36
      - (2) Marcellus, a.d. 36-37
      - (3) Marullus, a.d. 37-41
    - b. In a.d. 41 the procuratorial method of Roman administration was changed to an empirical model. The Roman Emperor, Claudius, appointed Herod Agrippa I in a.d. 41.
    - c. After the death of Herod Agrippa I, a.d. 44, the procurator method was reestablished until a.d. 66
      - (1) Antonius Felix
      - (2) Porcius Festus

## PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE

- A. One purpose of the book of Acts was to document the rapid growth of the followers of Jesus from Jewish roots to worldwide ministry, from the locked upper room to the palace of Caesar:
1. This geographical pattern follows Acts 1:8, which is Acts' Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20).
  2. This geographical expansion is expressed in several ways.
    - a. Using major cities and national boundaries. In Acts there are 32 countries, 54 cities and 9

Mediterranean islands mentioned. The three major cities are Jerusalem, Antioch, and Rome (cf. Acts 9:15).

- b. Using key persons. Acts can almost be divided into two halves: the ministries of Peter and Paul. There are over 95 people mentioned in Acts, but the major ones are: Peter, Stephen, Philip, Barnabas, James and Paul.
- c. There are two or three literary forms which appear repeatedly in Acts which seem to reflect the author's conscious attempt at structure:

(1) summary statements	(2) statements of growth	(3) use of numbers
Acts 1:1 – 6:7 (in Jerusalem)	2:47	2:41
Acts 6:8 – 9:31 (in Palestine)	5:14	4:4
Acts 9:32 – 12:24 (to Antioch)	6:7	5:14
Acts 12:25 – 15:5 (to Asia Minor)	9:31	6:7
Acts 16:6 – 19:20 (to Greece)	12:24	9:31
Acts 19:21 – 28:31 (to Rome)	16:5	11:21, 24
	19:20	12:24
		14:1
		19:20

B. Acts is obviously related to the misunderstanding that surrounded the death of Jesus for treason. Apparently, Luke is writing to Gentiles (Theophilus, possibly a Roman official). He uses (1) the speeches of Peter, Stephen, and Paul to show the scheming of the Jews and (2) the positiveness of Roman governmental officials toward Christianity. The Romans had nothing to fear from the followers of Jesus.

1. speeches of Christian leaders

- a. Peter, Acts 2:14-40; 3:12-26; 4:8-12; 10:34-43
- b. Stephen, Acts 7:1-53
- c. Paul, Acts 13:10-42; 17:22-31; 20:17-25; 21:40-22:21; 23:1-6; 24:10-21; 26:1-29

2. contacts with governmental officials

- a. Pontius Pilate, Luke 23:13-25
- b. Sergius Paulus, Acts 13:7,12
- c. chief magistrates of Philippi, Acts 16:35-40
- d. Gallio, Acts 18:12-17
- e. Asiarchs of Ephesus, Acts 19:23-41 (esp. v. 31)
- f. Claudius Lysias, Acts 23:29
- g. Felix, Acts 24
- h. Porcius Festus, Acts 24
- i. Agrippa II, Acts 26 (esp. v. 32)
- j. Publius, Acts 28:7-10

3. When one compares Peter's sermons with Paul's it is obvious that Paul is not an innovator, but a faithful proclaimer of apostolic, gospel truths. If anyone copies anyone, then it is Peter (cf. 1 Peter) who uses Paul's phrases and vocabulary. The *kerygma* is unified!

C. Luke not only defended Christianity before the Roman government, but he also defended Paul before the Gentile church. Paul was repeatedly attacked by Jewish groups (Judaizers of Galatians, the "super apostles" of 2 Corinthians 10-13); and Hellenistic groups (Gnosticism of Colossians and Ephesians). Luke shows Paul's normalcy by clearly revealing his heart and theology in his travels and sermons.

D. Although Acts was not intended to be a doctrinal book, it does record for us the elements of the early Apostles' preaching which C. H. Dodd has called "the *Kerygma*" (essential truths about Jesus). This helps us see what they felt were the essentials of the gospel, especially as they relate

to Jesus' death and resurrection.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE KERYGMA OF THE EARLY CHURCH**

E. Frank Stagg in his commentary, *The Book of Acts, the Early Struggle for an Unhindered Gospel*, asserts the purpose is primarily the movement of the message about Jesus (the gospel) from a strictly nationalistic Judaism to a universal message for all humans. Stagg's commentary focuses on Luke's purpose(s) in writing Acts. A good summary and analysis of the different theories is found on pp. 1-18. Stagg chooses to focus on the term "unhindered" in Acts 28:31, which is an unusual way to end a book, as the key to understanding Luke's emphasis on the spread of Christianity overcoming all barriers.

F. Although the Holy Spirit is mentioned more than fifty times in Acts, it is not "the Acts of the Holy Spirit." There are eleven chapters where the Spirit is never mentioned. He is mentioned most often in the first half of Acts, where Luke is quoting other sources (possibly originally written in Aramaic). Acts is not to the Spirit what the Gospels are to Jesus! This is not meant to depreciate the Spirit's place, but to guard us from building a theology of the Spirit primarily or exclusively from Acts.

G. Acts is not designed to teach doctrine (cf. Fee and Stuart, *Howto Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 94-112). An example of this would be the attempt to base a theology of conversion from Acts which is doomed to failure. The order and elements of conversion differ in Acts; therefore, which pattern is normative? We must look to the Epistles for doctrinal help.

However, it is interesting that some scholars (Hans Conzelmann) have seen Luke purposefully reorienting the imminent eschatologies of the first century with a patient service approach to the delayed *Parousia*. The kingdom is here in power now, changing lives. The church functioning now becomes the focus, not an eschatological hope.

H. Another possible purpose of Acts is similar to Rom. 9-11: why did the Jews reject the Jewish Messiah and the church become mostly Gentile? Several places in Acts the worldwide nature of the gospel is clearly trumpeted. Jesus sends them into all the world (cf. Acts 1:8). Jews reject Him, but Gentiles respond to Him. His message reaches Rome.

It is possible that Luke's purpose is to show that Jewish Christianity (Peter) and Gentile Christianity (Paul) can live together and grow together! They are not in competition, but joined in world evangelization.

I. As far as purpose is concerned I agree with F. F. Bruce (*NewInternational Commentary*, p. 18) that since Luke and Acts were originally one volume, the prologue for Luke (1:1-4) functions also as the prologue for Acts. Luke, though not an eyewitness to all the events, carefully researched them and recorded them accurately, using his own historical, literary, theological framework.

Luke then, in both his Gospel and narrative, wants to show the historical reality and theological trustworthiness (cf. Luke 1:4) of Jesus and the church. It may be that the focus of Acts is the theme of fulfillment (unhindered, cf. Acts 28:31, where it is the last word of the book). This theme is carried forward by several different words and phrases (cf. Walter L. Liefeld, *Interpreting the Book of Acts*, pp. 23-24). The Gospel is not an afterthought, a plan B, or a new thing. It is God's predetermined plan (cf. Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29).

## **GENRE**

A. Acts is to the NT what Joshua through 2 Kings is to the OT: Historical Narrative (see Appendix Three). Biblical historical narrative is factual, but the focus is not on chronology or exhaustive recording of event. It selects certain events which explain who God is, who we are, how we are made right with God, how God wants us to live.



- B. The problem in interpreting biblical narrative is that the authors never put in the text (1) what their purpose is, (2) what the main truth is, or (3) how we should emulate the things recorded. The reader needs to think through the following questions:
1. Why was the event recorded?
  2. How does it relate to previous biblical material?
  3. What is the central theological truth?
  4. Is there significance to the literary context? (What event precedes or follows? Has this subject been dealt with elsewhere?)
  5. How large is the literary context? (Sometimes large amounts of narrative form one theological theme or purpose.)
- C. Historical narrative should not be the only source of doctrine. Often things are recorded that are incidental to the purpose of the author. Historical narrative can illustrate truths recorded elsewhere in the Bible. Just because something happened does not mean it is God's will for all believers in all ages (e.g., suicide, polygamy, holy war, handling snakes, etc.).
- D. The best brief discussion of how to interpret historical narrative is in Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart's *Howto Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 78-93 and 94-112.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY OF HISTORICAL SETTING

New books on placing Acts in its first century setting have been produced by classicists. This interdisciplinary approach has truly helped the understanding of the NT. The series is edited by Bruce M. Minter.

- A. *The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting*
- B. *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*
- C. *The Book of Acts and Paul in Roman Custody*
- D. *The Book of the Acts in Its Palestinian Setting*
- E. *The Book of Acts in Its Diaspora Setting*
- F. *The Book of Acts in Its Theological Setting*

Also very helpful are

1. A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*
2. Paul Barnett, *Jesus and the Rise of Early Christianity*
3. James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World*

## READING CYCLE ONE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book at one sitting. State the central theme of the entire book in your own words.

1. Theme of entire book
2. Type of literature (genre)

## READING CYCLE TWO (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in

interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book a second time at one sitting. Outline the main subjects and express the subject in a single sentence.

1. Subject of first literary unit
2. Subject of second literary unit
3. Subject of third literary unit
4. Subject of fourth literary unit
5. Etc.

# ACTS 1

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS\*

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Promise of the Holy Spirit	Prologue	Introduction; the Risen Christ	Introduction	Prologue
1:1-5	1:1-3 The Holy Spirit Promised	1:1-5	1:1-5	1:1-5
The Ascension of Jesus	1:4-8	The Ascension	Jesus Is Taken Up to Heaven	The Ascension
1:6-11	Jesus Ascends to Heaven 1:9-11	1:6-11	1:6 1:7-9 1:10-11	1:6-8 1:9-11
The Choice of Judas' Successor	The Upper Room Prayer Meeting	The Gathering of the Twelve	Judas' Successor	The Group of Apostles
1:12-14	1:12-14 Matthias Chosen	1:12-14	1:12-14	1:12-14 Judas is Replaced
1:15-26	1:15-26	1:15-26	1:15-17 1:18-19 1:20 1:21-22 1:23-26	1:15-20 1:21-22 1:23-26

\* Although they are not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraphs. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth, or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text, ask yourself which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions.

In every chapter we must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs), then compare our understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can we truly understand the Bible. Only the original author is inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility of applying the inspired truth to their day and their lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in the following documents: [Brief Definitions of Greek Grammatical Structure](#), [Textual Criticism](#), and [Glossary](#).

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of

the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS ACTS 1:1-5

<sup>1</sup>The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, <sup>2</sup>until the day when He was taken up to *heaven*, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. <sup>3</sup>To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a *period of forty days* and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. <sup>4</sup>Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; <sup>5</sup>for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

**1:1 "The first account I composed"** This is an aorist middle indicative, literally, "I made." Luke is the obvious author of both the Gospel of Luke and Acts (compare Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-2). The term "volume" was used in Greek for a historical narrative. Technically (i.e., in Classical Greek) it implied one of at least three works. It is surely possible that the unusual ending of Acts might be explained by Luke's plan to write a third volume. Some even speculate that what we call the Pastoral Epistles (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus) may have been penned by Luke.

▣ **"Theophilus"** This name is formed from (1) God (*Theos*) and (2) brotherly love (*philos*). It can be translated "God lover," "friend of God," or "loved by God."

The title "most excellent" in Luke 1:3 could be an honorific title for a Roman governmental official (cf. Acts 23:26; 24:3; 26:25), possibly used of the equestrian order of Roman society. He may have been the literary benefactor for the writing, copying, and distributing of Luke's two books. Church tradition names him as T. Flavius Clemens, cousin of Domitian (a.d. 24-96).

▣ **"all that Jesus began to do"** This refers to the Gospel of Luke. It is surprising that Luke says "all" that Jesus did, because the Gospel of Luke (like all the Synoptic Gospels) is very selective in what it records about Jesus' life and teachings.

**1:2 "until the day when He was taken up to *heaven*"** This is mentioned in Luke 24:51. See Special Topic following.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE ASCENSION](#)

▣ **"He had by the Holy Spirit"** See Special Topic following.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE PERSONHOOD OF THE SPIRIT](#)

▣ **"given orders"** This refers to information recorded in Gospel of Luke 24:44-49, in Matt. 28:18-20, and in Acts 1:8.

- **"orders"** This is an aorist middle (deponent) participle. Some scholars see this as referring to 1:8 (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:45-47 or Luke 24:49). The church has a two-pronged function:
  1. evangelism and Christlike maturity; every believer must wait for God's power and equipping to achieve these
  2. others see it as referring to "wait in Jerusalem for the Spirit coming and empowering (cf. Acts 1:4; Luke 24:49)
- **"the apostles"** See chart of Apostles' names at Acts 1:13.
- **"He had chosen"** "Chosen" (*eklegō*, aorist middle indicative) is used in two senses. Usually in the OT it refers to service, not salvation, but in the NT it refers to spiritual salvation. Here it seems to refer to both ideas (cf. Luke 6:13).

**1:3 "He also presented Himself alive"** This probably refers to Jesus' three appearances in the upper room to the entire group of disciples on three successive Sunday nights, but also could refer to other appearances (cf. 1 Cor. 15:5-8). The resurrection of Jesus is crucial to the truthfulness of the gospel (cf. Acts 2:24,32; 3:15,26; 4:10; 5:35; 10:40; 13:30,33,34,37; 17:31; and esp. 1 Cor. 15:12-19,20). The following is a chart of the post-resurrection appearances from Paul Barnett, *Jesus and the Rise of Early Christianity*, p. 185.

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<b>John</b>	<b>Matthew</b>	<b>Luke</b>	<b>1 Corinthians</b>
<b><i>Jerusalem Appearances</i></b>			
Mary (Jn. 20:15)	Women (Mt. 28:9)	Simon (Lk. 24:34)	Cephas (1 Cor. 15:5)
		two on the road to Emmaus (Lk. 24:15)	
		disciples (Lk. 24:36)	the Twelve (1 Cor. 15:5)
ten disciples (Jn. 20:19)			
eleven disciples (Jn. 20:26)			

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***Galilee Appearances***

500+ believers (1 Cor. 15:6; possibly linked to Matt. 28:16-20)  
James (1 Cor. 15:7)

seven disciples (Jn. 21:1)

the disciples (Mt. 28:16-20)

### **Jerusalem Appearances**

the Ascension (Lk. 24:50-51) all the apostles (1 Cor. 15:7)

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**NASB, NRSV,**

**NIV** "by many convincing proofs"

**NKJV** "by many infallible proofs"

**TEV** "many times in ways that proved beyond doubt"

**NJB** "by many demonstrations"

The word *tekmērion* is used only here in the NT. There is a good discussion of the terms used in Greek literature in Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, p. 628, where it means "demonstrative evidence." This term is also used in the Wisdom of Solomon 5:11; 19:3 and III Maccabees 3:24.

■ **"after His suffering"** It was with great difficulty that Jewish believers accepted this aspect of the gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 1:23). The Messiah's suffering is mentioned in the OT (cf. Gen. 3:15; Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; Zech. 10:12; and notice in Luke 24:45-47). This was a major theological affirmation of Apostolic preaching (*kerygma*; see Special Topic at Acts 2:14).

Luke often uses the aorist active infinitive of *paschō* (suffer) to refer to Jesus' crucifixion (cf. Luke 9:22; 17:25; 22:15; 24:26,46; Acts 1:3; 3:18; 9:16; 17:3). Luke may have gotten this from Mark's Gospel (cf. Acts 8:31).

■ **"appearing to them"** We have ten or eleven accounts of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances recorded in the NT. However, these are only representative samples and not a definitive list. Apparently Jesus came and went during the period, but did not stay with any one group.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: JESUS' POST RESURRECTION APPEARANCES**

■ **"forty days"** This is an OT idiom for a long period of indefinite time, longer than a lunar cycle. Here it is related to the time between the annual Jewish feasts of Passover and Pentecost (which is fifty days). Luke is the only source of this information. Since the date of the ascension is not the major issue (not even noted by Christian writers until the fourth century a.d.), there must be another purpose for the number. It could relate to Moses on Mt. Sinai, Israel in the wilderness, Jesus' temptation experience, or we just do not know, but it is obvious that the date itself is not the issue.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: SYMBOLIC NUMBERS IN SCRIPTURE**

■ **"speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God"** The Gnostics claimed that Jesus revealed secret information to their group during the time between Passover and Pentecost. This is certainly false. However, the account of the two on the road to Emmaus is a good example of Jesus' post-resurrection teaching. I think Jesus, Himself, showed the church leaders from the Old Testament, the predictions and texts related to His life, death, resurrection and Second Coming. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE KINGDOM OF GOD](#) following.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1:4	
NASB	"gathering them together"
NKJV	"being assembled together with <i>them</i> "
NRSV	"while staying with them"
TEV	"when they came together"
TEV <sup>b</sup>	"while he was staying with them"
NIV	"while he was eating with them"
NJB	"while at table with them"

Verses 4-5 use one appearance of Jesus as an example of one of His several appearances and proofs. The term *sunalizomenos* can be spelled differently. The spelling changes the meaning.

1. long a – assemble/gather
2. short a – eat with (literally "with salt")
3. au (diphthong) – stay with

It is uncertain which was intended, but Luke 24:41-43 (cf. John 21) describes Jesus eating with the apostolic group, which would have been evidence of His resurrected, physical body (cf. Acts 1:3).

■ **"not to leave Jerusalem"** This is recorded in Luke 24:49. The first part of Acts is a review of the end of Luke's Gospel, possibly a literary way of linking the two books.

■ **"to wait for what the Father had promised"** In Acts 2:16-21 Peter relates this to the eschatological prophecy of Joel 2:28-32. They waited ten days until Pentecost. Luke has specifically designated "the Father's promise" as the Holy Spirit (cf. Luke 24:49; Acts 2:33). Jesus had previously spoken to them about the coming of the Spirit in John 14-16. However, it is possible that Luke understands the Father's promise not as one thing only (i.e., the Holy Spirit), but also that the OT promised salvation will be brought to Israel in the person of the Messiah (cf. Acts 2:39; 13:23,32; 26:6).

■ **"Father"** The OT introduces the intimate familial metaphor of God as Father:

1. the nation of Israel is often described as YHWH's "son" (cf. Hos. 11:1; Mal. 3:17)
2. in Deuteronomy the analogy of God as Father is used (1:31)
3. in Deut. 32:6 Israel is called "his children" and God called "your Father"
4. this analogy is stated in Ps. 103:13 and developed in Ps. 68:5 (the father of orphans)
5. it was common in the prophets (cf. Isa. 1:2; 63:8; Israel as son, God as Father, 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 3:4,19; 31:9)

Jesus spoke Aramaic, which means that many of the places where "Father" appears as the Greek *Pater* may reflect the Aramaic *Abba* (cf. Acts 14:36). This familial term "Daddy" or "papa" reflects Jesus' intimacy with the Father; His revealing this to His followers also encourages our own intimacy with the Father. The term "Father" was used rarely in the OT (and not often in rabbinical literature) for YHWH, but Jesus uses it often and pervasively. It is a major revelation of believers' new relationship with God through Christ (cf. Matt. 6:9).

**1:5 "John"** All four Gospels (cf. Matt. 3:1-12; Mark 1:2-8; Luke 3:15-17; John 1:6-8,19-28) tell of the ministry of John the Baptist. "John" was the shortened form of the Hebrew name Johanan (BDB 220), which meant "YHWH is gracious" or "gift of YHWH." His name was significant because, like all biblical names, it pointed toward God's purpose for his life. John was the last of the Old Testament prophets. There had not been a prophet in Israel since Malachi, around 430 b.c. His very presence caused great spiritual excitement among the people of Israel.

■ **"baptized with water"** Baptism was a common initiating rite among Jews of the first and second century, but only in connection with proselytes. If someone from a Gentile background wanted to become a

full child of Israel, he had to accomplish three tasks:

1. circumcision, if male
2. self-baptism by immersion, in the presence of three witnesses
3. a sacrifice in the Temple if possible

In sectarian groups of first century Palestine, such as the Essenes, baptism was apparently a common, repeated experience. However, to mainline Judaism, ritualism precedents can be cited for this ceremonial washing:

1. as a symbol of spiritual cleansing (cf. Isa. 1:16)
2. as a regular ritual performed by the priests (cf. Exod. 19:10; Leviticus 15)
3. a regular ritual procedure before entering the temple to worship

■ **"you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit"** This is a future passive indicative. The passive voice may refer to Jesus because of Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16. The preposition *ev* can mean "in," "with," or "by" (i.e., instrument, cf. Matt. 3:11). This phrase can refer to two events: (1) becoming a Christian, (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13) or (2) in this context, the promised infusion of spiritual power for effective ministry. John the Baptist often spoke of Jesus' ministry by this phrase, (cf. Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16-17; John 1:33).

This is in contrast to John's baptism. The Messiah will inaugurate the new age of the Spirit. His baptism will be with (or "in" or "by") the Spirit. There has been much discussion among denominations as to what event in the Christian experience this refers. Some take it to refer to an empowering experience after salvation, a kind of second blessing. Personally I think it refers to becoming a Christian (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13). I do not deny later fillings and equippings, but I believe there is only one initial spiritual baptism into Christ in which believers identify with Jesus' death and resurrection (cf. Rom. 6:3-4; Eph. 4:5; Col. 2:12). This initiating work of the Spirit is delineated in John 16:8-11. In my understanding the works of the Holy Spirit are:

1. convicting of sin
2. revealing the truth about Christ
3. leading to acceptance of the gospel
4. baptizing into Christ
5. convicting the believer of continuing sin
6. forming Christlikeness in the believer

■ **"not many days from now"** This is a reference to the Jewish festival of Pentecost which occurred seven weeks after Passover. It recognized God's ownership of the grain harvest. It came fifty days after Passover (cf. Lev. 23:15-31; Exod. 34:22; Deut. 16:10).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 1:6-11**

**<sup>6</sup>So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" <sup>7</sup>He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; <sup>8</sup>but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." <sup>9</sup>And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. <sup>10</sup>And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. <sup>11</sup>They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."**

**1:6 "they were asking Him"** This imperfect tense means either repeated action in past time or the initiation of an act. Apparently these disciples had asked this many times.



■ **"Lord"** The Greek term "Lord" (*kurios*) can be used in a general sense or in a developed theological sense. It can mean "mister," "sir," "master," "owner," "husband" or "the full God-man" (cf. John 9:36, 38). The OT (Hebrew, *adon*) usage of this term came from the Jews' reluctance to pronounce the covenant name for God, YHWH, which was a form of the Hebrew verb "to be" (cf. Exod. 3:14). They were afraid of breaking the Commandment which said, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" (cf. Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11). Therefore, they thought if they did not pronounce it, they could not take it in vain. So, they substituted the Hebrew word *adon*, which had a similar meaning to the Greek word *kurios* (Lord). The NT authors used this term to describe the full deity of Christ. The phrase "Jesus is Lord" was the public confession of faith and a baptismal formula of the early church (cf. Rom. 10:9-13; 1 Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:11).

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: NAMES FOR DEITY**

■ **"is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom of Israel"** They still had a totally Jewish nationalistic perspective (cf. Ps. 14:7; Jer. 33:7; Hos. 6:11; Luke 19:11; 24:21). They possibly even were asking about their administrative positions.

This theological question still causes much controversy. I want to include here a part of my commentary on Revelation (see [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org)) which discusses this very issue.

"The OT prophets predict a restoration of a Jewish kingdom in Palestine centered in Jerusalem where all the nations of the earth gather to praise and serve a Davidic ruler, but the NT Apostles never focus on this agenda. Is not the OT inspired (cf. Matt. 5:17-19)? Have the NT authors omitted crucial end-time events?"

There are several sources of information about the end of the world:

1. OT prophets
2. OT apocalyptic writers (cf. Ezek. 37-39; Dan. 7-12)
3. intertestamental, non-canonical Jewish apocalyptic writers (like I Enoch)
4. Jesus Himself (cf. Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21)
5. the writings of Paul (cf. 1 Cor. 15; 2 Cor. 5; 1 Thess. 4; 2 Thess. 2)
6. the writings of John (the book of Revelation).

Do these all clearly teach an end-time agenda (events, chronology, persons)? If not, why? Are they not all inspired (except the Jewish intertestamental writings)?

The Spirit revealed truths to the OT writers in terms and categories they could understand.

However, through progressive revelation the Spirit has expanded these OT eschatological concepts to a universal scope (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13). Here are some relevant examples:

1. The city of Jerusalem is used as a metaphor of the people of God (Zion) and is projected into the NT as a term expressing God's acceptance of all repentant, believing humans (the new Jerusalem of Revelation 20-22). The theological expansion of a literal, physical city into the people of God is foreshadowed in God's promise to redeem fallen mankind in Gen. 3:15 before there even were any Jews or a Jewish capital city. Even Abraham's call (cf. Gen. 12:3) involved the Gentiles.
2. In the OT the enemies are the surrounding nations of the Ancient Near East, but in the NT they have been expanded to all unbelieving, anti-God, Satanically-inspired people. The battle has moved from a geographical, regional conflict to a cosmic conflict.
3. The promise of a land which is so integral in the OT (the Patriarchal promises) has now become the whole earth. New Jerusalem comes to a recreated earth, not the Near East only or exclusively (cf. Rev. 20-22).
4. Some other examples of OT prophetic concepts being expanded are (1) the seed of Abraham is now the spiritually circumcised (cf. Rom. 2:28-29); (2) the covenant people now include Gentiles (cf. Hos. 1:9; 2:23; Rom. 9:24-26; also Lev. 26:12; Exod. 29:45; 2 Cor. 6:16-18 and Exod. 19:5; Deut. 14:2; Titus 2:14); (3) the temple is now the local church (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16) or the individual believer (cf. 1 Cor. 6:19); and (4) even Israel and its characteristic descriptive phrases now refer to the whole people of God (cf. Gal. 6:16; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9-10; Rev. 1:6)

The prophetic model has been fulfilled, expanded, and is now more inclusive. Jesus and the Apostolic writers do not present the end-time in the same way as the OT prophets (cf. Martin Wyngaarden, *The Future of The Kingdom in Prophecy and Fulfillment*). Modern interpreters who try to make the OT model literal or normative twist the Revelation into a very Jewish book and force meaning into atomized, ambiguous phrases of Jesus and Paul! The NT writers do not negate the OT prophets, but show their ultimate universal implication."

1:7

NASB	"It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority"
NKJV	"It is not for you to know times or seasons"
NRSV	"It is not for you to know the times or periods"
TEV	"the times and occasions"
NJB	"It is not for you to know times or dates"

The term "times" (*chronos*) means "eras" or "ages" (i.e., the passing of time), while the term "epochs" (*kairos*) means a "time of specific events or seasons" (cf. Titus 1:2-3). Louw and Nida: *Greek-English Lexicon*, says they are synonyms simply denoting duration of time (cf. 1 Thess. 5:1). It is obvious that believers are not to try to set specific dates; even Jesus did not know the time of His return (cf. Matt. 24:36; Mark 13:32). Believers can know the general season, but they are to remain ready and active for the actual event at all times (cf. Matt. 24:32-33). The twin emphases of the NT about the Second Coming are to stay **active** and **be ready**. The rest is up to God!

**1:8 "but you will receive power"** Notice that the coming of the Holy Spirit is linked to power and witness. Acts is about "witness" (i.e., *martus*). This theme dominates the book (cf. Acts 1:8,22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39,41; 13:31; 22:15,20; 26:16). The church has been given her assignment—witness to the gospel of Christ (cf. Luke 24:44-49)! The Apostles were witnesses of Jesus' life and teaching, now they were witnesses about His life and teaching. Effective witness occurs only by means of the Spirit's power.

It is interesting that *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (p. 169) notes Luke's tendency to express a "delayed paraousia." Here is the quote.

"The Spirit is the substitute for the *Parousia*. This is the force of *alla*, 'but,' the conjunction that joins the two parts of Jesus' reply. The Spirit is the principle of continued Christian existence in a new era of sacred history, the era of the church and mission. These realities must take the place of an early *Parousia* as the focal point of Christian awareness. The Spirit in the Church is the Lucan answer to the problem of the delay of the *Parousia* and the continuance of history."

■ **"Jerusalem. . . Judea. . . Samaria. . . the remotest part of the earth"** This is a geographical outline of Acts:

1. Jerusalem, Acts 1-7
2. Judea and Samaria, Acts 8-12
3. ends of the earth (i.e., Rome), Acts 13-28.

This outline may denote the author's literary structure and purpose. Christianity is not a sect of Judaism, but a worldwide movement of the one true God fulfilling His OT promises to restore rebellious mankind to fellowship with Himself (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5; Isa. 2:2-4; 56:7; Luke 19:46).

The phrase "the remotest part of the earth" is used again in Acts 13:47, where it is a quote from Isa. 49:6, a Messianic text which also mentions "a light to the nations." A Savior (cf. Gen. 3:15) for the nations (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; Isa. 2:2-4) has always been God's plan.

The first Jewish leaders, knowing the Septuagint and the many prophetic promises of YHWH restoring Jerusalem, raising Jerusalem, bringing the world to Jerusalem, expected these to be literally fulfilled. They stayed in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 8:1). But the gospel revolutionized and extended the OT concepts. The worldwide mandate (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8) told believers to go into all the world, not wait for the world to come to them. Jerusalem of the NT is a metaphor for heaven (cf. Rev. 21:2), not a city in Palestine.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: YHWH's ETERNAL REDEMPTIVE PLAN

**1:9 "He was lifted up"** This event is known as the Ascension. The resurrected Jesus is returned to His place of pre-existing glory (cf. Luke 24:50-51; John 6:22; 20:17; Eph. 4:10; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 4:14; and 1 Pet. 3:22). The unexpressed agent of the passive voice is the Father. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE ASCENSION](#) at Acts 1:2.

Notice the variety in the verb used to describe this ascension.

1. "taken up," Acts 1:2 – aorist passive indicative
2. "lifted up," Acts 1:9 – aorist passive indicative
3. "has been taken up," Acts 1:11 (same verb as Acts 1:2) – aorist passive participle
4. "was carried up into heaven," Luke 24:51 (textual variant) – imperfect passive indicative

See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE ASCENSION](#) at Acts 1:2.

■ **"a cloud"** Clouds were a significant eschatological marker. See Special Topic following.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: COMING ON THE CLOUDS

**1:10 "they were gazing intently"** This is a periphrastic imperfect. They were continuing to strain hard to see Jesus as long as possible. Even after He had been lost from sight, they kept on looking.

This term is characteristic in Luke's writings (cf. Luke 4:20; 22:56; Acts 1:10; 3:4,12; 6:15; 7:55; 10:4; 11:6; 13:9; 14:9; 23:1, found in the NT outside of Luke and Acts only twice, in 2 Corinthians 3). It implies "to look at intently," "to gaze upon," or "to fix one's eyes upon."

■ **"into the sky"** The ancients believed heaven was up, but in our day of a fuller knowledge of the universe, up is relative. In Luke 24:31, Jesus vanished. This might be a better model for our culture. Heaven is not up and out there, but possibly another dimension of time and space. Heaven is not a direction, but a person!

■ **"two men in white clothing"** The NT often identifies angels by their bright white clothing, (cf. Luke 24:4; John 20:12). Angels appeared at His birth, His temptation, in Gethsemane, at the tomb, and here at His ascension.

**1:11 "Men of Galilee"** Several times in Acts Luke records the Galilean origins of the disciples (cf. Acts 2:7; 13:31). All of the Twelve, except Judas Iscariot, were from Galilee. This area was looked down on by residents of Judea because it had a large Gentile population and it was not as "kosher" (i.e., strict) in its performance of the Oral Traditions (Talmud).

One wonders if Luke structured this exchange to answer the later questions about the delayed Second coming. Christians should not focus on the *Parousia* but on service, evangelism, and missions!

■ **"Jesus. . .will come"** Some theologians try to make a distinction between "Jesus" and "the Christ." These angels affirm that it is the Jesus who they knew who would return. The glorified, ascended Christ is still the glorified Jesus of Nazareth. He remains the God/man.

Jesus will come again as He left, on the clouds of heaven (See Special Topic at Acts 1:9, cf. Matt. 10:23; 16:27; 24:3,27,37,39; 26:64; Mark 8:38-39; 13:26; Luke 21:27; John 21:22; 1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 1:10, 4:16; 2 Thess. 1:7, 10; 2:1,8; James 5:7-8; 2 Pet. 1:16; 3:4,12; 1 John 2:28; Rev. 1:7). The Second Coming of Jesus is a recurrent and major theme of the NT. One reason the gospel took so long to be put into written form was the early church's expectation of the very-soon return of Christ. His surprising delay, the dying of the Apostles, and the rise of heresies all finally prompted the church to record the life and teachings of Jesus in written form.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 1:12-14**

**<sup>12</sup>Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. <sup>13</sup>When they had entered *the city*, they went up to the upper room**

where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James *the son of Alphaeus*, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas *the son of James*. <sup>14</sup>These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with *the women*, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

**1:12 "returned"** Luke 24:52 adds "with great joy."

▣ **"mount called Olivet"** This seems to contradict Luke 24:50 (i.e., Bethany); however, compare Luke 19:29 and 21:37 with Mark 11:11-12 and 14:3. The ridge known as the Mt. of Olives was a 2.5 mile ridge about 300-400 feet above Jerusalem that ran from Bethany opposite the Kidron Valley, across from the Temple. It is mentioned in OT eschatological prophecy (cf. Zech. 14:4). Jesus had met the disciples there many times to pray and possibly camp out.

▣ **"a Sabbath day's journey away"** The distance a Jew could travel on the Sabbath was set by the rabbis (cf. Exod. 16:29; Num. 35: 5). It was a distance of about 2,000 cubits (or steps), which the rabbis set as the maximum one could walk on the Sabbath and not break the Mosaic law.

**1:13 "the upper room"** This was probably the same site as the Last Supper (cf. Luke 22:12; Mark 14:14-15). Tradition says it was the upper level (2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> floor) of the home of John Mark (cf. Acts 12:12), who wrote the memories of Peter into the Gospel of Mark. It must have been a large room to accommodate 120 persons.

▣ **"they"** This is one of four lists of the Apostles (cf. Matt. 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; and Luke 6:14-16). The lists are not identical. The names and order change. However, they are always the same persons named in four groups of three. Peter is always first and Judas is always last. These three groups of four may have been for the purpose of allowing these men to return home periodically to check on and provide for their families. See Special Topic following.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE APOSTLES' NAMES**

▣ **"Peter"** Most Jews of Galilee had both a Jewish name (e.g., Simon or Simeon [BDB 1035, cf. Gen. 29:33], meaning "hearing") and a Greek name (which is never given). Jesus nicknames him "rock." In Greek it is *petros* and in Aramaic it is *cephas* (cf. John 1:42; Matt. 16:16).

▣ **"Andrew"** The Greek term means "manly." From John 1:29-42 we learn that Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist and that he introduced his brother Peter to Jesus.

▣ **"Philip"** The Greek term means "fond of horses." His call is elaborated in John 1:43-51.

▣ **"Thomas"** The Hebrew term means "twin" or Didymus (cf. John 11:16; 20:24; 21:2).

▣ **"Bartholomew"** The term means "Son of Ptolemy." He may be the Nathanael ("gift of God," BDB 681 and 41) of the Gospel of John (cf. John 1:45-49; 21:20).

▣ **"Matthew"** Possibly related to the Hebrew name *Mattenai*, means "gift of YHWH" (BDB 683). This is another designation for Levi (cf. Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27).

▣ **"James"** This is the Hebrew name "Jacob" (BDB 784, cf. Gen. 25:26) There are two men named James in the list of the Twelve. One is the brother of John (cf. Mark 3:17) and part of the inner circle (i.e., Peter, James, and John). This one is known as James the less.

▣ **"Simon the Zealot"** The Greek text of Mark has "Cananean" (also Matt. 10:4). Mark, whose Gospel was written to Romans, may not have wanted to use the politically "hot-button" word "zealot," which

referred to a Jewish anti-Roman guerrilla movement. Luke does call him by this term (cf. Luke 6:15 and Acts 1:13). The term "Cananean" may have several derivatives.

1. of the area of Galilee known as Cana
2. from the OT use of Canaanite as merchant
3. from a general designation as a native of Canaan.

If Luke's designation is right, then "zealot" is from the Aramaic term for "enthusiast" (cf. Luke 6:15; Acts 1:17). Jesus' chosen twelve disciples were from several different and competing groups. Simon was a member of a nationalistic group which advocated the violent overthrow of Roman authority. Normally this Simon and Levi (i.e., Matthew the tax collector) would not have been in the same room with each other.

■ **"Thaddaeus"** He was also called "Lebbeus" ("man of heart," cf. Matt. 10:3) or "Judas" (cf. Luke 6:16; John 14:22; Acts 1:13). Thaddaeus means "beloved child" (lit. "from the breast").

■ **"Judas Iscariot"** There are two Simons, two Jameses, and two Judases. "Iscariot" has two possible derivations: (1) man of Kerioth in Judah (cf. Jos. 15:23) or (2) "dagger man" or assassin, which would mean he also was a zealot, like Simon.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: ISCARIOT

**1:14 "these all with one mind"** This term is a compound of "this same" (*homo*) and "emotion of the mind" (*thumos*). It was not a prerequisite as much as it was the atmosphere of anticipation. This attitude is mentioned again and again in Acts (i.e., of believers, cf. Acts 1:14; 2:46; 4:24; 5:12; 15:25; and of others in Acts 7:57; 8:6; 12:20; 18:12; 19:29).

NASB	"continually devoting"
NKJV	"continued"
NRSV	"constantly devoting"
TEV	"gathered frequently"
NJB	"joined constantly"

This term (*pros* and *kaptereō*) means to be intent or persistent or intently engaged. Luke uses it often (cf. Acts 1:14; 2:42,46; 6:4; 8:13; 10:7). It is a periphrastic present active participle.

■ **"with the women"** There was a group of women who traveled with and provided for and cared for Jesus and the Apostles (cf. Matt. 27:55-56; Mark 15:40-41; Luke 8:2-3; 23:49; and John 19:25). See Special Topic following.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: WOMEN WHO TRAVELED WITH JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES

■ **"His brothers"** We know the names of several of Jesus' half-brothers: Jude, James (see Special Topic at Acts 12:17), and Simon (cf. Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3 and Luke 2:7). They were once unbelievers (cf. John 7:5), but now part of the inner group of disciples. For an interesting brief discussion of the historical development of the doctrine of the "perpetual virginity" of Mary, see F. F. Bruce, *New International Commentary, Acts*, p. 44, footnote 47.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 1:15-26**

<sup>15</sup>At this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together), and said, <sup>16</sup>"Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. <sup>17</sup>"For he was counted among us and received his share in this ministry." <sup>18</sup>(Now this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness, and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his intestines gushed out. <sup>19</sup>And it became



known to all who were living in Jerusalem; so that in their own language that field was called Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)<sup>20</sup> For it is written in the book of Psalms, 'Let his homestead be made desolate, And let no one dwell in it'; and, 'Let another man take his office.'<sup>21</sup> Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us—<sup>22</sup>beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us—one of these *must* become a witness with us of His resurrection."<sup>23</sup> So they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias.<sup>24</sup> And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men, show which one of these two You have chosen<sup>25</sup> to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place."<sup>26</sup> And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

**1:15 "at this time"** This is literally "in these days" (*en tais hēmerais*) This phrase is used often in the opening chapters of Acts (cf. Acts 1:15; 2:18; 5:37; 6:1; 7:41; 9:37; 11:27; 13:41). Luke is using other eyewitness sources. He also uses "from day to day" (*kath hēmeran*) as common, ambiguous time indicator in the early chapters of Acts (cf. Acts 2:46,47; 3:2; 16:5; 17:11,31; 19:9). After Acts 15, Luke is personally acquainted with many of the events he is recording. He still uses "day" often, but not as often as in these ambiguous, idiomatic phrases.

▣ **"Peter stood up"** Peter is obviously the spokesman for the Apostles (cf. Matthew 16). He preached the first sermon of the church after the coming of the Spirit (cf. Acts 2) and the second sermon in Acts 3. Jesus appears to him first in the post-resurrection appearances (cf. John 21 and 1 Cor. 15:5). His Hebrew name is "Simeon" (cf. Acts 15:14; 2 Pet. 1:1). This name is spelled "Simon" in Greek. The term "Peter" is a Greek term (*petros*) for a "detached rock." It is "Cephas" or "bedrock" in Aramaic (cf. Matt. 16:18).

▣ **"a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons"** This phrase is a parenthesis in the UBS<sup>4</sup> Greek text (but not Acts 1:18-19). This group must have included the eleven Apostles, the women who accompanied Jesus, and other disciples from Jesus' preaching and healing ministry.

**1:16 "the Scripture"** All references to "Scripture" in the NT (except 2 Pet. 3:15-16) refer to the OT (ex. Matt. 5:17-20; 2 Tim. 3:15-17). This passage also asserts the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Pet. 1:21) through David. It also implies the canonization of "the Writings" section of the Hebrew Bible.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: INSPIRATION**

▣ **had to be"** This is *dei*, which means necessity. It is an imperfect active indicative and refers to the first quote in Acts 1:20.

The term is characteristic of Luke's sense of the life of Jesus and the early church being an extension of OT Scriptures (cf. Luke 18:31-34; 22:37; 24:44). Luke uses this term often (cf. Luke 2:49; 4:43; 9:22; 11:42; 12:12; 13:14,16,33; 15:32; 17:25; 18:1; 19:5; 21:9; 22:7,37; 24:7,26,44; Acts 1:16,21; 3:21; 4:12; 5:29; 9:6,16; 14:27; 15:5; 16:30; 17:3; 19:21,36; 20:35; 23:11; 24:19; 25:10,24; 26:9; 27:21,24,26). The term means "it is binding," "it is necessary," "it is inevitable." The gospel and its growth is not a chance occurrence, but the predetermined plan of God and fulfillment of OT Scripture (LXX usage).

▣ **"fulfilled"** When one reads these OT quotes (Acts 1:20), Judas' betrayal was not the intent of the writer of the Psalms (i.e., Ps. 69:25; 109:8). The Apostles interpreted the OT in light of their experience with Jesus. This is called typological interpretation (cf. Acts 1:20). Jesus Himself may have set the pattern of this approach as He walked and talked with the two on the road to Emmaus (cf. Luke 24:13-35, especially Acts 1:25-27). The early Christian interpreters saw parallels between the events of the OT and Jesus' life and teachings. They saw Jesus as the prophetic fulfillment of all the OT. Believers today must be careful of this approach! Those inspired NT authors were under a level of inspiration and personally familiar with the

life and teachings of Jesus. We affirm the truth and authority of their witness but cannot reproduce their method.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: TYPOLOGY**

■ **"Judas"** It was Judas' apostasy, not his death, which caused this election of a substitute Apostle. In Acts 1:20b, Judas' actions were seen as a fulfillment of prophecy. The NT does not record another Apostolic election after the death of James (cf. Acts 12:2). There is much mystery and tragedy in the life of Judas. He was possibly the only Apostle who was not a Galilean. He was made the treasurer of the apostolic group (cf. John 12:6). He was accused of stealing their money throughout the period of Jesus' time with them. He is said to be a prophetic fulfillment and an object of Satanic attack. His motives are never stated, but his remorse resulted in his taking his own life after returning the bribe.

There is so much speculation about Judas and his motives. He is mentioned and vilified often in John's Gospel (John 6:71; 12:4; 13:2,26,39; 18:2,3,5). The modern play "Jesus Christ Superstar" depicts him as a faithful, but disillusioned, follower who tried to force Jesus into fulfilling the role of Jewish Messiah—this is, to overthrow the Romans, punish the wicked, and set up Jerusalem as the capital of the world. However, John depicts his motives as greedy and malicious.

The main problem is the theological issue of God's sovereignty and human free will. Did God or Jesus manipulate Judas? Is Judas responsible for his acts if Satan controlled him or God predicted and caused him to betray Jesus? The Bible does not address these questions directly. God is in control of history; He knows future events, but mankind is responsible for choices and actions. God is fair, not manipulative.

There is a new book that tries to defend Judas—*Judas Betrayer or Friend of Jesus?* by William Klassen, Fortress Press, 1996. I do not agree with this book, but it is very interesting and thought provoking.

■ **"who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus"** Here is a quote from my commentary on Matthew 26:47-50 (see [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org) ).

"There has been much discussion about the motivation of Judas. It must be said that this remains uncertain. His kiss of Jesus in Acts 1:49 either (1) was a sign to the soldiers that this was the man to arrest (cf. Matt. 26:48); or (2) lends support to the modern theory that he was trying to force Jesus' hand to act, (cf. Matt 27:4). Other Gospel passages state that he was a robber and an unbeliever from the beginning (cf. John 12:6).

From Luke 22:52 we know the make-up of this crowd. There were Roman soldiers involved because they were the only ones who could legally carry swords. Also, the Temple police were involved because they usually carried clubs. Representatives from the Sanhedrin were also present at the arrest (cf. Matt. 26:47, 51)."

**1:17** Judas was chosen by Jesus, heard Jesus speak, saw Jesus' miracles, was sent on mission by and for Jesus, was present in the upper room and participated in these events and, yet, betrayed Jesus!

**1:18**

**NASB, NKJV,**

**NRSV, NJB,**

**NIV**

**"falling headlong, he burst open"**

**TEV**

**"where he fell to his death and burst open"**

It is possible that "falling headlong" was a medical term for "swelling up" (cf. Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, pp. 535-536), which is found in some English translations (e.g., Phillips, Moffatt and Goodspeed). For a good discussion of the different versions of Judas' death (Matt. 27:5 vs. Acts 1:18) see *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 511-512.

■ **"this man acquired a field"** Verses 18-19 are parenthetical (cf. NASB, NKJV, NRSV, NJB, NIV). The author provided this information for the reader's understanding. From Matt. 27:6-8 we learn the priests bought this piece of land in fulfillment of OT prophecy (cf. Matt. 27:9). It was Judas' money, which the

priests considered unclean and used to buy a field for burying unclaimed bodies. Verses 18-19 tell us it was the very field in which Judas died. This information about Judas' death is not repeated elsewhere.

**1:19 "in their own language"** Many of the Jews of Jesus' day did not read or speak Hebrew, but a similar Semitic language, Aramaic, which they learned from their years under Persian rule. The educated people could speak and read Hebrew. Jesus used it when He reads Scripture in the Synagogues.

Many people in Palestine would have been bilingual (Koine Greek and Aramaic) or tri-lingual (Koine Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew).

Jesus spoke Aramaic most of the time. The phrases and words in the Gospels that are transliterated are all Aramaic.

**NASB, NRSV "Hakeldama, that is Field of Blood"**

**NKJV "Akel dama, that is, Field of Blood"**

**TEV "Akeldama, which means Field of Blood"**

**NJB "Bloody acre. . .Hakel-dama"**

This is a Greek translation of an Aramaic word. It is always difficult to uniformly transpose from one language to another. Despite the Greek spelling variations, the Aramaic means "field of blood." This could mean

1. a field bought with blood money (cf. Matt. 27:7a)
2. a field where blood was shed (cf. Acts 1:18)
3. a field where murderers or foreigners were buried (cf. Matt. 27:7b)

**1:20** These are two quotes from the Psalms. The first is Ps. 69:25. Originally it was plural. It functions as a curse formula related to Judas. The second quote is from Ps. 109:8 (LXX). It provides the prophetic precedent for the replacement of Judas discussed in Acts 1:21-26.

Modern believers cannot reproduce this method of typological hermeneutics because none of us in this period of history are inspired. The Spirit guided these Bible authors/scribes at a level He does not do for later believers. We are illumined by Him but we sometimes disagree (see [SPECIAL TOPIC: INSPIRATION](#) at Acts 1:16).

**NASB, NKJV,**

**NJB "office"**

**NRSV "positions of overseer"**

**TEV "place of service"**

In the Septuagint the term *episkopē* carries the connotation of a charge or service of an officer (cf. Num. 4:16; Ps. 109:8). It came to denote an office in the Roman Catholic clerical system, but in Greek it simply was the Greek city-state term for leader (cf. NIV), as "elder" (*presbuteros*) was the Jewish term for leader (ex. Gen. 50:7; Exod. 3:16,18; Num. 11:16,24,25,39; Deut. 21:2,3,4,6,19,20 and others). Therefore with the possible exception of James, "overseer" and "elder" after the death of the Apostles refer to the pastor (cf. Acts 20:17,28; Titus 1:5,7; Phil. 1:1).

**1:21 "it is necessary"** This is the word *dei* (see full note at Acts 1:16). Apparently Peter felt that the Twelve Apostles somehow represented the twelve tribes or some other symbolism that must not be lost.

**1:21-22** These are the qualifications for Apostleship (See Special Topic: Send [*apostellō*] at Acts 14:4). Notice that it shows the presence of other believers besides the Twelve who followed Jesus throughout His earthly ministry. These criteria were later used by some to reject Paul's Apostleship.

Luke apparently includes these two verses to show the priority of Apostolic witness, not the election of Matthias, about whom we hear no more. The church and NT Scripture will be built on Jesus' life and teachings, but it is mediated through eyewitness, authoritative witness, selected theological witness, the NT. This is the theological issue, not the symbolism of "twelve"!



## SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NUMBER TWELVE

**1:23 "they set two"** There is a Greek manuscript variant which shows the theological issue in this phrase:

1. *estēsan* ("they set") in MSS  $\kappa$ , A, B, C, D<sup>1</sup>, E
2. *estesēn* ("he set") in MS D\* (fifth century), Lectionary 156 (tenth century), two Old Latin manuscripts (fifth and thirteenth centuries), and Augustine (a.d. 354-430)

If number one, this is an example of the whole group of disciples voting on the possible replacement of Judas (a form of congregational polity (cf. Acts 15:22), but if number 2, then this is evidence for the supremacy of Peter (cf. Acts 15:7-11,14). As far as Greek manuscript evidence, the wording of number one is certain (UBS<sup>4</sup> gives it an "A" rating).

▣ **"Joseph. . . Matthias"** We know nothing about these men from the NT. We must remember that the Gospels and Acts are not western histories, but selected theological writings to introduce Jesus and show how His message impacted the world.

**1:24**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"who knows the hearts of all men"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"who knows the hearts of all"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"you know everyone's heart"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"you know the thoughts of everyone"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"you can read everyone's heart"</b>

This is a compound word, "hearts" and "known" (cf. Acts 15:8). This reflects an OT truth (cf. 1 Sam. 2:7; 16:7; 1 Kgs. 8:39; 1 Chr. 28:9; 2 Chr. 6:30; Ps. 7:9; 44:21; Pro. 15:11; 21:2; Jer. 11:20; 17:9-10; 20:12; Luke 16:15; Acts 1:24; 15:8; Rom. 8:27). God knows us completely and still loves us (cf. Rom. 8:27).

The disciples affirm that YHWH knows their motives as well as the motives and lives of the two candidates. They want God's will in this choice (aorist middle). Jesus chose the Twelve, but He is now with the Father.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEART

**1:25 "to his own place"** This is an euphemism for "damnation." Satan used him for his purposes (cf. Luke 22:3; John 13:2; 27), but Judas is responsible for his choices and actions (cf. Gal. 6:7).

**1:26 "they drew lots for them"** This has an OT background related to the High Priest's use of the Urim and Thummim in Lev. 16:8, or to individuals using some similar type of method (cf. Pro. 16:33; 18:18). The Roman soldiers also cast lots for Jesus' clothes (cf. Luke 23:34). However, this is the last time this method of knowing God's will is mentioned in the NT. If one tends toward proof-texting, this method could become normative for how to make spiritual decisions, which would be very unfortunate (e.g., opening the Bible and putting one's finger on a verse to determine the will of God). Believers are to live by faith, not by mechanical means of determining God's will (e.g., sheep fleece, cf. Jdgs. 6:17,36-40).

▣ **"Matthias"** Eusebius says he was involved in the mission of the seventy (cf. Luke 10). Later traditions assert that he was martyred in Ethiopia.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did Jesus stay with the disciples for 40 days?
2. What is the "baptism of the Spirit?"
3. Why is verse 7 so important?
4. Why is the ascension important?
5. Why did Peter feel a need to fill Judas' place?
6. How can Paul be an apostle when he did not fulfill the qualifications? (1:21-22)

# ACTS 2

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Coming of the Holy Spirit	Coming of the Holy Spirit	The Day of Pentecost	The Coming of the Holy Spirit	Pentecost
2:1-4	2:1-4	2:1-4	2:1-4	2:1-4
	The Crowds Respond			
2:5-13	2:5-13	2:5-13	2:5-13	2:5-13
Peter's Speech at Pentecost	Peter's Sermon	Peter's Sermon	Peter's Sermon	Peter's Address to the Crowd
2:14-21	2:14-39	2:14-21	2:14-21	2:14-21
2:22-28		2:22-28	2:22-28	2:22-28
2:29-36		2:29-36	2:29-35 2:36	2:29-35 2:36
		The Call to Repentance		The First Conversions
2:37-42		2:37-42	2:37	2:37-41
	A Vital Church grows		2:38-39	
	2:40-47		2:40-42	The Early Christian Conversions
Life Among the Believers			Life Among the Believers	2:42
2:43-47		2:43-47	2:43-47	2:43 2:44-45 2:46-47

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph

4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is the first sermon of the New Age. Notice the OT quotes and allusions in Acts 2. Peter is preaching to Jews from all over the Mediterranean world. The Scriptures he chooses reflect Jesus' teachings of the two on the road to Emmaus (cf. Luke 24:21-32) and His post-resurrection visits with the disciples (cf. Luke 24:45).
1. Acts 2:16-21 – Joel 2:28-32
  2. Acts 2:25-28 – Psalm 16:8-11
  3. Acts 2:30 – an allusion to 2 Sam. 7:11-16 and Ps. 89:34 or 132:11
  4. Acts 2:34-35 – Psalm 110:1
- B. The fulfillment of Joel's eschatological prophecy is a physical manifestation that the judgment of God that withdrew His Spirit from Israel after Malachi (or the author of Chronicles) is over! The Spirit has returned in Great Commission power and purpose!
- C. The confusion of languages from the Tower of Babel (cf. Genesis 11) is now reversed (at least symbolically). The New Age has begun.
- D. For now the "tongues" of Acts are different from the tongues of Corinth. There is no need for an interpreter. The message is exclusively evangelistic.
- Tongues in Acts are for believing Jews to recognize that God has accepted a new racial/geographical group of people into the Kingdom (i.e., Samaritans, Romans, etc.).
- The Corinthian tongues fit the cultural model of the Delphi Oracle. They address God not humans (cf. 1 Cor. 14:2). They edify the speaker (cf. 1 Cor. 14:4). Please do not take these observations as negative in any sense to the Corinthian model (cf. 1 Cor. 14:5,18). I believe it is still an ongoing spiritual gift. However, because of the questions of 1 Cor. 12:28-29, which expect a "no" answer, they are not for every believer! See full notes on the subject at 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 at [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org)

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 2:1-4**

**<sup>1</sup>When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup>And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup>And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. <sup>4</sup>And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.**

**2:1 "Pentecost"** This annual Jewish Feast is also called "Feast of Weeks" (cf. Exod. 34:22; Deut. 16:10). The term "Pentecost" means "fiftieth." This feast was held fifty days (seven weeks) after Passover (i.e., numbering from the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread). It had three purposes in Jesus' day:

1. commemoration of giving of the Law to Moses (cf. *Jubilees* 1:1)
2. thanksgiving to God for the harvest
3. an offering of the first fruits (i.e., a sign of YHWH's ownership of the whole harvest) of the grain harvest. The OT background is in Exod. 23:16-17; 34:22; Lev. 23:15-21; Num. 28:26-31 and Deut. 16:9-12.

**NASB, NRSV "had come"**

**NKJV "had fully come"**

TEV "came"  
NJB "came around"

This is literally "had been filled." It is a present passive infinitive. This was a divine appointment and fulfillment of divine purpose. It is used only in Luke's writings (cf. Luke 8:23; 9:51; here; and a similar metaphor in Luke 2:6). Human history is calendared by YHWH.

M. R. Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol. 1, p. 224, reminds us that the Jews saw the day as a container to be filled. The time of Pentecost had fully come! It was also the time of God's special inauguration of the Age of the Spirit, the beginning of the church.

▣ **"they were all together in one place"** This phrase implies unity of both place and mind (cf. Acts 1:14). It is not certain where this occurred. It was probably in the "upper room" (cf. Acts 1:13; "house," Acts 2:2), but at some point the Temple is involved in this experience (cf. Luke 24:53; size of group in Acts 2:47).

**2:2 "came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind"** In this entire section the emphasis is on the sound, not the wind or fire. This is similar to Gen. 3:8. In the OT the word *ruah* (BDB 924) is used of breath, wind, and Spirit (cf. Ezek. 37:9-14); in the NT *pneuma* is used of wind and the Holy Spirit (cf. John 3:5-8). The term wind in this verse is *pnoē*. It is used only here and in Acts 17:25. The term *pneuma* is used of the Spirit in Acts 2:4.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: SPIRIT (PNEUMA) IN THE NT

**2:3 "tongues as of fire distributing themselves"** The text appears to describe a sound and light event. The light-like fire was at first unified, but broke into separate manifestations and gathered on each believer. Each person in the Upper Room—Apostles, Jesus' family members, and disciples—had visible confirmation of their inclusion. The church was one!

The Feast of Pentecost had developed in Judaism as a celebration of the giving of the Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai (when the tradition developed is uncertain, it was definitely by the second century a.d., but probably much earlier). Therefore, the loud wind and fire may be a reminder of the awesomeness of YHWH descending on Horeb (cf. Exod. 19:16).

In the OT fire symbolizes (1) the presence of deity; (2) judgement (cf. Isa. 66:15-18); or (3) purification (cf. Exod. 3:2; Deut. 5:4 and Matt. 3:11). Luke is using an analogy to try to express a unique occurrence of a physical manifestation of the Spirit. See Special Topic following.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: FIRE

▣ **"each one of them"** There was no distinction made between Apostles or disciples; men or women (cf. Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:16-21).

**2:4 "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit"** This event is mentioned in Luke 24:49 and called "the promise of My Father." "Filling" is repeatable (cf. Acts 2:4; 4:8,31; 6:3,5; 7:55; 9:17; 11:24; 13:9). It implies daily Christlikeness (cf. Eph. 5:18 compared with Col. 3:16). This is different from baptism of the Spirit, which denotes the initial Christian experience or incorporation into Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:4-5). Filling is the spiritual empowering for effective ministry (cf. Eph. 5:18-20), here evangelism! See note at Acts 3:10.

In many ways some segments of Evangelicalism have reacted to what they see as excess in the area of spiritual experience and have depreciated the NT emphasis on the Holy Spirit. Two books that have helped me work through this issue are by Gordon Fee.

1. *Gospel and Spirit*

2. *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*

See full note at Acts 5:17.

**NASB, NKJV "began to speak with other tongues"**

<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"began to speak in other languages"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"talk in other languages"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"began to speak in different languages"</b>

Literally it is "other tongues" (*heterais glōssais*). The translation "different languages" reflects the understanding of this term based on the context of Acts 2:6 and 11. The other possible translation is "ecstatic utterances," based on 1 Corinthians 12-14 and possibly Acts 2:13. It is uncertain how many different languages were being spoken, but it was many. If you try to add up all the countries and regions in Acts 2:9-11 it must have been well over twenty. Several of the 120 believers must have spoken the same language.

God did something unique and powerful to inspire this small group of frightened men and women waiting in a locked upper room to become bold proclaimers of the gospel (both men and women). Whatever this initial sign of the coming of the promised Holy Spirit was, God also used it to confirm His acceptance of other groups (e.g., Samaritans, Roman army officers, and Gentiles). "Tongues" in Acts was always a sign to believers that the gospel had overcome another ethnic, geographical barrier. There is a distinctive difference between the tongues of Acts and Paul's later ministry in Corinth (cf. 1 Corinthians 12-14).

Theologically it is possible that Pentecost is the direct opposite of the tower of Babel (cf. Genesis 10-11). As prideful, rebellious humans asserted their independence (i.e., refusal to disperse and fill the earth), God implemented His will by the insertion of multiple languages. Now, in the new age of the Spirit, the nationalism which impedes humans from uniting (i.e., one world government of the eschaton) has for believers been reversed. Christian fellowship across every human boundary (i.e., age, sex, class, geography, language) is the reversal of the consequences of Genesis 3.

■ **"as the Spirit was giving them utterance"** The verb is imperfect active indicative, meaning the Spirit began to give them. The word "utterance" (*apophtheggomai*) is a present passive (deponent) infinitive. This term is only used by Luke in Acts (cf. Acts 2:4,14; 26:25). It is used in the Septuagint for the speaking of prophets (i.e., Spirit-inspired speech, cf. Deut. 32:2; 1 Chr. 25:1; Ezek. 13:9,19; Mic. 5:11; Zech. 10:2).

I prefer this interpretation to the Classical Greek etymological meaning "raised volume," "impassioned speaking," or "elevated rhetorical speaking." Luke knew the Septuagint and was influenced by its terminology. The Septuagint was the Bible of the Mediterranean world and became the Bible of the Church.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 2:5-13**

**<sup>5</sup>Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. <sup>6</sup>And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. <sup>7</sup>They were amazed and astonished, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? <sup>8</sup>"And how is it that we each hear *them* in our own language to which we were born? <sup>9</sup>"Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup>Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, <sup>11</sup>Cretans and Arabs -- we hear them in our *own* tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God." <sup>12</sup>And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" <sup>13</sup>But others were mocking and saying, "They are full of sweet wine."**

**2:5 "devout"** This term means "taking hold of something well" (cf. LXX Lev. 15:31; Micah 7:2). In the case of first century Judaism, it implies a reverence toward God and the traditions of the Elders (i.e., Oral Traditions, which became the Talmud). These were pious, religious men (cf. Acts 8:2; 22:12; Luke 2:25). This is similar in meaning to "blameless" used of Noah and Job.

■ **"from every nation under heaven"** All male Jews were strongly urged to attend the three major annual

feast days (cf. Leviticus 23) at the Temple (cf. Deut. 16:16). There were

1. probably pilgrims from all over the Mediterranean area who had come to Jerusalem for Passover and stayed until Pentecost
2. permanent residents who had moved from somewhere outside of Jerusalem (cf. use of the word in Acts 4:16; 7:24; 9:22,32)

This has great theological implications (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8).

**2:6 "when this sound occurred"** This could refer to (1) the noise of the rushing wind (cf. Acts 2:2) or (2) the believers speaking in other languages (cf. Acts 2:4).

**NASB, NRSV,**

**NJB** "bewildered"

**NKJV** "confused"

**TEV** "excited"

This same term is used in the Septuagint in Gen. 11:7,9, relating to the confusion of languages at the Tower of Babel. I think Pentecost is the symbolic reversal of the nationalism begun at the Tower of Babel, first in punishment for mankind's sinful rejection of God's will to disperse and second for mankind's protection from a one-world government. The *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 172, further reinforces this view by the use of *diamezizō* in Acts 2:3, which is a rare term, but also used in the Septuagint of Deut. 32:8 for dispersion of the Tower of Babel. Believers are no longer separated by nationality! See note at Acts 9:22.

▣ **"the crowd came together"** This implies that this occurred in the Temple area because a great crowd could not fit in a small upper room or in the small streets of Jerusalem.

▣ **"And how is it that we each hear *them* in our own language to which we were born"** This may have been a miracle of hearing, not necessarily speaking (cf. Acts 2:8 and 11). If this many people, all speaking a different language, spoke at the same time it would be confusion. This is the theological reversal of The Tower of Babel (cf. Genesis 11).

This is the Greek term *dialektos* (cf. Acts 2:8), from which we get the English term "dialect." Luke uses this term often in Acts (cf. Acts 1:19; 2:6,8; 21:40; 22:2; 26:14). It is used in the sense of "language." However, in this context, dialect may be the intended meaning. These Jews heard about Jesus in their mother dialect. This was meant to be a confirming sign to them of the truthfulness of the new message about God and its universal inclusion!

**2:7,12** Notice all the different terms expressing high emotions in this context.

1. *sunechō*, "bewildered" (Acts 2:6)
2. *existēmi*, "amazed" (Acts 2:7)
3. *thaumazō*, "astonished" (Acts 2:7)
4. *diaporeō*, "perplexed" (Acts 2:12)

▣ **"Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans"** This rhetorical question (expecting a "yes" answer) was asked because of their northern accent (i.e., dialect, cf. Matt. 26:73). The word "why" reflects the Greek term *idou* (behold), used twenty three times in Acts and Luke.

**2:9 "Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia"** All of these groups were from the Fertile Crescent (Mesopotamia), where Abraham was called from (Ur of the Chaldees, cf. Gen. 11:28) and from where Israel and Judah had been exiled (Assyrian, Babylonian).

▣ **"Judea"** Why is Judea listed between two other unrelated countries? Why is it listed without the article, which would be grammatically correct? Why would it surprise people of Judea that Galileans spoke Aramaic? Because of these questions many have that supposed an early scribal error has occurred and

this term refers to another nation.

1. Tertullian, Augustine – Armenia
2. Jerome – Syria
3. Chrysostom, Erasmus – India
4. for several modern suggestions see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, p. 293.

**2:9-10 "Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia"** These were groups from modern Turkey.

**2:10 "Egypt and the district of Libya around Cyrene"** These were groups from North Africa.

■ **"from Rome"** Jewish pilgrims who were converted on this occasion may have been the origin of the church in Rome.

■ **"proselytes"** This refers to Gentile converts to Judaism who were required

1. to keep the Mosaic law
2. that males be circumcised
3. to baptize themselves before witnesses
4. when possible to offer a sacrifice in the Temple

They were present in Jerusalem because all Jewish males were required to attend the three major feast days annually (cf. Exodus 23 and Leviticus 23).

**2:11 "Cretans"** This was a large island in the Mediterranean close to Turkey. It may have stood as a collective term for all the islands of the Aegean.

■ **"Arabs"** This would refer to the descendants of Esau. There were numerous Arab tribes spread out across the southern Near East. This list represented to Jewish people of the first century the entire known world. It may be a metaphor similar to the seventy languages of the world as a Jewish symbol of all humanity (cf. Luke 10). This same idea is expressed in Deut. 32:8 in the LXX.

**2:12** These pilgrims recognized this special event as a sign of significance. Peter seizes the moment to answer their questions.

**2:13 "They are full"** This is a Periphrastic perfect passive indicative, which asserts that these disciples had drunk themselves into a state of drunkenness and they remained intoxicated.

■ **"sweet wine"** One explanation of the situation was that these followers of Jesus were drunk (cf. Eph. 5:18a). How did drunkenness explain the linguistic abilities? I am sure there was also an atmosphere of excitement and joy.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: BIBLICAL ATTITUDES TOWARD ALCOHOL AND ALCOHOLISM**

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 2: 14-21**

**<sup>14</sup>But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words. <sup>15</sup>"For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is *only* the third hour of the day; <sup>16</sup>but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: <sup>17</sup>'And it shall be in the last days,' God says, 'That I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, And your young men shall see visions, And your old men shall dream dreams; <sup>18</sup>Even on My bondslaves, both men and women will in those days pour forth**



of My Spirit And they shall prophesy. <sup>19</sup>And I will grant wonders in the sky above And signs on the earth below, Blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. <sup>20</sup>The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood, Before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come. <sup>21</sup>And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

**2:14 "Peter"** Just think, of all the disciples, Peter was the one to preach the first Christian sermon! The one who denied knowing Jesus three times (cf. Luke 23)! Peter's change from cowardice and denial to boldness and spiritual insight is another evidence that the age of the Spirit had dawned with life-changing power. This is his first recorded sermon in Acts. It shows us the content and emphasis of the preaching of the Apostles. These apostolic sermons form an important part of Acts.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE KERYGMA OF THE EARLY CHURCH**

■ **"with the eleven"** This shows two things: (1) Peter is the spokesman, but still part of the Apostolic group. He does not speak alone or on his own authority. The Spirit speaks uniquely through this whole group of called, eyewitnesses and (2) Matthias, though we know nothing about his ministry, has officially become part of the Apostolic group.

■ **"Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem"** The people addressed here seem to be different from the pilgrims delineated by nationality in Acts 2:7-11.

■ **"Let this be known to you and give heed"** These are both imperatives. The first is a present active and the second an aorist middle (deponent). Peter wants their undivided attention.

This phrase is apparently a Semitic idiom. It is used twice to introduce Peter's sermons (cf. Acts 2:14; 4:10) and twice with Paul (cf. Acts 13:38; 28:28). Luke was a Gentile convert as an adult. This vestige of Semitic idioms shows that Luke does not create the sermons in Acts for his own theological purposes, but faithfully summarizes his sources.

**2:15 "these men are not drunk"** Peter, responding to the charge in Acts 2:13, says it was too early for Orthodox Jews to drink wine. This follows the rabbinical interpretation of Exod. 16:8 (cf. E. M. Blaiklock, Tyndale NT Commentary Series, *Acts*, p. 58).

■ **"third hour"** This would have been 9:00 a.m. It was the time of the daily morning sacrifice in the Temple. It had become a special prayer time for Jews. The "third hour" is a Jewish time indicator. New Testament authors (esp. John) use both Jewish and Roman time indicators.

**2:16 "this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel"** This is a quote from Joel 2:28-32 from the Septuagint. Jesus Himself may have been the source of identifying this prophetic passage as being fulfilled (cf. Luke 24:27,45).

**2:17 "in the last days"** This phrase is Luke's alteration of the Septuagint's text and should not be in capital letters. In the OT this phrase referred to the end of time and the coming of the Messianic Age. In the NT the "last days" referred to the overlapping of the two Jewish ages. The New Age began at Jesus' incarnation in Bethlehem and will last until His Second Coming. We live in the tension between "the already" and "the not yet" of the Kingdom of God. See Special Topic following.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THIS AGE AND THE AGE TO COME**

■ **"God says"** Codex Bezae, MS D, has *kurios* (Lord). Does *Kurios* refer to OT YHWH or to Jesus, the Messiah? It is surely possible that *Theos* (God) was a scribal attempt to clarify the speaker.

■ **"I will pour forth My Spirit on all mankind"** Note the universal element (cf. Acts 2:39). All the old traditional barriers are down in Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 3:6; Col. 3:11). Although no Jew-

Gentile distinction is mentioned in Joel 2, notice Acts 2:38, which implies no distinctions. YHWH is sharing His Spirit with all humans made in His image (literally, "all flesh"), which is asserted in Gen. 1:26-27.

- **"sons and your daughters shall prophesy. . .both men and women, I will pour forth My Spirit"**  
This may be a specific fulfillment of Num. 11:29. Note that there is no gender distinction.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: WOMEN IN THE BIBLE**

- **"prophecy"** There are at least two ways to understand this term: (1) in the Corinthian letters this term refers to sharing or proclaiming the gospel (cf. Acts 14:1; Acts 2:17) (2) the book of Acts mentions prophets (cf. Acts 12:27; 13:1; 15:32; 22:10, even prophetesses, 21:9), who predict the future (see Special Topic at Acts 11:27).

The problem with this term is, how does the NT gift of prophecy relate to OT prophets? In the OT prophets are the writers of Scripture. In the NT this task is given to the original twelve Apostles and their helpers. As the term "apostle" is retained as an ongoing gift (cf. Eph. 4:11) but with a changed tasks after the death of the Twelve, so too, the office of prophet. Inspiration has ceased, there is no further inspired Scripture (cf. Jude 3,20). New Testament prophets' primary task is the proclamation of the gospel, but also a different task, possibly how to apply NT truths to current situations and needs.

- **"young men. . .old men"** Note that there is no age distinction.

**2:18 "even on my bondslaves"** Notice that there is no socioeconomic discrimination. Peter has added the term "prophesy" to Joel's prophecy. It is not in the Masoretic Hebrew text or the Greek Septuagint, but it is implied from Acts 2:17.

As Luke 24 (Acts 2:3,6,12,17,32,36,40,51) has several textual variants, so too, Acts (i.e., 2:11,18,37,44). These variants are often related to a shorter text found in MS D (Bezae from the 5<sup>th</sup> century) and in a few Old Latin versions (it<sup>d</sup> from the 5<sup>th</sup> century). Usually this western family of Greek manuscripts adds phrases, but in Luke/Acts it has the shorter readings. Most English translations include all the Alexandrian family of manuscripts' longer version.

See Introduction to Acts, "Opening Statements," E.

**2:19-20** This is apocalyptic language, which is obvious because Peter asserts that this was fulfilled, yet none of these specific natural phenomena occurred, except possibly the darkness while Jesus was on the cross. It speaks in figurative language of the coming of the Creator and Judge. In the OT His comings may be for blessing or judgment. All creation convulses at His approach (cf. Isa. 13:6ff and Amos 5:18-20). In the OT prophecy there is no obvious distinction between the Incarnation (first coming) and the *Parousia* (second coming). The Jews were expecting only one coming and that of a powerful Judge/Deliverer. A very helpful book on apocalyptic language is D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking Prophetic and Apocalyptic Language*.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE**

**2:20 "the Great and Glorious Day of the Lord"** The term "glorious" is from the same root as *epiphaneia*, which is often used of Jesus' Second Coming (cf. 1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 4:1; Titus 2:13). See Special Topic following.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE SECOND COMING**

**2:21 "everyone"** Here is the universal element again (cf. Acts 2:17 and 39). Jesus died for the sin/sins of the entire world (cf. John 1:12; 3:16; 4:42; 1 Tim. 2:4; Titus 2:11; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 2:1; 4:14). Notice the Spirit is poured on all mankind (cf. Acts 2:17).

- **"who calls"** This is an aorist middle subjunctive. Human response is part of God's plan for salvation (cf. Joel 2:32; John 1:12, 3:16; and Romans 10:9-13). Individual human beings are called (cf. Acts 2:39) on to

repent (cf. Acts 2:38) and believe the gospel, and to enter into a personal relationship with God through Christ (cf. Acts 3:16,19; 20:21; Mark 1:15). Jesus died for the whole world; the mystery is why some respond to the Spirit's wooing (cf. John 6:44,65) and some do not (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4).

■ **"on the name of the Lord"** This refers to the character of Jesus or teachings about Him. It has both the personal and doctrinal element.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAME OF THE LORD

■ **"will be saved"** In this context, this refers to spiritual salvation, while in Joel it probably meant physical deliverance from God's wrath (cf. Acts 2:40). The term "saved" is used in the OT of physical deliverance (cf. Matt. 9:22; Mark 6:56; James 5:14,20). However, in the NT it was used metaphorically of spiritual salvation or deliverance from God's wrath (ex. James 1:21; 2:14; 4:12). God's heart beats for the salvation of all men and women made in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27); made for fellowship!

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 2:22-28**

**22"Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know --23this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. 24"But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. 25"For David says of Him, 'I saw the Lord always in my presence; For He is at my right hand, so that I will not be shaken. 26"Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue exulted; Moreover my flesh also will live in hope; 27"Because You will not abandon my soul to Hades, Nor allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. 28" You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of gladness with Your presence.'**

**2:22 "Men of Israel"** These hearers were eyewitnesses to the events of the last week of Jesus' earthly life. They had first-hand knowledge of what Peter was talking about. Those who had spiritual insight responded to the gospel, about three thousand to the first sermon (cf. Acts 2:41).

■ **"listen"** This is an aorist active imperative. The Spirit's physical manifestation got their attention; now comes the gospel message.

■ **"Jesus the Nazarene"** It is often assumed that this is just a parallel to "Jesus of Nazareth." But, this is a rather unusual way to express this. It is just possible that this phrase reflects the Messianic title, "the Branch" (BDB 666, cf. Isa. 4:2; 6:13; 11:1,10; 14:19; 53:2; Jer. 23:5; 33:15-16; Zech. 3:8; 6:12-13). The Hebrew term for "branch" is *nezer*.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: JESUS THE NAZARENE

■ **"a man attested to you by God"** Jesus is surely human (i.e., Acts 2:23; Rom. 1:3), as well as divine (cf. 1 John 4:1-3).

This is a perfect passive participle. The term means "shown by demonstration." God has clearly and repeatedly revealed Himself in Jesus' words, deeds, and lifestyle. These Jerusalem hearers had seen and heard!

■ **"with miracles and wonders and signs"** These hearers were eyewitnesses of all that Jesus did in Jerusalem the last week of His life.

The term "wonders" (*teras*) meant an unusual sign, usually occurring in the heavens, like Acts 2:19-20. The term "signs" (*sēmeion*) denotes a special event which conveys meaning or significance. This is a

key term in John's Gospel (seven special signs, cf. Acts 2:1-11; 4:46-54; 5:1-18; 6:1-15,16-21; 9:1-41; 11:1-57). Signs are not always seen in a positive light (cf. John 2:18; 4:48; 6:2). Here it is used as a series of power manifestations which reveal that the new age of the Spirit has begun!

It is interesting that Peter does not spend any time in the first sermon (at least the summary in Acts 2) about Jesus' early life and teachings. The fulfillment of OT prophecy, His predetermined sacrificial death, and His glorious resurrection are the main points.

**2:23 "This man"** This may be an idiom of contempt (cf. Acts 5:28; 6:13; Luke 23:14; John 9:16; 18:29), but in Acts 23:9 and 20:31-32 it is not a negative idiom. Again the humanity of Jesus is emphasized (cf. Acts 2:22)

▣ **"delivered over"** This term (*ekdotos*) is found only here in the NT.

NASB	"the predetermined plan"
NKJV	"the determined counsel"
NRSV	"the definite plan"
TEV	"God's own plan"
NJB	"the deliberate intention"

This is the term *horizō* in its perfect passive participle form. Its basic meaning is to determine, to appoint, or to fix. In the OT it is used of setting boundaries of land or desires. Luke uses it often (cf. Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 10:42; 11:29; 17:26,31). The cross was not a surprise to God, but had always been His chosen mechanism (i.e., sacrificial system of Leviticus 1-7) for bringing redemption to rebellious humanity (cf. Gen. 3:15; Isa. 53:10; Mark 10:45; 2 Cor. 5:21).

Jesus' death was no accident. It was the eternal, redemptive plan of God (cf. Luke 22:22; Acts 3:18; 4:28; 13:29; 26:22-23). Jesus came to die (cf. Mark. 10:45)! The cross was no accident!

▣ **"foreknowledge of God"** This is the term *prognosis* (to know before), used only here and in 1 Pet. 1:2. This concept of God's knowing all of human history is difficult for us to reconcile with human free will. God is an eternal, spiritual being who is not limited by temporal sequence. Although He controls and shapes history, humans are responsible for their motives and acts. Foreknowledge does not affect God's love and election. If so, then it would be conditional on future human effort and merit. God is sovereign and He has chosen that His Covenant followers have some freedom of choice in responding to Him (cf. Rom. 8:29; 1 Pet. 1:20).

There are two extremes in this area of theology: (1) freedom pushed too far: some say God does not know the future choices and actions of humans (Open Theism, which is a philosophical extension of Process Thought) and (2) sovereignty pushed too far, which becomes God choosing some to heaven and some to hell (supralapsarianism, double-edged Calvinism). I prefer Psalm 139!

▣ **"you"** Peter asserts the guilt and duplicity for Jesus' death to these Jerusalem hearers (cf. Acts 3:13-15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:39; 13:27,28). They were not part of this rabble that called for His crucifixion; they were not members of the Sanhedrin that brought Him to Pilate; they were not Roman officials or soldiers who crucified Him, but they are responsible, as we are responsible. Human sin and rebellion forced His death!

▣ **"nailed to a cross"** Literally this is the term "fastening" (*prospēgnumi*). It is used only here in the NT. It implies both a nailing and a tying to a cross. In Acts 5:30 the same process was described as "hanging on a tree." The Jewish leaders did not want Jesus stoned for blasphemy as Stephen later was (cf. Acts 7), but they wanted Him crucified (Louw and Nida say this *hapax legomenon* may be equivalent to *stauroō*, crucify, [p. 237 footnote 9]). This was probably connected to the curse of Deut. 21:23. Originally this curse related to public impaling and improper burial, but by Jesus' day the rabbis had linked it to crucifixion. Jesus bore the curse of the OT law for all believers (cf. Gal. 3:13; Col. 2:14).

▣ **"godless men"** Literally this is "lawless men" and refers to the Romans.

**2:24 "God raised Him"** The NT affirms that all three persons of the Trinity were active in Jesus' resurrection:

1. the Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:11)
2. the Son (cf. John 2:19-22; 10:17-18)
3. and most frequently the Father (cf. Acts 2:24,32; 3:15,26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30,33,34,37; 17:31; Rom. 6:4,9)

The Father's actions were confirmation of His acceptance of Jesus' life, death, and teachings. This was a major aspect of the early preaching of the Apostles. See Special Topic: The *Kerygma* at Acts 2:14.

▣ **"putting an end to the agony of death"** This term can mean (1) literally, birth pains (Classical Greek, cf. Rom. 8:22) (2) metaphorically the problems before the Second Coming (cf. Matt. 24:8; Mark 13:8; 1 Thess. 5:3). Possibly it reflects the Hebrew terms "snare" or "noose" in Ps. 18:4-5 and 116:3, which were OT metaphors of judgment (cf. Isa. 13:6-8; Jer. 4:31).

▣ **"since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power"** John 20:9 also links Jesus' resurrection to OT prophecy (cf. Acts 2:25-28). Jesus went to Hades for a purpose (cf. 1 Pet. 3:19; 4:6). When He left He took the righteous believers with Him (cf. 2 Cor. 5:6,8)!

**2:25 "For David says of Him"** This is a quote from Ps. 16:8-11. Peter is asserting that Psalm 16 is Messianic (as does Paul in Acts 13:36; these are the only two quotes of Psalm 16 in the NT) and that it refers directly to Jesus. Jesus' resurrection is the Psalmists hope and the NT believer's hope.

**2:26 "hope"** This term is not used in the Gospels, but is used in Acts to describe the faith of believers in the future consummation of the gospel promises (cf. Acts 23:6; 24:15; 26:6,7; 28:20). It is used often in Paul's writing, but in several senses connected to the eternal redemptive plan of God. See Special Topic following.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: HOPE](#)

**2:27 "hades"** This is the Greek term for the holding place of the dead. It is equivalent to the Hebrew term *Sheol* in the OT. In the OT the afterlife was described as a conscious existence with one's family, but there was no joy or fellowship. Only the progressive revelation of the NT more clearly defined the afterlife (i.e., heaven and hell).

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: Where Are the Dead?](#)

▣ **"Nor allow your holy one to undergo decay"** This was an obvious Messianic reference relating to the death, but not corruption of the Promised One, the Anointed One, the Holy One (cf. Ps. 49:15 and 86:13).

**2:28 "you will make me full of gladness with your presence"** This phrase implies a personal, joyful experience with the Father (Acts 2:22-28) in heaven by means of the death of the Messiah (cf. Isa. 53:10-12). This same positive view of personal fellowship with God in the afterlife is recorded in Job 14:14-15; 19:25-27.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 2:29-36**

**29**"Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. **30**"And so, because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne, **31**he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay. **32**"This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. **33**"Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received

from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. <sup>34</sup>"For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, <sup>35</sup>Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.'" <sup>36</sup>"Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified."

**2:29-31** It is not easy for modern western readers to follow Peter's analysis of this Psalm because he is using rabbinical hermeneutical procedures (this is also true of the book of Hebrews). Peter may have heard this argument in the synagogue for the coming Messiah and now knows it refers to Jesus of Nazareth.

**2:29** Peter shows that Psalm 16, although in some ways referring to David (especially 16:10b), cannot completely refer to David.

**2:30 "he was a prophet"** The Jews believed that God spoke through prophets. Moses is called a prophet (cf. Deut. 18:18). The OT books of Joshua, Judges, I and 2 Samuel, and I and 2 Kings were known in the Jewish canon as "the former prophets." After the death of the last prophet, Malachi, the rabbis considered revelation as ceasing. It was in this Jewish sense of the term (i.e., Scripture writer) that David is considered a prophet. Earlier in the OT God had revealed to Moses (cf. Genesis 49) that the Messiah would be from the tribe of Judah. In 2 Samuel 7 God revealed that He would be of the royal line of David. In Psalm 110 God further revealed that He would also be of the priestly line of Melchizedek (cf Acts 2:34-35).

▣ **"God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne"** This is a summary or composite reference to 2 Sam. 7:11-16; Ps. 89:3-4; or 132:11. This shows that God's ancient intent is to be fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. His death and resurrection were not plan B, but God's pre-determined, pre-creation plan of redemption (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13).

**2:31 "the Christ"** This is the Greek translation of "the Messiah" or literally "the Anointed One." Not only was Jesus son of David, King of Israel, but Son of God and seated on the heavenly throne (cf. Psalm 110).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: MESSIAH**

▣ **"He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay"** This is not marked off as an OT quote in the 1995 NASB (updated) text. It is obviously referring to Psalm 16.

For "flesh" see Special Topic below.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: FLESH (sarx)**

**2:32-33 "Jesus. . . God. . . Spirit"** Although the word "trinity" is never used in the Bible, the concept of a triune God is demanded by (1) the deity of Jesus and (2) the personality of the Spirit. The Bible communicates this concept by mentioning the three persons of the Trinity in a single context (cf. Acts 2:32-33; Matt. 28:19; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6 and 1 Pet. 1:2).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY**

**2:32 "This Jesus God raised up again"** See full note at Acts 2:24.

▣ **"to which we are all witnesses"** This refers to those who saw the resurrected Christ. See chart of the post-resurrection appearances from Paul Barnett, *Jesus and the Rise of Early Christianity*, p. 185, at Acts 1:3 (p. 9).

**2:33 "to the right hand of God"** This is an anthropomorphic metaphor for the place of power, authority, and intercession (cf. 1 John 2:1), which is taken from Ps. 110:1 (quoted more than any other Psalm in the



NT) or Ps. 118:16. God is eternal Spirit, present throughout physical and spiritual creation. Humans must use earth-bound language and concepts to speak of Him, but they are all (1) negations (2) analogies or (3) metaphors. Even the word "Father" to describe God or "Son" to describe Jesus are metaphorical. All metaphors break down at some point. They are meant to convey a central truth or concept about deity. Be careful of literalness! Surely you do not expect to see an old man, a young man on a throne and a white bird circling overhead when you get to heaven. See Special Topic following.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: GOD DESCRIBED AS A HUMAN (anthropomorphic language)**

■ **"the promise of the Holy Spirit"** The OT promised a new day of Spirit-led righteousness, made operative by the work of the Messiah.

1. John 7:39, the new day has arrived
2. Gal. 3:14, the blessing of Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:3) is now available to the whole world
3. Eph. 1:13, believers in this new age are sealed by the Spirit.

■ **"which you both see and hear"** This is the continuing emphasis in this sermon on the eyewitness nature of these hearers (cc. 14,22,32,33,36). They knew what Peter said was true because they were there. Lawyers call this primary source evidence.

**2:34 "the Lord said to my lord"** This is a quote from Psalm 110:1 (YHWH...Adon). Jesus uses it in Matt. 22:41-46. In the NT it shows the dual aspect of the kingdom; Jesus is already at God's right, but His enemies are not yet His footstool. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE KINGDOM OF GOD](#) at Acts 1:3.

**2:36 "Let all the house of Israel"** This refers to the Jewish leadership and people, the very ones Peter is addressing. He is asserting that OT prophecy is fulfilled and culminated in Jesus of Nazareth. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE KINGDOM OF GOD](#) at Acts 1:3.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"know for certain"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"know assuredly"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"know with certainty"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"know for sure"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"can be certain"</b>

This reflects two Greek words, the adverb *aphalōs*, which means "to fasten securely" (metaphorically with certainty, cf. Acts 16:23) and the present active imperative of *ginōskō*, "to know." These eyewitnesses of Jesus' last week, death, and resurrection could have no doubt about the truthfulness of Peter's words.

■ **"Lord and Christ"** The term "lord" (*kurios*) can be used in a general sense or in a specific theological sense (cf. Acts 2:21). It can mean "mister," "sir," "master," "owner," "husband," or "the full God-man." The OT usage of this term (*adon*) came from the Jews' reluctance to pronounce the covenant name for God, YHWH, from the Hebrew verb "to be" (cf. Exod. 3:14). They were afraid of breaking the commandment which said, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" (cf. Exod. 20:7, Deut. 5:11). They thought if they did not pronounce it, they could not take it in vain. So, they substituted the Hebrew word *adonai*, which had a similar meaning to the Greek word, *Kurios* (Lord). The NT authors used this term to describe the full Deity of Christ. The phrase "Jesus is Lord" was the public confession of faith and baptismal formula of the early church (cf. Rom. 10:9-13; 1 Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:11). See Special Topic: Names for Deity at Acts 1:6.

"Christ" was the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew term *messiah*, which meant "an anointed one" (cf. Acts 2:31,36; 3:18,20; 4:26; 5:42; 8:5; 9:22; 17:3; 18:5,28; 26:23). It implied "one called and equipped by God for a specific task." In the OT three groups of leaders: priests, kings, and prophets, were anointed. Jesus fulfilled all three of these anointed offices (cf. Heb. 1:2-3). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: MESSIAH](#) at Acts 2:31.

By using both of these OT titles for Jesus of Nazareth, Luke asserts both His deity (cf. Phil. 2:6-11, see Special Topic at Acts 2:32) and His Messiahship (cf. Luke 2:11). This surely sets the stage for the

proclamation (*kerygma*) of the other sermons in Acts!

See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE KERYGMA OF THE EARLY CHURCH](#) at Acts 2:14.

- **"this Jesus whom you crucified"** Peter accused these inhabitants of Jerusalem with duplicity in Jesus' death. All fallen humans are equally involved in the guilt. See note at Acts 2:23.
- **"this Jesus"** The designation "this Jesus" (cf. Acts 2:23,32,36) links Peter's proclamation of the historical Jesus to the resurrected, exalted Christ. Both concepts are true. There is no biblical distinction between the early Jesus and the Jesus of faith!

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 2:37-42**

**<sup>37</sup>Now when they heard *this*, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" <sup>38</sup>Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup>For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." <sup>40</sup>And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!" <sup>41</sup>So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. <sup>42</sup>They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.**

**2:37 "they were pierced to the heart"** This is the Greek term *kata plus nussō*. The root word is used in John 19:34 for Jesus being nailed to the cross. Peter's sermon nailed these hearers to the truth of the gospel. This obviously refers to the necessary conviction of the Holy Spirit which precedes salvation (cf. John 16:8-11; Rom. 3:21-31).

**2:38 "Repent"** This is an aorist active imperative, which means make a decisive decision. The Hebrew term for repentance meant a change of action. The Greek term meant a change of mind. Repentance is a willingness to change. It does not mean a total cessation of sin, but a desire to please God, not self. As fallen humanity we live for ourselves, but as believers we live for God! Repentance and faith are God's requirements for salvation (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16, 19; 20:21). Jesus said "Unless you repent, you will all perish" (cf. Luke. 13:3,5). Repentance is God's will for fallen man (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9, Ezek. 18:23, 30, 32). The mystery of the sovereignty of God and human free will can be clearly demonstrated by repentance as a requirement for salvation. However, the paradox or dialectic pair is that it is also a gift of God (cf. Acts 5:31; 11:18 and 2 Tim. 2:25). There is always a tension in the biblical presentation of God's initiating grace and humanity's needed covenantal response. The new covenant, like the old covenant, has an "if. . .then" structure. There are several terms used in the NT which relate to the concept of repentance.

#### **[SPECIAL TOPIC: REPENTANCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT](#)**

- **"be baptized"** This is another aorist passive imperative. See Special Topic following.

#### **[SPECIAL TOPIC: BAPTISM](#)**

- **"in the name of Jesus Christ"** This is a Hebrew idiom (reflected in Joel 2:32) which refers to the person or character of Jesus. It may be that the early church's baptismal formula, which was probably repeated by the candidate, was "I believe Jesus is Lord" (cf. Rom. 10:9-13; 1 Cor. 1:13,15). This was both a theological affirmation and a personal trust affirmation. In the Great Commission of Matt. 28:19-20 the triune name is the baptismal formula. Again we must guard against a mechanical sacramentalism! The title or formula is not the key, but the heart of the one being baptized.

For "Christ" see Special Topic at Acts 2:31.



NASB, NJB,	
NIV	"for the forgiveness of your sins"
NKJV	"for the remission of sins"
NRSV	"so that your sins may be forgiven"
TEV	"so that your sins will be forgiven"

The theological question is how does "for" (*e/s*) function? Is forgiveness linked to "repent" or "be baptized"? Is forgiveness dependent on repentance and/or baptism?

The possible uses of *e/s* are multiple. The most common use is "with a view to" or "for this purpose of." Most Baptist scholars choose "because of" for theological reasons, but it is a minor option. Often our presuppositions even function at this grammatical analysis level. We must let the Bible speak in context; then check the parallels; then form our systematic theologies. All interpreters are historically, denominationally, and experientially conditioned.

Forgiveness through faith in Christ is a recurrent theme in these sermons in Acts (i.e., Peter 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 10:43; and Paul 13:38).

■ **"receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"** This is a Future middle (deponent) indicative. The gift of the Spirit was

1. an assured salvation
2. an indwelling presence
3. an equipping for service
4. a developing Christlikeness

We must not push the items or the order of the events of salvation because they are often different in Acts. Acts was not meant to teach a standard formula or theological sequence (cf. *How To Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, pp. 94-112), but record what happened.

Should an interpreter use this text to assert a sequence of salvation acts: repent, be baptized, forgiveness, and then the gift of the Spirit? My theology demands the Spirit as active from the first (cf. John 6:44,65) and crucial all through the process of conviction (cf. John 16:8-12), repentance (cf. Acts 5:31; 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:25), and faith. The Spirit is primary and necessary (cf. Rom. 8:9) from start to finish. He certainly cannot be last in a series!

One of the books that has helped me shed my denominational indoctrination and let the Bible speak with power is F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*. In it he makes several good comments about Acts 2:38. One that grabbed me is:

"This reception of the spirit might be experienced before baptism (Acts 10:44), after baptism (Acts 2:38), or after baptism *plus* the laying on of apostolic hands (Acts 8:16; 19:54)" (p. 167).

Moderns want clear statements of doctrine which can be affirmed, but usually they react to a "proof-text" method of interpretation and isolate only those texts that fit their pre-understanding, biases (see seminar on Biblical Interpretation, [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org) )

**2:39 "the promise is for you and your children"** This was an OT corporate, multi-generational, familial concept (cf. Exod. 20:5-6 and Deut. 5:9-10; 7:9). The faith of the children was affected by the parents and was the parents' responsibility (cf. Deut. 4:9; 6:6-7; 20-25; 11:19; 32:46). This corporate influence also has a frightful aspect in light of Matt. 27:25 ("His blood be on us and our children").

The promise of multi-generational faith influence helps me trust that God will use my faith to influence, bless, and protect my descendants (cf. Deut. 7:9). This does not deny personal responsibility, but adds an element of corporate influence. My faith and faithful service in Christ does impact my family and their family and so forth (cf. Deut. 7:9). What a comforting hope and motivational promise. Faith runs through families!

In Acts the promise (2:39) of God involves several items with OT links:

1. forgiveness of sins – Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38-39; 26:18
2. salvation – Acts 2:21; 4:12; 11:14; 13:26; 16:31
3. the Spirit – Acts 2:38-39; 3:19; 5:32; 8:15-18; 10:44-48; 19:6
4. times of refreshing – Acts 3:19

■ **"for all who are far off"** Peter is addressing Jewish people. This phrase originally referred to exiled Jews who would be brought back to the Promised Land (cf. Isa. 57:19). However, it also, in some passages, seemed to refer to the Gentiles who were so far from a knowledge of YHWH (cf. Isa. 49:1; Zech. 6:15). The good news of the gospel is that the one true God (i.e., monotheism) who created all humans in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27), desires to have fellowship with all of them (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9). This is the hope of the unity of all humans in Christ. In Him there are no more Jews-Gentiles, slaves-free, men-women, but all are one (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13). Paul uses this very quote addressing Gentiles in Eph. 2:13 & 17. The new age of the Spirit has brought an unexpected unity!

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: MONOTHEISM**

■ **"as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself"** This is an aorist middle (deponent) subjunctive. It originally referred to scattered Judaism. God always takes the initiative (middle voice, cf. John 6:44,65). From Ezek. 18:32; John 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9 we know He calls all humans, at some level, to Himself. But, they must respond (i.e., subjunctive mood).

The terms "many" and "all" are biblically parallel (compare Isa. 53:6, "all" with Isa. 53:11,12, "many" or Rom. 5:18, "all" with Rom. 5:19, "many"). God's heart beats for a lost humanity made in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27), created for fellowship with Him (cf. Gen. 3:8)!

**2:40 "with many other words"** This is textual evidence that the sermons recorded in Acts are summaries. This is also true of Jesus' teaching and preaching in the Gospels. We presuppositionally affirm the inspiration and accuracy of these summaries. The first century world was accustomed to oral presentations and their retention.

■ **"solemnly testified"** This Greek term (*dia plus marturomai*) is popular with Luke (cf. Acts 2:40; 8:25; 10:42; 18:5; 20:21,23,24; 23:11; 28:23; Luke 16:28). The gospel has an urgency and ultimacy that cannot be ignored in either proclamation or hearing.

■ **"kept on exhorting them"** Man must respond to God's offer in Christ (cf. John 1:12; 3:16; Rom. 10:9-13). This is the paradox of God's sovereignty and human free will (cf. Phil. 2:12-13).

**NASB, NKJV "Be saved"**

**NRSV, TEV,**

**NJB "Save yourselves"**

The inflected form of this term is aorist passive imperative, but as you can tell, NRSV, TEV, and NJB translate it as middle voice. This is the theological tension concerning salvation (cf. Phil. 2:12-13). Is it all of God, or must the hearer allow God to work in his/her life?

The Greek term "saved" (*sōsō*) reflects a Hebrew concept (*yasha*, BDB 446, cf. Exod. 14:30) of physical deliverance (cf. James 5:15,20), while in the NT usage it takes on the connotation of spiritual deliverance or salvation (cf. James 1:21; 2:14; 4:12).

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: SALVATION (GREEK VERB TENSES)**

■ **"this perverse generation"** This may be an allusion to Deut. 32:5 and Ps. 78:8. The OT root for the terms "right," "righteous," "just," "justice" was "a river reed" (see Special Topic at Acts 3:14). It became a construction metaphor, a measuring reed, or straight standard. God chose this metaphor to describe His own character. God is the standard! Most of the words for sin in Hebrew and Greek refer to a deviation from this standard (i.e., crooked, perverse). All humans need to be saved and restored.

**2:41**

**NASB "received"**

**NKJV "gladly received"**

**NRSV "welcomed"**

TEV "believed"  
NJB "accepted"

This is an aorist middle participle of *apodechomai*. Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, list three uses of this term (cf. vol.2, p. 28).

1. welcome a person
2. accept something or someone as true and respond appropriately
3. acknowledge the truth or value of something or someone

Luke uses this word often (cf. Luke 8:40; 9:11; Acts 2:41; 18:27; 24:3; 28:30). The gospel is a person to be welcomed, truth about that person to believe, and a life like that person's to live. All three are crucial.

■ **"were baptized"** Baptism was a religious expectation for Jews as they entered the temple. Proselytes were self-baptized. This was an expected religious event for these hearers but with new meaning. Jesus was baptized (Matt. 3:13-17); Jesus commanded us to baptize (Matt. 28:19)—that settles that! The NT knows nothing of unbaptized believers. It seems to me that this was a clear break with Judaism and the start of the new people of God (i.e., the Church, cf. Gal. 6:16).

■ **"three thousand souls"** This is a round number, but a large number. Peter's message struck home to these eyewitnesses. They were ready to make the leap of faith required to believe.

1. Jesus was the Messiah
2. the Messiah was meant to suffer
3. faith in Him was the only way to forgiveness
4. baptism was appropriate

This required a decisive, immediate, life-changing decision (as it does today)! See Special Topic: *Kerygma* at Acts 2:14.

**2:42 "They were continually devoting themselves"** Luke uses this concept often (cf. Acts 1:14; 2:42,46; 6:4; 8:13; 10:7). Notice the things they did when together:

1. teaching (cf. Acts 2:42; 4:2,18; 5:21,25,28,42)
2. fellowship
3. breaking of bread (i.e., this possibly refers to the Lord's Supper, see note at Acts 2:46)
4. prayer (cf. Acts 2:43-47)

These are the things we must teach new believers! These new converts were hungry for truth and community. See Special Topic following.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: KOINŌNIA](#)

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 2:43-47**

<sup>43</sup>Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. <sup>44</sup>And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; <sup>45</sup>and they *began* selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. <sup>46</sup>Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, <sup>47</sup>praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

**2:43-47** This seems to be the first of many editorial comments by Luke (i.e., Acts 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20). See Introduction, "Purpose and Structure," A.

**2:43 "Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe"** This is an imperfect passive (deponent) indicative. We get the English "phobia" from this term "awe" or "fear." God's presence and power caused a holy

atmosphere, even unsaved sinners were aware of the sacredness of the time and place!

**2:44 "all those who had believed"** See note at Acts 3:16.

▣ **"and had all things in common"** This early experiment in "community" was not successful (cf. Acts 4:32-5:11). It was not meant to be a universal principle, but an attempt at a loving, mutually supportive community or faith. This is a good example that not everything recorded in the Bible is meant to be universally implemented! These early believers had a great love for one another. Oh, that we could regain this love and sense of the presence and power of God among us (cf. John 17:11,21,22,23)!!

**2:46 "with one mind"** The early church was characterized by this unity of purpose (cf. Acts 1:14; 2:46; 4:24; 5:12). This is not to say that they agreed on everything, but that their hearts and minds were knit together in kingdom priorities instead of personal preferences or agendas.

▣ **"in the temple"** They probably met in "Solomon's portico" (cf Acts 3:11; 5:12). Jesus taught there (cf. John 10:23). Solomon's Portico or porch was a covered colonnade along the east side of the outer court of the Gentiles in Herod's Temple (cf. Josephus' *Antiq.* 15.11.3). Rabbis taught there. People regularly gathered there to hear teaching.

Notice the early church attended the temple and probably the local synagogues until the rabbis instituted a curse formula (about a.d. 70), which forced synagogue members to curse Jesus. This caused the break between the church and Judaism. The early believers maintained their weekly worship, but also met on Sunday to commemorate Jesus' resurrection. Remember, Jesus Himself met with the disciples, three Sunday nights in a row.

▣ **"breaking bread from house to house"** If "breaking bread" was a technical designation for the Lord's Supper (cf. Luke 22:19 and esp. in contexts of agape meals [1 Cor. 11:17-22; 2 Pet. 2:13-14; Jude 12] in the early church, ex. Acts 20:7), then this refers to daily communion in local homes (but it must be admitted that it is also used of a regular meal in Luke 24:30,35). Be careful of your dogmatic denominational traditions about the when, where, frequency, and form of the Lord's Supper. The heart is the key!

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"gladness and sincerity of heart"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"gladness and simplicity of heart"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"glad and generous hearts"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"glad and humble hearts"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"glad and generously"</b>

The variety of the translations of the second term shows the difficulty of translating *aphelotēs*. Literally it meant smooth or plain, but it was used metaphorically for "simple," "sincere," or "humble" (Louw and Nida). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEART](#) at Acts 1:24.

**2:47**

<b>NASB, NKJV</b>	<b>"having favor with all the people"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"having the goodwill of all the people"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"enjoying the goodwill of all the people"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"were looked up to by everyone"</b>

This phrase refers to the acceptance of the early Christians by the people of Jerusalem. All the different types and levels of society thought well of these first believers. Christians were not a threat to Roman authority or to the Roman peace (one purpose of Acts). There was no break with rabbinical Judaism at the beginning of the church.

▣ **"the Lord was adding"** This is an imperfect active indicative. The Bible emphasizes the sovereignty of God. Nothing happens apart from God's will. Nothing surprises God. However, this OT way of asserting monotheism (i.e., one causality, see Special Topic at Acts 2:39) has been misunderstood. I would like to

insert two Special Topics, one on the need for balance and one on covenant. I hope this brings light, not heat!

## [SPECIAL TOPIC: Election/Predestination and the Need for a Theological Balance](#)

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT](#)

**NASB, NRSV** "to their number"  
**NKJV** "to the church"  
**TEV** "to their group"  
**NJB** "to their community"

The phrase *epi to auto* is used in Classical Greek and Koine Greek (Septuagint and Acts 1:15; 2:1,47; 1 Cor. 11:20; 14:23), meaning "coming together" (Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, p. 305). Here in the NT it refers to a church meeting. Therefore, the Lord added to the church (i.e., the gathering) daily. This shows the lifestyle evangelism of these first generation believers!

▣ **"those who were being saved"** The phrase "Lord (God or Christ) was adding," used earlier in Acts 2:46, is an imperfect active indicative, but this phrase is a present passive participle. The expressed agent of the passive voice is the Lord. The "saved" are in a process. Salvation starts with belief/trust/faith (i.e., John 1:12; 3:16; Rom. 10:9-13). Salvation is a relationship initiated by God/Spirit (cf. John 6:44,65), but it must be an ongoing experience. It is not a ticket to heaven or a life insurance policy; it is a daily, growing, faith relationship. See Special Topic: Greek Verb Tenses Used for Salvation at Acts 2:40.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Outline Peter's sermon
2. What was the purpose of Pentecost?
3. How did Joel's prophecy relate to this context?
4. Describe Peter's use of Old Testament passages.

# ACTS 3

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Lame Man Healed at the Gate of the Temple	A Lame Man Healed	Healing at the Beautiful Gate	A Lame Beggar is Healed	The Cure of a Lame Man
3:1-10	3:1-10	3:1-10	3:1-10	3:1-10
Peter's Speech in Solomon's Portico	Preaching in Solomon's Portico	Peter's Preaching	Peter's Message in the Temple	Peter's Address to the People
3:11-26	3:11-26	3:11-16 3:17-26	3:11-16 3:17-26	3:11-16 3:17-24 3:25-26

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

In Acts 3-5 there is tension in Jerusalem over Jesus' teaching and the Apostle's miracles. The time frame for the first five chapters is about one year.

- A. Peter and John heal the lame man, Acts 3:1-4:31 ( an example of Acts 2:43)
  1. the healing itself
  2. Peter's second sermon explaining the healing
  3. the reaction and trial (Peter's third sermon, given to the Sanhedrin)
  4. the persecution begins
- B. An attempt at communal life, Acts 4:32-5:11
  1. the early unity of believers (an example of Acts 2:43-47)
  2. the problems with Ananias and Sapphira

- C. The early church's relations with rabbinical Judaism, Acts 5:12-42
1. the life of the church
  2. the jealousy of the Sanhedrin
  3. the intercession of an angel
  4. Peter's fourth sermon
  5. the reaction and punishment

## TITLES FOR JESUS IN CHAPTERS 3-4

- A. Jesus Christ the Nazarene, Acts 3:6; 4:10  
B. His Servant Jesus, Acts 3:13,26; 4:27  
C. The Holy and Righteous One, 3:14 (cf. Acts 2:27)  
D. The Prince of Life, Acts 3:15  
E. The Christ, Acts 3:18,20; 4:10 (cf. "Lord and Christ," Acts 2:36)  
F. Prophet, Acts 3:22  
G. Possibly an allusion to the title "Seed of Abraham," Acts 3:25-26  
H. The Cornerstone, Acts 4:11

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 3:1-10

<sup>1</sup>Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth *hour*, the hour of prayer. <sup>2</sup>And a man who had been lame from his mother's womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple. <sup>3</sup>When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he *began* asking to receive alms. <sup>4</sup>But Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze on him and said, "Look at us!" <sup>5</sup>And he *began* to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. <sup>6</sup>But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene – walk!" <sup>7</sup>And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. <sup>8</sup>With a leap he stood upright and *began* to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. <sup>9</sup>And all the people saw him walking and praising God; <sup>10</sup>and they were taking note of him as being the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple to *beg* alms, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

**3:1 "Peter and John were going up to the temple"** This is an imperfect active indicative. It was the habit of all of the early disciples to go to the Temple daily (cf. Luke 24:53; Acts 2:46). The original followers of Jesus in Palestine worshiped

1. in the Temple (at least on special days if not daily)
2. in the local synagogue (every Sabbath)
3. with believers on Sunday

This was the pattern for a long period of time. These believers saw no division between their faith in Jesus as the Promised Messiah and Judaism. They saw themselves as the "people or congregation of Israel." This is why they chose the name *ekklesia* for their group. In the Septuagint this is how the Hebrew covenantal phrase, "the congregation (*qahal*) of Israel" was translated.

The Jews took official action after the fall of Jerusalem and instituted an oath formula (rejecting Jesus as the Messiah) to restrict membership in the local synagogues. This is when the church solidified its day of worship as Sunday (the day to commemorate Jesus' resurrection; the day Jesus appeared three times to the disciples in the Upper Room).

John is often identified with Peter in Acts (cf. Acts 1:13; 3:1,3,4,11; 4:13,19; 8:14). It is surely possible



that the early church in Jerusalem had groups of leaders which represented different perspectives and emphases of the gospel. Possibly Peter and John were more open to Gentile evangelism (cf. Acts 3:8,10), while James (the half-brother of Jesus) was more identified with a conservative Jewish element. All this changed to some extent after the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15.

■ **"at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer"** This would denote nine hours after sunrise. The Jews (i.e., Pharisees) had traditionally prayed each day at 9 a.m., 12 noon, and 3 p.m. (possibly based on Ps. 55:17). This text refers to the time of the evening sacrifice, which was 3 p.m. (the morning sacrifice was at 9 a.m.). Many people would have been in the temple at this time (cf. Acts 10:30).

**3:2 "a man who had been lame from his mother's womb"** All of the regular attenders of the Temple knew of this man's condition ("was being carried repeatedly" is an imperfect passive); therefore, there was no chance of a trick being involved in the healing (cf. 3:10; 4:22). This was a fulfillment of OT Messianic prophecy (cf. Isa. 35:6). The Jews wanted a sign; Jesus gave them many, now they have another if they only had eyes to see.

Here is the shocking paradox of the sick sitting daily at the house of God. As a matter of fact, there was even a prohibition against these kinds of people actively participating in worship (i.e., serving as priests, cf. Lev. 21:16-24). The gospel offers a new day. Even an Ethiopian (no race barriers) eunuch (no physical barriers) is welcome in the new kingdom (cf. Acts 8:26-40).

■ **"the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful"** The exact location of this gate is uncertain. It was possibly the Nicanor Gate which was made of Corinthian brass (Flavius Josephus, *Antiq.* 15.11.3; *Wars* 5.5.3). It led from the Court of the Gentiles to the Court of the Women. It was on the eastern side of the temple, facing the Mount of Olives, close to Solomon's Portico.

■ **"to beg alms of those who were entering"** Almsgiving, or giving to the poor, was a required part of the Jewish faith (cf. Matt. 6:1-4; Luke 11:41; 12:33; Acts 10:2,4,31; 24:17). Usually money was collected weekly in the local synagogues and then food distributed, but apparently some begged daily in the Temple area itself.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: ALMSGIVING**

**3:3** The man's motive was originally only monetary (cf. Acts 3:5).

**3:4 "fixed his gaze on"** See note at Acts 1:10.

■ **"look at us"** They wanted his undivided attention (*blepō* is in an aorist active imperative form).

**3:5** The Apostles were not monetarily wealthy men, but they had access to the spiritual resources of God (cf. Acts 3:6).

**3:6 "In the name of Jesus Christ"** "Name" is a Hebrew idiom which speaks of one's character (cf. Luke 9:48,49; 10:17; 21:12,17; 24:47, see Special Topic at Acts 2:21). This must have been shocking to this man. Jesus was a recently condemned and crucified criminal, whom this stranger (i.e., Peter) was calling "the Messiah" (i.e., "The Christ," which is the Greek translation, see Special Topic at Acts 2:31).

■ **"The Nazarene"** See Special Topic at Acts 2:22.

■ **"walk"** This is a present active imperative. Peter and John, like Jesus, used a chance encounter to demonstrate God's love and power and also to confirm the gospel message (cf. Acts 3:9). This healing drew the attention of the Jewish worshipers (cf. Acts 3:12ff).

**3:7** This is an eyewitness account of several related events. Someone who was there told Luke about this in vivid, detailed terms.



▣ **"immediately"** This is the Greek term *parachrēma*. Luke uses it ten times in his Gospel and six times in Acts (cf. Acts 3:7; 5:10; 12:23; 13:11; 16:26,33). It is used only twice in Matthew and nowhere else in the NT. It is used several times in the Septuagint. Luke uses idioms and terms from this Greek translation of the Hebrew OT often. He must have known the OT well, possibly from his contact with the Apostle Paul or involvement in Christian catechism with new believers.

**3:8 "With a leap he stood upright"** This is a present middle participle (cf. Acts 3:9). This man began walking all around this section of the Temple. What an opportunity to share the Good News!

**3:10** They knew this man (imperfect active indicative, they began to recognize him). He was no stranger or visitor. They had seen him at the gate day after day, and passed by! However, Jesus' representatives did not just pass by, they acted in Pentecostal power!

▣ **"they were filled"** Luke uses this term often (see full note at Acts 5:17). Humans can be "filled" with many things (i.e., characterized by):

1. the Holy Spirit, Luke 1:15,41,67; Acts 2:4; 4:8,31; 9:17; 13:9
2. rage, Luke 4:28; 6:11
3. fear, Luke 5:26
4. wonder and amazement, Acts 3:10
5. jealousy, Acts 5:17; 13:45
6. confusion, Acts 19:29

Peter and John wanted these who were amazed (he got their attention) to be filled with the gospel!

▣ **"wonder and amazement"** These things are also common in Luke's writings.

1. wonder, *thambos*, Luke 3:6; 5:9; Acts 3:10 and *ekthambos* in Acts 3:11
2. amazement
  - a. *ekstasis*, Luke 5:26; Acts 3:10; 10:10; 11:5; 22:17
  - b. *existēmi*, Luke 2:47; 8:56; 24:22; Acts 2:7,12; 8:9,11; 9:21; 10:45; 12:16

God's love and acts always cause amazement (these Greek words were used in the Septuagint for fear and awe of God, cf. Gen. 15:12; Exod. 23:27; Deut. 28:28).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 3:11-16**

**<sup>11</sup>While he was clinging to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them at the so-called portico of Solomon, full of amazement. <sup>12</sup>But when Peter saw *this*, he replied to the people, "Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk? <sup>13</sup>The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, *the one* whom you delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. <sup>14</sup>But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, <sup>15</sup>but put to death the Prince of life, *the one* whom God raised from the dead, a *fact* to which we are witnesses. <sup>16</sup>And on the basis of faith in His name, *it is* the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which *comes* through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all."**

**3:11 "while he was clinging to Peter"** This is a present active participle. I would imagine he was holding on to Peter as Mary held on to Jesus in the garden (cf. John 20:16-17).

▣ **"the portico of Solomon"** This was a long covered area along the eastern side of the court of the Gentiles (cf. Josephus' *Antiq.* 20.9.7). The roof was supported by many columns. It got its name from the fact that the old foundations of Solomon's temple were located in the same general area. Jesus taught

there often (cf. John 10:23).

**3:12 "when Peter saw *this*"** They saw the amazement and curiosity of the crowd and took advantage (cf. Col. 4:3; 2 Tim. 4:2) of the opportunity to share the gospel (i.e., the second sermon of the new church).

■ **"Men of Israel"** Peter called them this in Acts 2:22. Peter is still addressing Jews.

■ **"why. . .why"** Peter asked why they were surprised by a miraculous healing. Had not Jesus performed these kinds of miracles during the last week of His life?

Also, why did they look at Peter and John so admiringly, as if they did it? This was a sign of the trustworthiness of the gospel and the power of the name of the resurrected Messiah.

The Spirit performed this miracle for several reasons.

1. to confirm the leadership of Peter and John
2. to help a needy man
3. to witness to the Jews at the Temple

**3:13 "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob"** This shows that Jesus' ministry and the gospel were vitally connected to the Covenant God and Covenant people of the Old Testament (cf. Exod. 3:6,15; Luke 20:37).

Christianity must be characterized as the true fulfillment of Judaism (cf. Matt. 5:17-19). Many Jews would see it as a perversion, but NT writers saw it as a fulfillment. The followers of Jesus are the promised fruition of the "new covenant" of Jer. 31:31-34 (cf. Gal. 6:16). Israel did not complete her missionary task of being a kingdom of priests for the world (cf. Exod. 19:5-6; 1 Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6). The church has been given the mandate (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8). God's goal is the restoration of His image in mankind, so that His initial purpose of fellowship can be accomplished. If there is only one God (i.e., monotheism, see Special Topic at Acts 2:39), then there cannot be a special people, only servants to serve God's universal purposes with all humanity (see Special Topic at Acts 1:8).

■ **"has glorified"** This term can be understood in several ways.

1. the immediate context to the healing of the lame man in His name
2. the larger context of Peter's sermon to Jesus being resurrected and thereby glorified
3. the OT context to Jesus as the coming Messiah
4. in John's Gospel this term is always used by Jesus Himself for His crucifixion (cf. Acts 7:39; 12:10,23; 13:31-32; 16:14; 17:1).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY (DOXA)**

■ **"His servant"** The term "servant" (*pais* used regularly in the LXX)

1. an honorific title in the OT used for Jacob, Moses, Joshua, and David (cf. Psalm 105; Luke 1:69)
2. in the Servant Songs of Isaiah (i.e., Isa. 42:1-5; 49:1-7; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12)
3. the nation of Israel (cf. Acts 41:8-9; 42:19; 43:10; 44:1,21; also LXX seen in Luke 1:54)
4. God's Messiah (cf. Acts 42:1; 52:13; 53:11)
5. *Pais* is used of Jesus as the Servant/Messiah in Acts 3:13,26; 4:27,30

There is not a clear distinction between the corporate and individual aspect, especially in the last Song (i.e., Isa. 52:13-53:12). In context it cannot refer to Israel.

1. the nation cannot be the innocent one who brings redemption because the nation deserves the judgment (cf. Isa. 41:18-22; 53:8d)
2. the Septuagint changes "you" in Isa. 52:14 to "Him" (also in Acts 3:15). The Jewish translators before Jesus' birth (possibly 250-150 b.c.) saw this text as Messianic and individual.

■ **"Jesus"** When the name Jesus is used by itself, it usually emphasizes His humanness (cf. Acts 3:6).

■ **"whom you delivered and disowned"** The "you" is emphatic! It was not only the Jewish leaders who

were responsible for Jesus' death (cf. Acts 3:17; 2:23). Peter makes a specific reference to the crowd's responses before Pilate (cf. Luke 23:18-25). It is possible some of these may have been there, but Peter addresses this crowd as if they were responsible as a group (cf. Acts 3:15). God's chosen people (Jews) "delivered" and "disowned" God's Messiah (cf. John 1:11).

■ **"Pilate"** See Special Topic below.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: PONTIUS PILATE**

■ **"when he had decided to release Him"** This refers to Luke 23:4,14,22, where Pilate says three times, "I find no guilt in Him," as well as the three times he tried to release Him (cf. Luke 23:16,20,22). Many scholars believe Acts was written to show that Roman officials did not find Jesus treasonous. Pilate was forced by the Jewish leadership to do that which he was reluctant to do himself.

**3:14 "the Holy and Righteous One"** This states clearly the innocence and sinlessness of Jesus. The trial was a farce. This is another OT Messianic title (cf. Isa. 53:11; Acts 7:52; 22:14; John 6:69). The demons called Jesus the Holy One of God in Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34. See Special Topics following.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HOLY ONE**

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS**

■ **"and asked for a murderer"** It is so ironic that Barabbas was guilty of the exact crime they accused Jesus of—sedition (cf. Luke 23:18-19,23-25).

**3:15 "but put to death"** It is surprising that in the many texts which mention Jesus' death (cf. Acts 2:23,36; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 7:52; 10:39; 13:28) in Acts very little is developed along the lines of Gen. 3:15 or Isaiah 53.

There is also variety in how His death is phrased.

1. nailed to a cross – Acts 2:23
2. crucified – Acts 2:36; 4:10
3. put to death – Acts 3:15; 13:28
4. put to death by hanging Him on a cross – Acts 5:30; 10:39
5. killed – Acts 7:52

The resurrection is emphasized but not substitutionary atonement.

<b>NASB, NKJV</b>	<b>"the Prince of life"</b>
<b>NRSV, NIV</b>	<b>"the Author of life"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"the one who leads to life"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"the prince of life"</b>
<b>Moffatt</b>	<b>"the pioneer of life"</b>

This title reflects one of the three possible meanings of *archēgos*:

1. the author or originator (cf. NRSV, Heb. 2:10; 12:2)
2. the agent of creation (cf. John 1:3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2)
3. the one who goes first, a trail blazer (cf. TEV, NEB, Moffatt, Acts. 5:31)

The term is an obvious contrast to "murderer" (Acts 3:14). See Special Topic below.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: AUTHOR/LEADER (ARCHĒGOS)**

■ **"God raised from the dead"** Usually in the NT it is the Father who raises the Son from the dead as a sign of His approval of Jesus' life, teachings, and substitutionary death. The NT also affirms that all three persons of the Trinity were active in Jesus' resurrection:

1. the Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:11)
2. the Son (cf. John 2:19-22; 10:17-18)
3. the Father (cf. Acts 2:24,32; 3:15,26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30,33,34,37; 17:31; Rom. 6:4,9)

This is a major theological aspect of the *Kerygma* (see Special Topic at Acts 2:14). If this is not true, all else is not true (cf. 1 Cor. 15:12-19).

■ **"a fact to which we are witnesses"** This is either

1. an emphasis on primary source material; these hearers were eyewitnesses (cf. Acts 2:22)
2. a reference to the Apostles and disciples in the Upper Room (cf. Acts 1:22; 2:32)

In context number 2 seems best.

**3:16 "on the basis of faith"** This same phrase occurs in Phil. 3:9. The Greek term "faith" (*pistis*) can be translated into English as "faith," "trust," or "believe." It is humanity's conditional response to God's unconditional grace (cf. Eph. 2:8-9). It is basically the believer's trusting in the trustworthiness of God (i.e., His character, His promises, His Messiah) or faithing God's faithfulness! It is difficult in the healing accounts of the Gospels and Acts to document the spiritual (i.e., covenantal) side of the event. Those healed are not always "saved" (cf. John 5). See Special Topic below.

The Greek preposition used in this phrase, *eis* (cf. Phil. 3:9), is rare when used on one's faith in Christ (similar expression in Acts 2:38). Usually one of several prepositions is used.

1. *dia* – Rom. 3:22,25,30; Gal. 2:16; 3:14,26; Eph. 2:8; 3:12,17; Col. 2:12; 2 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 1:5
2. *ek* – Rom. 9:30; 14:23; Gal. 3:8,9,22; 5:5; James 2:24
3. *en* – 1 Cor. 16:13; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20; 1 Tim. 3:13
4. both *eis* and *ek* are used in Rom. 1:17

There was not standardized phrase to express "saving faith."

**[SPECIAL TOPIC: Faith, Believe, or Trust \(\*Pistis\* \[noun\], \*Pisteuō\*, \[verb\], \*Pistos\* \[adjective\]\)](#)**

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 3:17-26**

**17**"And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also. **18**But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. **19**Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; **20**and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, **21**whom heaven must receive *until* the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time. **22**Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed to everything He says to you. **23**And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.' **24**And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and *his* successors onward, also announced these days. **25**'It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' **26**For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one *of you* from your wicked ways."

**3:17 "I know that you acted in ignorance"** This reflects Jesus' words from the cross (cf. Luke 23:34). However, even in their ignorance, the people were still spiritually responsible! In some ways this excuse was a way to help people accept their own responsibility (cf. Acts 13:27; 17:30; 26:9; 1 Cor. 2:8). For a good discussion of the concept see Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 583-585.

■ **"just as you rulers did also"** Luke often makes a distinction between the people and their rulers (cf.

Luke 7:29-30; 23:35; Acts 13:27; 14:5). The real issue in trying to do this may be the mutual responsibility of both groups. Often it is asserted that Jesus does not condemn Jews as a whole, but their illegal (i.e., not of Aaronic descent) leaders. It is surely difficult to know if the cursing of the fig tree (cf. Mark 11:12-14,20-24) and the parable of the unjust vineyard tenants (cf. Luke 20:9-18) are condemnations of Judaism of the first century or only its leaders. Luke asserts it is both!

**3:18 "announced beforehand"** The gospel was no afterthought with God, but His eternal, purposeful plan (cf. Gen. 3:15; Mark 10:45; Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; Rom. 1:2, see Special Topic at Acts 1:8). The early sermons in Acts (the *kerygma*, see Special Topic at Acts 2:14) present Jesus as the fulfillment of OT promises and prophecies.

There are several aspects of the *Kerygma* (i.e., the major theological aspects of the sermons in Acts) expressed in these verses.

1. faith in Jesus is essential
2. Jesus' person and work were prophesied by OT prophets
3. the Messiah must suffer
4. they must repent
5. Jesus is coming again.

▣ **"God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets"** Jesus fulfilled OT prophecy (cf. Acts 3:34, Matt. 5:17-48). I think Jesus Himself showed the two on the road to Emmaus (cf. Luke 24:13-35) the OT prophecies that pertained to His suffering, death, and resurrection. They shared this with the Apostles, who made it part of their preaching (cf. Luke 24:45).

▣ **"Christ"** This is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word "Messiah" (see Special Topic at Acts 2:31), which means Anointed One. This refers to God's special agent whose life and death would inaugurate the new age of righteousness, the new age of the Spirit.

The affirmation that Jesus was/is the Christ/Messiah promised by YHWH becomes a recurrent theme of the preaching of Acts.

1. Peter – 2:31; 3:18; Acts 5:42; 8:5
2. Paul – 9:22; 17:3; Acts 18:5,28

▣ **"suffer"** This was alluded to in several OT texts (cf. Gen. 3:15; Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; Zech. 12:10). This aspect of a suffering Messiah is what surprised the Jews (cf. 1 Cor. 1:23). They were expecting a conquering general (cf. Rev. 20:11-16). This was a recurrent theme of Apostolic sermons in Acts

1. Paul (cf. Acts 17:3; 26:23)
2. Peter (cf. Acts 3:18; 1 Pet. 1:10-12; 2:21; 3:18)

**3:19 "repent and return"** The Greek term "repent" means a change of mind. This is an aorist active imperative of *metanoēō*. The Hebrew term for repentance means "change of action" ("return" [*emistrefhō*] may reflect the Hebrew "turn" *shub*, cf. Num. 30:36; Deut. 30:2,10) in the Septuagint. Repentance is a necessary covenant item in salvation along with faith (cf. Mark 1:15 and Acts 3:16,19; 20:21). Acts mentions it often (cf. Peter – 2:38; 3:19,26 and Paul – 14:15; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20). Repentance is indispensable (cf. Luke 13:3 and 2 Peter 3:9). It is basically a willingness to change. It is both a human volitional act and a gift of God (cf. Acts 5:31; 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:25). See Special Topic at Acts 2:38.

▣ **"sins may be wiped away"** This term means "to erase"; "blot out"; or "wipe away" (cf. Col. 2:14; Rev. 3:5; 7:17; 21:4). What a promise! In the ancient world ink was acid and was, therefore, impossible to erase. This is a true miracle of God's grace (cf. Ps. 51:1; 103:11-13; Isa. 1:18; 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; Jer. 31:34; Micah 7:19). When God forgives, God forgets (erases)!

▣ **"times of refreshing"** The Greek term (*anapsuchō, anapsuxis*) basically means "breathing space, relaxation, relief" (Baker, Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 63), "refresh by air," or

"treat a wound with air" (Kittle, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 9, p. 663). The metaphorical extension is physical or spiritual refreshment or restoration.

In the Septuagint it is used of regaining physical strength after a battle (cf. Exod. 23:12; Jdgs. 15:19; 2 Sam. 16:14) or emotional refreshment as in 1 Sam. 16:23.

Peter's reference seems to be to an OT promise, but this phrase is not used in the OT. For desert people expanse was identified with freedom and joy, while closed in spaces were a sign of distress and trouble. God was going to bring a widening, refreshing period of spiritual activity. This Messianic activity had come in the gospel. The "times of refreshing" had come in Jesus of Nazareth. However, the coming consummation would bring the new age of the Spirit. In this specific context Peter is referring to the Second Coming. This phrase seems to be parallel to "the period of restoration" (Acts 3:21). See Special Topic: Kerygma at Acts 2:14.

**3:20 "He may send Jesus"** This is an aorist active subjunctive, which denotes an element of contingency. The actions of Peter's hearers, in some sense, determined the time of spiritual consummation (cf. F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, where he links Acts 3:19-21 with Rom. 11:25-27, p. 201).

The juxtaposition of "Jesus" next to "the Christ/the Messiah" seems to imply that Peter is specifically asserting the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth. Later in the NT, "Lord," "Jesus," and "Christ" occur often, more as a combined referent to Jesus (i.e., the Lord Jesus Christ) than an emphasis on the title Messiah. This is especially true in predominately Gentile churches.

■ **"the Christ appointed for you"** This verb is a perfect passive participle. This same term is used of God's fore-choice in Acts 10:41; 22:14; 26:16; Jesus' coming and dying has always been God's eternal redemptive plan (cf. Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29).

In the Septuagint this term reflects a choice, but without the foreknowledge (i.e., for Luke "pro" means before, cf. Exod. 4:13 and Jos. 3:12), which is obvious in this word's usage in Acts. It does convey that sending Jesus was God's choice of blessing and redemption!

### 3:21

**NASB, NKJV** "whom heaven must receive"  
**NRSV** "who must remain in heaven"  
**TEV, NIV** "He must remain in heaven"  
**NJB** "whom heaven must keep"

The subject of this phrase is "heaven"; the object is "whom" (i.e., Jesus). There are two verbals in this phrase. The first is *dei*, from *deō*, which means "it is necessary" or "it is proper." See full note at Acts 1:16.

The second is an AORIST MIDDLE (deponent) infinitive of *dechomai*. Harold K Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised* says in this context it means "to receive into and retain" (p. 88). You can see how the English translations pick up on the contextual aspect. Luke uses this term more than any other NT writer (13 times in Luke and 8 times in Acts). Words must be defined in light of contextual usage and implication, not etymology. Lexicons (dictionaries) only denote usage. They do not set definition!

**NASB** "until"  
**NKJV, NRSV,**  
**TEV** "until"  
**NJB** "til"

This word is in the Greek UBS<sup>4</sup> text. I do not know why NASB, 1995 edition, put it in italics, which is the way to show it is not in the Greek text, but supplied for English readers to understand.

In the 1970 edition of NASB, the "the" is in italics and not "until," which is correct.

■ **"period of restoration of all things"** This refers to recreation (cf. Matt. 17:11; and especially Rom. 8:13-23). The evil of human rebellion in Genesis 3 is nullified and creation is restored; fellowship with God is reestablished. The initial purpose of creation is finally fulfilled.

■ **"about which God spoke by mouth of His holy prophets from ancient times"** Mark's Gospel begins with a quote from Mal. 3:1. Matthew 1:22-23 refers to the prophecy of Isa. 7:14. Luke used this same phrase in Luke 1:70. One aspect of the *Kerygma* (i.e., recurrent theological truths in the sermons in Acts, see Special Topic at Acts 2:14) is that Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection fulfilled OT prophecy (cf. Matt. 5:17-19). Jesus' ministry was not an afterthought or Plan B. It was the predetermined plan of God (cf. Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29, see Special Topic at Acts 1:8). All things are working out to the fulfillment of the total restoration of God's will for creation.

**3:22 "Moses said"** The title "The Prophet" was used of the coming Messiah (cf. Deut. 18:14-22; esp. 15,18; John 1:21,25). This documentation of Jesus from the Law of Moses (i.e., the most authoritative part of the OT canon for Jews, both Sadducees and Pharisees) would have been very important to these Jewish hearers. Jesus has always been God's plan of redemption (i.e., Gen. 3:15). He came to die (cf. Mark 10:45; 2 Cor. 5:21).

**3:23** This was a serious word of warning. It is an allusion to Deut. 18:19. Rejection of Jesus was, and still is, a serious, eternal matter.

This allusion to Deut. 18:14-22 also has some significant theological insights.

1. Notice both the individual and corporate aspects. Each individual soul must personally respond to the Messiah. It is not enough to be a part of the corporate body of Israel.
2. The phrase "utterly destroyed" is an allusion to "holy war." God will prune His own vine (i.e., Israel, cf. John 15; Rom. 9-11). Those who reject "the Prophet" are rejected by God. The issue of salvation is one's faith response to God's Messiah. Family, race, ethics, and meticulous performance of rules are not the new covenant criteria of salvation, but faith in Christ (cf. 1 John 5:12).

**3:24 "Samuel"** In the Jewish canon he (i.e., 1 Samuel) is considered one of the "Former Prophets," a part of the second division of the Hebrew canon. Samuel was called a prophet in 1 Sam. 3:20 and also a seer (i.e., another term for prophet) in 1 Sam. 9:9; 1 Chr. 29:29.

■ **"these days"** The "time of refreshing" (Acts 3:20) and "the period of restoration of all things" (Acts 3:21) refer to the consummation of the Kingdom of God at the return of Christ, but this phrase refers to the inauguration of the Messianic Kingdom, which occurred at the incarnation of Jesus at Bethlehem or at least to the whole period of the latter days, which is the time between Christ's two appearances on planet earth. The OT primarily understood only one coming of the Messiah. His first coming as the "Suffering Servant" (Acts 3:18) was a surprise; His glorious return as military leader and judge was expected.

**3:25** Peter addresses these Jews as the children of Abraham, the covenant people. However, these covenant people must respond in faith and repentance to Jesus and the gospel or they will be rejected (Acts 3:23)!

The NT (new covenant) is focused in a person, not a racial group. In the very call of Abram there was a universal element (cf. Gen. 12:3). The universal offer has come in Christ and is available to all (i.e., Luke wrote primarily to Gentiles). His Gospel and Acts made this invitation repeatedly and specifically).

■ **"covenant"** See [SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT](#) at Acts 2:47.

■ **"all the families of the earth shall be blessed"** This is a reference to God's promise to Abraham in Gen. 12:1-3. Notice the universal element also in Gen. 22:18. God chose Abraham to choose a people, to choose the world ( cf. Exod. 19:5-6; Eph. 2:11-3:13). See Special Topic at Acts 1:8.

**3:26 "For you first"** The Jews, because of their Covenant heritage, have the first opportunity to hear and understand the message of the gospel (cf. Rom. 1:16; 9:5). However, they must respond in the same way as everyone else: repentance, faith, baptism, obedience, and perseverance.

■ **"raised up His Servant and sent Him"** See note at Acts 2:24 and 3:13.



- ▣ **"to bless you"** This is what God wants for all mankind (cf. Gen. 12:3). However, He sent Jesus to the lost sheep of the house of Israel first!
- ▣ **"by turning every one of you from your wicked ways"** Salvation involves a change of mind about sin with a resulting change of actions and priorities. This change is evidence of true conversion! Eternal life has observable characteristics!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is "the continual"?
2. Why was this healing so powerful?
3. Why was a suffering Messiah so shocking to the Jews?
4. Why does Luke quote Gen. 12:3?
5. Are Jews saved differently from Gentiles?



# ACTS 4

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS4	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Peter and John Before the Council 4:1-4	Peter and John Arrested 4:1-4	Arrest and Release of Peter and John 4:1-4	Peter and John Before the Council 4:1-4	Peter and John Before the Sanhedrin 4:1-4
4:5-22	Addressing the Sanhedrin 4:5-12 The Name of Jesus Forbidden 4:13-22	4:5-12 4:13-22	4:5-7 4:8-12 4:13-17 4:18-22	4:5-12 4:13-17 4:18-22
The Believers Pray for Boldness 4:23-31	Prayer for Boldness 4:23-31	4:23-31	The Believers Pray for Boldness 4:23-30 4:31	The Apostles' Prayer Under Persecution 4:23-26 4:27-31
All Things in Common 4:32-37	Sharing All Things 4:32-37	The Sharing of Goods (4:32-5:6) 4:32-5:11	The Believers Share Their Possessions 4:32-35 4:36-37	The Early Christian Community 4:32 4:33 4:34-35 The Generosity of Barnabas 4:36-37

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent,

which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. It is obvious the chapter divisions are inappropriate in Acts. Remember, chapter divisions, verse divisions, capitalization, paragraphing, and punctuation all are not original to the Greek text and, therefore, are the work of modern translation committees.
- B. Verses 1-31 deal with the lame man's healing in Acts 3 and its consequences.
- C. Verses 32-37 should go with Acts 5:1-11.
- D. The problems of the early church continue and multiply, but so does the grace and power of the Spirit.
- E. In dealing with Luke's emphasis on the loving, giving nature of the early church in Jerusalem, modern western interpreters must guard against a "capitalistic" bias. Luke seems to affirm voluntary mutuality. Acts cannot support communism nor capitalism because neither was known at that time. The text must be interpreted in light of its day, its author's intent, and its hearers' world.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 4:1-4

**<sup>1</sup>As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple *guard* and the Sadducees came up to them, <sup>2</sup>being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. <sup>3</sup>And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening. <sup>4</sup>But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.**

**4:1 "the priests"** This is the word used in the ancient uncial Greek manuscripts  $\kappa$ , A, D, and E, but MS C has "high priests" (*archiereis*). The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives the word "priests" a B rating (almost certain). The context of Acts 4 shows that opposition did not come from the High Priests (cf. Acts 4:6).

In the OT the tribe of Levi (i.e., Moses and Aaron's tribe) was selected to serve YHWH in the stead of the "first born" (cf. Exodus 13). Within this tribe were certain families who served as

1. local teachers of the Law
2. temple servants
3. priests who officiated at the Temple, especially involved in the sacrificial procedures (cf. Leviticus 1-7)

The special family from which the High Priest must come was the family of Moses and Aaron. This whole tribe did not receive a land allotment like the other tribes of Jacob/Israel. They had certain cities partially given to them (i.e., 48 Levitical cities, cf. Joshua 20). These Levitical families depended on the other tribes to support them through the Temple tithe and the third-year local tithe.

All of this changed when Rome took over Palestine. The office of High Priest was purchased from Rome. No longer was it an OT spiritual office, but a commercial, political power office.

The current High Priest was Caiaphas (cf. Matt. 26:3; Luke 3:2; John 18), but the real power behind the office was the former High Priest Annas (cf. Luke 3:2; John 18:13,24; Acts 4:6). This family was of the

Sadducean sect of Judaism.

- **"the captain of the temple guard"** This was a special Levitical office which was next in power to the High Priest (cf. Josephus, *Wars* 6.5.3). He would have controlled the temple police (cf. 1 Chr. 9:11; Neh. 11:11; Luke 22:4,52; Acts 5:24,26). In Hebrew he was called "the man of the mountain of the house."
- **"Sadducees"** These were the rich, political leaders of the Sanhedrin.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: SADDUCEES](#)

4:2

NASB, NKJV "being greatly disturbed"  
NRSV "much annoyed"  
TEV "were annoyed"  
NJB "extremely annoyed"

This rare Greek term (here a present middle [deponent] participle) means "to work hard at something." It is found only one other place in Acts (16:18). It is not found in the Septuagint, nor the Koine papyri from Egypt.

The Sadducean leadership was upset because the Christian leaders were teaching the crowds at the Temple in Jesus' name and proclaiming His resurrection (which Sadducees denied, as well as the theological concept of resurrections in general). It is also possible from the wording of Acts 4:2 that the Apostles were not only asserting Jesus' resurrection, but the full implications of all believers' resurrection (cf. 1 Corinthians 15).

**4:3 "they"** In Acts 4:2 the antecedent was Peter, John, and even possibly the healed lame man. In Acts 4:3 the antecedent is the priests and temple police.

■ **"laid hands on them"** This Greek verb has a wide semantic field, but Luke often uses it in this sense of arrest (cf. Luke 20:19; 21:12; Acts 5:18; 12:1; 21:27).

■ **"until the next day"** Jewish law forbade a trial to be held after twilight. These leaders wanted this preaching/teaching stopped and stopped immediately. So they jailed them overnight somewhere on the Temple grounds, as opposed to a public jail (cf. Acts 5:18).

**4:4 "those who had heard. . .believed"** Both of these verbals are aorist tense. Faith begins with hearing (cf. Rom. 10:17). Hearing the gospel results (with the Spirit's aid, cf. John 6:44,65; 16:8-11) in believing the gospel. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: SALVATION \(GREEK VERB TENSES\)](#) at Acts 2:40.

■ **"the number of men came to be about five thousand"** Notice that this number does not include women and children. Often in the NT it is implied that the belief of the father extended to and included the whole family (cf Acts 11:14; 16:15,31,33). The group in the upper room numbered about 120. At Pentecost 3,000 were added (cf. Acts 2:41); now the number of believers was up to 5,000! The church in Jerusalem is growing rapidly!

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 4:5-12**

<sup>5</sup>On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; <sup>6</sup>and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent. <sup>7</sup>When they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?" <sup>8</sup>Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people, <sup>9</sup>if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, <sup>10</sup>let it be known to all of you and to all the people

of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this *name* this man stands here before you in good health. <sup>11</sup>He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, *but* which became the chief cornerstone. <sup>12</sup>And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

**4:5 "their rulers and elders and scribes"** The Sanhedrin (i.e., the Council, 5:21, from the Jerusalem area; the Council of the elders, 22:5) was made up of seventy Jewish leaders. It was the highest political/religious body (which Rome allowed) within Judaism of Jesus' day. The concept was begun (i.e., Jewish tradition) by Ezra and the "men of the Great Synagogue." It is usually identified in the NT by the phrase, "the scribes, elders and high priests" (cf. Luke 23:13; Acts 3:17; 4:5,8; 13:27). See Special Topic following.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE SANHEDRIN**

**4:6 "Annas"** His name in Greek is Hannas; Josephus calls him Hannanos (Jonathan). The name seems to come from the Hebrew "merciful" or "gracious" (*hānān*, BDB 336).

In the OT the high priesthood was for life and stayed in the lineage of Aaron. However, the Romans had turned this office into a political plumb, purchased by a Levitical family. The high priest controlled and operated the merchandising in the Court of the Women. Jesus' cleansing of the Temple angered this family.

According to Flavius Josephus, Annas was the High Priest from a.d. 6-14. He was appointed by Quirinius, governor of Syria and removed by Valerius Gratus. His relatives (5 sons and 1 grandson) succeeded him. Caiaphas (a.d. 18-36), his son-in-law (cf. John 18:13), was his immediate successor. Annas was the real power behind the office. John depicts him as the first person to whom Jesus is taken (cf. Acts 18:13,19-22).

- **"Caiaphas"** He was appointed high priest by Valerius Gratus, procurator of Judea (cf. MS D, *'lōnathas*, cf. NEB, NJB) from a.d. 18-36.
- **"John"** This may refer to "Jonathan," who Josephus tells us was also one of Annas' sons who became High Priest in a.d. 36 after Caiaphas. However, the UBS<sup>4</sup> has *'lōannēs* (i.e., John) as an A rating (certain); even the REB goes back to "John."
- **"Alexander"** Nothing is known about this man, but he, like John, was probably a member of Annas' family or a leading member of the Sadducean party.

**4:7 "When they had placed them in the center"** The members of the Sanhedrin sat in a semicircle on a raised platform.

■ **"they began to inquire"** This is an imperfect tense, which means either (1) continuous action in past time or (2) the beginning of an action.

■ **"By what power, or in what name"** They insinuated that the healing was done by magical power (cf. Acts 19:13). They tried this same trick on Jesus (cf. Luke 11:14-26; Mark 3:20-30). They could not deny the miracles so they attempted to impugn the method or source of the power.

**4:8 "filled with the Holy Spirit"** The Spirit was the source of wisdom and boldness for the Apostles (cf. Luke 12:11-12; 21:12-15). Remember this was the same man who only a few days earlier had denied the Lord out of fear (cf. Acts 4:13). Notice that Peter was "filled" (cf. Acts 2:4; 4:8,31). This shows that it was a repeatable experience (cf. Eph. 5:18). See full note at Acts 5:17.

**4:9 "if"** This is a first class conditional sentence which is assumed true for the author's purpose.

■ **"if we are on trial today"** This Greek term literally means "examined by a court" (cf. Acts 12:19; 24:8; 28:18; Luke 23:14). It was used of the Berean Jews examining the Scriptures to see if Paul was accurately interpreting them (cf. Acts 17:11).

■ **"for a benefit done to a sick man"** Peter is asserting the inappropriateness of this official trial with such a hostile environment concerning a wonderful miracle of healing and mercy. They should be praising God instead!

■ **"has been made well"** This is a perfect passive indicative, meaning complete health and restoration of his legs.

**4:10 "Let it be known to all of you and all the people of Israel"** This is a perfect active imperative. The Spirit has emboldened Peter. He is not intimidated by the judicial setting. These leaders could not keep Christ in the tomb and they could not deny the healed man standing in front of them!

■ **"by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene"** Peter picks up on their question and answers specifically how the miracle occurred. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: JESUS THE NAZARENE](#) at Acts 2:22.

■ **"whom you crucified"** This was the obvious truth. They instigated His death. Notice "by you" in Acts 4:11, which also asserts their guilt.

■ **"whom God raised"** The NT affirms that all three persons of the Trinity were active in Jesus' resurrection:

1. Spirit, Rom. 8:11

2. Jesus, John 2:19-22; 10:17-18

3. Father, Acts 2:24,32; 3:15,26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30,33,34,37; 17:31; Rom. 6:4,9

This was confirmation of the truth of Jesus' life and teachings about God and also the Father's full acceptance of Jesus' substitutionary death. This was a major aspect of the *Kerygma* (i.e., sermons in Acts, see Special Topic at Acts 2:14).

■ **"this man stands here"** This is a word play on "stands." The lame man stands up and stands before them.

**4:11** This is a quote from Ps. 118:22, but not from the Masoretic text or Septuagint (cf. Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:4ff). Jesus uses this of Himself in Mark 12:10 and Luke 20:17, taken from the Septuagint. It signifies the fulfillment of OT prophecy of a rejected Messiah who has become the very heart of God's eternal plan for the redemption (see Special Topic at Acts 1:8) of Israel and the world. This was a shocking statement for these Jewish leaders (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5).

NASB	"the chief corner <i>stone</i> "
NKJV	"the chief cornerstone"
NRSV, NJB	"the cornerstone"
TEV	"stone. . .the most important of all"

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: CORNERSTONE](#)

**4:12 "there is salvation in no one else"** This is a strong double negative. There is no salvation in Abraham or Moses (cf. John 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5; 1 John 5:10-12). What a shocking claim! It is very restrictive but also very obvious that Jesus believed that only through a personal relationship with Himself can one know God. Peter boldly proclaims this to that elite Jewish leadership. This has often been called the exclusivistic scandal of Christianity. There is no middle ground here. This statement is true or Christianity is false!

■ **"there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men"** The participle "has been given" is a perfect passive. God has ordained this! Jesus is His answer to mankind's spiritual need. There is no Plan B! For a good book on the exclusivistic claims of Christianity see H. A. Netland, *Dissonant Voices: Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth*.

■ **"among men"** Notice the universal element (cf. John 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9).

■ **"by which we must be saved"** This phrase has two verbals.

1. *dei*, present active indicative, "we must" (see full note on *dei* at Acts 1:16)

2. *sōthēnai*, aorist passive infinitive of *sōzō*, "to be saved"

The word for "save" has two usages in the NT.

1. physical deliverance (OT sense, cf. Matt. 9:22; Mark 6:56; Luke 1:71; 6:9; 7:50; Acts 27:20,31; James 1:21; 2:14; 4:12; 5:20)

2. spiritual salvation (NT usages, cf. Luke 19:10; Acts 2:21,40,47; 11:14; 15:11; 16:30-31)

The lame man experienced both. The religious leaders needed to trust Jesus as their only hope for acceptance and forgiveness! Humans need to be saved (cf. Rom. 1:18-3:20) and Jesus is the only way for this to be accomplished (cf. Rom. 3:21-31). The OT quote in Acts 4:12 shows He has always been God's plan (cf. Isa. 8:14-15; 28:14-19; 52:13-53:12).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 4:13-22**

**<sup>13</sup>Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus. <sup>14</sup>And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in reply. <sup>15</sup>But when they had ordered them to leave the Council, they began to confer with one another, <sup>16</sup>saying, "What shall we do with these men? For the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. <sup>17</sup>But so that it will not spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no longer to any man in this name." <sup>18</sup>And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. <sup>19</sup>But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; <sup>20</sup>for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard." <sup>21</sup>When they had threatened them further, they let them go (finding no basis on which to punish them) on account of the people, because they were all glorifying God for what had happened; <sup>22</sup>for the man was more than forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.**

**4:13 "the confidence"** See the Special Topic: boldness (*parrhēsia*) at Acts 4:29.

■ **"uneducated"** The term is *agrammatos*, which is the term "writing" with the alpha privative. This may mean that they were

1. ignorant or uneducated (cf. Moulton, Milligan, *Vocabulary*, p. 6)

2. untrained in the rabbinical schools (cf. A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the Greek New Testament*, vol. 3, p. 52 and Louw and Nida, *Lexicon*, vol. 1, p. 328)

■ **"untrained"** This is the term *idiōtēs*, which is usually translated "layman" or "untrained in a certain area." Originally it referred to a normal person as opposed to a leader or spokesperson. It came to be used of an outsider vs. a member of a group (cf. 1 Cor. 14:16,23-24; 2 Cor. 11:6).

Notice how the different English translations handle this phrase.

NASB, NKJV "uneducated and untrained men"

NRSV "uneducated and ordinary men"

TEV "ordinary men of no education"

NJB "uneducated layman"

■ **"they were amazed"** This is an imperfect active indicative (as are the next two verbs). They imply either the beginning of an action or repeated action in past time (indicative mood). Luke uses this word often (18 times in Luke and Acts); it usually, but not always, has a positive connotation (cf. Luke 11:38; 20:26; Acts 4:13; 13:41).

■ **"began to recognize them as having been with Jesus"** This was in truth a compliment. Jesus was also untrained in the rabbinical schools, yet He knew the Old Testament well. He did attend synagogue school as all Jewish children (as did Peter and John) were required to do.

These leaders recognized the boldness and power of Peter and John. They had seen the same in Jesus.

**4:14** Everyone knew this lame man because he regularly sat at the Temple door daily. But he was not sitting anymore! The crowd in the Temple could not deny this (cf. Acts 4:16,22).

**4:15** They asked the three of them to leave while they discussed their options and planned their strategy of denial and deception (cf. Acts 4:17-18).

**4:17-18** This was their plan! Stop talking about Jesus and stop helping people in His name! What about all the people who were praising God for the healing (cf. Acts 3:8-9; 4:16)?

**4:19 "whether"** This is a first class conditional sentence, which is used not of reality, but for the sake of argument. Peter and John did not think their commands were valid (cf. Acts 5:28).

■ **"right"** See [SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS](#) at Acts 3:14.

■ **"you be the judge"** This is an aorist active imperative. These leaders condemned themselves by their words, motives, and actions.

**4:20** Peter and John assert that they cannot deny what they have experienced and they will not stop sharing it!

**4:21 "when they had threatened them further"** I wonder what they threatened to do. Jesus was raised from the dead. The man was raised from his bed; what were these leaders going to do to Peter and John?

■ **"(finding no basis on which to punish them)"** This may indicate one of Luke's purposes in writing. Christianity was not a threat to Rome or the peace of Jerusalem. Even the Sanhedrin could find no grounds to condemn its leaders.

■ **"on account of the people"** The eyewitnesses of the events in Jerusalem held the early church in high esteem (cf. Acts 2:47). The Jewish leaders were threatened by this popularity (cf. Acts 5:13,26).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 4:23-31**

<sup>23</sup>When they had been released, they went to their own *companions* and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. <sup>24</sup>And when they heard *this*, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, "O Lord, it is You who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them, <sup>25</sup>who by the Holy Spirit, *through* the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, 'Why did the Gentiles rage, And the peoples devise futile things? <sup>26</sup>The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the



**Lord and against His Christ.' <sup>27</sup>"For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, <sup>28</sup>to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur. <sup>29</sup>"And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, <sup>30</sup>while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus." <sup>31</sup>And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and *began* to speak the word of God with boldness.**

**4:23** They went back to the Upper Room to meet with the disciples.

**4:24 "with one accord"** This unity of heart and mind characterized the early church (cf. Acts 1:14; 2:46; 4:24; 5:12; 15:25). There is spiritual power and focused action in this atmosphere of unity of purpose.

▣ **"Lord"** This is the Greek term *despota*, from which we get the English word despot. It denoted someone in complete authority! Here it refers to God the Father (cf. Luke 2:29 and Rev. 6:10). It is also used of Jesus (cf. 2 Pet. 2:1 and Jude Acts 4:4).

▣ **"who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them"** This may be an allusion to Exod. 20:11. It is also quoted in Acts 14:15 and the truth is stated in Acts 17:24. YHWH is the creator!

**4:25** There are many variant readings of the first part of this verse. The oldest manuscripts P<sup>74</sup>, ξ, A, and B already include the ambiguous variant. Although the exact wording is uncertain, the thrust of the text is obvious. For a full account of the problem and the theories of what happened, see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, pp. 321-323).

▣ **"who by the Holy Spirit *through* the mouth of our father David"** This asserts the inspiration of the Old Testament (cf. Matt. 5:17-19). This is a quote from the Septuagint of Psalm 2:1-2, a royal Messianic Psalm. Christianity is not something new, but the fulfillment of the Old Testament (cf. Matt. 5:17-48). Worldly opposition is to be expected, but so too, is the victory of YHWH.

**4:25-26 "Gentiles. . .the peoples. . .the Kings. . .the Rulers"** It looks as if the disciples are doing a rabbinical word association on "rulers." In a sense, they are calling the Sanhedrin *Goyim* (i.e., Gentiles) or at least associating these OT names to contemporary groups (i.e., Pilate, Herod, Sanhedrin, and Jewish mob) who participated in Jesus' trial and crucifixion.

▣ **"rage"** This is literally "to snort through one's nose." This implies a haughty arrogance.

**4:26 "the Lord. . .His Christ"** Notice that YHWH and Messiah are both spoken of together. I am surprised they did not quote Ps. 110:1.

It is so difficult to be a monotheist (see Special Topic at Acts 2:39) and assert the full deity of Christ and the personality of the Spirit (cf. Acts 4:25, see Special Topic at Acts 2:32). Yet, these three divine, eternal persons appear in unified contexts several times in the NT. Remember that all the writers except Luke are monotheistic Jewish Christians. Something radical has caused them to assert a trinity (i.e., the gospel). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY](#) at Acts 2:32.

**4:27 "Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed"** Notice these Messianic titles.

1. holy (cf. Acts 3:14; 4:30)
2. servant (*pais*, cf. Acts 3:13,26; 4:25,27,30. See note at Acts 3:13)
3. anointed (*chriō*, from which Christ is derived, cf. Luke 4:18; Acts 4:27; 10:38)

This verse asserts several different ways that Jesus was sent and authorized by YHWH. Jesus is God's eternal plan and method of redemption and restoration (cf. Acts 4:28, see Special Topic at Acts 1:8).



## **SPECIAL TOPIC: ANOINTING IN THE BIBLE (BDB 603)**

▣ **"there were gathered together against Your holy servant"** Here is a list of the opponents to Jesus in Jerusalem.

1. Herod, the Roman appointed Edumean ruler of Palestine (see Special Topic below)
2. Pontius Pilate, the Roman administrative leader of Palestine (see Special Topic at Acts 3:13)
3. Gentiles, which might refer to the Roman army or proselyte Jews
4. the "people of Israel," which would refer to the Jewish authorities and the Jewish mob who asked for Barabbas to be released and Jesus to be crucified

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE FAMILY OF HEROD THE GREAT**

**4:28 "Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur"** Even before creation God had His plan of redemption (cf. Matt. 25:34; John 17:24; Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8; Acts 2:13; 3:18; 13:29). These enemies of Christ only performed that which God wanted them to perform. Jesus came to die (cf. Mark 10:45). The term translated here "predestine" is a compound of the preposition "before" and "to set bounds" (cf. Rom. 8:29,30; 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:5,11).

The definitive passages on predestination in the NT are Rom. 8:28-30; Rom. 9; and Eph. 1:3-14. These texts obviously stress that God is sovereign. He is in total control of all things, including human history. There is a preset divine redemption plan being worked out in time. However, this plan is not arbitrary or selective. It is based not only on God's sovereignty and foreknowledge, but also on His unchanging character of love, mercy, and undeserved grace.

We must be careful of our western (American) individualism or our evangelical zeal coloring this wonderful truth. We must also guard against being polarized into the historical, theological conflicts between Augustine and Pelegius or Calvinism and Arminianism.

Predestination is not a doctrine meant to limit God's love, grace, and mercy, nor to exclude some from the gospel. It is meant to strengthen believers by molding their worldview. God's love is for all mankind (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9). God is in control of all things. Who or what can separate us from Him (cf. Rom. 8:31-39)? Predestination forms one of two ways to view life. God views all history as present. Humans are time-bound. Our perspective and mental abilities are limited. There is no contradiction between God's sovereignty and mankind's free will. It is a covenantal structure. This is another example of biblical truth given in paradoxical, dialectical, tension-filled pairs. Biblical doctrines are presented from different perspectives. They often appear paradoxical. The truth is a balance between the seemingly opposite pairs. We must not remove the tension by picking one of the truths. We must not isolate any biblical truth into a compartment by itself.

It is also important to add that the goal of election is not only heaven when we die, but Christlikeness now (cf. Eph. 1:4; 2:10)! We were chosen to be "holy and blameless." God chooses to change us so that others may see the change and respond by faith to God in Christ. Predestination is not a personal privilege, but a covenantal responsibility! We are saved to serve! See Special Topic at Acts 2:47.

**4:29 "speak Your word"** This is a present active infinitive. This is a prayer for continual boldness (cf. Eph. 6:19 and Col. 4:3) and an affirmation of inspiration (cf. 2 Tim. 3:15-17).

**NASB** "with all confidence"

**NKJV, NRSV,**

**TEV** "with all boldness"

**NJB** "with all fearlessness"

See Special Topic following.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: BOLDNESS (PARRHĒSIA)**

**4:30 "while you extend Your hand to heal"** This was an anthropomorphic phrase (see Special Topic at

Acts 2:33) used to describe God revealing His compassion and power. The signs were a way to confirm the gospel message. It was a radically different message from what they had heard all their lives in the synagogue.

**4:31 "the place where they had gathered together was shaken"** God encouraged these witnesses by another physical demonstration of His power and presence, just as He did at Pentecost. The word is used of wind blowing upon a sailing vessel.

▣ **"all filled with the Holy Spirit"** Notice that here again all were filled (cf. Acts 2:4; 4:8,31; 9:17; 13:9,52, see full note at Acts 5:17). This filling was for the bold proclamation of the gospel. Also notice that tongues are not mentioned. In Acts when tongues are mentioned, they are usually in an evangelistic context of the gospel overcoming cultural-ethnic and/or geographical barriers.

▣ **"the word of God"** The Jerome Biblical Commentary (p. 180) has a good note about this phrase, "this is a favorite Lucan way of expressing the Christian message (see Acts 6:2,7; 8:14; 11:1; 13:5,7,44,46,48; 16:32; 17:13; 18:11). Variants of it are "the word of the Lord" (Acts 8:25; 13:49; 15:35,36; 19:10,20; 20:35) or simply "the word" (Acts 4:29; 6:4; 8:4; 10:44; 11:19; 14:25; 16:6)."

This is the central question of faith, "Is the gospel presented in the NT the word of God?" Faith energized by the Spirit says "yes"!!

▣ **"with boldness"** See Special Topic at Acts 4:29.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 4:32-35**

**<sup>32</sup>And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them. <sup>33</sup>And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. <sup>34</sup>For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales <sup>35</sup>and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need.**

**4:32 "who believed were of one heart and soul"** The spirit of unity among the believers (cf. Acts 1:14) reflected the unity of the Triune God (cf. John 17:11,21,23; Eph. 4:4-6). These very words are used in Mark 12:30 to reflect the first commandment in Deut. 6:4-5.

▣ **"all things were common property to them"** They felt and acted like a family. This was the church's first attempt to finance ministry. It was voluntary and mutual, not mandatory. Love and concern, not government or social leveling, was the motive!

**4:33 "were giving testimony to the resurrection"** This was the central truth of their message ( cf. 1 Corinthians 15). Jesus was alive!

▣ **"and abundant grace was upon them all"** We learn from Paul's letters that at a later time this church was very poor (cf. Rom. 15:3; Gal. 2:10). Abundant grace, like abundant living (cf. John 10:10) has little to do with material things. Notice this abundance was upon all of them, not just the leaders, the possessors of certain gifts, or those of a certain socio-economic level.

**4:34** The church felt a responsibility for one another. Those who had, gave freely to those in need (cf. Acts 4:35). This is not communism, but love in action.

**4:35 "lay them at the apostles feet"** This is a cultural idiom of giving something to another. They laid their goods and money at the Apostles' feet because they had laid their lives at Jesus' feet.

- **"they would be distributed"** This is an imperfect passive indicative, which shows continual action in past time. This follows the synagogue pattern of helping the poor and needy.
- **"as any had need"** There is an interesting comment in Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard's *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, pp. 451-453, that Marx's manifesto contains two quotes from Acts:
  1. "from each according to his ability" – Acts 11:29
  2. "to each according to his need"

The hermeneutical problem is that modern people try to use the Bible to support that which the Bible itself never addressed or realized. The Bible cannot mean to us what it never meant to the original author or hearer. We can apply the text in different ways to our cultural and existential situation, but our application must be inseparably linked to the original author's intended meaning. Every biblical text has only one meaning, but many applications or significances. (See my Biblical Interpretation Seminar at [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org) )

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 4:36-37**

<sup>36</sup>Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement), <sup>37</sup>and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

**4:36 "Joseph, a Levite"** The Old Testament forbade priests to own land, but the Roman authorities had changed many things in Palestine.

- **"called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement)"** This is the popular meaning of "Barnabas." In Aramaic it could have meant "son of prophecy" or in Hebrew possibly "son of Nebo" (AB, vol. 1). He was an early leader in the Jerusalem church and Paul's friend and missionary companion. Eusebius, an early church historian, says that he was one of the seventy in Luke 10.

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: BARNABAS**

**4:37 "who owned a tract of land"** He was a man of means (like Nicodemus and Joseph of Aramathea). Acts 5 shows the potential for abuse in this method of financing ministry (e.g., jealousy, lying, and death).

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Who are the Sadducees? Why were they so mad?
2. What is the Sanhedrin?
3. What is the significance of Ps. 118?
4. Why is Acts 4:12 so significant?
5. Does the predestination of Acts 4:28 refer to individuals or God's plan of redemption? Why?
6. Is Luke trying to set a precedent for the church in Acts 4:32-5:11?

# ACTS 5

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Ananias and Sapphira	Lying to the Holy Spirit	The Sharing of Goods (4:32-5:11) 4:32-5:6	Ananias and Sapphira	The Fraud of Ananias and Sapphira
5:1-11	5:1-11	5:7-11	5:1-6 5:7-8 5:9-11	5:1-6 5:7-11
Many Signs and Wonders Performed	Continuing Power in the Church	Second Arrest of the Apostles	Miracles and Wonders	The General Situation
5:12-16	5:12-16	5:12-21a	5:12-16	5:12-16
Persecution of the Apostles	Imprisoned Apostles Freed		The Apostles are Persecuted	The Apostles' Arrest and Deliverance
5:17-26	5:17-21		5:17-21a	5:17-18 5:19-21a A Summons to Appear Before the Sanhedrin
	Apostles on Trial Again	5:21b-26	5:21b-26	5:21b-26
5:27-32	5:22-32	5:27-32	5:27-28	5:27-33
	Gamaliel's Advice	Gamaliel	5:29-32	
5:33-42	5:33-42	5:33-39a	5:33-39a	Gamaliel's Intervention
		5:39b-42	5:39b-42	5:34-39a 5:39b-41 5:42

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent,

which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 5:1-6

**<sup>1</sup>But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, <sup>2</sup>and kept back some of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet. <sup>3</sup>But Peter said, "Ananias, why had Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep *back* some of the price of the land? <sup>4</sup>While it remained *unsold*, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." <sup>5</sup>And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came over all who heard of it. <sup>6</sup>The young men got up and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him.**

**5:1 "Ananias"** The full Hebrew name would have been Hananiah, which means "YHWH has graciously given" or "YHWH is gracious" (BDB 337).

▣ **"Sapphira"** This was Ananias' wife. The name in Aramaic means "beautiful." They were both believers.

**5:2 kept back"** This same rare verb (*nosphizomai*) is used in the Septuagint (LXX) of Joshua 7:1 to describe the sin of Achan. F. F. Bruce, in his commentary on Acts (NIC) has made the comment that Ananias was to the early church what Achan was to the Conquest. This sin had the potential of hurting the entire church. This term is also used in Titus 2:10 of slaves stealing from their masters.

▣ **"bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet"** This mimics what Barnabas did in Acts 4:37. This couple had the freedom to sell or not to sell their personal property (cf. Acts 5:4). They had the freedom to give some or all of it to the Lord's work. They did not have the right to give part, but claim they gave all. Their motives and duplicitous actions revealed their heart (cf. Acts 5:4c; Luke 21:14). God looks at the heart (cf. 1 Sam. 16:7; 1 Kgs. 8:39; 1 Chr. 28:9; Pro. 21:2; Jer. 17:10; Luke 16:15; Acts 1:24; Rom. 8:27).

**5:3 "Satan. . .Holy Spirit"** This shows the presence of the two spiritual forces which are active in our world and in our lives. In Eph. 2:2-3 (cf. James. 4) are listed the three enemies of post-Genesis humanity:

1. the fallen world system
2. a personal tempter
3. our fallen nature

### SPECIAL TOPIC: SATAN

### SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSONAL EVIL

▣ **"filled"** This is the same word used of the Spirit (cf. Eph. 5:18). Filling requires cooperation! We are filled with something (see full note at Acts 5:17)! Satan is involved, but we are responsible (cf. Luke 22:3-6). I recommend the book *Three Crucial Questions About Spiritual Warfare*, by Clinton E. Arnold. Surprisingly there is continuing satanic influence in the lives of believers (cf. Eph. 6:10-19; 1 John 5:18-19). See fuller notes at Acts 2:4 and 3:10.

This phrase (i.e., filled your heart") may be a Hebrew idiom (cf. Esther 7:5; Eccl. 8:11; 9:3). Many scholars assume an Aramaic original to the early chapters of Acts.

■ **"to lie to the Holy Spirit"** They lied to Peter and the church, but in reality they lied to the Spirit. Theologically this is very similar to Jesus asking Paul on the road to Damascus, "Why are you persecuting Me?" (cf. Acts 9:4). Paul was persecuting individual believers, but Jesus took it personally, as does the Spirit here. This should be a word of warning to modern believers.

**5:4** This verse has two questions that expect "yes" answers. This is a grammatical feature, not an interpretive issue.

■ **"You have not lied to men but to God"** It was not that they kept part of the money, but that they lied to make themselves look spiritual. Notice that even a kind, generous act, which is done with a bad motive, is a sin (cf. Rom. 14:23c). Notice that the Holy Spirit mentioned in Acts 5:3 here is called God.

**5:5 "fell down and breathed his last"** In the ancient world one's last breath was evidence that the spirit of the person had left (cf. Jgds. 4:2; Ezek. 21:7 in the LXX). This rare term is found in the NT only in Acts (cf. Acts 5:4,10; 12:23). This is an example of temporal judgment. This is similar to God's judgment on Aaron's sons in Leviticus 10. Sin is serious to God. It cost a life (cf. 2 Kgs. 14:6; Ezek. 18:4,20).

■ **"a great fear came over all"** This possibly was the purpose of this temporal judgment. This would be analogous to the OT deaths of Nadab and Abihu of Leviticus 10 and Uzzah of 2 Samuel 6. Based on 1 Cor. 11:30; James 5:20; and 1 John 5:16-17, it is possible to assume that some sins by believers result in an early death. It is hard to keep the balance between the holiness of God (transcendence) and Fatherhood of God (immanence).

**5:6 "they buried him"** Jews of the first century did not practice embalming (they still do not), probably because of Gen. 3:19 (cf. Ps. 103:14; 104:29). A person had to be buried quickly, usually within one day. Because of the offense there was no memorial service or other Christian burial rites.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: BURIAL PRACTICES**

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 5:7-11**

**<sup>7</sup>Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. <sup>8</sup>And Peter responded to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?" And she said, "Yes, that was the price." <sup>9</sup>Then Peter *said* to her, "Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out as well." <sup>10</sup>And immediately she fell at his feet and breathed her last, and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. <sup>11</sup>And great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of these things.**

**5:7 "about three hours"** This shows the vividness of the account by an eyewitness. Luke's writing is characterized by this attention to details. It reflects both his writing style and research methods (i.e., interviews with eyewitnesses).

**5:8** The lie, the pretense continues!

**5:9 "test"** In a round about sense, this was a test of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, God the Father's personal presence on earth (see Special Topic at Acts 1:2). There are temporal consequences, as well as eternal consequences for challenging the Spirit! These two did not realize that it was the Spirit they were lying to, but Peter did.

There are two Greek terms used to denote a test. This one connotes "to test with a view toward destruction." This possibly reflects Exod. 17:2 and Deut. 6:16, where these texts warn against tempting/testing YHWH (cf. Ps. 78:18,41,56).

### SPECIAL TOPIC: GREEK TERMS FOR TESTING AND THEIR CONNOTATIONS

**5:10** The term used to describe "the young men" (*neōteroi*) in Acts 5:6 is different from the term *neanikoi* in Acts 5:10. It is uncertain whether this is just authorial variety or a different group of young men in the church. Both Greek words come from the same root word (*neos*).

**5:11 "great fear. . .over all who heard of these things"** Luke uses the common word *phobos* several times in this same general sense (cf. Luke 1:69; 3:37; Acts 19:17). For believers it is a sense of reverence, respect, and awe, but for unbelievers it is a sense of foreboding, fear, and terror (cf. Luke 12:4-5; Heb. 10:31).

■ **"church"** This is the first time this term is used in Acts, although it is in the Textus Receptus at Acts 2:47. See Special Topic following.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: CHURCH (EKKLESIA)

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 5:12-16**

**<sup>12</sup>At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico. <sup>13</sup>But none of the rest dared to associate with them; however, the people held them in high esteem. <sup>14</sup>And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to *their number*, <sup>15</sup>to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on any one of them. <sup>16</sup>Also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all being healed.**

**5:12-16** This is a brief summary, which is so characteristic of the book of Acts (cf. Acts 2:43-47 and 4:32-35).

**5:12 "many signs and wonders"** This is an Imperfect passive (deponent) indicative. These two terms appear in Peter's quote from Joel 2 in Acts 2:19. Miracles were repeatedly performed (cf. Acts 2:43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 7:36; 14:3; 15:20). Remember that the miraculous is not automatically a sign of deity (cf. Matt. 24:24; and 2 Thess. 2:9), but it was and is a way to confirm the Christian message, which was so radically different from the focus and emphasis of Judaism.

■ **"they were all in one accord"** See note at Acts 1:14. It is important to Luke to emphasize this again and again. It was an ideal that did not last long!

■ **"in Solomon's portico"** This was an open colonnade within the Temple area along the eastern wall of the Court of the Gentiles. Jesus often taught there also (cf. John 10:23). This was the site of Peter and John's first arrest.

#### **5:13**

**NASB** "none of the rest dared to associate with them"

**NKJV, NRSV** "none of the rest dared join them"

**TEV** "Nobody outside the group dared join them"

**NJB** "No one else dared to join them"



This is an unusual phrase. It seems to describe the negative side of "fear." There are several groups designated in this context (cf. Acts 5:12-16). For most, the events were a draw to faith in Christ (cf. #5 and possibly #6 and #7) or a confirmation of faith in Christ (i.e., #3).

1. the Apostles, Acts 5:12
2. the people, Acts 5:12,13
3. the believers (i.e., in one accord in Solomon's portico), Acts 5:12
4. the rest (i.e., the Jewish leadership), Acts 5:13
5. new believers, Acts 5:14
6. the sick of Jerusalem, Acts 5:15
7. the sick and possessed from the surrounding villages, Acts 5:16

The present middle infinitive "to associate" is literally "to glue." Luke uses this term often, but in a wide variety of senses. Here it refers to their not becoming part of the new group (i.e., believers in Jesus as the promised Messiah).

**5:14 "believers"** This is a present active participle, which implies an ongoing action. See Special Topics at Acts 2:40 and 3:16.

**NASB, TEV,**  
**NJB, NIV** "in the Lord"  
**NKJV, NRSV** "to the Lord"

This grammatical form (i.e., eight case system) can be understood as dative ("to") or locative ("in"). I think it is a way to show that believers belong to the Lord. We are His possession, and He is ours!

- **"women"** Luke especially highlights "women," both in the Gospel and Acts (i.e., Acts 1:14; 8:12; 16:1,13; 17:4,12,34; 18:2; 21:5). Jesus brings a new sense of dignity and worth to women and children.
- **"were constantly added to their number"** Luke often used summary statements of the growth of the church (cf. Acts 2:47; 5:14; 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20).

**5:15 "when Peter came by at least his shadow"** Miracles at this stage were common as a way of confirming the gospel. Peter was the obvious spokesman for the Apostles. This same type of confirming, healing also occurred through Paul (cf. Acts 19:12).

As interpreters we must remember that these miracle signs were given to

1. show the compassion of God
2. show the truth of the gospel
3. show who were the God-called leaders

These signs were given in a particular culture, for a specific purpose. Because God did it there, it does not automatically mean that He will do the same in every period of history in every culture. Not that God is not active in every age nor less compassionate, but that the people of God must walk by faith and not by sight! Miracles continue, but salvation of sinners must be the greatest goal, not physical healing for those who will still die!

It seems to me that God has not changed. His character, power, compassion, and desire for all to be saved remains the same, but looking at history theologically, there are two major periods of intense, supernatural signs, both from God and from Satan.

1. surrounding the time of the incarnation and development of the early church
2. preceding the end-time events when believers will be under terrible persecution

I would like to quote A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. III, p. 62

"There was, of course, no virtue or power in Peter's shadow. That was faith with superstition, of course, just as similar cases in the Gospels occur (Matt. 9:20; Mark 6:56; John 9:5) and the use of Paul's handkerchief (Acts 19:12). God honours even superstitious faith if it is real faith in him. Few people are wholly devoid of superstition."

**5:16 "they were all being healed"** This is an imperfect passive indicative, which asserts each one was

healed (the agent is unexpressed, but probably the Spirit) one at a time, over and over and over, until none were left!

This is a summary type statement. Are we to take it literally (i.e., every single one)? Jesus required faith or used the healing to (1) train the disciples or (2) cause the crowds to listen.

It is shocking to me that not all those healed in the NT were simultaneously "saved" (i.e., trust Christ and have eternal life). Physical healing is a poor substitute for spiritual salvation. Miracles are only truly helpful if they bring us to God. All humans live in a fallen world. Bad things happen. God often chooses not to intervene, but this says nothing about His love and concern. Be careful of demanding that God act miraculously every time in this current evil age. He is sovereign and we do not know the full implications of any given situation.

At this point I would like to add my commentary notes from 2 Tim. 4:20 about Paul and physical healing (see [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org)):

"There are so many questions we would like to ask the NT writers. One subject all believers think about is physical healing. In Acts (cf. Acts 19:12; 28:7-9) Paul is able to heal, but here and in 2 Cor. 12:7-10 and Phil. 2:25-30, he seems unable. Why are some healed and not all, and is there a time window connected to healing which has closed?

I surely believe in a supernatural, compassionate Father who has and does heal physically as well as spiritually, but why is this healing aspect seemingly present and then noticeably absent? I do not think that it is connected to human faith, for surely Paul had faith (cf. 2 Corinthians 12). I feel that healing and believing miracles affirmed the truthfulness and validity of the gospel, which it still does in areas of the world where it is first proclaimed. However, I feel that God wants us to walk by faith and not by sight. Also, physical illness is often allowed in believer's lives (1) as temporal punishment for sin; (2) as consequences of life in a fallen world; and (3) to help believers mature spiritually. My problem is that I never know which one is involved! My prayer for God's will to be done in each case is not a lack of faith but a sincere attempt to allow the gracious, compassionate God to work His will in each life."

■ "unclean spirits" See Special Topics below.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE DEMONIC \(UNCLEAN SPIRITS\)](#)

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: EXORCISM](#)

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 5:17-26**

**<sup>17</sup>But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy. <sup>18</sup>They laid hands on the apostles and put them in a public jail. <sup>19</sup>But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the gates of the prison, and taking them out he said, <sup>20</sup>"Go, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life." <sup>21</sup>Upon hearing *this*, they entered into the temple about daybreak and *began* to teach. Now when the high priest and his associates came, they called the Council together, even all the Senate of the sons of Israel, and sent *orders* to the prison house for them to be brought. <sup>22</sup>But the officers who came did not find them in the prison; and they returned and reported back, <sup>23</sup>saying, "We found the prison house locked quite securely and the guards standing at the doors; but when we had opened up, we found no one inside." <sup>24</sup>Now when the captain of the temple *guard* and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them as to what would come of this. <sup>25</sup>But someone came and reported to them, "The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!" <sup>26</sup>Then the captain went along with the officers and *proceeded* to bring them *back* without violence (for they were afraid of the people, that they might be stoned).**

**5:17 "they were filled with jealousy"** The Greek word simply means "to boil." Therefore, context must tell us it is zealousness or jealousy. This shows the true motivation of the religious leaders, jealousy! In Luke's Gospel Jesus' main enemies were the Pharisees, but in Acts His followers' main enemies were the Sadducees.

The verb "filled" is used in a variety of ways by Luke to show what characterizes or describes a person or personified entity.

1. John the Baptist, even before his birth, was filled with the Holy Spirit – Luke 1:15
2. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit – Luke 1:41
3. Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit – Luke 1:61
4. all in the Synagogue who heard Jesus speak were filled with rage – Luke 4:28
5. those in the house where the paralytic was lowered through the roof were filled with fear – Luke 5:26
6. Pharisees and Scribes traveling with Jesus on a Sabbath were filled with rage – Luke 6:11
7. those in the upper room on Pentecost were filled with the Holy Spirit – Acts 2:4
8. those who heard Peter speak in the temple were filled with amazement – Acts 3:10
9. Peter speaking before the Sanhedrin was filled with the Holy Spirit – Acts 4:8
10. all in the upper room were filled with the Holy Spirit – Acts 4:31
11. Satan filled Ananias' and Sapphira's hearts – Acts 5:3
12. Peter and John spoke to the Sanhedrin again and they were filled with jealousy – Acts 5:17
13. Jerusalem filled with the gospel – Acts 5:28
14. the seven full of the Spirit and wisdom – Acts 6:3
15. Stephen full of faith and the Holy Spirit – Acts 6:5,8; 7:55
16. Ananias lays hands on Saul/Paul and he is filled with the Holy Spirit – Acts 9:17
17. Paul preaches filled with the Spirit – Acts 13:9
18. Jews in the crowd who Paul preached to were filled with jealousy – Acts 13:45
19. the disciples were continually filled with joy and the Holy Spirit – Acts 13:52
20. Ephesus was filled with confusion – Acts 19:29

In the presence of the gospel what are you "filled" with?

**5:18** These first chapters in Acts show the problems faced by the early church. The problems differ from age to age, culture to culture, but God is for us, with us, and empowers us to overcome. Nothing—prison, attempted humiliation, threats, etc.—can rob believers of the presence and peace of Christ (cf. Rom. 8:31-39).

**5:19 "an angel of the Lord"** This phrase is used two ways in the OT.

1. an angel (cf. Gen. 24:7,40; Exod. 23:20-23; 32:34; Num. 22:22; Jdgs. 5:23; 1 Sam. 24:16; 1 Chr. 21:15ff; Zech. 1:28)
2. as a way of referring to YHWH (cf. Gen. 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16; Exod. 3:2,4; 13:21; 14:19; Jdgs. 2:1; 6:22-24; 13:3-23; Zech. 3:1-2)

Luke uses the phrase often (cf. Luke 1:11,13; 2:9; Acts 5:19; 7:30; 8:26; 12:7,11,23; 10:3; 27:23), but in the sense of #1 above. The NT does not use sense #2, except in Acts 8:26 and 29, where, "an angel of the Lord" is paralleled to the Holy Spirit.

■ **"opened the gates of the prison"** This is similar to Paul and Silas' experience at Philippi (cf. Acts 16:26). In many ways the life of Peter is paralleled in Paul. This may have been Luke's literary intentionality.

**5:20 "Go, stand and speak"** These function as three imperatives.

1. Go, present middle (deponent) imperative
2. Stand, aorist passive participle used as an imperative (Friberg's, *Analytical Greek New Testament*, p. 379)
3. Speak, present active imperative

The angel had an evangelistic mission for the early church (and for today's church).

▣ **"speak to the people"** This was the major thrust of the Apostles' ministry. Boldness (see Special Topic at Acts 4:29), not fear, characterizes their new spirit-filled lives.

**NASB** "the whole message of the Life"  
**NKJV** "all the words of this life"  
**NRSV** "the whole message about this life"  
**TEV** "all about this new life"  
**NJB** "all about this new Life"

This phrase is speaking about the new life (*zōe*, eternal life) found only in the gospel of Jesus Christ. They had been freed both spiritually (salvation) and physically (out of prison). Now they were to tell all to all (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8)!

**5:21** Notice that being supernaturally freed did not imply that they would not be imprisoned again. Even God's provision does not mean that all difficulties will be solved or removed in ministry (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; Rom. 8:17; 1 Pet. 4:12-16)

▣ **"the Council. . .the Senate of the sons of Israel"** See Special Topic: Sanhedrin at Acts 4:5. To whom does "the Senate" refer? Curtis Vaughan, in *Acts*, pp. 39-40, says it was the elders of Jerusalem who were not members of the Sanhedrin at that present time (cf. M. R. Vincent, *Word Studies*, Vol. 1, p. 234), but the NASB and NIV translations assume that Council and Senate are synonymous.

**5:23 "locked"** This is a perfect passive participle. The idea was that the prison doors were secure and the guards set (perfect active participle), but the prisoners were gone.

**5:24 "they were greatly perplexed"** Luke uses this term several times. It is an intensified form of *aporeō* (cf. Luke 24:4; Acts 25:20) with *dia* (cf. Luke 9:7; Acts 2:12; 5:24; 10:17). Its basic meaning is doubt, uncertainty, or perplexity.

▣ **"as to what would come of this"** The grammatical form of the phrase is an incomplete Fourth class conditional sentence (*an* plus aorist middle [deponent] optative). The optative mood expresses perplexity (cf. Luke 1:61-62; 3:15; 8:9; 15:26; 22:23; Acts 5:24; 8:31; 10:17; 21:33, see James Allen Hewett, *New Testament Greek*, p. 195).

**5:26 "they were afraid of the people, that they might be stoned"** This showed the popularity of the early church (cf. Acts 5:13; 2:47; 4:21) and the source of the continuing jealousy of the Jewish leaders.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 5:27-32**

**27**When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them, **28**saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." **29**But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. **30**The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. **31**He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. **32**And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him."

**5:28**  
**NASB, NRSV,**  
**TEV** "strict orders"  
**NKJV** "strictly command"

The NKJV has "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name," which is a Greek manuscript variant found in the Greek texts  $\kappa^2$ , D, and E, but not in MSS P<sup>74</sup>,  $\kappa^*$ , A, or B. The UBS<sup>4</sup> puts the NKJV option in the text, but "not" in brackets. This question expects a "yes" answer. The Apostles were warned!

The construction is a Semitic idiom (cf. Luke 22:15) similar to the cognate accusative in Koine Greek, where the verb (*parangellō*) and the direct object (*parangelia*) are from the same root. This construction intensifies the basic meaning of the terms. It is interesting that this term in the Koine papyri found in Egypt meant an official summons to court or an order from a court (cf. Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, p. 481).

▣ **"this man's"** This expression shows the contempt of the Jewish leaders. They never mention Jesus' name. The Talmud even calls Him "so and so" (cf. M. R. Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol. 1, p. 234).

▣ **"blood upon us"** Peter and John were continuing to assert that these Jewish leaders engineered Jesus' death (cf. Acts 5:30; 2:33; 3:14-15; 4:10). This was also Stephen's accusation in Acts 7:52.

**5:29 "must"** This word *dei* means moral necessity. This shows the Apostles' obligation to preach the truth, regardless of the consequences (cf. Acts 4:19). See full note at Acts 1:16.

**5:30 "The God of our fathers"** These early Christians believed they were the true spiritual heirs and descendants of the OT people of God (cf. Acts 3:13; Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 6:16; 1 Pet. 3:5,9; Rev. 1:6).

▣ **"raised up Jesus"** The NT affirms that the Father raised Jesus (cf. Acts 2:24,32; 3:15,26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30,33,34,37; 17:31; Rom. 6:4,9) to confirm the truth of Jesus' life and teachings. This is a major aspect of the *Kerygma* (cf. 1 Corinthians 15).

It should also be noted that the NT affirms that the Son and the Spirit were also involved in this great affirmation event.

1. the Son – John 2:19-22; 10:17-18
2. the Spirit – Rom. 8:11

▣ **"whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross"** This relates back to the curse of Deut. 21:23. These religious leaders wanted Jesus, a Messianic pretender, to bear the curse of YHWH. Jesus bore the curse of the OT law (i.e., the soul that sins will surely die [cf. Ezek. 18:4,20] and all humans have sinned, cf. Rom. 3:9-18, 23) for us (cf. Gal. 3:13; Col. 1:14). Jesus was the innocent lamb of God who gave Himself for the estranged world (cf. John 1:29; 2 Cor. 5:21).

**5:31 "God exalted to His right hand"** The term "exalted" is translated in John 3:14 as "lifted up" and in Phil. 2:9 as "highly exalted." The cross was Christ's means of exaltation and triumph (cf. Col. 1:15; 2 Cor. 2:14).

The anthropomorphic phrase "right hand" was a metaphor for the place of power and authority (cf. Matt. 26:64). God is an eternal Spirit. He does not have a physical body. See Special Topic at Acts 2:33.

▣ **"Prince"** This verse clearly and specifically asserts the Messiahship of Jesus. This same term was used of Jesus in Acts 3:15, where it could be translated "Author" (NRSV). It can mean "chief," "pioneer," or "prince." It was also used of the founder of a school or family (cf. Heb. 2:10; 12:2). See Special Topic at Acts 3:15.

▣ **"Savior"** This term was used in the first century Greco-Roman world of Caesar. He claimed to be the savior of culture and peace. Another term which the Caesars claimed for themselves, but Christians used uniquely for Jesus, was Lord (*kurios*).

This term "Savior" was used in the OT as a term for YHWH (cf. 2 Sam. 22:3; Ps. 106:21; Isa. 43:4,11; 45:15,21; 49:26; 60:16; 63:8). NT writers often assert the deity of Jesus by attributing to Him OT titles of

YHWH. Notice how Paul in his letter to Titus does this.

1. Titus 1:3, "God our Savior"
2. Titus 1:4, "Christ Jesus our Savior"
3. Titus 2:10, "God our Savior"
4. Titus 2:13, "our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus"
5. Titus 3:4, "God our Savior"
6. Titus 3:6, "Jesus Christ our Savior"

■ **"to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins"** This shows the purpose of Jesus' death (cf. Luke 24:47 and Acts 2:38). It is unusual for NT authors to refer to repentance as a gift from God (cf. Acts 11:18 [to Gentiles]; 2 Tim. 2:25; and possibly also Rom. 2:4). Usually it is one of the requirements of the New Covenant for the human recipient of the gospel (cf. Mark 1:15 and Acts 3:16,19; 20:21). I think it is a literary way to show that God wants all humans made in His image to be saved. It is not an issue related to God's sovereignty.

Often those who focus solely on God's part in the New Covenant use this verse to prove that salvation is all of God and does not involve any participation on the part of mankind. However, this is a good example of proof-texting a passage to fit one's preconceived system of theology. The Bible clearly asserts the priority and necessity of God's initiation, but also reveals that the concept of "covenant" best describes His chosen model of how to relate to needy humanity. Freedom is a gift which God gave in creation. God does not violate this gift/responsibility (cf. Rom. 2:4; 2 Cor. 7:10). He does draw us, woo us, work with us, and provide a way of redemption (cf. John 6:44,65). But fallen humans must respond and continue to respond in repentance, faith, obedience, and perseverance.

Here is an interesting quote from Frank Stagg, *New Testament Theology*, p. 119:

"Men cannot achieve but only receive repentance, yet they must receive it. By faith a man receives Christ into his innermost person; and Christ, as a transforming presence reverses the course of that life from self-trust to trust in God, from self-assertion to self-denial. This conversion is the reversal of the Fall, in which man sought to find the whole meaning of his existence within himself."

**5:32** Several times in Acts Peter referred to the fact that the Apostles and disciples are witnesses of Jesus' life and death and resurrection. In this context he adds, "the Holy Spirit" as witness. This may be a way of affirming the two necessary OT witnesses to confirm a matter (cf. Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6).

Luke/Acts speak of the gift of the Spirit

1. at baptism – Acts 2:38
2. at obedience to the gospel – Acts 5:32
3. cannot be bought – Acts 8:19-20
4. to the Gentiles – Acts 10:45; 11:17
5. from the Father – Luke 11:13 (cf. James 1:17)

■ **"those who obey Him"** Obedience is a lifestyle choice! We must obey by believing the gospel. We must continue in obedience to enjoy its fruits (cf. Matt. 7:24-27; Luke 6:46-48). The rare term "obey" (*peithomai* plus *archē*, cf. Acts 27:21; Titus 3:1), used in Acts 5:29 and 32, was a combination of the terms "ruler" (*archē*) and obey.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 5:33-39**

**<sup>33</sup>But when they heard this, they were cut to the quick and intended to kill them. <sup>34</sup>But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law, respected by all the people, stood up in the Council and gave orders to put the men outside for a short time. <sup>35</sup>And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you propose to do with these men. <sup>36</sup>For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a group of about four hundred men joined up with him. But he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. <sup>37</sup>After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census and drew away *some* people after him; he**

too perished, and all those who followed him were scattered. <sup>38</sup>So in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown; <sup>39</sup>but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God."

5:33

NASB "they were cut to the quick"

NKJV "they were furious"

NRSV "they were enraged"

TEV "they were so furious"

NJB "this so infuriated them"

This term literally means "cut with a saw" or "gnash with the teeth." This very same term in the same form is also used in Acts 7:54, where the added phrase, "cut to the heart," shows the full metaphorical sense (see also Luke 2:35). This strong term (i.e., *diaprō*) is similar in meaning to 2:37a.

■ **"intended to kill them"** This is an imperfect middle (deponent) indicative, implying that (1) they began at this point to try to kill them or (2) this was a recurrent plan and desire. From our knowledge of the early church's growth from Acts, #1 fits best. Notice it is the Sadducees who expressed this anger and murderous intent. It is just possible that the Pharisees (i.e., Gamaliel) saw the early church as a useful thorn to poke at the Sadducean rejection of resurrection in general. Pharisees would not want to affirm the resurrection of Jesus, but would affirm the concept of a resurrection followed by a future life with God.

It is surprising to modern Bible readers that religious leaders could plan murder. Remember these were Sadducees committed to the writings of Moses, which commanded that a blasphemer must be stoned to death. These leaders thought they were acting on God's behalf and in conformity to His word (cf. Lev. 24:10-16).

5:34 **"Pharisees"** See Special Topic following.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: PHARISEES](#)

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: GAMALIEL](#)

5:36-37 **"Theudas. . . Judas of Galilee"** Josephus mentions these same two names (cf. *Antiq.* 20.5.1). However, he listed them in the reverse order. Further historical information shows that there were two persons by this name who were Jewish zealots against Rome. Therefore, both the NT and Josephus could be accurate. The one mentioned by Gamaliel rebelled in a.d. 6, whereas the one mentioned by Josephus rebelled in a.d. 44.

5:37 **"in the days of the census"** Josephus (cf. *Antiq.* 18.1.1; *Wars* 2.8.1) tells us that Augustus ordered a tax to be levied on the Jews, soon after Archelaus was dethroned and Quirinius was made legate of Syria (i.e., about a.d. 6-7). These census for taxation purposes occurred every fourteen years, but took years to complete.

■ **"Judas of Galilee"** He is mentioned several times by Josephus (cf. *Antiq.* 18.1.1-6; 20.5.2 and also in *Wars* 2.8.1; 2.17.8-9). His revolt occurred in about a.d. 6 or 7. He was the founder of the zealot movement. The zealots (Josephus calls them "the fourth philosophy) and the Sicarii (i.e., assassins) are possibly the same political movement.

5:38 **"stay away from these men and let them alone"** What surprising advice! This phrase has two aorist active imperatives.

1. *aphistēmi*, separate, put away
2. *aphiēmi*, send away, dismiss



▣ **"if"** This is a third class conditional sentence, which means potential action.

**5:39 "if"** This is a first class conditional sentence, which usually denotes an affirmation of truth, but here it cannot be true. This shows the literary use of this grammatical form.

▣ **"or else you may even be found fighting against God"** It must be remembered that these religious leaders think they are acting on God's behalf. The very fact that Gamaliel speaks the possibility of their being sincerely wrong is a shocking statement (cf. Acts 11:17).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 5:40-42**

**<sup>40</sup>They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and *then* released them. <sup>41</sup>So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for *His* name. <sup>42</sup>And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.**

**5:40 "They took his advice"** This phrase is included in Acts 5:39 in some translations (cf. NRSV) and in Acts 5:40 in others (cf. NASB, NKJV). The TEV and NJB keep it in Acts 5:39, but start a new paragraph.

▣ **"flogged"** This was not the same as the Roman flogging (*mastix*, cf. Acts 22:24-25), which Jesus endured. This referred to the Jewish beating with rods (cf. Deut. 25:3; i.e., *derō*, Luke 12:47-48; 20:10-11; 22:63). It was very painful, but not life-threatening.

The interpretive problem is that these two Greek terms are often used interchangeably. The Septuagint of Deut. 25:3 has *mastix*, but it refers to a Jewish punishment. Luke regularly uses *derō* for this Jewish synagogue beating (literally "skinning an animal").

▣ **"and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus"** This same Council had done this earlier (cf. Acts 4:17,21). This time they beat them and repeated the warning.

**5:41** Jesus had predicted this type of treatment (cf. Matt. 10:16-23; Mark 13:9-13; Luke 12:1-12; 21:10-19; John 15:18-27; 16:2-4).

▣ **"rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name"** This seems surprising to us today because we live in a society where physical persecution is so rare, but this has not been the case for the vast majority of believers through the centuries.

Jesus plainly said that His followers would suffer. Please read Matt. 5:10-12; John 15:18-21; 16:1-2; 17:14; Acts 14:22; Rom. 5:3-4;; 8:17; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; Phil. 1:29; 1 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 3:12; James 1:2-4. Also notice how in 1 Peter Jesus' suffering (cf. Acts 1:11; 2:21,23; 3:18; 4:1,13; 5:1) is to be emulated by His followers (cf. Acts 1:6-7; 2:19; 3:13-17; 4:1,12-19; 5:9-10).

**5:42 "every day, in the temple"** These early witnesses of Jesus refused to be silenced, even in the very heart of Judaism, the temple in Jerusalem.

▣ **"from house to house"** The early church had their meetings in private homes spread throughout the city (cf. Acts 2:46). There were no church buildings until several hundred years later.

**NASB, NKJV "the Christ"**

**NRSV, TEV,**

**REB**

**"the Messiah"**

In this Jewish setting the title "Messiah" (see Special Topic at Acts 2:31) is more appropriate (cf. Acts

2:31; 3:18; 5:42; 8:5; 9:22), as Peter used in Matt. 16:16. When Paul preached to Jews he also used this as a reference to the promised, anointed One (cf. Acts 17:3; 18:5,28).

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR ACTS 3-5**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did the Apostles stay within Judaism so long?
2. List the titles of Jesus and their meanings which are used in Acts 3.
3. What are the two minimal requirements in salvation?
4. Why is Moses quoted so often in the New Testament?
5. What is the significance of the Abrahamic covenant to the NT church?
6. Why were Peter and John arrested?
7. Outline Peter's third sermon.
8. What is significant about the prayer of Acts 4:24-31?
9. To be truly New Testament must one be communistic? (cf. Acts 4:32)
10. List the reasons why Luke included the account of Ananias and Sapphira.
11. Did Ananias realize that he was filled with Satan? Did he realize that he had lied to God?
12. Why was God seemingly so harsh?
13. What about miracles (especially healings) in our day?
14. Why were the Sadducees so mad?
15. Why did the angel release the Apostles from prison?
16. Outline Peter's fourth sermon. List the common elements between his other recorded sermons in Acts.
17. Who was Gamaliel?
18. Why should Christians rejoice in suffering?

# ACTS 6

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Appointment of the Seven	Seven Chosen to Serve	Choice of the Seven	The Seven Helpers	The Institution of the Seven
6:1-6	6:1-7	6:1-7	6:1-4 6:5-6	6:1-6
6:7			6:7	6:7
The Arrest of Stephen	Stephen Accused of Blasphemy	Preaching and Martyrdom of Stephen (6:8-7:2a)	The Arrest of Stephen	Stephen's Arrest
6:8-15	6:8-15	6:8-7:2a	6:8-15	6:8-15

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

#### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Actss 6 and 7 are Luke's literary/historical way of beginning to discuss the Gentile mission.
- B. The church in Jerusalem had grown rapidly by this time (cf. Acts 6:1).
- C. The Church was made up of Aramaic-speaking Jews from Palestine and Greek-speaking Jews from the Diaspora.

#### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 6:1-6**

<sup>1</sup>Now at this time while the disciples were increasing *in number*, a complaint arose on the

part of the Hellenistic *Jews* against the *native* Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food.<sup>2</sup> So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.<sup>4</sup>" But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."<sup>5</sup> The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.<sup>6</sup> And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.

**6:1 "disciples"** This is literally "learners" from the verb *manthanō*. It is important to realize that the NT emphasizes "becoming disciples" (cf. Matt. 28:19; Act 14:21), not merely making a decision. This designation for believers is unique to the Gospels and Acts. In the Letters, the terms "brothers" and "saints" are used to designate the followers of Jesus.

- **"were increasing in number"** This is a present active participle. Growth always causes tension.
- **"complaint"** This term means "to speak privately in a low voice" (i.e., private conversations between individuals, Moulton, *Analytical Lexicon*, p. 81). It occurs several times in the LXX of Exodus describing the Wilderness Wandering Period (cf. Exod. 16:7,8; 17:3; also Num. 11:1; 14:27). This same word is found in Luke 5:30 and several times in John (cf. John 6:41,43,61; 7:12,32).
- **"the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews"** This refers to believing Jews, those who were from Palestine and spoke primarily Aramaic and those who grew up in the Diaspora and spoke primarily Koine Greek. There were certainly cultural and racial overtones in this situation.
- **"the daily serving of food"** The early church followed the patterns of the Synagogue. Every week funds (i.e., alms) were collected to feed the poor. This money was used to buy food, which was given out weekly by the Synagogue and daily by the early church. See Special Topic: Almsgiving at Acts 3:2.  
It seems from history that many Jewish families who lived and worked in other countries returned to Palestine in the father's later years so that he could be buried in the Promised Land. Therefore, there were many widows in Palestine, especially the Jerusalem area.  
Judaism had an institutional (i.e., Mosaic Covenant) concern for the poor, alien, and widows (cf. Exod. 22:21-24; Deut. 10:18; 24:17). Luke's writings show that Jesus, too, cared for widows (cf. Luke 7:11-15; 18:7-8; 21:1-4). It is, then, natural that the early church, patterning itself on both the Synagogue social services and the teachings of Jesus, would have an overt concern for church widows.

**6:2 "The twelve"** This was the collective title for the Apostles in Acts. Those were the first specially chosen companions of Jesus during His earthly ministry, starting in Galilee.

■ **"summoned the congregation of the disciples"** Exactly what is meant here is uncertain in this sense that the church was made up of several thousand people at this point, so no home or business was large enough to accommodate this gathering. This must have taken place in the Temple itself, probably Solomon's Portico (cf. Acts 3:11; 5:12).

This is the first example of what came to be called congregational polity (cf. Acts 6:3,5; 15:22). This is one of three biblical ways the modern church organizes itself:

1. episcopal (i.e., one top leader)
2. presbyterian (i.e., a group of leaders)
3. congregational (i.e., the whole body of believers)

All are present in Acts 15.

■ **"It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables"** This is not a

disparaging word about serving, but the beginning of the sensed need for a division of pastoral responsibilities among the people of God. These were not offices, but delegated functions. Gospel proclamation must take priority over some needed ministries. The Apostles were uniquely called and qualified for their task. Nothing should take away from that task. This was not an "either/or," but a "both/and" situation.

The word "serve" is the common Greek term for service, *diakonia*. Unfortunately many modern commentators, looking for guidelines for the later office of deacon (cf. Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8-10,12-13), have used this text to define that ministry task. However, these are not "deacons"; they are lay ministers/preachers. Only eisegesis can find deacons in Acts 6.

It is interesting to me how this early church conducted its ministry without buildings.

1. When they all met together it must have been at the Temple.
2. On Sabbaths they surely met with their local synagogues and on Sundays probably in house churches.
3. During the week (daily) the Apostles moved from believer's home to believer's home (cf. Acts 2:46).

### 6:3

**NASB, NRSV** "select"

**NKJV** "seek out"

**TEV** "choose"

**NJB** "must select"

This is an aorist middle (deponent) imperative. Something had to be done to restore unity and the spirit of one accord. This pastoral issue had the potential to affect the furtherance of the gospel. The church had to organize for ministry. Every believer is a called, gifted, full-time minister (cf. Eph. 4:11-16).

■ **"seven men"** There is no reason for this number except that it was often the symbolic number of perfection in the OT because of its relation to the seven days of creation (cf. Genesis 1; Psalm 104). In the OT there is a precedent for this same process of developing a second-tier leadership (cf. Numbers 18). See Special Topic: Number Symbolism in Scripture at Acts 1:3.

**NASB, NJB** "of good reputation"

**NKJV** "of good reputation"

**NRSV** "of good standing"

**TEV** "who are known to be"

The differences in these English translations reflect the two different usages of this term.

1. "to witness to" or provide information about (cf. TEV, NIV)
2. "to speak well of someone" (cf. Luke 4:22).

■ **"full of the Spirit"** The filling of the Spirit has been mentioned several times in Acts, usually in connection with the Twelve and their preaching/teaching/reaching ministries. It denotes power for ministry. The presence of the Spirit in a person's life is detectable. There is evidence in attitude, actions, and effectiveness. Widows are important, but gospel proclamation is priority (cf. Acts 6:4). See full note on "filling" at Acts 5:17.

■ **"and of wisdom"** There are two kinds of wisdom in the OT.

1. grasp of knowledge (academic)
2. wise living (practical)

These seven men had both!

■ **"whom we may put in charge of this task"** They had a task-oriented assignment. This passage cannot be used to assert that deacons handle the business matters (KJV, "this business") of the church! The word "task" (*chraomai*) means "need," not "office" (Alfred Marshall, *RSV Interlinear*, p. 468).

**6:4 "devote ourselves"** This Greek term is used in several senses.

1. to closely associate with someone, Acts 8:13
2. to personally serve someone, Acts 10:7
3. to be steadfastly committed to something or someone
  - a. the early disciples to each other and prayer, Acts 1:14
  - b. the early disciples to the Apostles' teaching, Acts 2:42
  - c. the early disciples to each other, Acts 2:46
  - d. the Apostles to the ministry of prayer and the Word, Acts 6:4 (Paul uses the same word to call believers to steadfastness in prayer, Rom. 12:12; Col. 4:2).

■ **"prayer and the ministry of the word"** This phrase is fronted (i.e., placed first) in the Greek sentence for emphasis. Isn't it paradoxical that it was these "seven" who were the first to catch the vision of the world mission of the gospel, not the Apostles. It was "the seven" whose preaching forced the break with Judaism, not the Apostles.

It is so shocking that the Apostles were not the initiators of the Great commission, but these Greek-speaking Jews. Acts never records them fulfilling the task assigned to them by the Apostles but instead depicts them as gospel preachers. Their qualifications seem more in line with this task than the administration and pastoral care needed by the church in Jerusalem.

Instead of bringing peace, their ministries brought conflict and persecution!

**6:5 "Stephen"** His name means "victor's crown." All of the "seven" had Greek names, but most Jews of the Diaspora had both a Hebrew name and a Greek name. Just the names themselves do not mean they were all Greek-speaking Jews. Reason says there may have been both groups present.

■ **"full of faith"** The term faith came from an OT word (i.e., *emeth*) that originally meant a person whose feet were in a stable stance. It came to be used metaphorically for someone who was trustworthy, faithful, dependable, and loyal. In the NT this term is used for the believer's response to God's promise through Christ. We trust His trustworthiness! We faith His faithfulness. Stephen trusted in God's trustworthiness; therefore, he was characterized by God's character (i.e., full of faith, faithfulness).

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: Believe, Trust, Faith, and Faithfulness in the Old Testament \(jnx\)](#)

■ **"full of . . . the Holy Spirit"** There are many different phrases which describe the ministry of the Spirit to believers:

1. the wooing of the Spirit (cf. John 6:44,65)
2. the baptism of the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13)
3. the fruit of the Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:22-23)
4. the gifts of the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12)
5. the filling of the Spirit (cf. Eph. 5:18).

To be full of the Spirit implies two things: (1) that the person is saved (cf. Rom. 8:9) and (2) that the person is led by the Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:14). It seems that one's "fullness" is related to one's continually being filled (present passive imperative of Eph. 5:18). For "filled" see full note at Acts 5:17.

■ **"Philip"** There are several Philips in the NT. This one was one of the Seven. His name means "lover of horses." His ministry is told in Acts 8. He was instrumental in the revival in Samaria and a personal witness to a governmental official from Ethiopia. He is called "the evangelist" in Acts 21:8 and his daughters were also active in ministry (i.e., prophetesses, cf. Acts 21:9, see [SPECIAL TOPIC: WOMEN IN THE BIBLE](#) at Acts 2:17).

■ **"Prochorus"** Little is known of this person. In *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 4, James Orr (ed.) says he became bishop of Nicomedia and was martyred at Antioch (p. 2457).

- **"Nicanor"** Nothing is known about this person in church history. His name is Greek and means "conqueror."
- **"Timon"** Nothing is known about this person in church history. His name is Greek and means "honorable."
- **"Parmenas"** This is a shortened form of *Parmenides*. Church tradition says he was martyred at Philippi during the reign of Trajan (cf. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 4, p. 2248).
- **"Nicholas, a proselyte from Antioch"** More information may have been given about this man because his city may have been Luke's home. Being a Jewish proselyte involved three ritual acts:
  1. that the person baptized himself in the presence of witnesses
  2. that the person, if a male, was circumcised
  3. that the person, if they had opportunity, offered a sacrifice in the temple

There has been some confusion about this man in church history because there is a group of a similar name mentioned in Rev. 2:14-15. Some early church fathers (i.e., Irenaeus and Hippolytus) thought he was the founder of this heretical group. Most of the church fathers who mention a connection at all think the group may have tried to use his name to assert their founder was a leader in the Jerusalem church.

**6:6 "they laid their hands on them"** The grammar implies that the whole church laid hands on them (cf. Acts 13:1-3), although the referent to the pronoun is ambiguous.

The Roman Catholic Church has used texts like this one to assert Apostolic Succession. In Baptist life we use texts like this to assert ordination (i.e., to dedicate people to a particular ministry). If it is true that all believers are called, gifted ministers (cf. Eph. 4:11-12), then there is no distinction in the NT between "clergy" and "laity." The elitism set up and propagated by biblically unsupported ecclesiastical traditions needs to be reexamined in light of NT Scripture. Laying on of hands may denote function, but not special standing or authority. Many of our denominational traditions are historically or denominationally-based and not a clear biblical teaching or mandate. Tradition is not a problem until it is raised to the level of Scriptural authority.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: LAYING ON OF HANDS IN THE BIBLE](#)

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 6:7**

**<sup>7</sup>The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.**

**6:7 "The word of God"** This refers to the gospel of Jesus Christ. His life, death, resurrection, and teaching about God form the new way of viewing the Old Covenant (cf. Matt. 5:17-48). Jesus is the word (cf. John 1:1; 14:6). Christianity is a Person! See full note at Acts 4:31.

- **"kept on spreading"** All three verbs in Acts 6:7 are imperfect tense. This is a central theme in Acts. God's word is spreading by people trusting in Christ and becoming a part of the new people covenant of God (cf. Acts 6:7; 12:24; 19:20).

This may be an allusion to God's promises to Abraham about the numerical growth of his family, who became the old covenant people of God (cf. Acts 7:17; Gen. 17:4-8; 18:18; 28:3; 35:11).

- **"a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith"** This was one of the causes of the Jewish leadership (i.e., Sadducees) unrest over Christianity. Those who knew the OT well were being convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was truly the promised Messiah. The inner circle of Judaism was cracking!

The summary statements of growth may be a key to the structure of the book (cf. Acts 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:31).



■ **"the faith"** This term may have several distinct connotations:

1. its OT background means "faithfulness" or "trustworthiness"; therefore, it is used of our faithing the faithfulness of God or our trusting in the trustworthiness of God (see Special Topic at Acts 6:5)
2. our accepting or receiving God's free offer of forgiveness in Christ
3. faithful, godly living
4. the collective sense of the Christian faith or the doctrinal truth about Jesus (cf. Rom. 1:5; Gal. 1:23; and Jude 3 & 20). In several passages, such as 2 Thess. 3:2, it is difficult to know which sense Paul had in mind.

See [SPECIAL TOPIC: BELIEVE, TRUST, FAITH, AND FAITHFULNESS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT \(אמנ\)](#), Believe, Trust (noun, verb, adjective) at Acts 3:16.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 6:8-15**

**<sup>8</sup>And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people. <sup>9</sup>But some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, *including* both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and argued with Stephen. <sup>10</sup>But they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking. <sup>11</sup>Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and *against* God." <sup>12</sup>And they stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes, and they came up to him and dragged him away and brought him before the Council. <sup>13</sup>They put forward false witnesses who said, "This man incessantly speaks against this holy place and the Law; <sup>14</sup>for we have heard him say that this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us." <sup>15</sup>And fixing their gaze on him, all who were sitting in the Council saw his face like the face of an angel.**

**6:8 "full of grace and power"** "Full of grace" refers to the blessing of God on his life and ministry. See special Topic at Acts 5:17.

This term "power" relates to the next phrase, "performing great signs and wonders."

■ **"was performing great wonders and signs"** This is an imperfect tense (like Acts 6:7). This possibly occurred before his choice as one of the Seven. Stephen's gospel message was continually corroborated by his person (i.e., full of grace) and power (i.e., signs and wonders).

**6:9 "some men from. . .some from"** There is the question concerning how one interprets how many groups rose up against Stephen.

1. one synagogue (men from all countries listed)
2. two synagogues
  - a. of Jews from Cyrenia and Alexandria
  - b. of Jews from Cilicia and Asia (Paul was from Cilicia)
3. one synagogue, but two groups
4. five separate synagogues

The Greek genitive masculine plural article (*tōn*) is repeated twice.

■ **"from what is called"** The reason for this phrase is that the term "freedman" is a Latin word; therefore, it had to be interpreted for clarity. Apparently these were Jews who had been taken into foreign lands as slaves (military or economic), but had now returned to Palestine as freedmen, but still Koine Greek was their first language.

**6:10** Not only was Stephen's gospel message confirmed by power signs, but apparently it was logically persuasive. Acts 7 is an example of his preaching.

■ **"the Spirit"** In the Greek text there is no way to distinguish capitals; therefore, this is the interpretation of the translators. A capital "S" would refer to the Holy Spirit, a small "s" to the human spirit (KJV, NRSV footnote, REB, cf. Acts 7:59; 17:16; 18:25; Rom. 1:9; 8:16; 1 Cor. 2:11; 5:4; 16:18; 2 Cor. 2:13; 7:13; 12:18; Gal. 6:18; Phil. 4:23). This may be an allusion to Pro. 20:27.

See [SPECIAL TOPIC: SPIRIT \(PNEUMA\) IN THE NEW TESTAMENT](#) at Acts 2:2.

**6:11 "they secretly induced men to say"** The term "induced" can mean (1) to bribe (cf. Louw and Nida, *Lexicon*, vol. 1, pp. 577-578) or (2) to scheme secretly (cf. Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 843). This is the same technique used against Jesus (cf. Matt. 26:61) and Paul (cf. Acts 21:28). Their charge was a violation of Exod. 20:7, which carried the death penalty.

■ **"We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses"** Stephen's sermon in Acts 7 answers this charge. Whether Acts 7 was typical of Stephen's gospel preaching or a special sermon meant to answer this specific charge is uncertain, but Stephen probably used the OT often to assert Jesus' Messiahship.

■ **"and against God"** These Jews put God after Moses! Their very sentence structure reveals the perception problem. Moses' Law had become ultimate.

**6:12 "the elders and the scribes. . .the Council"** The phrase "elders and scribes" is often a shortened designation for the members of the Sanhedrin, which is referred to in this context by the term "the Council." It was the religious authority of the Jewish nation in the Roman period before a.d. 70. It was made up of

1. the High Priest(s) and his family
2. local wealthy land owners and civic leaders
3. local scribes

It totaled seventy leaders from the Jerusalem area. See Special Topic: The Sanhedrin at Acts 4:5.

**6:13 "this man"** This is a Semitic way to show contempt. This phrase is often used of Jesus.

■ **"speaks against this holy place and the Law"** This phrase is an extension of the charge in Acts 6:11. This may refer to Stephen's affirmation of Jesus' words about the Temple's destruction recorded in Luke 19:44-48 (also Mark 13:2), or Jesus' threat in Matt. 26:61; 27:40; Mark 14:58; 15:29; John 2:19 (cf. Acts 6:14). Jesus saw Himself as the "new Temple," the new center of worship, the new meeting place of God and humanity (cf. Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34). God's judgment was coming on Herod's building.

Stephen's preaching about a full and free forgiveness in Jesus was probably the source of "speaks against the Law." The gospel message reduces "the Mosaic Covenant" to a historical witness instead of a means of salvation (cf. Galatians 3 and the NT book of Hebrews).

For first century Jews this was radical teaching, blasphemy! This truly departs from a typical OT understanding of monotheism, salvation, and the unique place of Israel. The NT has a radical reoriented focus (i.e., Jesus not Israel, grace not human merit).

**6:14** In a sense their charges were true! These two charges were designed to stir up both the Sadducees (i.e., "destroy this place") and the Pharisees (i.e., "alter the customs which Moses handed down").

■ **"this Nazarene, Jesus"** See Special Topic at Acts 2:22.

**6:15 "fixing their gaze on him"** This is a literary device often used by Luke. It denotes uninterrupted attention (cf. Luke 4:20; 22:56; Acts 1:10; 3:4,12; 6:15; 7:55; 10:4; 11:6; 13:9; 14:9; 23:1).

■ **"his face like the face of an angel"** This may have been similar to

1. Moses' face glowing after visiting with YHWH (cf. Exod. 34:29-35, 2 Cor. 3:7)
2. Jesus' face and body glowing during His transfiguration (cf. Matt. 17:2; Luke 9:29)
3. the messenger angel of Daniel 10:5-6

This was a way of metaphorically denoting one who had been in the presence of God.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did the early church choose their best spiritual men to serve tables?
2. Why is there tension in rapid growth?
3. What is the purpose of laying on hands?
4. Why was Stephen attacked?

# ACTS 7

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Stephen's Speeches	Stephen's Address: the Call of Abraham	Preaching and Martyrdom of Stephen (6:8-8:1a)	Stephen's Speech	Stephen's Speech
7:1-8	7:1-8		7:1 7:2-8	7:1-8
	The Patriarchs in Egypt	7:2b-8		
7:9-16	7:9-16	7:9-16	7:9-16	7:9-16
7:17-22	7:17-36	7:17-22	7:17-22	7:17-22
7:23-29		7:23-29	7:23-29	7:23-29
7:30-43		7:30-34	7:30-34	7:30-34
	Israel Rebels Against God	7:35-43	7:35-38	7:35-43
	7:37-43			
	God's True Tabernacle		7:39-43	
7:44-50	7:44-50	7:44-50	7:44-47	7:44-50
	Israel Resists the Holy Spirit		7:48-50	
7:51-53	7:51-53	7:51-53	7:51-53	7:51-53
The Stoning of Stephen	Stephen the Martyr		The Stoning of Stephen	The Stoning of Stephen, Saul as Persecutor
7:54-8:1a	7:54-60	7:54-8:1a	7:54-8:1a	7:54-8:1

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph

3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Stephen's speech in Acts 7 is the longest recorded in Acts. It breaks the theological ground for Paul's (and the church's) understanding of the gospel's relationship to the Old Testament. Stephen's sermon answers the charges made against him, showing that
  1. God has acted outside the Temple
  2. God works with Gentiles
  3. Jews have always rejected God's message, men, and now they have rejected the Messiah!
- B. Stephen's defense affected Saul of Tarsus' heart and Paul's theology.
- C. Stephen reveals the continuing covenant infidelity of the Jewish people and God's revelations outside the Promised Land and apart from the Temple in Jerusalem, which had become the focus of first century Jewish worship.
- D. The Jewish people had regularly rejected God's spokesman and now they did it again. They had violently rejected Jesus of Nazareth and they were about to violently reject Stephen, His witness.
- E. Stephen is charged by the same group with similar blasphemes as Jesus was. As he was being stoned Stephen said several things which mimic Jesus' words and actions on the cross. Was this an intentional literary device used by Luke? It seems so!
- F. Stephen's perspective on the relationship between Jews and Christians will set the stage for the persecution (cf. Acts 8:1-3) and ultimate splitting (i.e., a.d. 70 curse formulas) of these two groups. It is surely possible that God used Stephen, as He did Samson in the OT, to start a fight thereby forcing the spread of the gospel beyond Palestine.
- G. Stephen's speech/defense/sermon has several details which differ from the Hebrew OT (he quotes from the Septuagint). Should scholars try to defend Stephen's sayings or allow them to be Jewish traditions or even historical errors? This question reveals the emotional and intellectual biases of interpreters. I believe that the Bible is true history, that Christianity stands or falls on the events of the Bible. However, the very beginning of the Bible (i.e., Genesis 1-11) and the end of the Bible (i.e., book of Revelation) are not "typical history"! As for the intervening accounts I think they are accurate and true. This takes into account that sometimes there are:
  1. differences in numbers
  2. differences in genre
  3. differences in detail
  4. rabbinical techniques of interpretation (ex. combining two or more texts)These do not affect my affirmation of the historical accuracy or trustworthiness of biblical narratives. Stephen may have been recounting what he learned in Synagogue school or he may have modified texts to fit his purpose! To miss his message by focusing on one or two details shows our modern sense of historiography and not the first century's sense of history.
- H. Basic Outline of Stephen's historical overview of God's dealing with Israel in Acts 7
  1. the Patriarchs, Acts 7:2-16
  2. the Exodus and Wilderness Wanderings, Acts 7:17-43
  3. the Tabernacle and Temple, Acts 7:44-50
  4. the application to them of his summary of the OT history, Acts 7:51-53

I. Stephen uses several OT references (quotes and allusions).

1. Acts 7:3 – Gen. 12:1
2. Acts 7:5 – Gen. 12:7 or 17:8
3. Acts 7:6-7a – Gen. 15:13-14
4. Acts 7:7b – Exod. 3:12
5. Acts 7:8a – Gen. 17:9-14
6. Acts 7:8b – Gen. 21:2-4
7. Acts 7:8c – Gen. 25:26
8. Acts 7:8d – Gen. 35:22-26
9. Acts 7:9 – Gen. 37:10,28; 45:4
10. Acts 7:10 – Gen. 39:21; 41:40-46
11. Acts 7:11 – Gen. 41:54-55; 42:5
12. Acts 7:12 – Gen. 42:2
13. Acts 7:13 – Gen. 45:1-4
14. Acts 7:14 – Gen. 45:9-10
15. Acts 7:15 – Gen. 46:5; 49:33; Exod. 1:6
16. Acts 7:16 – Gen. 23:16; 50:13
17. Acts 7:17 – Exod. 1:7-8
18. Acts 7:18 – Exod. 1:8
19. Acts 7:19 – Exod. 1:10-11
20. Acts 7:20 – Exod. 2:2
21. Acts 7:21 – Exod. 2:5,6,10
22. Acts 7:22 – Exod. 2:10
23. Acts 7:23 – Exod. 2:11-12
24. Acts 7:26 – Exod. 2:13
25. Acts 7:27-28 – Exod. 2:14
26. Acts 7:30 – Exod. 3:1-2
27. Acts 7:29a – Exod. 2:15
28. Acts 7:29b – Exod. 2:22; 4:20; 18:3-4
29. Acts 7:32 – Exod. 3:6
30. Acts 7:33-34 – Exod. 3:5,7-10
31. Acts 7:36 – Exod. 12:41; 33:1
32. Acts 7:37 – Deut. 18:15
33. Acts 7:38 – Exod. 19:17
34. Acts 7:39 – Num. 14:3-4
35. Acts 7:40 – Exod. 32:1,23
36. Acts 7:41 – Exod. 32:4,6
37. Acts 7:42-43 – Amos 5:25-27
38. Acts 7:44 – Exod. 25:31,36-40
39. Acts 7:45 – Jos. 3:14ff; 18:1; 23:9
40. Acts 7:46 – 2 Sam. 7:8ff
41. Acts 7:47 – 1 Kings 6-8; 2 Chronicles 1-6
42. Acts 7:49-50 – Isa. 66:1-2

Another good Scriptural summary of Israel's history is Nehemiah 9.

1. Neh. 9:6 – Genesis 1-11
2. Neh. 9:7-8 – Genesis 12-50
3. Neh. 9:9-14 – Exodus (the exodus)
4. Neh. 9:15-21 – Numbers (the wilderness wandering period)
5. Neh. 9:22-25 – Joshua (the conquest)
6. Neh. 9:26-31 – Judges
7. Neh. 9:32-38 – Samuel, Kings, Chronicles (the Monarchy)

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 7:1-8

<sup>1</sup>The high priest said, "Are these things so?" <sup>2</sup>And he said, "Hear me, brethren and fathers! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, <sup>3</sup>and said to him, 'Leave your country and your relatives, and come into the land that I will show you.' <sup>4</sup>Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. From there, after his father died, God had him move to this country in which you are now living. <sup>5</sup>But He gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot of ground, and yet, even when he had no child, He promised that He would give it to him as a possession, and to his descendants after him. <sup>6</sup>But God spoke to this effect, that his descendants would be aliens in a foreign land, and that they would be enslaved and mistreated for four hundred years. <sup>7</sup>And whatever nation to which they will be in bondage I Myself will judge,' said God, 'and after that they will come out and serve Me in this place.' <sup>8</sup>And He gave him the covenant of circumcision; and so Abraham became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs."

**7:1 "The high priest"** This was Caiaphas. See note at Acts 4:6.

**7:2 "And he said"** Stephen's defense is very similar to the book of Hebrews. He answered the charges in two ways: (1) the Jewish people had continually rejected Moses in the past and (2) the Temple was only one of several ways that God used to speak with Israel. This is a direct answer to the charges brought against him in Acts 6:13.

▣ **"Hear"** This is the aorist active imperative form of the Greek word *akouō*. It is used in the Septuagint to translate the famous prayer of Judaism, the *Shema* (cf. Deut. 6:4-5). It is also used in the prophets to reflect the sense of "hear so as to respond" (cf. Micah 1:2; 6:1). It is difficult to be certain this technical connotation is present when these Jewish men express their Hebrew thoughts in Koine Greek words, but in some contexts like this it may be true.

▣ **"The God of glory"** This God of glory (cf. Ps. 29:3) appeared to the Patriarch Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:1, 15:1,4; 17:1; 18:1, 22:1), thus beginning the Jewish people. See Special Topic at Acts 3:13.

▣ **"Abraham"** Abraham was considered the father of the Jewish people. He was the first Patriarch. His call and subsequent walk with God are described in Gen. 12:1-25:11. In Galatians 3 and later Romans 4 Paul uses him as the paradigm of justification by grace through faith.

▣ **"when he was in Mesopotamia before he lived in Haran"** Genesis 11:31 implies that Abraham was in the city of Haran when YHWH spoke to him. However, the time of God's contact with Abraham was not specifically stated. Abraham was from Ur of the Chaldeans (cf. Gen. 11:28,31), but later moved to Haran (cf. Gen. 11:31,32; 29:4) following God's command. The point is that God spoke to Abraham outside of the land of Canaan. Abraham did not own or possess any part of the Holy Land (cf. Acts 7:5) during his lifetime (except a cave to bury his family, cf. Gen. 23:9).

The term "Mesopotamia" can refer to the different ethnic groups:

1. a people group in the northern area of the Tigris and Euphrates (i.e., "Syria between the Rivers")
2. a people group near the mouth of the Tigris and Euphrates

**7:3 "Leave your country and your relatives, and come into the land that I will show you"** This is a quote from Gen. 12:1. The theological issue involved in this quote is when God says this to Abram:

1. while he was in Ur before he took his father Terah and nephew Lot to Haran



2. while he was in Haran and he waited until his father died to follow God south to Canaan?

**7:4 "he left the land of the Chaldeans"** Chaldea (BDB 505) may be the name of a district close to the mouth of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers (see note at Acts 7:2). It later came to refer to the nation which developed in this region, also known as Babylon (BDB 93). This nation also produced many scholars who developed mathematical formulas related to the movement of the night lights (i.e., planets, stars, comets, etc.). This group of wise men (i.e., astrologers) was also known by the name Chaldean (cf. Dan. 2:2; 4:7; 5:7-11).

■ **"Haran"** Haran (BDB 357) is a city to which Terah, Abraham, and Lot moved (cf. Gen. 11:31-32). Another of Abram's brothers settled there and the place is called by his name (i.e., city of Nahor, cf. Gen. 24:10; 27:43). This city on the upper part of the Euphrates (i.e., tributary river, Balikh) was started in the third millennium b.c. and has retained its name until today. Just as a note of interest, Abraham's brother, Haran (BDB 248), is not spelled the same in Hebrew as the city.

■ **"after his father died"** Many have seen a contradiction here between Gen. 11:26,32 and 12:4. There are at least two possible solutions.

1. Abraham might not have been the oldest son, but the most famous son (i.e., listed first).
2. The Samaritan Pentateuch has Terah's age at death at 145, not 205, as the Hebrew text.

See Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, p. 378.

**7:5 "He promised that He would give it to him as a possession, and to his descendants after him"** This is an allusion to Gen. 12:7 or 17:8. The theological key is not only God's promise, but Abraham's faith in God giving him a descendant as well as a land. This faith is highlighted in Gen. 15:6 (cf. Gal. 3:6; Romans 4:3).

**7:6** This predictive prophecy is stated in Gen. 15:13,14 and reaffirmed in Exod. 3:12. However, Exod. 12:40 has "430 years" instead of "400 years." The Septuagint (LXX) translates Exod. 12:40 as "and the sojourning of the children of Israel, while they sojourned in the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan was 430 years."

The rabbis have said that the number "400 years" starts with the offering of Isaac in Genesis 22. John Calvin has called the 400 years a round number. It may relate to four generations of 100 years each (cf. Gen. 15:16).

**7:7 "And whatever nation"** This is a quote from the Septuagint of Gen. 15:14. This is not meant to be obtuse, but is a general statement. The nation was obviously Egypt. Other nations, however (i.e., Philistia, Syria, Assyria, Babylon), would become Israel's oppressors and God will judge them also.

■ **"and after that"** This full phrase is a quote from Exod. 3:12. Stephen is reciting a loose, running history of Israel.

This text asserts that Canaan and Jerusalem will uniquely become YHWH's special place. This fits the emphasis of Deuteronomy.

■ **"in this place"** In the context of the quote from Exod. 3:12, this refers to Mt. Sinai (see Special Topic at Acts 7:30), which is also outside the Promised Land and is the site of one of the major events in the life of Israel (the giving of the Law to Moses).

**7:8 "covenant"** See Special Topic at Acts 2:47.

■ **"circumcision"** This was practiced by all of Israel's neighbors, except the Philistines (Greek Aegean people). For most cultures it was usually a rite of passage into manhood, but not for Israel, where it was an initiation rite into the covenant People. It was a sign of a special faith relationship with YHWH (cf. Gen. 17:9-14). Each Patriarch circumcised his own sons (i.e., acted as priest for his own family). Robert Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, p. 214, says the rite of circumcision connected the rite of

blood-shedding with the act of circumcision. Blood was connected to covenant forming (cf. Gen. 15:17), covenant breaking (cf. Gen. 2:17), and covenant redemption (cf. Isaiah 53).

▣ **"the twelve patriarchs"** This usually refers to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but here it refers to Jacob's twelve sons, who will become the tribes of Israel.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 7:9-10**

**<sup>9</sup>The patriarchs became jealous of Joseph and sold him into Egypt. Yet God was with him, <sup>10</sup>and rescued him from all his afflictions, and granted him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he made him governor over Egypt and all his household.**

**7:9 "Joseph"** This account is found in Gen. 37:11,28; 45:4. Stephen is trying to show that the Jewish people and their leaders have often rejected God's chosen leader (cf. Moses in Acts 7:35).

**7:10** This account is found in Gen. 39:21; 41:40-46.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 7:11-16**

**<sup>11</sup>Now a famine came over all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction *with it*, and our fathers could find no food. <sup>12</sup>But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our fathers *there* the first time. <sup>13</sup>On the second *visit* Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph's family was disclosed to Pharaoh. <sup>14</sup>Then Joseph sent *word* and invited Jacob his father and all his relatives to come to him, seventy-five persons *in all*. <sup>15</sup>And Jacob went down to Egypt and *there* he and our fathers died. <sup>16</sup>*From there* they were removed to Shechem and laid in the tomb which Abraham had purchased for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.**

**7:11** This account is found in Gen. 41:54-55; 42:5.

**7:12** This account is found in Gen. 42:4.

**7:13** This account is found in Gen. 45:1-4.

**7:14 "seventy-five"** This follows the Septuagint and the Dead Sea Scrolls manuscripts, while the Masoretic Text has "seventy" (cf. Gen. 46:27; Exod. 1:5; Deut. 10:22). At first this seems like a manuscript problem between the LXX, which Stephen quotes, and the Hebrew text of Exod. 1:5. On further reflection it may be two ways of counting all the descendants of Jacob. The problem arises between Gen. 46:26 and 27:

1. the MT of verse 27 has two sons born to Joseph in Egypt, while the LXX has nine, which means that Ephraim and Manassah later had more children between them
2. in the Hebrew text Jacob and his wife are counted, but Ephraim and Manasseh's extra children are not counted

In the Greek text (LXX) Jacob and his wife are not counted, but the extra children of Ephraim and Manasseh are counted. Both are accurate, but they add up the descendants in different ways at different times in Jacob's life. The Hebrew texts known as the Dead Sea Scrolls also have "seventy-five persons" in Gen. 46:27 and Exod. 1:5. Philo of Alexandria was familiar with both numbers.

We are all the benefactors of modern scholarship when it comes to difficult texts or number problems like this one. There is a new type of biblical resource available today which targets these difficult texts. I recommend:

1. *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, IVP
2. *More Hard Sayings of the Bible*, IVP

3. *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* by Gleason Archer.  
For a discussion of Acts 7:14-15 see #1 pp. 521-522.

**7:15** This account is found in Gen. 46:5; 49:33; Exod. 1:6.

**7:16 "to Shechem"** From the Genesis accounts of (1) the burial of Joseph recorded in Jos. 24:32 and (2) the burial of Jacob recorded in Gen. 50:13, there seems to be a discrepancy in Stephen's sermon. The problem is (1) the city; it should be Hebron, not Shechem, or (2) the patriarch; it should be Jacob, not Abraham. However, Abraham and Jacob both bought land (cf. Gen. 23:16; 33:19). At Hebron Sarah and Abraham were buried (cf. Gen. 23:19; 25:9), as were Isaac and Rebekah (cf. Gen. 49:29-31) and Jacob (cf. Gen. 50:13). Although it is uncertain about a burial plot at Shechem, it is possible that Abraham had earlier purchased a field on his stop there in Gen. 12:6-7. Later Jacob redeemed that same piece of land (cf. Gen. 33:19; Jos. 24:32). This is obviously speculation, but Stephen appears to be very knowledgeable of the OT history and this would be the only way to reconcile the various accounts.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 7:17-29**

<sup>17</sup>But as the time of the promise was approaching which God had assured to Abraham, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt, <sup>18</sup>until there arose another king over Egypt who knew nothing about Joseph. <sup>19</sup>It was he who took shrewd advantage of our race and mistreated our fathers so that they would expose their infants and they would not survive. <sup>20</sup>It was at this time that Moses was born; and he was lovely in the sight of God, and he was nurtured three months in his father's home. <sup>21</sup>And after he had been set outside, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and nurtured him as her own son. <sup>22</sup>Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds. <sup>23</sup>But when he was approaching the age of forty, it entered his mind to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel. <sup>24</sup>And when he saw one of them being treated unjustly, he defended him and took vengeance for the oppressed by striking down the Egyptian. <sup>25</sup>And he supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance through him, but they did not understand. <sup>26</sup>On the following day he appeared to them as they were fighting together, and he tried to reconcile them in peace, saying, "Men, you are brethren, why do you injure one another?" <sup>27</sup>But the one who was injuring his neighbor pushed him away, saying, "Who made you a ruler and judge over us? <sup>28</sup>You do not mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday, do you?" <sup>29</sup>At this remark, Moses fled and became an alien in the land of Midian, where he became the father of two sons.

**7:17** This would refer to Gen. 15:12-16 (the Promise) and Exod. 1:7 (their large number).

**7:18 "until there arose another king"** This is a quote from Exod. 1:8. There has been and continues to be debate among scholars on the date of the Exodus. The identity of this Egyptian king is caught up in the disagreement. One could identify him as an Egyptian king from the XVIII dynasty (1445 b.c.) or from the XIX dynasty (1290 b.c.). One theory is to relate this Egyptian king to the first native Egyptian dynasty who overthrew the Hyksos (Semitic) rulers of Egypt. This would explain the use of *heteros* in Acts 7:18. A native Egyptian would not want Semites, like the Hebrews, in large numbers in his territory, fearing another invasion like the Hyksos.

**SPECIAL TOPIC: THE DATE OF THE EXODUS**

**7:19** This account is found in Exod. 1:10ff.

**7:20 "Moses was born"** This account is found in Exodus 2.

▣ **"was lovely in the sight of God"** This is a Hebrew idiom of beauty (cf. Exod. 2:2). Even Josephus comments on Moses' beauty (cf. *Antiq.* 2.9.6).

**7:21** This account is found in Exod. 2:5-6,10.

▣ **"he had been set outside"** This is the Greek term *ektithēmi*, which means "to expose" (cf. Acts 7:19) or "place outside." The Egyptians forced the Hebrews to abandon their male children to the elements and wild beasts so as to control their rapid population growth.

**NASB, NKJV "Pharaoh's daughter took him away"**

**NRSV, NJB "Pharaoh's daughter adopted him"**

**TEV "the king's daughter adopted him"**

The term *anaireō* literally means "to lift up." Moses was literally "lifted up" out of the river and by this act, became the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter.

**7:22** Moses had the best academic and military training available in his day at the court of Pharaoh.

▣ **"he was a man of power in words and deeds"** This must be a summary of Moses' later life because at his encounter with YHWH at the burning bush he claimed he could not speak well (cf. Exod. 4:10-17).

**7:23-24** This account is in Exod. 2:11-12.

**7:23 "he was approaching the age of forty"** I think it was D. L. Moody who said Moses' life can be divided into three groups of forty:

1. for the first forty years he thought he was somebody (i.e., educated at Pharaoh's court)
2. for the second forty years he thought he had become a nobody (i.e., exiled to the land of Midian and learned the ways and terrain of the Sinai desert)
3. for the third forty years he found out what God could do with a nobody (i.e., led the people of God to the Promised Land)

**7:25** This verse is Stephen's assumptions (possibly Jewish traditions); they are not stated in Exodus.

**7:26-29** This account is found in Exod. 2:13-14.

**7:28** The question expects a "no" answer.

**7:29 "At this remark Moses fled"** This account is found in Exod. 2:15,22. Moses' fear at killing an Egyptian shows that Pharaoh was not supportive of his being an adopted child of one of his daughters. Even so, Hebrews 11:27 is clear!

▣ **"and became an alien in the land of Midian"** God appeared to Moses at the burning bush in the land of Midian (cf. Exodus 3-4) and revealed His law to him at Sinai in the land of Midian (cf. Exodus 19-20), which shows that God was not limited as to where He revealed Himself. This same emphasis on God revealing Himself apart from the Temple in Jerusalem is seen in Acts 7:36, 44, 48, and 53.

▣ **"became the father of two sons"** This account is found in Exod. 2:22; 4:20; 18:3-4.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 7:30-34**

**<sup>30</sup>After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in the flame of a burning thorn bush. <sup>31</sup>When Moses saw it, he marveled at the sight; and as he**

approached to look more closely, there came the voice of the Lord: <sup>32</sup>"I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob." Moses shook with fear and would not venture to look. <sup>33</sup>But the Lord said to him, "Take off the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground. <sup>34</sup>I have certainly seen the oppression of My people in Egypt and have heard their groans, and I have come down to rescue them; come now, and I will send you to Egypt."

**7:30** This account is found in Exodus, chapters 3 and 4.

▣ **"an angel"** In the OT text this angel is really YHWH. See full note at Acts 5:19. Notice how this angel is characterized.

1. Exod. 3:2, "the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire"
2. Exod. 3:4, "when the Lord (i.e., YHWH) saw that he turned aside to look"
3. Exod. 3:4, "God (i.e., *Elohim*) called to him from the midst of the bush"

See [SPECIAL TOPIC: NAMES FOR DEITY](#) at Acts 1:6.

▣ **"Mount Sinai"** See Special Topic below.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE LOCATION OF MT. SINAI](#)

**7:32** This account is found in Exod. 3:6.

▣ **"fathers"** In both the Hebrew text and Greek translation (i.e., Septuagint) the word is singular. In every other occurrence of the phrase it is plural. God knew Moses' slave father.

**7:33** This account is found in Exod. 3:5. Moses approached the bush out of curiosity, not religious devotion.

The exact reason for taking off his shoes is uncertain.

1. shoes might be polluted (i.e., animal dung)
2. taking off shoes might be a sign of intimacy or familiarity (i.e., at home).
3. a cultural practice of the Patriarchs or Egyptian ritual

**7:34** This account is found in Exod. 3:7. For me this verse is so theologically significant for this reason: YHWH heard their prayers, saw the affliction, and responded. He came down to rescue them, but notice His rescue was effected through human instrumentality. God sent a reluctant Moses. God has chosen to deal with humans through humans!

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 7:35-43**

<sup>35</sup>This Moses whom they disowned, saying, "Who made you a ruler and a judge?" Is the one whom God sent to be both a ruler and a deliverer with the help of the angel who appeared to him in the thorn bush. <sup>36</sup>This man led them out, performing wonders and signs in the land of Egypt and in the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years. <sup>37</sup>This is the Moses who said to the sons of Israel, "God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren." <sup>38</sup>This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness together with the angel who was speaking to him on Mount Sinai, and who was with our fathers; and he received living oracles to pass on to you. <sup>39</sup>Our fathers were unwilling to be obedient to him, but repudiated him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt, <sup>40</sup>saying to Aaron, "Make for us gods who will go before us; for this Moses who led us out of the land of Egypt—we do not know what happened to him." <sup>41</sup>At that time they made a calf and brought a sacrifice to the idol, and were rejoicing in the works of

their hands. <sup>42</sup>But God turned away and delivered them up to serve the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, "It was not to Me that you offered victims and sacrifices forty years in the wilderness, was it, O house of Israel? <sup>43</sup>You also took along the tabernacle of Moloch and the star of the god Rompha, the images which you made to worship. I also will remove you beyond Babylon."

**7:35 "This Moses whom they disowned"** God's people regularly reject God's spokesperson (cf. Acts 7:51-52). This may even be the purpose of Acts 7:27!

▣ **"with the help of the angel who appeared to him in the thorn bush"** Again God came to an Israelite outside the Promised Land. God's activity was not limited to any locality. Much of Israel's history occurred outside Canaan and before the Temple in Jerusalem. All through the Israelites' history God's leaders were rejected by their peers (cf. Acts 7:9,27-28,35,39). This is a recurrent theme.

This angel is depicted as deity (cf. Exod. 3:2,4). This divine physical manifestation can also be seen in Gen. 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16; Exod. 13:21; 14:19; Jdgs. 2:1; 6:22-23; 13:3-22; Zech. 3:1-2. However, it must be stated that "the angel of the Lord" is not always a divine physical manifestation; sometimes he is just an angel, a messenger, (cf. Gen. 24:7,40; Exod. 23:20-23; 32:34; Num. 22:22; Judg. 5:23; 2 Sam. 24:16; 1 Chr. 21:15ff; Zech. 1:11; 12-13).

**7:36** This is a summary of God's miraculous power (i.e., Moses' staff) through Moses and Aaron.

**7:37-38** This is a Messianic quote from Deut. 18:15. Stephen is identifying God's presence during the Exodus and Wilderness Wandering Period as both God's angel and God's special successor of Moses (i.e., the Messiah, the Prophet). Stephen is not depreciating Moses, but truly listening to Moses!

**7:38 "congregation"** This is the Greek term *ekklesia*, but it is used in the sense of assembly, not church. See Special Topic: Church at Acts 5:11.

▣ **"the angel who was speaking to him on Mount Sinai"** Rabbinical theology asserted that angels were mediators between YHWH and the giving of the Law (see note at Acts 7:53). It is also possible that the angel refers to YHWH Himself (cf. Exod. 3:21 compared to 14:19; and also Exod. 32:34; Num. 20:16; Jdgs. 2:1).

**7:39 "our fathers were unwilling to be obedient to him"** Stephen is connecting the dots of OT rebellion. His implication is that the Jews have always rejected God's leaders, and now they have rejected the Messiah.

▣ **"repudiated him"** This account is found in Num. 14:3-4.

**7:40-41** This account is found in Exodus 32. This was not idolatry, but the creation of a physical image of God. It later turned into fertility worship.

**7:41** Stephen interprets the golden calf as an idol and uses this historical event to introduce a quote from Amos 5, which implies that Israel, even as far back as the Exodus and Wilderness Wandering, was idolatrous and rebellious.

**7:42 "God turned away and delivered them up to serve"** Verses 42 and 43 are quotes from Amos 5:25-27 where Amos asserts that Israel was always offering sacrifices to foreign gods. It was a regular, and early, pattern of their history (cf. Jos. 24:20). This reminds one of the drastic statements of rejection in Romans 1:24,26,28.

▣ **"the host of heaven"** This refers to Assyrian and Babylonian astral worship (cf. Deut. 17:3; 2 Kgs. 17:16; 27:3; 2 Chr. 33:3,5; Jer. 8:2; 19:13). There are several textual problems between the Hebrew text

(MT) of Amos 5:25-27, the Greek text (LXX) and Stephen's quote:

1. the name of the star god. The MT has *kywn* or *kaiwann*, the Assyrian name for the planet Saturn. The LXX has *rypn* or *raiphan*, which may be *repa*, the Egyptian name for the planetary god of Saturn.
2. the Hebrew text (MT) and the Greek text (LXX) have "beyond Damascus," while Stephen quotes "beyond Babylon."

There is no known manuscript of Amos that has the reading. Stephen may have been combining the Assyrians exile, of which Amos speaks, with the later Babylonian exile of Judah, but substituting the place of exile.

The worship of astral deities began in Mesopotamia, but spread into Syria and Canaan (cf. Job 31:26,27). The archaeological discovery at Tell El-Amarna, which included hundreds of letters from Canaan to Egypt in the 14<sup>th</sup> century b.c. also uses these astral deities as place names.

■ **"in the book of the prophets"** This refers to the scroll that contained the twelve minor prophets (cf. Acts 13:40). The quote in Acts 7:42-43 is from the Septuagint of Amos 5:25-27.

The next phrase in Acts 7:42 is a question that expects a "no" answer.

**7:43 "Moloch"** The Hebrew consonants for the word king are *mlk* (BDB 574). There are several Canaanite gods whose names are a play on these three consonants, *Milcom*, *Molech*, or *Moloch*. *Moloch* was the chief fertility god of the Amorites to whom children were offered to ensure the health and prosperity of the community or nation (cf. Lev. 20:2-5; Deut. 12:31; 1 Kgs. 11:5,7,33; 2 Kgs. 23:10,13,14; Jer. 7:31; 32:35). A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures In the New Testament*, vol. 3, p. 93, says *Moloch* was "an ox-headed image with arms outstretched in which children were placed and hollow underneath so that fire could burn underneath." The mention of the term Molech in Lev. 18:21 in context of inappropriate sexual unions, has caused some scholars to assume that children were not sacrificed to Molech, but dedicated to him as temple prostitutes, male and female. The concept fits in the general practices of fertility worship.

■ **"images"** See Special Topic following.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: FORM (TUPOS)**

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 7:44-50**

**<sup>44</sup>Our fathers had the tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness, just as He who spoke to Moses directed *him* to make it according to the pattern which he had seen. <sup>45</sup>And having received it in their turn, our fathers brought it in with Joshua upon dispossessing the nations whom God drove out before our fathers, until the time of David. <sup>46</sup>David found favor in God's sight, and asked that he might find a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. <sup>47</sup>But it was Solomon who built a house for Him. <sup>48</sup>However, the Most High does not dwell in *houses* made by *human* hands; as the prophet says: <sup>49</sup>"Heaven is My throne, And earth is the footstool of My feet; What kind of house will you build for Me?" says the Lord, "Or what place is there for My repose? <sup>50</sup>Was it not My hand which made all these things?"**

**7:44** This account is found in Exodus, chapters 25-31; 36-40. These detailed plans of the tabernacle were revealed to Moses on Mt. Sinai. The NT book of Hebrews talks about a heavenly tabernacle or sanctuary (cf. Acts 8:5-6; 9:11,23) of which the earthly one was a copy. As Stephen dealt previously in this chapter with the charge of chapter 6 that he was against Moses (cf. Acts 6:11), now he begins to deal with the second charge that he was against the Temple (cf. Acts 6:13).

■ **"the pattern"** See Special Topic at Acts 7:43.

**7:45** This covers a period of time from the conquest (either 1400 or 1250 b.c.) to the time of David (+



1011 b.c. to 971/70 b.c., Harrison; 973 b.c., Young; 961 b.c., Bright).

**7:46** This reflects 2 Samuel 7, which is such a significant passage. It is the divine establishment of the Davidic kingship.

**7:47 "Solomon who built a house for Him"** This account is found in 1 Kings 6-8 and 2 Chronicles 1-6.

**7:48** This statement is similar to Solomon's statement in 1 Kgs. 8:27 and 2 Chr. 6:18.

**7:49-50** This quote is taken from the Septuagint of Isa. 66:1-2. The point is that even Solomon recognized that a building could not contain the God of creation!

Do these verses imply an argument for the inclusion of Gentiles? If so, it seems somewhat veiled. However, Solomon himself saw the temple as a place for the world to come to YHWH (cf. 1 Kgs. 8:41-43). It was the Greek-speaking Jews (i.e., the seven in Acts 6) who saw and proclaimed the worldwide mission even before the Apostles recognized this aspect of Jesus' teachings (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). Stephen may have been asserting this by implication in Acts 7:50.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 7:51-53**

**<sup>51</sup>"You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. <sup>52</sup>Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; <sup>53</sup>you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it."**

**7:51 "You men"** Stephen turns from the rebellion of Jewish leaders and people in the past to the current leaders and people in the temple hearing his message. They were and they are rebels against YHWH!

▣ **"a stiff-necked"** Stephens alludes to Moses' characterization of the children of Jacob/Israel (cf. Exod. 32:9; 33:3,5; 34:9; Deut. 9:6).

▣ **"uncircumcised in heart"** This Hebrew idiom means unfaithful, disloyal, and untrustworthy (cf. Lev. 26:41; Jer. 9:25-26; Ezek. 44:7). This is the opposite of Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4!

▣ **"and ears"** This idiom refers to their unwillingness to hear and respond to God's messengers (cf. Jer. 6:10).

▣ **"are always resisting the Holy Spirit"** This is very similar to Isa. 63:10. God's love and faithfulness were extolled in Isa. 63:9,11-14, but the people's reaction was faithlessness!

**7:51b-52** This is the strong condemnation of the current Jewish leadership, just like the ancient Israelite leadership! The ancient people of God had killed God's messengers and now they have killed the Messiah (cf. Acts 3:14; 5:28).

**7:52 "Righteous One"** This is used as a title for Jesus in Acts 3:14 and 22:14. See fuller note at Acts 3:14 and Special Topic: Righteousness at Acts 3:14.

**7:53 "as ordained by angels"** This refers to the rabbinical interpretation of Deut. 33:2 from the Septuagint in which God gave the law to Moses through angelic mediation which seems to be confirmed by Gal. 3:19 and Heb. 2:2.

▣ **"yet did not keep it"** Stephen opened his defense with "hear" (BDB 1033) which may reflect the Hebrew *Shema*, "hear so as to heed" (cf. Deut. 6:4). Stephen and later James (Jesus' half brother) both assert "be doers of the word not merely hearers" (cf. James 1:22-23 following Jesus, Matt. 7:24-27; Luke

11:48; John 13:17; as did Paul, Rom. 2:13).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 7:54-60**

<sup>54</sup>Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they *began* gnashing their teeth at him. <sup>55</sup>But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; <sup>56</sup>and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." <sup>57</sup>But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse. <sup>58</sup>When they had driven him out of the city, they *began* stoning *him*; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. <sup>59</sup>They went on stoning Stephen as he called on *the Lord* and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" <sup>60</sup>Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep.

**7:54 "they"** This must refer to the members of the Sanhedrin (cf. Acts 6:15).

NASB	"cut to the quick"
NKJV	"cut to the heart"
NRSV	"they became enraged"
TEV	"they became furious"
NJB	"they were infuriated"

This is an imperfect passive indicative. It is literally "cut to the heart" (cf. Acts 5:33). Stephen's message really got to these leaders, but instead of repenting, they turned, as always, to rejection and murder (cf. Acts 5:33).

■ **"gnashing their teeth"** This is a sign of rage (cf. Job 16:9; Psalm 35:16; 37:12; Lam. 2:16).

**7:55 "Holy Spirit. . . God. . . Jesus"** Notice the mention of the Triune God. See Special Topic at Acts 2:32-33.

■ **"Being full of the Holy Spirit"** The concept of being filled with the Spirit for proclamation of the gospel is unique to Acts (i.e., *plēroō*, cf. Acts 2:4; 4:8,31; *plērēs*, cf. Acts 6:3,5,8; 7:55; 11:24). See full note at Acts 5:17.

The biblical truths related to the Spirit are characterized as:

1. the person of the Spirit (cf. John 14-16)
2. the baptism of the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13)
3. the fruit of the Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:22-23)
4. the gifts of the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12)
5. the filling of the Spirit (cf. Eph. 5:18)

Of all of these, Acts focuses on #5. The early church leaders were empowered, apparently again and again, to boldly and powerfully proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. In Stephen's case the effectiveness of his sermon cost him his life.

■ **"gazed intently"** Luke is very fond of this term (cf. Luke 4:20; 22:56; Acts 1:10; 3:4,12; 6:15; 7:55; 10:4; 11:6; 13:9; 14:9; 23:1). Stephen looked up, as was typical of the Jewish manner of prayer, but instead of praying, God allowed him to see into heaven itself.

■ **"saw the glory of God"** Notice that Stephen is not said to have seen God, but His glory. No one could see God and live (cf. Exod. 33:20-23). Job believed he would see God (cf. Job 19:25-27; Acts 7:55). Jesus promises that one day the pure in heart will see God (cf. Matt. 5:8). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY \(DOXA\)](#) at Acts 3:13.

■ **"Jesus standing at the right hand of God"** Jesus being at God's right hand is an anthropomorphic idiom (see Special Topic at Acts 2:33) for the place of divine power and authority. The fact that Jesus was standing shows His interest and care for the first Christian martyr.

God revealed Himself to Stephen in the form and manner that Stephen could receive. This does not mean to imply

1. that heaven is "up"
2. that God is sitting on a throne

It does mean to convey Jesus' care and concern. We must be careful of culturally conditioned anthropomorphic language as the source of doctrine. Modern western readers' trying to take every passage literally as a way to show trust or devotion to the Bible is an unfortunate cultural trend. God truly reveals Himself to His creation, but He does so in earthly ways and forms in which they can understand. There is surely an element of accommodation. Fallen, finite, human creatures are not able to fully comprehend the spiritual realm. God chooses things in our cultural and experiential world to use as analogies and metaphors to communicate to us. These are surely true, but not exhaustive.

**7:56 "Son of Man"** Stephen obviously is identifying Jesus with the "Righteous One" of Acts 5:52. His hearers would not have missed this Messianic affirmation. The term "son of man" has two OT usages:

1. it was a common phrase for a person (cf. Ezek. 2:1; Ps. 8:4)
2. it was used of the divine personage (i.e., Messiah) in Daniel 7:13-14 and Ps. 110:1

Therefore, it had connotations of both humanity and deity. This is why Jesus used it as a self-designation and also because it was not used by the rabbis who tended to use OT titles in exclusivistic, nationalistic, and militaristic ways. This reference by Stephen is one of only two uses of this phrase outside of the words of Jesus (cf. John 12:34).

**7:57-58** These hearers believed that Stephen had blasphemed by asserting that Jesus was the coming Son of Man (cf. Dan. 7:13). For these monotheistic (see Special Topic at Acts 2:39) Jews this was just too much! They did to Stephen what Moses mandated for blasphemy (cf. Lev. 24:14-16; Deut. 13:9; 17:7). Stephen's affirmation is either true or he is a blasphemer worthy of death! There can be no middle ground about the claims of Jesus (cf. John 14:6-9).

**7:57 "rushed at him with one impulse"** This is the very term used so often by Luke to describe the unity of the early disciples (cf. Acts 1:14; 2:46; 5:12; 15:25). The Sanhedrin was unified in their anger and rejection of Stephen (also see 18:12, where the Jews of Achaia reject Paul and 19:29 of the anger of the pagans of Ephesus against Christians).

**7:58 "driven him out of the city"** No one could be killed inside Jerusalem because it was "holy" ground!

■ **"stoning him"** It is often stated that the Jews under Roman occupation did not have the right of capital punishment. This shows that that is not always true. Mob violence could not be stopped quickly.

■ **"a young man named Saul"** In Jewish circles, one was considered young up to age 40. This is our first encounter with Saul of Tarsus by name, later to become Paul the Apostle. Paul heard Stephen's OT survey and possibly had heard him earlier in the synagogue of the Cilicians in Jerusalem (6:9). One wonders whether this began Saul's period of doubt, which he tried to deal with by persecuting Christians.

**7:59 "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit"** This is an aorist middle imperative. Notice that Stephen believed that he was going to heaven to be with Jesus (cf. 2 Cor. 5:6,8) and not to hades (i.e., the holding place of the dead like the Hebrew *sheol*, see Special Topic at Acts 2:27). Stephen may have witnessed Jesus' crucifixion, or at least had heard about it in detail because he uses two similar phrases (i.e., Acts 7:59 and 60, cf. Luke 23:34,46).

It is interesting to note that Stephen prays to Jesus, as did the disciples in Acts 1:24. However, in the rest of the NT prayer is made to the Father in the name of the Son.

**7:60 "falling on his knees"** Stoning was not always a quick experience. The text implies it took several minutes.

▣ **"he cried out with a loud voice"** This also mimics Jesus' experience. These words were as much for the crowd as for YHWH. These words must have echoed in Saul's ears.

▣ **"he fell asleep"** This is a biblical metaphor for death (ex. Job 3:13; 14:12; Ps. 76:5; 2 Sam. 7:12; 1 Kgs. 2:10; Jer. 51:39,57; Dan. 12:2; Matt. 27:52; John 11:11; Acts 7:60; 13:36; 1 Cor. 15:6,18,20; 1 Thess. 4:13; 2 Pet. 3:4). This does not affirm the doctrine of "soul-sleep."

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the purpose of Stephen's statement?  
What did it show about the Jews?  
Why were they so enraged?
2. How was Jesus like Moses, verse 37?
3. Why is the quote from Isaiah 66:1-2 in verses 49-50 so important?
4. What was so significant about Stephen's vision of Jesus?

# ACTS 8

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Saul Persecutes the Church	Saul Persecutes the Church	Spread of the Gospel to Samaria and the Sea Coast	Saul Persecutes the church	The Stoning of Stephen, Saul as Persecutor
8:1b-3	8:1-3	8:1b-3	8:1b-2	(7:55-8:3)
				8:2
			8:3	8:3
The Gospel is Preached in Samaria	Christ is Preached in Samaria		The Gospel is Preached in Samaria	Philip in Samaria
8:4-8	8:4-8	8:4-8	8:4-8	8:4-8
	The Sorcerer's Profession of Faith			Simon the Magician
8:9-13	8:9-13	8:9-13	8:9-13	8:9-13
	The Sorcerer's Sin			
8:14-24	8:14-24	8:14-24	8:14-17	8:14-17
			8:18-19	8:18-24
			8:20-24	
8:25	8:25	8:25	8:25	8:25
Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch	Christ is Preached to an Ethiopian		Philip and the Ethiopian Official	Philip Baptizes a Eunuch
8:26-33	8:26-40	8:26-40	8:26-30	8:26-33
			8:31-33	
8:34-40			8:34-37	8:34-40
			8:38-40	

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 8:1a

<sup>1</sup>Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death.

**8:1 "Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death"** This phrase concludes Acts 7. It is a periphrastic imperfect active. Paul remembered this experience with great shame (cf. Acts 22:20; 1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13,23; Phil. 3:6; 1 Tim. 1:13). Some relate this passage to 26:10, where it is assumed Paul voted in the Sanhedrin to put Christians to death.

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 8:1b-3

<sup>1b</sup>And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. <sup>2</sup>Some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him. <sup>3</sup>But Saul *began* ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.

■ **"on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem"** This probably represents the activity of the Jewish leaders (mostly Sadducees) because of the exploding growth and prominence of the early church in Jerusalem. However, it was also God's way of forcing the church to implement Acts 1:8! If not 1:8 then 8:1!

It is not by accident that Luke uses the term *ekklesia* (see Special Topic at Acts 5:11) for the new body of believers. These men and women did not see themselves as something separate from God's OT promises, but the fulfillment! The term was used in the Septuagint to translate "the congregation" (MT - *qahal*) of Israel (cf. Acts 7:38); now it is used of the fellowship of believers in Jerusalem.

Luke is very fond of the term "great" (*megas*). He uses it twenty-five times in his Gospel and twenty-nine times in Acts. In Acts 8 he uses it for:

1. great persecution, Acts 8:1
2. great lamentation, Acts 8:2
3. loud voice, Acts 8:7
4. someone great, Acts 8:9
5. to the greatest, Acts 8:10
6. great miracles, Acts 8:13

■ **"they were all scattered throughout the region. . .except the apostles"** It is extremely interesting that the persecution bypassed the Apostles and landed squarely on the Hellenistic Jewish Christians. Apparently at this stage the Apostles were still content to remain within Judaism. This event occurred some time after their meeting with Jesus in Galilee (cf. Matt. 28:18-20) Pentecost and still the Apostolic leadership was content to remain and preach only to Jews or proselytes and only in the Jerusalem area.

■ **"scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria"** This is in fulfillment of Luke's Great Commission mentioned in Acts 1:8. It has been some time now since Jesus spoke these words and apparently persecution was the only means of getting the church to go into all the world. The church is still reluctant!

**8:2 "Some devout men buried Stephen"** The term "devout men" is usually used of spiritually sensitive Jews (cf. Luke 2:25). It is possible that this refers to Jewish Christians or simply Jews who disagreed with the illegal procedures (i.e., mob violence) and execution of Stephen. The *Mishnah* permits the burial of blasphemers, but not with the loud lamentations made by those who bury them. These devout men grieved openly

1. in defiance of what happened
2. in reference to the fact that what happened was not officially sanctioned

**8:3 "Saul began ravaging the church"** This verb is an imperfect middle indicative. This can mean the beginning of an action in past time (cf. NASB, NJB) or recurrent action (cf. NKJV, NRSV, TEV).

The term "ravage" meant "the tearing of a body by an animal." It is used in the Septuagint of animals in Exod. 22:13; Ps. 74:13 and of military defeat in Jer. 28:2 and 31:18. Paul apparently was struggling with the truth of Stephen's statements, and may have tried to cover up his internal tension by aggressively persecuting the church (cf. Acts 9:1,13,21; 22:4,19; 26:10-11; 1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13; Phil. 3:6; 1 Tim. 1:13).

See Special Topic: Church at Acts 5:11.

■ **"entering house by house"** This phrase could be understood in two ways:

1. Paul found out where the Apostles had visited (cf. Acts 5:42)
2. there were several house churches even at this early date in Jerusalem where believers met regularly

The early Christians would meet at

1. the local synagogues every Sabbath
2. the Temple on special days or even most days
3. special locations or numerous homes on Sundays

■ **"dragging off men and women"** This is a verb that is used for Satan sweeping a third of the stars from heaven in Rev. 12:4. It is used several times in Acts (cf. Acts 8:3; 14:19; 17:6). Saul was vicious in his persecution (cf. Acts 26:10). This is evidenced by the phrase "men and women." He tore apart families of sincere believers and had them imprisoned and some even killed (cf. Acts 9:1,13,21; 22:4,19; 26:10,11; Gal. 1:13; 23; 1 Tim. 1:13). This is why he later calls himself "the least of the saints" (cf. 1 Cor. 15:9; Eph. 3:8).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 8:4-8**

<sup>4</sup>Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word. <sup>5</sup>Philip went down to the city of Samaria and *began* proclaiming Christ to them. <sup>6</sup>The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing. <sup>7</sup>For *in the case of* many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out of *them* shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed. <sup>8</sup>So there was much rejoicing in that city.

**8:4 "those who had been scattered went about preaching the word"** Notice it was not the Apostles, because they remained in Jerusalem, but the Hellenistic Jewish Christians scattered throughout the region who became the early evangelists. It is amazing that the worldwide mission of the church was instigated, not by the Apostles, but by Stephen and Philip.

The "word" here must surely mean the gospel, but also the added worldwide, non-Jewish focus of Stephen (Great Commission, 1:8; Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:47).

**8:5 "Philip"** He is one of "the Seven" mentioned in Acts 6:5 (cf. Acts 21:8-9). He is depicted in three evangelistic settings: (1) Samaria; (2) the Ethiopian Eunuch; and (3) ministry in the Palestinian coastal area. These "seven" had a heart for evangelism.



■ **"went down to the city of Samaria"** There is a manuscript question over whether the text reads "the city of Samaria" or "a city of Samaria." Manuscript attestation is in favor of the definite article (cf. MSS, P<sup>74</sup>, κ, A, B). However, this city was not known by the name Samaria at this time, but as Sebaste. During this Roman period the term Samaria was used of the district. The major city of Samaria would have been Shechem, then called Neapolis and today Nablus. It has been theorized that this city may be Gitta because that is the traditional home of Simon Magus. This theory is from Justin Martyr, who was also from this area.

■ **"and began proclaiming Christ to them"** The Samaritans were hated by the Jews because they considered them to be half-breeds (cf. Ezra 4:1-3). This was related to the Assyrian exile of 722 b.c. that repopulated the area of the northern Ten Tribes with pagans who intermarried with the small remaining Jewish population (cf. 2 Kings 17:24-41).

This group of people was also ministered to by Jesus. Jesus revealed His Messiahship to a woman of Samaria and her village (cf. John 4). Now Philip preaches about "the Christ" (definitive article), which is the Greek translation of "The Messiah" (see Special Topic at Acts 2:31). The OT title relates to YHWH's promise of sending One who would set up the new kingdom, inaugurate the new age of the Spirit. This event is foreshadowed in Jesus' ministry and specifically mandated in Jesus' closing words (1:8).

**8:6 "The crowds with one accord"** The phrase "one accord" is very popular with Luke. See note at Acts 1:14.

■ **"as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing"** This refers to miracles confirming Philip's message (cf. Acts 8:7). These same manifestations of the Spirit accompanied Jesus, the Twelve, the Seventy, and Peter and John preaching.

**8:7** Demon possession is a reality in our world (cf. Merrill F. Unger's two books: [1] *Biblical Demonology* and [2] *Demons in the World Today*). See the two Special Topics at Acts 5:16.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 8: 9-13**

**<sup>9</sup>Now there was a man named Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great; <sup>10</sup>and they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, "This man is what is called the Great Power of God." <sup>11</sup>And they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts. <sup>12</sup>But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike. <sup>13</sup>Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed.**

**8:9 "a man named Simon"** Whether this man truly believed (cf. Acts 8:13,18) or was simply a charlatan seeking power is uncertain. I would like to give him the benefit of the doubt based on Acts 8:24. It is amazing how much tradition the early church developed around this man, but all of it is speculative (cf. *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 5, pp. 442-444).

**NASB, NRSV "magic"**

**NKJV, TEV "sorcery"**

**NJB "magic arts"**

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: MAGIC**

**8:10 "This man is what is called the Great Power of God"** This was a title for the high god of the Greco-Roman Pantheon (i.e., Zeus). In Aramaic it would be "This is the power of the god who is called great." This man had thoroughly tricked the locals. He may have even tricked himself (cf. Acts 8:9,13).

**8:12 "believed"** See Special Topic: Believe, Faith, Trust at Acts 3:16 and OT Believe at Acts 6:5.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"preaching the good news"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"preached the things"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"was proclaiming the good news"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"message about the good news"</b>

This is the Greek verb *euangelizō*, which is a compound of good (*eu*) and message (*angelizō*). We get the English words evangel, evangelize, and evangelism from this Greek term. Philip presented the story of Jesus to these Samaritans and they responded in saving faith.

- ▣ **"about the kingdom of God"** See the Two Special Topics on this subject at Acts 1:3.
- ▣ **"the name of Jesus Christ"** See Special Topic at Acts 2:21.
- ▣ **"they were being baptized"** See Special Topic at Acts 2:38.
- ▣ **"men and women alike"** Contextually there may be two significances to this phrase.
  1. Paul persecuted "men and women (cf. Acts 8:3)," but the gospel also was saving "men and women"
  2. In Judaism only men participated in the initial Jewish rite of circumcision, but now in the gospel, both genders participated in the initial rite of baptism.

**8:13 "Simon believed"** Most evangelicals use this term "believed" (See Special Topic at Acts 3:16) in a very definitive sense, but there are places in the NT (e.g., John 8:31) where it denotes something less than conversion (cf. John 8:59).

Initial faith is not the only criteria (cf. Matt. 13:1-9,10-23; 24:13). Continuance and obedience are also evidence of a true relationship with Christ.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSEVERANCE**

- ▣ **"he continued on with Philip"** This is a periphrastic imperfect. Notice the sequence.
  1. he heard, Acts 8:6-7,12
  2. he saw, Acts 8:6-7,13
  3. he believed, Acts 8:13
  4. he was baptized, Acts 8:13
  5. he went with Philip, Acts 8:13

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 8:14-24**

**<sup>14</sup>Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, <sup>15</sup>who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>16</sup>For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>17</sup>Then they *began* laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit. <sup>18</sup>Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, <sup>19</sup>saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." <sup>20</sup>But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! <sup>21</sup>You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. <sup>22</sup>Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. <sup>23</sup>For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity." <sup>24</sup>But Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so**

**that nothing of what you have said may come upon me."**

**8:14 "when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John"** Ministry to the Samaritans was forbidden to the disciples during Jesus' lifetime (cf. Matt. 10:5). Apparently the Apostles wanted to give their official sanction to this radical and unusual movement of the Holy Spirit among this traditionally hated racial group. This area was specifically mentioned in Acts 1:8. As was typical, Philip caught Jesus' implication of world-wide evangelization quicker than the Twelve.

Notice that believing in Jesus is parallel to "receiving the word of God." The word of God can stand for several things.

1. God's total communication to human beings
2. God's recorded communication to human beings (i.e., Scripture)
3. God's Son (i.e., the Word, cf. John 1:1) who is the ultimate revelation of God (cf. Heb. 1:3)

Notice that Peter and John were sent. Peter was the acknowledged leader of the apostolic group and John the one who earlier wanted to call down fire on the Samaritans (cf. Luke 9:54).

**8:15 "who came and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit"** There are tremendous problems trying to build a theology of salvation from Acts for the following reason: the order of events and the events themselves surrounding salvation differs from passage to passage. The Holy Spirit in this passage refers to a confirmation, like Pentecost, showing that God had accepted and saved these Samaritans. They could not have truly been saved in the first place (i.e., receive is perfect middle indicative) without the work of the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:9).

I think the experience of Pentecost set a pattern, which God reproduced in the experience of different racial and geographical people groups, to show and confirm to the believing Jewish church that God Himself had fully and completely accepted a new group. The Spirit's manifestation in Acts (i.e., Pentecost) is thereby theologically different from the Corinthian tongues.

This text cannot be used to demand a Corinthian-like experience to confirm salvation (cf. 1 Cor. 12:29-30, which is a series of questions which expect a "no" answer). Luke records what occurred, not what should occur every time.

**8:16-17** This is different from the stated order of events in Acts 2:38. The discrepancy is due to the specific action of the Holy Spirit: (1) in Acts 2:38 in relation to salvation and (2) in Acts 8:16 in relation to a Pentecostal type of experience. The same "Holy Spirit event" of Acts 2 now occurred with Samaritans. This was not for their benefit alone, but mostly for the Jewish Christian community. It showed them that God had fully accepted the Samaritans! This is not meant to assert a two-step initial salvation experience.

Please notice that it was Peter and John who noticed the absence of the special manifestation of the Spirit that they had experienced at Pentecost. This is not to imply that the miraculous signs which accompanied Philip's preaching were not true manifestations of the Spirit (cf. Acts 8:13). Peter and John wanted a Samaritan Pentecost! This is so important because when Cornelius has the same experience (i.e., Acts 10), Peter knew that God had fully accepted a Roman military man and his family. The gospel is for all people. This is the great truth which this experience reveals in Acts!

**8:16** This could be called the Samaritan Pentecost.

**8:17** This cannot be a proof-text for the necessity of laying on hands. This procedure, for this purpose, does not occur again in Acts. It does express the power and authority of the Apostles. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: LAYING ON OF HANDS](#) at Acts 6:6.

**8:20** The theological question for us is the soteriological question for Simon. Was he saved or not? Peter's word can be taken as a curse or a warning. All new believers have weak and incorrect information about the gospel, but does Simon's denote an added element of egotism? Can people be saved with conflicting priorities in their lives?

■ **"the gift of God"** Here the Spirit stands for all of God's work on behalf of sinful rebellious humanity (cf. Isa. 55:1-2; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38; Luke 11:13; Acts 2:38).

**8:21 "You have no part or portion in this matter"** The first term "part" (i.e., *meris*) means a portion in common. It has a negative connotation here and in 2 Cor. 6:15.

The second term "portion" (i.e., *klēros*) is the OT word for "lot," which was the way they determined the will of God (i.e., *Urim* and *Thummim*). They were used to divide the Promised Land among the tribes (cf. Jos. 12-19). Therefore, it is used in the sense of inheritance. This term came to be used in English for "clergy," but in the NT it refers to all believers.

■ **"your heart is not right before God"** This may be an allusion to Ps. 78:37. The terms "right" and "just" (see Special Topic at Acts 3:14) and their various forms, come from a term for a river reed found in Mesopotamia. It was fifteen to twenty feet tall and straight. God took this word, which was used in construction (checking the horizontal straightness of walls), to describe His own ethical character. God is the standard, ruler, straight edge by which all humans are judged. In light of this, all fail the test (cf. Rom. 3:9-18,23).

**8:22 "repent"** This is an aorist active imperative, which denotes urgency. See note and Special Topic at Acts 2:38.

■ **"pray"** This is an aorist passive (deponent) imperative. Talking to God is evidence of a personal relationship, as conviction, which leads to repentance, is evidence of the indwelling Spirit!

■ **"if"** This is a first class conditional sentence, which is assumed to be true for the author's literary purposes or from his perspective. In this sentence it denotes a contingency based on Simon's willingness to repent and pray for forgiveness. His mindset and actions are a serious deviation from normative Christianity.

■ **"the intention of your heart"** Sin begins in the thought life. The rabbis say that the mind is like a plowed garden ready for seed. What we allow in through our eyes and ears takes root. If we dwell on it, these thoughts become actions. This is why the NT asserts that we should "gird up the loins of our minds" (cf. 1 Pet. 1:13) or "renew your mind" (cf. Rom 12:2; Eph. 4:23).

## 8:23

**NASB, NRSV "the gall of bitterness"**

**NKJV "poisoned by bitterness"**

**TEV "full of bitter envy"**

**NJB "bitterness of gall"**

The terms "gall" (*cholē*) and "bitterness" (*pikros*) both refer to a bitter spirit, usually associated with anger and apostasy (cf. Deut. 29:18; 32:28-33; Heb. 12:15). Paul uses the term "bitter" several times in lists of things to avoid (cf. Rom. 3:14; Eph. 4:31).

**NASB "in the bondage of iniquity"**

**NKJV "bound by iniquity"**

**NRSV "chains of wickedness"**

**TEV "a prisoner of sin"**

**NJB "chains of sin"**

This may be an allusion to the work of the Messiah (cf. Isa. 58:6). Jesus could free Simon from this evil bondage to personal power as he freed him from the penalty of sin. Sin has two aspects: (1) death both physically and spiritually and (2) who is in control in the sinner's life (it can affect both the saved and the lost, cf. 1 Cor. 3:1-3). Sin must be dealt with both in time and in eternity; its penalty and power must be

dealt with, but only Christ and the Spirit can do it, but we as believers must allow Them to!

**8:24 "Pray to the Lord for me yourselves"** This is an aorist passive imperative (plural, which may refer to the entire mission team). Simon repeats Peter's words from Acts 8:22. Peter's words have frightened him. I believe Simon is a believer, but a new, baby one.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 8:25**

**<sup>25</sup>So, when they had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.**

**8:25 "solemnly testified"** See note at Acts 2:40.

▣ **"and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans"** This shows the marked change of attitude on the part of the Apostles to the Samaritans.

It seems that "the word of the Lord" and "the gospel" are synonymous.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 8:26-40**

**<sup>26</sup>But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert road.) <sup>27</sup>So he got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship, <sup>28</sup>and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah. <sup>29</sup>Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot." <sup>30</sup>Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" <sup>31</sup>And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. <sup>32</sup>Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: "He was led as a sheep to slaughter; And as a lamb before its shearer is silent, So He does not open His mouth. <sup>33</sup>In humiliation His judgment was taken away; Who will relate His generation? For His life is removed from the earth." <sup>34</sup>The eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please *tell me*, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?" <sup>35</sup>Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him. <sup>36</sup>As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" <sup>37</sup>And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." <sup>38</sup>And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him. <sup>39</sup>When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing. <sup>40</sup>But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities until he came to Caesarea.**

**8:26 "an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip"** Here "the angel of the Lord" and "the Holy Spirit" seem to be synonymous (cf. Acts 8:29). This is common in Acts. See note at Acts 5:19.

▣ **"Get up and go south"** These are both imperatives. This could refer to one of two roads to Egypt. This message may have been audible because of its specificity. This is obviously a divinely prepared evangelistic encounter (like Paul's).

NASB	"(This is a desert road)."
NKJV	"This is desert"
NRSV	"(This is a wilderness road)"

**TEV**                    **"(This road is not used nowadays)"**  
**NJB**                    **"the desert road"**

If this is a comment by Luke, is Luke clarifying his source, or is this is a comment from Luke's source (probably Philip, cf. Acts 21:8)? These questions cannot be answered with certainty. Inspiration covers Bible productions no matter how many separate persons are involved.

**8:27 "a court official"** The term "official" is literally the term "eunuch." However, it is uncertain whether he was a physical eunuch or simply an official at court (derived meaning). In the OT, Potiphar is called a eunuch and yet he is married (cf. Gen. 39:1). In the OT, Deut. 23:1 forbids a eunuch from becoming a part of the Jewish community; however, in Isaiah 56:3-5, this ban is removed. This clearly shows the new age of the Spirit has dawned. Whether this man was a god-fearer or a proselyte is simply uncertain, but probable. The descriptive phrase implies he was a high government official.

■ **"Candace, queen of the Ethiopians"** Candace is a title like "Pharaoh" or "Caesar." The reason the queen is mentioned is because the king in Ethiopia was considered to be a deity and, therefore, it was beneath him to deal with simple administrative or political affairs.

**8:28 "reading the prophet Isaiah"** Apparently this man had bought an expensive leather scroll of Isaiah, which would have been over 29 feet long (i.e., one found in the Dead Sea Scrolls). By the Spirit's direction, he had opened it to the Messianic passage of Isaiah 53:7-8 and was reading it.

**8:29 "the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go up and join this chariot'"** This is an aorist passive imperative. It literally meant "be glued." The Spirit is giving Philip every specific guidance.

**8:30 "Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet"** Ancients all read aloud even when alone.

■ **"Do you understand what you are reading"** What a great question! It is possible to read Scripture and not clearly see its intent. The Spirit is directing Philip to a "divine appointment" which will

1. show the new age has dawned
2. give a powerful witness to another people group

**8:31** A. T. Robertson's *Word Pictures in the New Testament* comments on this verse, "This is a mixed condition, the conclusion coming first belongs to the fourth class. . .with 'an' and the optative, but the condition. . .is of the first class. . .a common enough phenomenon in Koine" (p. 110). This first class condition, like Luke 19:40 uses *ean* instead of *ei*. The condition is determined by the mood, not the construction (cf. Luke 19:40).

**8:32-33** This quote is from the Messianic passage from the Septuagint of Isa. 53:7-9. I am surprised that these verses are emphasized and not other Messianic verses in this OT context. However, Philip starts right where he was reading and explains the entire passage in light of the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. The OT prophecy has been fulfilled and forgiveness through Christ is offered to everyone!

**8:35 "Philip opened his mouth"** This shows the centrality of the OT passage concerning "the Suffering Servant" to gospel proclamation. I believe Jesus, Himself, showed the early church how these ancient prophecies applied to Himself (cf. Luke 24:27).

**8:36 "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized"** Philip's gospel message included baptism (cf. Matthew 3; 28:19; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:1-11; Col. 2:12)! See Special Topic at Acts 2:38. Notice he did not need approval from the Apostles in Jerusalem to baptize a convert. Baptism is not a denominational issue, but a kingdom issue. We must be careful of the denominational traditions that have

so muddied the biblical waters as far as expected procedures in our day!

Was the eunuch worried about being accepted?

1. racial issue
2. physical issue
3. socio-economic issue
4. catechism issue

All barriers are down in Jesus Christ (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13). Whosoever will may come (cf. John 1:12; 3:16; Rom. 10:9-13)!

**8:37** This verse, which records the eunuch's confession, is not included in the ancient Greek papyri manuscripts P<sup>45</sup> (Chester Beatty Papyri), P<sup>74</sup> (Bodmer Papyri), or the ancient uncial Greek manuscripts  $\alpha$ , A, B, or C. Neither is it present in some of the ancient Vulgate, Syriac, Coptic, or Ethiopian translations. Verse 37 is not original to Acts. UBS<sup>4</sup> gives its omission an "A" rating, meaning certain. It is not even included in the text of NASB (1970) edition, but is included in the 1995 update with brackets.

**8:38-39 "went down into the water. . .came up out of the water"** This is not a proof-text for immersion. The context implies they walked into a body of water, not the method of the baptism. Be careful of your preconceived biases!

**8:39 "the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away"** Whether this is a miraculous occurrence like Elijah's (cf. 1 Kgs. 18:12; 2 Kgs. 2:16) or Ezekiel's (cf. Ezek. 3:14; 8:3) or simply a reference to his immediate departure is uncertain. The Spirit was intimately involved in this conversion. Notice also that extensive follow-up and catechism apparently did not occur, but the convert had the scroll of Isaiah and the indwelling Spirit!

▣ **"went on his way rejoicing"** The Good News is always accompanied by rejoicing (cf. Acts 8:8). Irenaeus records the tradition that this eunuch became a gospel missionary to his own people. The Spirit Himself must have done the follow-up discipling!

**8:40** Philip continued (imperfect middle indicative) his evangelistic ministry in the Philistine town of Ashdod (i.e., *Azotus*) on his way home to Caesarea by the sea. It is obvious that Philip understood the universal evangelistic implication of the Samaritans and the Ethiopians. The gospel included even Philistines!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did God allow persecution to come upon the early Church?
2. Why was the gospel being preached to Samaritans so significantly?
3. Was Simon a believer?
4. Why did the Samaritans not receive the Holy Spirit when they believed?
5. What type of persons does the eunuch represent?
6. Why is verse 37 not in all Bibles?



# ACTS 9

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Conversion of Saul	The Damascus Road: Saul Converted	Conversion of Saul of Tarsus	The Conversion of Saul	The Conversion of Saul
9:1-9	9:1-9	9:1-9	9:1-2 9:3-4 9:5a 9:5b-6 9:7-9	9:1-2 9:3-9
9:10-19a	Ananias Baptizes Saul 9:10-19	9:10-19a	9:10a 9:10b 9:11-12 9:13-14 9:15-16 9:17-19a	9:10-12 9:13-19a
Saul Preaches at Damascus	Saul Preaches Christ		Saul Preaches in Damascus	Saul's Preaching at Damascus
9:19b-22	9:20-22	9:19b-22	9:19b-20 9:21 9:22	9:19b-22
Saul Escapes From the Jews	Saul Escapes Death	Saul's First Visit to Jerusalem		
9:23-25	9:23-25	9:23-25	9:23-25	9:23-25
Saul at Jerusalem	Saul at Jerusalem		Saul in Jerusalem	Saul's Visit to Jerusalem
9:26-30	9:26-30	9:26-30	9:26-30	9:26-30
	The Church Prospers			A Lull
9:31	9:31	9:31	9:31	9:31
The Healing of Aeneas	Aeneas Healed	Peter's Journey to Lydda and Joppa	Peter Sees Lydda in Joppa	Peter Cures a Paralytic at Joppa
9:32-35	9:32-35	9:32-35	9:32-35	9:32-35
Dorcas Restored to Life	Dorcas Restored to Life			Peter Raises a Woman to Life at Joppa

## READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The emphasis in Acts is beginning to shift from
  1. the Apostle Peter to the Apostle Paul
  2. from Palestine to the Mediterranean world
  3. from Jews to Gentiles.
  
- B. Paul's conversion is such an important point in church history that it is recorded three times in the book of Acts.
  1. Luke's account, Acts 9:1-30
  2. Paul's account before the mob in Jerusalem, Acts 22:3-16
  3. Paul's account before Agrippa II at Caesarea, Acts 26:4-18
  4. Paul also briefly mentions this same period in Gal. 1:13-17 and 2 Cor. 11:32-33
  
- C. The similarities between Stephen's message and Paul's messages are obvious. Paul began to minister to the same Hellenistic Jews to whom Stephen had preached. Paul heard Stephen's sermon of Acts 7 (cf. Acts 7:58; 8:1; 22:20). It is even possible that Paul was one of the leaders of the Hellenist Synagogues in Jerusalem who debated with Stephen and lost!
  
- D. Some possible influential factors in Paul's conversion
  1. failure of Judaism to provide internal peace and joy
  2. the life and teachings of Jesus were well known and discussed in rabbinical circles (especially Jerusalem)
  3. he heard Stephen's sermon and witnessed his death (possibly even debated Stephen)
  4. he saw the demeanor and faith of Christians under persecution
  5. his personal encounter with the resurrected Lord changed everything

### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 9:1-9**

**<sup>1</sup>Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the**

high priest,<sup>2</sup> and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup> As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him;<sup>4</sup> and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"<sup>5</sup> And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,<sup>6</sup> but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do."<sup>7</sup> The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.<sup>8</sup> Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus.<sup>9</sup> And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

**9:1 "Saul, still breathing threats and murder"** This is literally "snorting." In Acts 26:11, Paul says of himself, that he was furiously enraged at them. Apparently Paul even killed some Christians (cf. Acts 8:1).

■ **"the disciples of the Lord"** This term means learners. It only appears in the Gospels and Acts. This term is rapidly replaced by the term "saints." Notice the number of terms used in this chapter to describe the people of God:

1. disciples, Acts 9:1,10,19,25,26,36,38
2. the Way, Acts 9:2
3. saints, Acts 9:13,32,41
4. brothers, Acts 9:17.

■ **"went to the high priest"** This is obviously a reference to the Sanhedrin (cf. Acts 26:10). See note on Sanhedrin at Acts 4:5.

**9:2 "for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus"** The Roman government had given limited authority to the Sanhedrin to conduct and control events in the synagogues or related to Jewish life in the Empire (cf. I Macc. 15:16-21 or Josephus, *Antiq.* 14.10.2). Judaism was a recognized, legal religion of the Greco-Roman world.

Apparently these were letters of extradition for the Jewish Christians who had fled Jerusalem in the face of the Jewish persecution (cf. Acts 9:14,21; 22:5; 26:10).

■ **"if"** This is a third class conditional sentence meaning potential action.

■ **"The Way"** This was the early designation for believers (cf. Acts 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22 and possibly 18:25,26). It has an OT background, speaking of lifestyle faith (cf. Ps. 1:1; 16:11; 119:105; 139:24; Pro. 4:10-19). Jesus uses this concept in Matt. 7:14 and uses the title for Himself in John 14:6. Christianity is a personal encounter followed by a daily relationship.

■ **"women"** The mention of women three times amidst the groups that Paul persecuted is a way to show the intensity of Paul's actions (cf. Acts 8:3; 22:4). Luke has a special concern for women!

**9:3 "Damascus"** This was an ancient city and capital of the Roman Province of Syria just north/northeast of Galilee. It was 150 miles from Jerusalem.

■ **"and suddenly"** This term also has the connotation of "unexpectedly."

■ **"a light from heaven"** Paul relates his experience with this light differently in his three accounts of his experience in Acts

1. "a light from heaven flashed around him" (Acts 9:3)
2. "a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me" (Acts 22:6)
3. "I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me" (Acts 26:13)

Paul vividly remembers this event! It is just possible that this light is theologically/physically related to the *Shekinah* glory of YHWH's presence with Israel during the Wilderness Wandering Period. The Hebrew concept of "glory" takes on an aspect of bright light from this historical event (see [SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY \(DOXA\)](#) at Acts 3:13). This light would have showed Saul the rabbi that this was the personal presence of God.

**9:4 "heard a voice"** This heavenly voice was something Judaism was familiar with. It is known as a *bath kol*. This provided a means for the Jews to receive information and/or confirmation from God (during the interbiblical period between the closing of Malachi [or Chronicles] and the beginning of the ministry of John the Baptist). This form of revelation was necessary because there were no inspired prophets during this period.

■ **"Saul, Saul"** In Hebrew this repeating of the name was a way to show intensity.

■ **"why are you persecuting Me"** This is extremely significant theologically because it shows the continuity and intimacy between Jesus and His church (cf. Matt. 10:40; 25:40,45). Paul was persecuting the Church, but Jesus took it personally. From Acts 26:14 we know that Jesus spoke to Paul in Aramaic.

It is also theologically significant that Christianity is both a person (Jesus) and a group (church). The corporate metaphors used in the NT for the church are:

1. body
2. family
3. building
4. saints

All emphasize the corporate nature of faith (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7). It starts individually, but moves to the group (conscientiousness and concern). This individual corporality can be seen in Paul's discussion of Adam and Christ in Rom. 5:12-21. The One is part of the all; the One can affect the all (cf. Joshua 7).

**9:5a "Who are You, Lord"** What did Paul imply by the use of "Lord"?

1. sir, title of respect (ex. John 4:11)
2. YHWH, translated by Lord in the OT (ex. Gen. 2:4)

If surprise is the focus, then possibly #1 applies, but if the light from heaven denotes an action of God, then #2 is the case. If #2, then suddenly Paul's rabbinical theology is challenged. What a confusing and frightful time this must have been! See [SPECIAL TOPIC: NAMES FOR DEITY](#) at Acts 1:6.

**9:5b-6b** These verses are not found in any early Greek manuscripts. They are found in only one Latin family of manuscripts. Erasmus, translating from the Vulgate, put them in his first edition of the Greek New Testament in 1516. These words are found in Acts 26:14. Their inclusion here shows a tendency of scribes to make parallels uniform and full of all details.

**9:5 "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting"** Paul is claiming to have seen the Glorified Christ (cf. Acts 22:14; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8-9). Paul will later understand this experience as an integral part of his call to be the Apostle to the Gentiles.

The crucified carpenter from Nazareth is the glorified Messiah!

**9:6** This verse is explained in detail in Acts 9:10-19.

■ **"must do"** See full note on *dei* at Acts 1:16.

**9:7 "The men who traveled with him"** This possibly refers to

1. the Temple police accompanying Paul
2. other Jewish zealots, probably from Hellenistic synagogues
3. other theological students from Jerusalem

■ **"hearing the voice but seeing no one"** There is a seeming discrepancy between Acts 9:7 and 22:9 in the details of this event. There have been several theories how to deal with it:

1. It is a matter of syntax. The verb "to hear" can take a genitive (Acts 9:7) or an accusative (Acts 22:9). These different forms have different implications or connotations. The NRSV, in a footnote, has "The Greek suggests that his companions heard the sound of the voice, but not the words spoken."
2. Others say it is similar to John 12:29-30 about Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and the voice from heaven.
3. Others say that it is Paul's voice that is being referred to, not Jesus'. They heard Paul speaking, but they did not hear Jesus speaking.
4. Others say this is similar to the Synoptic problem. Different Gospel writers record the same events, sermons, and actions of Jesus in differing ways, which is different eyewitness accounts.

**9:8 "though his eyes were open, he could see nothing"** Paul apparently had eye problems from this point on (cf. Gal. 4:13-15; 6:11). I, personally, believe Paul's "thorn in the flesh" (cf. 2 Cor. 12:7-10; Gal. 4:13-15; 6:11) was Oriental ophthalmia, possibly caused by this experience. There is irony here; Paul experiences a reorientation. He thought he could see (physically and spiritually, cf. John 9), but he found out that he was blind. After this encounter with Christ he was physically blinded for a period, but his spiritual eyes were wide open!

**9:9 "And he was three days without sight"** This is a periphrastic imperfect. Some commentators see this as the occasion of Paul's vision of heaven recorded in 2 Cor. 12:1-4.

■ **"and neither ate nor drank"** Paul was fasting and praying (cf. Acts 9:11). What a reorientation must have been occurring in Paul's mind (theology) and heart (desire)! He was beginning the transformation from persecutor of the gospel to proclaimer of the gospel!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 9:10-19a**

<sup>10</sup>Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." <sup>11</sup>And the Lord *said* to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying, <sup>12</sup>and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight." <sup>13</sup>But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem; <sup>14</sup>and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name." <sup>15</sup>But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; <sup>16</sup>for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake." <sup>17</sup>So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." <sup>18</sup>And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized; <sup>19</sup>and he took food and was strengthened.

**9:10 "Ananias"** This name means "YHWH is gracious." Apparently he was a believing Jew of good reputation, not a refugee (cf. Acts 22:12).

■ **"Here I am, Lord"** This is a Jewish idiom of availability (cf. Isa. 6:8). Verse 11 was obviously given verbally because it is very specific instruction.

**9:12 "he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias"** "In a vision" is not in the ancient Greek

manuscripts P<sup>74</sup>, α, and A, but it is in MSS B and C. The UBS4 put the shorter reading in the text but gives it a "C" rating (with difficulty in deciding). This verse shows that Ananias' coming, actions, and message were confirming Jesus' earlier words to Paul (cf. Acts 9:6)

■ **"lay his hands on him"** See Special Topic at Acts 6:6.

**9:13 "I have heard from many"** Obviously Ananias had heard the bad reports about Paul's vicious persecution of believers from the Jewish refugees from Jerusalem.

■ **"Your saints"** The term *hagioi* is related to the Greek word "holy" (*hagios*). The OT background (*kadosh*) relates to some thing, some person, or some place set apart by God for a special task. The term "saints" is always plural, except one time in Phil. 4:21, but even there it is in a plural context. To be a Christian is to be a part of a family, a community. There are no loners in the faith.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: SAINTS**

**9:14 "the chief priests"** In the OT the high priesthood was for life and was passed on to a special family of Levite's son (cf. Lev. 8-10). However, during the Roman period this position was purchased from the Roman officials. Therefore, there were several High Priests within the Sadducean family of Annas.

■ **"who call on Your name"** This phrase has important theological implications. Luke uses it several times in Acts for

1. someone addressing Jesus (cf. Acts 7:59)
2. someone who has accepted Jesus as Savior (cf. Acts 9:14,21)
3. an OT quote from Amos 9:12, where it refers to someone upon whom YHWH's name is called (i.e., believers, cf. Acts 15:17)
4. A way for someone to publicly affirm his faith in Jesus (cf. Acts 22:16)

This phrase is also part of Paul's plea to Israel from Joel 2:32 in Rom. 10:9-13 (cf. 2 Tim. 2:22). Peter uses this same passage (Joel 2:28-32) in his Pentecost sermon and invited those present to "call upon the name of the Lord" from Joel 2:32.

The name stands for the person. By invoking the name sinners beseech Jesus to act on their behalf and include them in His family. See Special Topic at Acts 2:22.

**9:15 "Go"** This is a present middle (deponent) imperative. Jesus authoritatively sends the reluctant Ananias to Saul.

■ **"for he is a chosen instrument of Mine"** Oh, the greatness of the grace and election of God! Paul does not fit the evangelical model of voluntary, volitional conversion. He was dramatically drafted!

**NASB, NKJV "before the Gentiles"**

**NRSV, NJB "to bring my name before Gentiles"**

**TEV "to make my name known to Gentiles"**

What a startling statement for a Jew to be told (cf. Eph. 3:7)! Yet, this has always been God's plan (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; Eph. 2:11-3:13, see Special Topic at Acts 1:8). Israel was only an instrument to reach the world, made in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27), but fallen (cf. Gen. 3:15).

■ **"and kings"** Paul spoke to governmental leaders, small and great, and finally to Caesar!

■ **"and the sons of Israel"** Paul's regular missionary pattern was to preach first at the local synagogue (cf. Rom. 1:16) in every city. This allowed the Jews and the God-fearers who knew the OT a chance to respond first to the gospel. Then he would turn to the pagans.

**9:16 "for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake"** Suffering is not the

exception, but the norm for Christians in a fallen world (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; John 15:18-21; 16:1-2; 17:14; Acts 14:22; Rom. 5:3-4; 8:17-18; 2 Cor. 4:7-12; 6:3-10; 11:24-33; Phil. 1:29; 1 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 3:12; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 4:12-16).

There is a theological relationship between the sufferings of Christ and the sufferings of His followers in this fallen realm. The book of 1 Peter shows this parallel.

1. Jesus' suffering, 1 Pet. 1:11; 2:21,23; 3:18; 4:1,13; 5:1

2. His followers', 1 Pet. 1:6-7; 2:19; 3:13-17; 4:1,12-19; 5:9-10

If the world rejected Him it will reject His (cf. John 7:7; 15:18-19; 17:14).

**9:17 "and after laying his hands on him"** There is no scriptural basis for the concept of "apostolic authority" in bestowing spiritual gifts. Ananias is an unknown lay believer in Damascus who becomes

1. God's spokesman and an agent in

2. Paul's being filled with the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 9:17)

3. Paul's physical healing (cf. Acts 9:18)

4. Paul's baptism (cf. Acts 9:18)

■ **"Brother Saul"** What a great example of obedience and love!

**9:18 "there fell from his eyes something like scales"** This is a technical medical term for the flaking of skin from a wound Luke uses to describe what happened to Paul's eyes in this moment of healing. The word scales is used of fish scales in the Septuagint (cf. Lev. 11:9,10,12; Deut. 14:9). The metaphorical extension can be seen in Num. 16:38, where it is used of flattened metal plates. In this context they were probably flakes of skin or crust which oozed from Paul's eyes.

■ **"was baptized"** Ananias apparently also baptized Paul (cf. Acts 8:36,38). NT baptism was an act of obedience to Jesus' example (cf. Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22) and command (cf. Matt. 28:19.) It marks a change of ownership and allegiance.

**9:19a "he took food and was strengthened"** Paul had been fasting and praying since the light knocked him to the ground (cf. Acts 9:9). After a three day total fast (no food or water), he must have been very weak.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 9:19b-22**

<sup>19b</sup>Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, <sup>20</sup>and immediately he *began* to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."  
<sup>21</sup>All those hearing him continued to be amazed, and were saying, "Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and *who* had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?" <sup>22</sup>But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this *Jesus* is the Christ.

**9:20 "he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues"** This is an imperfect active indicative. It can mean (1) the beginning of an action or (2) repeated action. What irony! He came earlier with a letter from the High Priests in Jerusalem to the synagogues in Damascus to persecute the followers of Jesus and now he came to the same synagogues preaching Jesus as the Messiah (cf. v 21).

■ **"He is the Son of God"** This is the only use of the title "Son of God" in the book of Acts (except for the quote of Ps. 2:7 in Acts 13:33). Its OT background reflects its significance: (1) the nation of Israel (cf. Hos. 11:1); (2) the King of Israel (cf. 2 Sam. 7:14); and (3) the Messiah (cf. Matt. 2:15). Paul's strict monotheism (see Special Topic at Acts 2:39) is being redefined!

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE SON OF GOD**



**9:21** This verse is in the form of a question which expects a "yes" answer.

■ **"destroyed"** This is a rare and intense word meaning to ravage, lay waste to, or totally destroy. It is found only here and in Gal. 1:13,23 in the NT and in IV Macc. 4:23. Paul was a vicious persecutor!

**9:22**

**NASB** "Saul kept increasing in strength"  
**NKJV** "Saul increased all the more in strength"  
**NRSV** "Saul became increasingly more powerful"  
**TEV** "Saul's preaching became even more powerful"  
**NJB** "Saul's power increased steadily"

This is an imperfect passive indicative. It took some time for Saul's gifts and skills to develop. In context this refers to Paul's preaching and debating skills (cf. TEV).

■ **"confounding"** This is an imperfect active indicative which denotes repeated action in past time. This is a compound term from "together" (*sun*) and "pour" (*cheō*). This word is only found in Acts.

1. Acts 2:6, bewildered
2. Acts 9:22, confounded
3. Acts 19:32, confusion
4. Acts 21:27, stir up
5. Acts 21:31, confusion

The Jews could not explain Paul's conversion or his powerful preaching of Jesus as the promised OT Messiah.

■ **"proving"** This word means to conclude (cf. Acts 16:10; 19:33) and by extension, to prove. Paul's method was much like Stephen's. They both used OT passages and their fulfillment in the life of Jesus of Nazareth to prove that He was the Messiah promised in the OT.

■ **"the Christ"** This is a way of referring to the Messiah (Anointed One, Promised Coming One, see Special Topic at Acts 2:31). Many times in Acts the definite article precedes the noun (ex. Acts 2:31,36; 3:18,20). Saul was asserting with power and conviction that Jesus of Nazareth, killed in Jerusalem, was indeed God's Son, the Messiah. If this was true, it changed everything for Jews (and Gentiles)! They had misunderstood and rejected Him. They had missed God's gift and remained in spiritual darkness and need.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 9:23-25**

**<sup>23</sup>When many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted together to do away with him, <sup>24</sup>but their plot became known to Saul. They were also watching the gates day and night so that they might put him to death; <sup>25</sup>but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a large basket.**

**9:23 "When many days had elapsed"** We must take into account Paul's personal account found in Gal. 1:15-24, where he spent a long period of time in Arabia. In this context Arabia refers to the Nabataean kingdom (ruled by Aretas IV, who reigned from 9 b.c. to a.d. 40) just southeast of Damascus. The three-year period probably reflects somewhere close to eighteen months. Jews counted part of a day as the whole day (cf. Matt. 26:61; 27:40,63); this reckoning was also used of years.

■ **"the Jews plotted together to do away with him"** The Jews apparently stirred up the civil authorities (cf. 2 Cor. 11:32-33). This must have been humiliating for Paul because he mentions this very event in his discussion of weakness in 2 Corinthians 11.

**9:25 "through an opening in the wall"** This must refer to a window in a private house whose back wall was part of the wall surrounding the city (cf. 2 Cor. 11:33; Josh 2:15; 1 Sam. 19:12).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 9:26-30**

**26**When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. **27**But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus. **28**And he was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord. **29**And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews; but they were attempting to put him to death. **30**But when the brethren learned of it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus.

**9:26 "he came to Jerusalem"** This was apparently eighteen to thirty-six months later (cf. Gal. 1:15-24). This verse shows the level of skepticism in which the Jerusalem believers held their former persecutor. Apparently Acts records several of Paul's visits to Jerusalem after his dramatic conversion.

1. Acts 9:26, first visit
2. Acts 11:30, relief visit
3. Acts 12:25, after mission
4. Acts 15:2, Jerusalem Council
5. Acts 18:22, brief visit with the church
6. Acts 21:17, visit with James and the elders and resulting Nazarite vow and arrest

**9:27 "Barnabas"** The popular meaning, though not etymological, was "son of encouragement." This was the great saint mentioned back in Acts 4:36 who later became Paul's first missionary companion. See full note and Special Topic at Acts 4:36.

▣ **"brought him to the apostles"** The only other account is Galatians 1:18.

▣ **"and described to them"** Barnabas knew and shared Saul's testimony. This opened the door to his acceptance (cf. Acts 9:28).

**9:28**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"moving about freely"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"coming in and going out"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"went in and out"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"went all over"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"to go around"</b>

This is an OT idiom of everyday life or activity (cf. Num. 27:17; 1 Kgs. 3:7).

**9:29 "he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews"** This refers to the same group (synagogues of Greek-speaking Jews in Jerusalem) who killed Stephen; now they are planning to kill Saul, who was also a Jew from the diaspora. They must have thought Stephen had returned!

**9:30 "when the brethren learned of it"** From 22:17-21 we learn that Jesus appeared to Paul at this time to tell him to flee Jerusalem. Jesus appeared to Paul several times during his ministry to encourage and guide him (cf. Acts 18:9-11; 22:17-21; and an angel of the Lord in Acts 27:23).

▣ **"Caesarea"** This refers to the Roman seaport on the Mediterranean coast of Palestine. This was the official headquarters of the Roman government in Palestine.

■ **"Tarsus"** Paul is going to drop out of sight now for several years in his home town. Tarsus was a free city. It was also the third largest center of learning in the ancient world, behind Alexandria and Athens. The universities in Tarsus emphasized philosophy, rhetoric, and law. Paul was obviously trained both in Greek rhetoric and philosophy as well as rabbinical Judaism.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 9:31**

**<sup>31</sup>So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.**

**9:31** This is a summary verse which concludes the account of Paul's conversion and introduces the travels of Peter. Luke uses these summary verses often in Acts. See Introduction IV Purpose and Structure, A.

■ **"the church"** See note and Special Topic at Acts 5:11 and notice how the singular "church" refers to many individual congregations. The term "church" can denote a local church (ex. Col. 1:18,24; 4:15,16), all churches of an area (ex. Eph. 1:22; 3:10,21; 5:23,24,25,27,29,32), and all churches universally (ex. Matt. 16:18).

■ Notice the items Luke chooses to mention.

1. peace in all churches
2. growing and increasing
3. comfort from the Spirit

What a change from the persecution of Acts 8:1! There were still problems, but God had met every need!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why was Paul so vehement in his persecution of the church?
2. Why are there three accounts of Paul's conversion in the book of Acts?
3. What is the significance of Paul being commissioned, laid-hands on, and baptized by Ananias?
4. What is the significance of Paul's use of Jesus as "The Son of God"?
5. Why does Luke not record Paul's three year excursion to Arabia?

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 9:32-10:48

- A. Although the book of Acts begins the transition from Peter to Paul, Acts 9:32-12:25 show the itinerant ministry of Peter.
- B. This section deals with Peter at Lydda, Acts 9:32-35; Joppa, Acts 9:36-43, 10:9-23; Caesarea, Acts 10:1-8, 23-48; and at Jerusalem, Acts 11:1-18; 12:1-17.
- C. This section is extremely important because it deals with the continuing struggle over the Gentile mission and Peter's part (as head of the Apostolic group) in that struggle. Luke deems the Cornelius account so important as to repeat it three times in this section.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

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## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 9:32-35

<sup>32</sup>Now as Peter was traveling through all *those regions*, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda. <sup>33</sup>There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years, for he was paralyzed. <sup>34</sup>Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and make your bed." Immediately he got up. <sup>35</sup>And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.

**9:32 "Peter was traveling"** Apparently the Apostles were preaching throughout Palestine and in neighboring countries.

▣ **"the saints"** This term is used in the book of Acts to describe the church. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: SAINTS](#) at Acts 9:13. The term "disciples" is gradually replaced by the term "saints." The term is related to the OT word "holy" and means, "set apart" for God's service. It is never used in the singular except one time in Phil. 4:21, which is a corporate context. This shows that to be a saint means to be "in community." See Special Topic at Acts 9:13. All believers are called "saints" in the NT! It is our position in Christ that is being emphasized.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: NEW TESTAMENT HOLINESS/SANCTIFICATION](#)

▣ **"Lydda"** The town of Lydda was located on the trade route from Babylon to Egypt. In the OT it was known as "Lod" (cf. 1 Chr. 8:12). It was about eleven miles inland from the Mediterranean Sea. This is the same area visited by Philip in Acts 8:40.

**9:33 "a man named Aeneas"** His Greek name means "praise." Whether he is a believer or unbeliever is uncertain, but apparently Peter is revisiting the established churches started by Philip.

▣ **"who had been bedridden eight years, for he was paralyzed"** This translation is the most common interpretation of this Greek phrase (NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV, NJB). However, the Greek phrase can mean "since eight years old" (cf. Newman and Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 199).

**9:34 "Jesus Christ heals you"** There is no article here, which implies that these two terms had become a common designation. This is a literary form known as an aoristic present, which means "this instant the Messiah is healing you."

▣ **"get up and make your bed"** These are two aorist active imperatives showing intensity and urgency!

▣ **"Immediately he got up"** This shows the man's faith in response to Peter's message about Jesus.

**9:35 "all who lived at Lydda"** This is a good example of a hyperbolic use of the term "all" in the Bible (cf. Gen. 41:37; Deut. 2:25; Luke 2:1; Rom. 11:26).

▣ **"Sharon"** This refers to the northern coastal plain in Palestine. It is about thirty miles in length running from Joppa to Caesarea.

▣ **"and they turned to the Lord"** The word "turn to" may reflect the OT word for repentance (*shub*). It implies turning from sin and self (repentance) and turning to (faith) the Lord (cf. Acts 11:21).

This little summary statement is included several times in this section, showing the great movement of the Spirit of God through Peter and later through Paul. This miraculous event opened the door for the proclamation of the gospel.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: REPENTANCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT](#)

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## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 9:36-43

<sup>36</sup>Now in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which translated *in Greek* is called Dorcas); this woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity which she continually did. <sup>37</sup>And it happened at that time that she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her body, they laid it in an upper room. <sup>38</sup>Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, having heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him, imploring him, "Do not delay in coming to us." <sup>39</sup>So Peter arose and went with them. When he arrived, they brought him into the upper room; and all the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing all the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them. <sup>40</sup>But Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed, and turning to the body, he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. <sup>41</sup>And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. <sup>42</sup>It became known all over Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. <sup>43</sup>And Peter stayed many days in Joppa with a tanner *named* Simon.

**9:36 "Joppa"** Today this town is known as Jaffa (*Yafo*). It was the ancient seaport for Jerusalem. Today it is part of the modern city of Tel Aviv-*Yafo*.

■ **"disciple"** The term "disciple" is used quite often in this section of Acts. It literally means "learner," but is used in the sense of believer.

■ **"Tabitha. . .Dorcas"** This lady's Aramaic name was *Tabitha*; her Greek name was *Dorcas*. Most Jews who had social or commercial contact with non-Jews had two names, an Aramaic one and a Greek one. Both of these names mean "gazelle," a symbol of grace and beauty (cf. Song of Songs 2:9, 17; 4:5; 7:3).

■ **"with deeds of kindness and charity"** This refers to Jewish alms-giving. This was a Jewish concept of weekly donations that developed in the Synagogue for the care of the needy Jewish people in the community. It was considered spiritually important by the Jews of Jesus' day. The church followed this pattern (cf. Acts 6). See Special Topic at Acts 3:2.

■ **"which she continually did"** This is an imperfect active indicative. This speaks of habitual action in past time.

**9:37 "they had washed her body, they laid it in an upper room"** The washing of the body was typical of the Jewish preparation for burial. In Jerusalem a body had to be buried the same day one died, but outside of Jerusalem, burial could be delayed for three days. See Special Topic at Acts 5:6.

**9:38 "sent two men to him"** These believers had heard of great miracles done by God through Peter and they believed that he could do something for this great Jewish Christian lady.

**9:39 "and all the widows stood beside him"** Apparently they were wearing the clothes that Dorcas had made for them of two different kinds: (1) the inner undergarments and (2) the outward cloaks.

**9:40 "But Peter sent them all out"** This is literally "threw them out." This is exactly what Jesus did in Mark 5:40. In fact, there are great similarities between the miracles performed in this section and the miracles performed in Jesus' lifetime. Jesus' ministry is the only model the Apostles had.

The question is, "Why did Peter want all of them to leave the room?" Jesus did this because He did not want to be known as a healer only and the gospel was not yet complete. But why did Peter do this? It seems that these miracles opened the door of faith, so it would seem he would want as many as possible to view it.

■ **"knelt down"** The usual position for Jewish prayer was standing with the arms and eyes raised to

heaven. However, in the Book of Acts, it is recorded several times that the disciples knelt down to pray. This apparently was for emphasis (cf. Acts 7:60; 20:36; 21:5), as it was with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (cf. Luke 22:41).

■ **"Tabitha, arise"** Apparently he was speaking Aramaic. Jesus and the Jews in Palestine of the first century all spoke Aramaic, not Hebrew. This is true even as far back as Ezra-Nehemiah (cf. Neh. 8:4-8).

**9:41 "saints"** See Special Topic: Saints at Acts 9:13.

**9:42 "and many believed in the Lord"** This is another summary statement that shows the great results of Peter's miracles and preaching ministry. See Special Topics at Acts 2:40 and 3:16.

**9:43 "Peter stayed many days in Joppa with a tanner named Simon"** Peter's Jewish legalism must have been breaking down already for him to stay with a ceremonially unclean tanner (had to deal with dead animal skins) such as Simon.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is the conversion of Paul recorded three times in Acts?
2. Why are the three accounts of Paul's conversion slightly different?
3. How much choice did Paul have in his conversion? Is his experience to be seen as normative?
4. Why did the Hellenistic Jews try to kill Paul?
5. If Peter and Paul used miracles to open the door for the gospel, why does God not use that method more today?

# ACTS 10

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Peter and Cornelius	Cornelius Sends a Delegation	The Conversion of Cornelius	Peter and Cornelius	Peter Visits a Roman Centurion
10:1-8	10:1-8	10:1-8	10:1-3  10:4a 10:4b-8	10:1-2 10:3-8
10:9-16	Peter's Vision 10:9-16	10:9-16	10:9-13 10:14 10:15-16	10:9-16
10:17-23a	Summons to Caesarea 10:17-23	10:17-23a	10:17-18 10:19-21 10:22-23a	10:17-23a
10:23b-33	Peter Meets Cornelius 10:24-33	10:23b-29  10:30-33	10:23b-29  10:30-33	10:23b-33
Peter Speaks in Cornelius' House	Preaching to Cornelius' Household		Peter's Speech	Peter's Address in the House of Cornelius
10:34-43	10:34-43	10:34-43	10:34-43	10:34-35 10:36-43
Gentiles Receive the Holy Spirit	The Holy Spirit Falls on the Gentiles		The Gentiles Welcome the Holy Spirit	Baptism of the First Gentiles
10:44-48	10:44-48	10:44-48	10:44-48	10:44-48

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

#### 1. First paragraph

2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The gospel is breaking out of its Jewish origins.
  1. Cornelius – a Roman military God-fearer
  2. the Ethiopian Eunuch – a Gentile God-fearer
- B. The work of the Greek-speaking Jews (the seven of Acts 6) is having an influence.
- C. The repeat of the Pentecostal experience shows God's acceptance of all people.
  1. Samaritans (Acts 8)
  2. Romans (Acts 10)
  3. Ethiopian (Acts 8)
- D. The theological stage is being set for the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15. A watershed of universal gospel availability has been reached!

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 10:1-8

<sup>1</sup>Now *there was* a man at Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian cohort, <sup>2</sup>a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the *Jewish* people and prayed to God continually. <sup>3</sup>About the ninth hour of the day he clearly saw in a vision an angel of God who had *just* come in and said to him, "Cornelius!" <sup>4</sup>And fixing his gaze on him and being much alarmed, he said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God. <sup>5</sup>Now dispatch *some* men to Joppa and send for a man *named* Simon, who is also called Peter; <sup>6</sup>he is staying with a tanner *named* Simon, whose house is by the sea." <sup>7</sup>When the angel who was speaking to him had left, he summoned two of his servants and a devout soldier of those who were his personal attendants, <sup>8</sup>and after he had explained everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

**10:1 "there was a man at Caesarea"** The conversion of Cornelius was a major event. However, it must be remembered that he was not the first social barrier the gospel had overcome.

1. The first was the Samaritans
2. then there was the Ethiopian Eunuch who also was possibly a God-fearer
3. then Cornelius, who was not only a Gentile, but a Roman army officer who was part of the military occupation of the Promised Land

The emphasis of this account is not so much on Cornelius' conversion because he was already a God-fearer, like the Ethiopian Eunuch, but the large number of relatives and friends, mentioned in Acts 10:1,24,27,44,48, who were also saved. Peter refers to this account at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15:7-9 and sets the stage for the Gentile mission of the Church.

■ **"Cornelius"** Footnote 1 in F. F. Bruce's *Commentary on the Book of the Acts*, p. 214, has "Cornelius was an especially common name in Rome ever since Publius Cornelius Sulla in 82 b.c. liberated 10,000 slaves who were enrolled in the *gens Cornelia*, to which he belonged." A *gens* was a clan or group of families who shared a common name and a belief in a common ancestor or hero (as here).



■ **"a centurion"** Centurions are mentioned several times in the NT and always in a favorable light (cf. Matt. 8:5; Luke 7:2; 23:47; Acts 10:1; 22:5; 27:3; etc). Technically they were leaders of a hundred men; however, they were noncommissioned officers, something like our sergeant majors.

■ **"called the Italian cohort"** Usually a Roman cohort is made up of 600 men. This particular one was made up of a thousand Roman volunteers who were stationed in Syria. We know from historical evidence that they were called an auxiliary cohort. Possibly they were archers. Roman troops had to be stationed in Palestine because of the rebelliousness of the Jews.

**10:2 "a devout man"** There is a threefold description of this man's devotion:

1. he revered God (see note at Acts 10:22) with all his households
2. he was always liberal in his many deeds of charity to the people
3. he had the habit of praying to God (cf. Acts 10:22; 13:16,26).

This man was religiously, emotionally, and socially linked to the synagogue, although he was not a full convert. To be a full convert one had to

1. be circumcised if a male
2. baptize himself in the presence of witnesses
3. if possible, offer a sacrifice in the Temple.

These requirements prevented many interested Gentiles from becoming full proselytes.

■ **"with all his household"** This is the first mention of a family as a religious unit which we find often in the Book of Acts (cf. Acts 10:2; 11:14; 16:15, 31; 18:8). It shows the cultural context that the faith of the father was always the faith of the household and even of the extended family which would include servants.

■ **"many alms"** This refers to almsgiving. To Jewish people this would show that Cornelius was an active part of the local synagogue and apparently a God-fearer. See Special Topic: Alms Giving at Acts 3:2.

■ **"prayed to God continually"** There are three present participles here, denoting continuing action which shows Cornelius' piety.

1. fearing, Present middle (deponent)
2. doing alms, present active
3. praying, present middle (deponent)

This man's devotion was daily and personal. He was doing the two things which rabbinical Judaism honored most—almsgiving and prayer.

**10:3 "About the ninth hour"** This refers to the time of the evening offering (i.e., 3 p.m., cf. Exod. 29:39, 41; Num. 28:3-31; 1 Kgs. 18:29-36; Ps. 55:17; 141:2; Dan. 6:10; Josephus *Antiq.* 11.4.1; *Wars* 1.1.1). This was a traditional time for prayer.

**NASB, NRSV,**

**TEV** "clearly saw"

**NKJV** "saw clearly"

**NJB, NIV** "distinctly saw"

In the Gospels the adverb *phanerōs* means to openly or publicly make an appearance (cf. Mark 1:45; John 7:10). This vision came in daylight hours and was very specific and distinct.

■ **"in a vision an angel of God"** In some ways this conversion is like Saul's. This person was a devoutly religious man. God sends a supernatural agent to direct him to faith. Who could say "No"? These conversions are a sign of God's choice, not human free will. These people are responding to overwhelming evidence and experience of the reality of the gospel.

**10:4** The angel's message contains two sacrificial terms: "ascended" and "memorial before God."

Apparently God accepted this man's worship (i.e., prayers and almsgiving) even before he heard the gospel.

▣ **"fixing his gaze on him"** See note at Acts 1:10.

▣ **"What is it, Lord"** It is very difficult to know how to translate this term Lord. It can mean (1) "mister" or "sir" or (2) "Lord" in a theological sense of master/owner/sovereign. Another good NT passage which shows the ambiguity is John 4:1,11,15,19,49.

In Acts there is even an added possibility. Cornelius addresses the angel as Lord (cf. Rev. 7:14) and Peter addresses "the voice" (cf. Acts 10:13,15) as Lord (cf. Acts 10:14). Therefore, the term could refer to any supernatural, personal manifestation, with reference specifically to Jesus. In Acts 8:26 and 29 an angel of the Lord is identified with the Spirit. This same fluidity and transference occurs between "the voice" and the Spirit in Acts 10:13,14,15 and 19,20.

**10:5 "Now dispatch some men to Joppa"** This is an aorist middle (deponent) imperative. Notice the angel did not share the gospel, but sent for Peter. God uses human instruments (cf. Exod. 3:7-10). This man, though a devout, sincere religionist (like Saul), needed to hear and respond to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

**10:7 "he summoned two of his servants and a devout soldier"** This makes a party of three; however, in verse 19 only two of them are mentioned. Possibly the soldier was a guard and the two household servants spoke.

**10:8** Cornelius involved his family and friends in his faith. This man lived out what he believed. A whole community would come to faith in Christ through him.

These three men must have walked through the night and wondered and discussed the angel's message and their master and friend's faith.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 10:9-16**

**<sup>9</sup>On the next day, as they were on their way and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. <sup>10</sup>But he became hungry and was desiring to eat; but while they were making preparations, he fell into a trance; <sup>11</sup>and he saw the sky opened up, and an object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground, <sup>12</sup>and there were in it all *kinds of four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air.* <sup>13</sup>A voice came to him, "Get up, Peter, kill and eat!" <sup>14</sup>But Peter said, "By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean." <sup>15</sup>Again a voice *came* to him a second time, "What God has cleansed, no *longer* consider unholy." <sup>16</sup>This happened three times, and immediately the object was taken up into the sky.**

**10:9 "about the sixth hour to pray"** Although rabbinical Judaism had set aside 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. to pray (the times of the daily sacrifices in the Temple), the Pharisees had added noon as another appropriate time. Apparently Peter was acting in the traditions of the elders by praying at noon or maybe he was just taking a nap before lunch.

**10:10 "he became hungry"** The setting of Peter's vision is in the context of his hunger and his view of the Mediterranean Ocean from Simon's roof.

The word for "hunger" is used only here in all of known Greek literature. Its exact connotation is impossible to know, but with the preposition *pros* added, it may mean "extreme hunger," but this is surprising in this context. This *hapax legomenon* (words used only once in the NT) must remain uncertain until more lexical information is discovered. It must remain uncertain as to why Luke chose to use this rare term, but the general sense of the context is obvious.

■ **"he fell into a trance"** This is literally "out of himself" or "beside himself," often used of astonishment (cf. Mark 5:42; 16:8; Luke 5:26; and several texts in LXX). We get the English term "ecstasy" from this Greek word. In this verse and 11:5 and 22:17 it means a semiconscious mental state which allows God to speak to the subconscious. This is a different word from the one used in verse 3 to describe Cornelius' vision.

**10:11**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"the sky opened"</b>
<b>NKJV, TEV</b>	<b>"heaven opened"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"the heaven opened"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"heaven thrown open"</b>

This is a perfect passive participle, literally "the heavens having been and continued to be opened." In the OT heavens is plural. This opening of the atmosphere is an idiom for the spiritual, invisible dimension to break into physical reality (cf. Ezek. 1:1; Matt. 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:21; John 1:51; Acts 7:56; 10:11; Rev. 4:1; 19:11).

■ **"like a great sheet"** This is the same term used for the sails on a ship.

**10:12 "all kinds of four footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air"**

This is the same threefold division of animals found in Gen. 1 and 6:20. Apparently they were made up of clean and unclean animals according to the Jewish food laws of Lev. 11.

**10:13 "A voice came to him"** From the time of the closing of Malachi to the coming of the NT period there was no authoritative prophetic voice from God among the Jews. During this period when the Jews wanted to confirm something as being revealed from God they depended on something known as a *bath kol*. We see this in the NT in Matt. 3:17; 17:5, also in Acts 9:7, and here.

**10:14 "By no means Lord for I have never eaten anything unholy or unclean"** "By no means" is a strong Greek phrase used several times in the Septuagint to translate several Hebrew idioms. Peter was still struggling with his Jewish orthodoxy. He was basing his actions on Leviticus. 11. However, Jesus seems to have specifically dealt with this issue in Mark 7:14ff, especially verse 19. It is interesting to note that the Gospel of Mark is apparently the later recollections or sermons of the Apostle Peter from Rome.

**10:15 "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy"** This is a present active imperative with a negative particle, which usually implies stop an action already in progress. God clearly states the cessation of the Mosaic food laws (i.e., Leviticus 11). They are no longer appropriate for new covenant believers. Here they are used in an analogous way to show the acceptance of all humans!

**10:16 "This happened three times"** It is not uncommon in the Bible for important prayers, praises, or actions to be repeated three times.

1. Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (cf. Mark 14:36,39)
2. Jesus' discussion with Peter after the resurrection (cf. John 21:17)
3. Paul's "thorn in the flesh" prayer (cf. 2 Cor. 12:8)

It was a Semitic way of emphasis (cf. Isa. 6:3; Jer. 7:4). In this case it specifically shows Peter's reluctance to obey this heavenly voice!

A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures In the New Testament* has an incisive word at this point.

"Here is a striking illustration of obstinacy on the part of one who acknowledges the voice of God to him when the command of the Lord crosses one's preferences and prejudices. There are abundant examples today of precisely this thing. In a real sense Peter was maintaining a pose of piety beyond the will of the Lord" (p. 137).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 10:17-23a**

**17**Now while Peter was greatly perplexed in mind as to what the vision which he had seen might be, behold, the men who had been sent by Cornelius, having asked directions for Simon's house, appeared at the gate; **18**and calling out, they were asking whether Simon, who was also called Peter, was staying there. **19**While Peter was reflecting on the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you. **20**But get up, go downstairs and accompany them without misgivings, for I have sent them Myself." **21**Peter went down to the men and said, "Behold, I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for which you have come?" **22**They said, "Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous and God-fearing man well spoken of by the entire nation of the Jews, was *divinely* directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and hear a message from you." **23**So he invited them in and gave them lodging.

**10:17 "Peter was greatly perplexed"** This is an imperfect active indicative, which here denotes the beginning of an action in past time.

The term is used several times by Luke to show mental confusion (cf. Luke 9:7; Acts 2:12; 5:24; 10:17). Peter did not immediately understand the purpose of the vision.

■ **"the vision"** The word used here to describe Peter's experience, *horama*, is the same as is used of Cornelius' vision in Acts 10:3 (cf. Acts 10:19).

**10:19 "the Spirit said to him"** The exact relationship between "the Spirit" (Acts 10:19) speaking and "the angel" (Acts 10:3,22) speaking throughout this context is uncertain (cf. Acts 10:20, "I have sent them Myself"). Apparently the angel spoke on the behalf of the Holy Spirit or the two are identified like an OT theophony (cf. Exod.3:2,4; Acts 8:26,29).

**10:20** This verse is very emphatic.

1. get up, participle used as an imperative
2. go downstairs, aorist active imperative
3. accompany them, present middle (deponent) imperative
4. without misgiving, participle used as an imperative
5. I have sent them Myself, *ego* with perfect active indicative

There was no option for Peter but to go! This was a divine appointment. The Spirit was responsible for Cornelius' vision, Cornelius' sending the men, Peter's vision, and now Peter's responding to their request.

**10:22** They faithfully relate what has happened.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"a righteous"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"a just man"</b>
<b>NRSV, NJB</b>	<b>"upright"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"a good man"</b>

This term must be used in the OT sense of "blameless." It does not refer to sinlessness (cf. Gen. 6:1; Job 1:1; Luke 1:6; 2:25) or to the imputed righteousness of Christ (cf. Rom. 4). This man lived up to all he understood about the will of God. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS](#) at Acts 3:14.

<b>NASB, NRSV,</b>	
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"God-fearing"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"one who fears God"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"who worships God"</b>

This phrase (or one like it) is used often to describe Cornelius (cf. Acts 10:2,22,35). In Acts 13:16,26,43,50 it is used for those who are not racial Jews and not full proselytes, but those who regularly

attended synagogues. They were called "God-fearers" (cf. Acts 16:14; 17:4,17; 18:7).

**10:23 "So he invited them in and gave them lodging"** This is another example of Peter's continuing separation from his Jewish legalism. It is certain that the accompanying soldier was a Roman and yet Peter invited him in for dinner and fellowship. Notice how in Acts 10:48 Peter will stay in a Roman house for a few days.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 10:23b-29**

**<sup>23b</sup>And on the next day he got up and went away with them, and some of the brethren from Joppa accompanied him. <sup>24</sup>On the following day he entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends. <sup>25</sup>When Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell at his feet and worshiped *him*. <sup>26</sup>But Peter raised him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am *just* a man." <sup>27</sup>As he talked with him, he entered and found many people assembled. <sup>28</sup>And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean. <sup>29</sup>That is why I came without even raising any objection when I was sent for. So I ask for what reason you have sent for me."**

**10:24 "some of the brethren from Joppa accompanied him"** Acts 11:12 says there were six of them. Peter knew that this incident would cause problems among some of the Jewish followers of Jesus. Therefore, he took several witnesses with him (cf. Acts 11:12).

■ **"Caesarea"** Caesarea was the beautiful city by the sea. It was named in honor of the Roman Caesar. It was the Palestinian quarters for the Roman occupation force. The Romans had made it into a small harbor.

■ **"called together his relatives and close friends"** Cornelius, expecting a speaker from God, had called all his close family, friends, servants, and possibly other soldiers. They may have all been waiting for hours and hours. What a spirit of anticipation and expectation must have filled this house! All of these would have been discussing the vision and its message.

This is what shocked the leaders of the Jewish segment of the church, that a large number of Gentiles, many of them not God-fearers, had been included in the filling of the Spirit and baptism (cf. Acts 10:27).

**10:25,27 "When Paul entered. . .he entered"** There is an apparent discrepancy in the Greek text here. However, the first "entering" mentioned in Acts 10:25 could be the city gate on the courtyard of the house, and the second "entering" in Acts 10:27 could be Cornelius' house. Whichever is the case, again Peter is violating Jewish ceremonial ritualism by entering a Gentile home.

**10:25 "fell at his feet and worshiped *him*"** This is the regular idiom in the Septuagint and the Gospels for worship. But, in this context "give respect" may better catch the idea (cf. NJB). An angel had prepared Peter's coming; of course Cornelius would honor and respect this messenger (cf. Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9).

**10:28 "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate"** Peter is quoting his rabbinical training or synagogue school; however, this is not found in the OT, but simply in rabbinical interpretations.

■ **"a foreigner"** This term is another unique text found only here in the NT. Luke has chosen several very rare words in this chapter.

1. *eusebēs*, Acts 10:2,7, devout (cf. 2 Pet. 2:9)
2. *prospeinos*, Acts 10:10, hungry
3. *dienthumeomai*, Acts 10:19, reflecting

4. *sunomileō*, Acts 10:27, talked
5. *athemiton*, Acts 10:28, unlawful
6. *allopulō*, Acts 10:28, foreigner
7. *anantirrētos*, Acts 10:29, without even raising any objections (cf. Acts 19:36)
8. *prosōpolēmpēs*, Acts 10:34, respecter of persons (similar to Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; James 2:19)
9. *katadunasteuō*, Acts 10:38, oppress (cf. James 2:6)
10. *procheirotoneō*, Acts 10:41, elect before

It is uncertain whether Luke copied some of these early sermons and events in Acts from other sources or records verbal interviews with those who were present.

■ **"yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean"** Peter got the message! The animals in the sheet represented all human beings made in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). God's love for Cornelius and his family and friends showed Peter the worldwide scope of the gospel! This would confirm the witness of Stephen and the preaching of Philip.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 10:30-33**

<sup>30</sup>Cornelius said, "Four days ago to this hour, I was praying in my house during the ninth hour; and behold, a man stood before me in shining garments, <sup>31</sup>and he said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. <sup>32</sup>Therefore send to Joppa and invite Simon, who is also called Peter, to come to you; he is staying at the house of Simon *the tanner by the sea.*' <sup>33</sup>So I sent for you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. Now then, we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord."

**10:30 "in shining garments"** Angels often appear in this form (cf. Acts 1:10; Matt.28:3; Mark 16:5; John 20:12; Luke 24:4).

**10:31** This is the third time in this chapter that Cornelius' piety has been affirmed (cf. Acts 10:4,22). Cornelius is not the surprise; it is his friends, servants, and family who also trust Christ. This is one of several examples in Acts of "household salvations."

Those of us who have grown up with western evangelical models of evangelism which emphasize individual volitional response are surprised by these kinds of corporate responses, but most of the world has a tribal, family, group orientation. God is able to work through many models to reach humans made in His image. There is no one model of evangelism!

**10:33** These people were ready to hear! They realized they were in the midst of a divine moment with a God-sent messenger.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 34-43**

<sup>34</sup>Opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, <sup>35</sup>but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him. <sup>36</sup>The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)—<sup>37</sup>you yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed. <sup>38</sup>You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. <sup>39</sup>We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. <sup>40</sup>God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible, <sup>41</sup>not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by

**God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. <sup>42</sup>And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. <sup>43</sup>Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins."**

**10:34 "that God is not one to show partiality"** This is the beginning of Peter's sermon to Cornelius. It is a good example of the preaching of the early church to non-Jews. In the OT this judicial phrase characterized God (cf. Deut. 10:17; 2 Chr. 19:7) and is required of His people (cf. Deut. 1:17; 16:19). It is also a common characterization of God in the NT (cf. Rom. 2:11; Gal. 2:6; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:24-25; 1 Pet. 1:17). In the OT this phrase literally meant "to lift the face." In Hebrew courts the defendants kept their heads bowed so that the judge would not recognize the person and thereby be biased.

God has no favorites (nations, races, or individuals)! If this is true then how does predestination work? Or how is Israel special? Be careful of modern systems of theology!

**10:35 "in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him"** This description does not refer to the concept of spiritual salvation, but apparently to the idea of almsgiving, prayer, and piety. See Special Topic at Acts 3:2. This phrase must be theologically balanced with the mandate to receive the gospel (cf. John 1:12; 3:16; Rom. 10:9-13).

The major truth is that God accepts Gentiles without their becoming proselyte Jews. This set the theological stage for Acts 15, the Jerusalem Council.

**10:36-39** *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (vol. II, p. 188) makes a several good comments about these names.

1. they constitute Peter's summary of the gospel (i.e., *Kerygma*)
2. they have poor syntax, which shows that Luke accurately records his sources and does not invent them or edit them

**10:36 "The word which He sent to the sons of Israel"** This does not refer to the OT, but Jesus and the Apostles' preaching.

▣ **"preaching peace through Jesus Christ"** This may be an allusion to Isa. 52:7. The term "peace" is used in three ways in the NT:

1. peace between God and humanity (cf. Col. 1:20)
2. the subjective peace of the individual believer (cf. John 14:27; 16:33, Philippians 4)
3. peace between human groups who respond to Christ (cf. Eph. 2:14-3:6; Col. 3:16)

All human barriers are down in Christ (cf. Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11)

▣ **"(He is Lord of all)"** This is an editorial/authorial comment. Here is the universal element of the message and invitation of the gospel of Jesus Christ that still sounded so radical in the mouth of an orthodox Jew (cf. Acts 2:36; Matt. 28:18; Rom. 10:12; Eph. 1:20-22; Col. 2:10; 1 Pet. 3:22). He is Lord of all races and all things (i.e., cosmic Lordship)!

**10:37,39 "you yourselves know the things which took place"** Peter is using the same form as his Pentecost sermon (cf. Acts 2:22,33). They had heard about Jesus and what happened to Him in Jerusalem.

One wonders how these people would have had all this information. Is Peter using hyperbole? Were these somehow involved in some of the events in Jerusalem? Were some of these household servants Jewish? The text is too brief and we just do not know.

Some have used this sermon to assert:

1. Luke wrote all the sermons in Acts (but Luke is a good Koine writer and Acts 10:36-38 are not good, acceptable Greek).
2. Luke was true to his sources and quoted them accurately without correcting their poor grammar.

3. This phrase is meant to be understood by later readers of Acts (cf. *The Jerome Commentary*, vol. II, p. 189).

**10:37 "after the baptism which John proclaimed"** Why Jesus was baptized has always been a concern for believers because John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. Jesus did not need repentance or forgiveness, for He was sinless (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 1 Pet. 2:22; 1 John 3:5). The theories have been:

1. it was an example for believers to follow
2. it was His identification with believers' need
3. it was His ordination and equipping for ministry
4. it was a symbol of His redemptive task
5. it was His approval of the ministry and message of John the Baptist
6. it was a prophetic foreshadowing of His death, burial, and resurrection (cf. Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12).

The baptism by John was seen as the beginning of Jesus' Spirit-filled, public ministry. All three Synoptic Gospels record this inaugural event. Mark begins his Gospel (Peter's eyewitness account) with this event. This was seen by the early church as the special start of the new age of the Spirit as it relates to the public ministry of Jesus.

**10:38 "Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power"** Notice the things Peter affirms about Jesus.

1. God anointed Him (anoint is the Hebrew root word of Messiah)
2. with the Holy Spirit (the new age is the age of the Spirit)
3. with power (effective ministry)
  - a. doing good
  - b. healing all oppressed by the devil (power of evil and Satan)
4. God was with Him (He spoke and acted on behalf of YHWH, cf. John 3:2; 9:33; 10:38; 14:10-11)

Apparently this refers to Jesus' baptism (cf. F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, pp. 171-172).

Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, makes the interesting statement:

"The verb *XPIEIN* is used five times in the N.T. In four of these passages it refers to the anointing of Christ by His father, namely: Luke 4. 18, which is quoted from Isa. 61. 1; Heb. 1. 9, quoted from Ps. 45. 7; Acts 4. 27, where it is used with special reference to the quotation from the second Psalm, which immediately precedes it; and Acts 10. 38, where we are told God anointed Jesus with the Spirit" (p. 183).

See Special Topic: *Kerygma* at Acts 2:14.

■ **"healing all who were oppressed by the devil"** See special Topics at Acts 5:3 and 5:16.

**10:39 "They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross"** "They" refers to the Jewish leadership, the mob, and the Roman authorities. See note at Acts 2:23. This concept of hanging upon a tree is mentioned in Acts 5:30 and reflects Deut. 21:23 (which originally referred to impaling on a stake after death to humiliate someone, but the rabbis of Jesus' day interpreted it as Roman crucifixion), whereby Jesus bore the curse of the OT law (cf. Isa. 53) for us (cf. Gal. 3:13).

**10:40 "God raised him"** It is theologically interesting that Isa.53:4-6,10 asserts that it was YHWH's will and purpose that Jesus suffer and die (cf. Gen. 3:15). YHWH used the agency of

1. Satan
2. evil Jewish leadership
3. manipulated Roman leadership
4. an angry Jewish mob

Evil is in the will of God! He uses it to accomplish His ultimate purpose for humanity made in His image/likeness. Wow! What a theology of sovereignty! He allows death, then brings resurrection life to Jesus and to all!

The NT affirms that all three persons of the Trinity were active in Jesus' resurrection:



1. Spirit (Rom. 8:11)
2. Jesus (John 2:19-22; 10:17-18)
3. Father (Acts 2:24,32; 3:15,25; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30,33,34,37; 27:31; Rom. 6:4,9)

This was confirmation of the truth of Jesus' life, death, and teachings about God. This was a major aspect of the *Kerygma* (i.e., sermons in Acts, see Special Topic at Acts 2:14).

▣ **"on the third day"** Because of 1 Cor. 15:4, some relate this to Ps. 16:10 or Hosea 6:2, but more probably Jonah 1:17 because of Matt. 12:40.

**10:40-41 "granted that He become visible, not to all the people"** Jesus appeared to several select groups (cf. John 14:19, 24; 15:27; 16:16, 22; 1 Cor. 15:5-9).

**10:41 "who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead"** Although Jesus' resurrection body did not need physical nourishment, He ate and drank to show His special witnesses He was real and to express His fellowship with them (cf. Luke 24:35, 41-43; John 21:9-13).

**10:42 "He ordered us to preach to the people"** The pronoun refers to Jesus (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:47-48; John 15:27). This witness was to begin in Jerusalem but reach to all the world (cf 1:8).

▣ **"Judge of the living and the dead"** Christ is the Father's agent in judgment (cf. Dan. 7:13-14; John 5:22,27; Acts 17:31; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim. 4:1; 1 Pet. 4:5) as He was the Father's agent in creation (cf. John 1:3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2). Jesus did not come to judge, but to save (cf. John 3:17-19).

The phrase "living and dead" refers to eschatological judgment, the Second Coming. Some believers will be alive (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13-18).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: JUDGE, JUDGMENT, and JUSTICE ( טִשַׁשׁ ) IN ISAIAH**

**10:43 "Of Him all the prophets bear witness"** Jesus showed the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (only recorded in Luke 24:13-35) where and how the OT referred to Himself. These showed the disciples in the upper room and this information became the standard approach of witnessing to Jews (cf. Acts 3:18). Jesus opened the disciples' minds (cf. Luke 24:45).

▣ **"through His name"** (cf. Joel 2:32 and Luke 24:47)

▣ **"everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins"** This is the gospel message:

1. everyone
2. through His name
3. who believes in Him
4. receives forgiveness of sin (cf. Luke 24:46-47)

It is Jesus-focused, not performance focused (i.e., the new covenant of Jer. 31:31-34, cf. Ezek. 36:22-38). All that needs to be done for everyone, anyone, to be saved has been done! God has chosen to work with fallen humanity through covenant. He initiates it and sets the agenda, but He has also demanded that humans respond by repentance, faith, obedience, and perseverance. Humans must receive God's gift in Christ (cf. John 1:12; 3:16; Rom. 10:9-13). It is not an automatic transfer.

Frank Stagg, *New Testament Theology*, has an interesting comment about forgiveness and its assumed relationship to repentance.

"Forgiveness calls for a new awareness of sin and a turning from it. The assurance is given that forgiveness and cleansing will certainly follow upon the confession of sins (1 John 1:9), but no promise is given where confession does not obtain. In the home of Cornelius, Peter related forgiveness to faith, declaring that to this one (Jesus) all the prophets bear witness: 'that through his name everyone who trusts him shall receive forgiveness of sins' (Acts 10:43). In this trust, with its repentance and confession, one both 'owns and disowns' his sin. This does not mean that repentance *wins* forgiveness; even repentance does not make one worthy of forgiveness. As another

has put it, the sinner must accept his rejection and accept his acceptance, although he knows himself to be unacceptable. The sinner is not forgivable until he is willing to accept God's *no* in order to hear his *yes*" (p. 94).

For "believes in Him" see Special Topic at Acts 3:16.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 10:44-48**

**<sup>44</sup>While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. <sup>45</sup>All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. <sup>46</sup>For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, <sup>47</sup>"Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we *did*, can he?" <sup>48</sup>And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days.**

**10:44** Notice that Peter had not yet finished his sermon when the Spirit fell (cf. Acts 8:16-17; 10:44; 11:15).

■ **"upon all those who were listening to the message"** The real theological tension was not Cornelius. He had been fully accepted by the local synagogue. It was all the friends! They had no apparent previous contact, even with Judaism, and now God had fully accepted them. This acceptance was demonstrated and confirmed by the same manifestation of spiritual power and presence shown at Pentecost.

Also notice that the order of events changes. The Spirit comes before water baptism, not in conjunction with it (cf. Acts 2:38) or after it (cf. Acts 8:17). Luke records what happened, not what "should have happened." Be careful of trying to turn one of these gospel encounters recorded in Acts into "the" gospel encounter!

**10:45** The same supernatural manifestation of the Spirit (cf. Acts 10:46) that occurred at Pentecost, occurred again involving Romans! This special sign was not for Cornelius and his friends only, but primarily for the circumcised believers (cf. Acts 10:47). It showed in a powerful, undisputable fashion that God had accepted Gentiles (cf. Acts 11:17), even Romans!

Luke is setting the literary stage for Acts 15, the Jerusalem Council. Both Peter and Paul had been convinced along with the Hellenistic believing Jews that God fully accepted Gentiles through Christ.

■ **"the gift of the Holy Spirit"** The ministry of the Spirit can be seen clearly in John 16:8-14. In one sense, conviction of sin is a gift from the Spirit. Salvation itself is a gift of the Spirit. The indwelling presence is a gift of the Spirit. This is the new age of the Spirit (cf. Acts 2:38; 8:20; 11:17). Nothing permanent and effective happens without the presence and power of the Spirit.

■ **"had been poured out"** This is a perfect passive indicative. Pouring was part of the OT sacrificial system. It was predicted of the Spirit in Joel 2:28 and quoted by Peter in his Pentecostal sermon (cf. Acts 2:17,33). The Spirit has been fully and permanently given to believers by God.

**10:47** This is a rhetorical question which expects a "no" answer. This question was to gain the consensus of the Jewish believers who accompanied Peter from Joppa. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: BAPTISM](#) at Acts 2:38.

**10:48 "he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ"** Notice that baptism was immediate. Also, notice that it was done in Jesus' name as in Acts 2:38 and 19:5. The baptismal formula in Acts was "in the name of Jesus," while in Matt. 28:19 it was in the name of the Triune God. The formula is not the key, but the heart of the candidate!

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of

the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is the salvation of Cornelius so significant?
2. How is Cornelius' salvation experience like Paul's?
3. What theological significance did the sheet full of animals and Peter's comments have in relation to Cornelius?
4. Why was Cornelius' friends' conversion such a problem?
5. Outline Peter's sermon and compare it with other salvation events in Acts. They are all different, yet the same.

# ACTS 11

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Peter's Report to the Church at Jerusalem 11:1-18	Peter Defends God's Grace 11:1-18	Peter's Defense 11:1-18	Peter's Report to the Church at Jerusalem 11:1-4 11:5-17 11:18	Jerusalem: Peter Justifies His Conduct 11:1-10 11:11-14 11:15-17 11:18
The Church at Antioch 11:19-26	Barnabas and Saul at Antioch 11:19-26	Mission to the Greeks in Antioch 11:19-26	The Church at Antioch 11:19-26	Foundation of the Church of Antioch 11:19-21 11:22-24 11:25-26
11:27-30	Relief to Judea 11:27-30	Famine Relief Sent to Jerusalem 11:27-30	11:27-30	Barnabas and Saul Sent as Deputies of Jerusalem 11:27-30

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

#### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

##### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 11:1-18**

<sup>1</sup>Now the apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. <sup>2</sup>And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those who were

circumcised took issue with him, <sup>3</sup>saying, "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them." <sup>4</sup>But Peter began *speaking* and *proceeded* to explain to them in orderly sequence, saying, <sup>5</sup>"I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object coming down like a great sheet lowered by four corners from the sky; and it came right down to me, <sup>6</sup>and when I had fixed my gaze on it and was observing it I saw the four-footed animals of the earth and the wild beasts and the crawling creatures and the birds of the air. <sup>7</sup>I also heard a voice saying to me, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.' <sup>8</sup>But I said, 'By no means, Lord, for nothing unholy or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' <sup>9</sup>But a voice from heaven answered a second time, 'What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy.' <sup>10</sup>This happened three times, and everything was drawn back up into the sky. <sup>11</sup>And behold, at that moment three men appeared at the house in which we were *staying*, having been sent to me from Caesarea. <sup>12</sup>The Spirit told me to go with them without misgivings. These six brethren also went with me and we entered the man's house. <sup>13</sup>And he reported to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house, and saying, 'Send to Joppa and have Simon, who is also called Peter, brought here; <sup>14</sup>and he will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household.' <sup>15</sup>And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as *He did* upon us at the beginning. <sup>16</sup>And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' <sup>17</sup>Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as *He gave* to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" <sup>18</sup>When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance *that leads to life*."

**11:1** This verse implies that the church in Jerusalem's leadership was surprised at this turn of events. They were shocked and not fully supportive! They had not understood the Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8) to include pagans. This same phrase occurs in Acts 8:14 at Samaritan's receiving the gospel.

- **"brethren"** This is an early title for believers which emphasizes our corporate family identify (cf. Acts 1:15; 6:3; 9:30; 10:23; 11:1,12, 29; 12:17; 14:2; 15:1,3,22,23,32-33,40; 16:2,40; 17:6,10,14; 18:18,27; 21:7, 17; 22:5; 28:14-15). To be a Christian is to be a part of a family (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11).
- **"throughout Judea"** This shows the geographical limitations of the church up to the time. Even after many years the church had not moved beyond its cultural boundaries. Jesus' command in Acts 1:8 had not been obeyed! It is "almost" parallel to Genesis 10-11.
- **"Gentiles also had received the word of God"** This is aorist middle (deponent) indicative. It shows the necessity of a personal reception of the gospel message (cf. John 1:12; 3:16; Rom. 10:9-13 Eph. 2:8-9).

The phrase "the word of God" is parallel to "the gospel." The OT universal promises/prophecies are being fulfilled. See the Special Topic at Acts 1:8.

**11:2 "When Peter came up to Jerusalem"** Apparently the problem with the Gentile mission which continues in Acts 15 was a recurring problem for the Jerusalem leadership of the early church. Many of the converts to Christianity were still very nationalistic (cf. Acts 15:5; 21:18-26).

NASB	"those who were circumcised"
NKJV	"those of the circumcision"
NRSV, NJB	"the circumcised believers"

**TEV** "those who were in favor of circumcising Gentiles"  
**Williams** "the champions of circumcision"

This phrase is used in several different senses:

1. in Acts 10:45 to describe Peter's six Jewish companions
2. here, it refers to a group of believers in the church at Jerusalem (cf. Acts 11:18 or 15:5)
3. in Galatians it refers to believers from the Jerusalem church (cf. Acts 2:12) as well as Jewish unbelievers (cf. Acts 1:7; 2:4; 5:10,12)

There is no question about the sincerity of these believers, nor the logic of their position. However, the radical nature of the gospel had opened the door to all people totally unconnected to the Mosaic Law (i.e., Rom. 3:21-31) This is a message (grace, not performance, brings salvation) many modern believers need to hear and heed!

**NASB** "took issue"  
**NKJV** "contended"  
**NRSV, TEV** "criticized"  
**NJB** "protested"

This is an imperfect middle indicative. This grammatical form can denote repeated action in past time or the beginning of an action. Notice these believing traditionalists took issue with Peter, not with the gospel. They did not see that this was a gospel issue.

**11:3 "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them"** Obviously Peter is not the unchallenged leader. Grammatically this verse can be a statement or a question (NRSV).

This issue of table fellowship was very important to Jewish people. This may be the very issue behind the food laws of Leviticus 11. Jews were not to share any social event with Canaanites. Eating in the Ancient Near East was a kind of covenant of fellowship.

Jesus had been accused of a similar breach of tradition in Matt. 9:11; 11:19; Luke 5:30; 15:2.

Peter struggled with this issue in his ministry (cf. Gal. 2:12). This was such a sensitive issue for these first believers. It is so hard to rethink traditions, culture, and personal preferences, but the gospel demands that we do (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:23-29; Col. 3:11). The Jew vs. Gentile model of the OT has been totally replaced with the believer vs. unbeliever model!

**11:4-18** Peter recounts his experience at Simon's and Cornelius' houses (Acts 10) for the Jewish leaders at Jerusalem. This repetition (cf. the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15) is Luke's way of showing how important this issue (world evangelization) was for the life of the church. This was a theological watershed moment!

**11:4**  
**NASB** "in orderly sequence"  
**NKJV** "in order from the beginning"  
**NRSV** "step by step"  
**TEV** "a complete account"  
**NJB** "the details point by point"

The word *kathexēs* is used in the NT only by Luke (cf. Luke 1:3; 8:1; Acts 3:24; 11:4; 18:23). It has the connotation of explaining something in a logical, temporal, or sequential order. This fits Luke's research method (cf. Luke 1:1-4), personality, and professional training (physician).

**11:6 "fixed my gaze on it"** See note at Acts 1:10.

**11:12**  
**NASB** "without misgivings"  
**NKJV** "doubting nothing"  
**NRSV** "not to make a distinction"

TEV            **"without hesitation"**  
NJB            **"have no hesitation"**

There are several Greek manuscript variants connected to the tense of this participle (present middle from Acts 10:20 or aorist middle in MSS P<sup>74</sup>,  $\kappa^2$ , B). It is even omitted in the Greek manuscripts P<sup>45</sup>, D, and some Old Latin and one Syrian version. Scribes tended to make parallels agree. As with most of the textual variants in the NT, these do not affect the meaning of the phrase. The UBS<sup>4</sup> put the aorist middle participle in the text but gives it a "C" rating (difficulty in deciding).

**11:14 "will be saved"** Cornelius' piety and generosity did not make him a Christian! He and his family and friends are saved by faith in Christ!

**11:15** This verse is theologically crucial in seeing the purpose of the repeated Pentecostal experience in Acts. God used the inaugurating experience in Jerusalem to show His acceptance of other racial, geographical, and cultural groups (cf. Acts 11:17). The experience was not only for Cornelius, but for

1. Peter
2. the accompanying Jewish believers
3. the church in Jerusalem

**11:16 "I remembered the word of the Lord"** This is an allusion to Jesus' words in Acts 1:5. This shows the pattern of the early Apostles' approach to theology:

1. quote Jesus
2. use Jesus' example
3. quote the OT (cf. Matt. 3:11; Acts 1:5)

Peter is establishing that the Lord Himself foresaw this development (i.e., sign).

**11:17 "if"** This is a first class conditional sentence which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes.

▣ **"God gave to them the same gift"** This, like Acts 11:15, refers to the Pentecost experience (cf. Acts 2:1-4; 8:15; 10:46; 15:8). Salvation, like the Spirit, is also a gift from God (cf. Rom. 3:24; 5:15-17; 6:23; Eph. 2:8).

▣ **"after believing in the Lord"** It must be received (cf. Acts 11:1; John 1:12; Eph. 2:8-9). Notice how Acts 11:17 asserts both the sovereignty of God and the mandated human response. There are several prepositions in the NT used to describe faith in Jesus:

1. *epi* = on (here)
2. *eis* = into
3. *en* = in
4. *hoti* = statement about Jesus
5. Dative case without preposition

This variety seems to imply that there was no specific grammatical form connected to "believe" (*pisteuō*). Usually the personal, volitional aspect is emphasized (except for *hoti*, which means the content of the gospel or doctrines). Jesus is a person to be welcomed! See Special Topics at Acts 2:40 and 3:16.

**11:18 "they quieted down and glorified God"** Peter's testimony not only stopped the negative atmosphere, but it engendered praise! Most of these early leaders and believers were teachable and flexible. They were willing to adjust their theology and follow God's lead.

▣ **"God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life"** There are several passages in the NT that imply that the sovereign God is the source of repentance as well as grace (cf. Acts 5:31, 8:22; 2 Tim. 2:25).

The theological issue related to this phrase is, "how is the sovereignty of God related to salvation versus

the demanded response of humans?" Are faith and repentance (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21) human responses or gifts from God? There are texts which strongly imply that they are a gift from God (cf. Acts 5:31; 11:18; Rom. 2:4; and 2 Tim. 2:25). Since I believe that all Scripture is inspired (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16) then one must compare all texts related to any theological issue and not succumb to a proof-text or denominational method. It is obvious that the one true God is in control of all things! Acts emphasizes this over and over. However, He has chosen to relate to His highest creation by means of covenant. God always takes the initiative and sets the agenda, but mankind must respond and continue to respond. It is never an either/or question. It is always a both/and relationship. See Special Topic: Covenant at Acts 2:47. For "repentance" see Special Topic at Acts 2:38.

Michael Magill, *NT TransLine* (p. 435, #24) has a good summary statement of what the early believing Jews in Jerusalem thought would happen.

"The Jewish believers knew the message was for the world. But that salvation was to come to the Gentiles apart from Judaism, with all the implications that this has, was a new thought for them. They were assuming salvation would be proclaimed to the world as part of and through a true, spiritual Judaism; that Judaism would reign and all people would become Jews as part of finding life in Christ; that Israel's culture would gloriously become world culture."

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 11:19-26**

**<sup>19</sup>So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. <sup>20</sup>But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and *began* speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. <sup>21</sup>And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. <sup>22</sup>The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. <sup>23</sup>Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and *began* to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain *true* to the Lord; <sup>24</sup>for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord. <sup>25</sup>And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; <sup>26</sup>and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.**

**11:19-30** These verses seem to be a historical flashback and a theological summary. They connect to 8:4.

**11:19 "those who were scattered because of the persecution"** We have several early examples of these persecutions in Acts (cf. Acts 5:17ff; 6:8-15; 8:1-3; 9:1-2). Stephen's understanding of the radical implication of the gospel forced all the Jewish believers in Palestine to reassess their faith and the purpose of the gospel.

■ **"Antioch"** Antioch was the third largest city of the Roman Empire after Rome and Alexandria. It was the capital of Syria and it had a large Jewish population. It was well known for its university life and its sexual immorality. It was also famous worldwide for its chariot racing. It will become a major center of Christianity!

■ **"speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone"** This shows that the early church was not certain whether preaching to the Gentiles was appropriate. The conservatives would quote the words of Jesus in Matt. 10:5, while the visionaries would quote Matt. 28:18-20 or Acts 1:8. This theological issue will resurface in Acts 15.

**11:20 "men of Cyprus and Cyrene"** These are the same Greek-speaking Jewish believers as in Acts 6-8, who began to preach the universal implications of the Christian gospel in Jerusalem. Barnabas was



also from this geographical area.

■ **"to Greeks"** This word (*Hellēn*) normally refers to Gentiles (cf. Acts 14:1; 16:1,3; 18:4; 19:10,17; 20:21; 21:28). However, in Acts 17:4 it refers to Gentiles who were connected to the synagogues (God-fearers), but not members (i.e., proselytes).

The question is, "Who is Luke referring to as being preached to."

1. Greek-speaking Jews as in Acts 6:1 and 9:29 (*Hellēnists*)
2. Gentiles related to the synagogue (*Hellēn*)
3. full Gentiles (cf. TEV, NJB)?

With all the commotion this caused, possibly the term refers to those who spoke Greek; some might be Jews of the Diaspora, and others full Gentiles.

■ **"preaching the Lord Jesus"** This is a present middle participle of the verb from which we get the English term "evangel" and evangelism." Their message was not about OT laws and procedures, but about Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah (see Special Topic at Acts 2:31)!

### **11:21 "the hand of the Lord was with them and a large number who believed turned to the Lord"**

This is another summary statement of the great movement of God through evangelistic preaching. Finally Acts 1:8 was being fulfilled (cf. Acts 11:24b).

This is an OT idiom for the acknowledgment of YHWH's presence and power for the accomplishing of His purpose in human activity (cf. 2 Sam. 3:12).

It is interesting to note that the term "Lord" (*Kurios*) is used in the first of this verse to refer to YHWH (cf. LXX Exod. 3:14; 2 Sam. 3:12; Isa. 59:1, see Special Topic at Acts 1:6). However, in the latter part of the verse it is used to refer to Jesus Christ. This transference of titles is a common literary technique of the NT authors to assert the deity of Jesus. Notice where Paul quotes OT texts referring to YHWH and applies them to Jesus (i.e., Rom. 10:13; 1 Cor. 2:16; Phil. 2:10-11).

The "hand of the Lord" is an OT anthropomorphic idiom (see special Topic at Acts 2:33). YHWH is an eternal spirit present through time and creation. He does not have a physical body. However, the only vocabulary humans have to speak of anything personal is physical, human terms. We must remember the limits of fallen, temporal, earth-bound human language. It speaks of the spiritual realm in metaphors, analogies, and negations. It expresses truth, but in non-exhaustive ways. God is far greater than our ability to know and express. He communicates truly to us, but not exhaustively. We can trust the Bible as God's self-revelation, but we must realize God is greater still! Human language both reveals and limits!

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: HAND (ILLUSTRATED FROM EZEKIEL)**

**11:22 "Barnabas"** Barnabas is a major figure in the book of Acts (cf. Acts 4:36-37; 9:27). His name is used in the sense of encourager, which is obvious in Acts 11:23. The church in Jerusalem was still uncomfortable about Gentile inclusion! See Special Topic at Acts 4:36.

**11:23** It is interesting to notice that when Barnabas saw the active presence of God's grace through the Spirit, he encouraged all of them to remain in faith (cf. Acts 14:22). This clearly shows the need for diligence on the part of God's people for purposeful perseverance (see Special Topic at Acts 14:22). The Jews and the church were very concerned about the immoral cultural context of paganism. The gospel was not only a free gift of salvation, but a call to godliness (cf. Matt. 5:48; Rom. 8:28-29; 2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 4:1; 1 Thess. 3:13; 4:3; 1 Pet. 1:15). God wants a people who reflect His character to a lost world. The goal of Christianity is not only heaven when we die, but Christlikeness now so that others may come to faith in Christ!

**11:24 "he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith"** This description is very similar to the Greek-speaking Jewish believers (the seven) of Acts 6:3, 5. The early church was full of men like this! Oh that it may be true of our day, our culture, our church!

**11:25 "And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul"** This verb in the Egyptian Koine papyri (but not the LXX) implies that Saul was not easy to find. Only Luke uses this term in the NT (cf. Luke 2:44,45; Acts 11:25). These silent years are apparently referred to in Gal. 1:21. The exact time frame is uncertain, but it was approximately ten years.

**11:26 "church"** See Special Topic at Acts 5:11.

▣ **"he brought him to Antioch. . .the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch"** At first "Christian" was a derogatory reference to believers coined by pagans. Surprisingly this is a rare term in the NT. The word's formation (ending *ianos*) follows the pattern of the formation of a term for those who support and follow; Herod (and his family) are called "Herodians" (cf. Mark 3:6; 12:13; Matt. 22:16). Its use in this Hellenistic environment shows how the title for Messiah (Hebrew) translated Christ in Greek has become a name for Jesus' followers (Christians).

In this Hellenistic setting, it is possible that the term was given by governmental officials to differentiate Jews from believers.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 11:27-30**

**<sup>27</sup>Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. <sup>28</sup>One of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius. <sup>29</sup>And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. <sup>30</sup>And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.**

**11:27 "prophets"** Prophets are mentioned several times in the NT (cf. Acts 13:1; 15:32; 21:10; 1 Cor. 12:28; 14:1-5, 29-33; Eph. 2:20; 4:10). It is not always certain whether their function is primarily foretelling, as here, or forth-telling, as in 1 Corinthians 14 and Acts 2:17 (cf. Acts 13:6; 15:32; 1 Cor. 12:28; 14:1-5, 29-33; Eph. 2:20; 4:10).

In the OT prophets are seen as the spokesmen of God, explaining His revelation; however, NT prophets are not the mediators of God's revelation. This is reserved to NT authors, most of whom were Apostles or those related to an Apostle (Mark, Luke). The NT gift of prophecy must be limited. Inspired revelation has ceased (cf. Jude 3 and 20).

**SPECIAL TOPIC: NEW TESTAMENT PROPHECY**

**11:28 "great famine all over the world. . .Claudius"** This geographical phrase refers to the Roman Empire (cf. Acts 17:6, 31; 19:27; 24:5). Claudius reigned from a.d. 41-54. He followed Caligula and preceded Nero. There were several severe famines during his reign (cf. Suetonius, *Life of Caludius* 18:2). The worst famine for Palestine was sometime between a.d. 44-48, according to Josephus, *Antiq.* 20.5.2.

**11:29 "in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution"** This is one of the major strategies of the Gentile churches, to promote fellowship with their sister church in Jerusalem. This would set a pattern in Paul's churches (cf. Acts 24:17; Rom. 15:2-28; 1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8-9; Gal. 2:10).

**11:30 "sending it. . .to the elders"** This is the first mention of church "elders" (cf. Acts 14:23; 15:2,4, 6, 22,23; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18). The term "elders" is synonymous with the terms "overseers," "bishops," and "pastors" (cf. Acts 20:17,28 and Titus 1:5,7). The term elder (*presbuteros*) has an OT tribal background, while overseer (*episkopos*) has a Greek city-state governmental background. Apparently this refers to a specific group of leaders in the Jerusalem church (cf. Acts 15:2,6,22,23). The more Jewish portions of the NT, like James and Hebrews, still use the Jewish understanding of older, local leaders, but not necessarily pastors.

▣ **"of Barnabas and Saul"** There is much discussion as to whether the visit to Jerusalem mentioned in Gal. 2:2,10 is referring to this visit or to the Jerusalem Council which is mentioned in Acts 15. We know so little of Paul's early life and ministry.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why was Gentiles receiving Christ such a theological problem?
2. Is repentance a gift of God (Acts 11:18) or a covenant requirement (Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21)?
3. Why did Barnabas go and seek for Saul (Paul)?

# ACTS 12

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
James Killed and Peter Imprisoned 12:1-5	Herod's Violence to the Church 12:1-5	Herod Agrippa's Persecution 12:1-5	More Persecution 12:1-5	Peter's Arrest and Miraculous Deliverance 12:1-5
Peter Delivered from Prison 12:6-17	Peter Freed from Prison 12:6-19	12:6-11 12:12-17	Peter is Set Free from Prison 12:6-10 12:11 12:12-15 12:16-17	12:6-11 12:12-17
12:18-19		12:18-19	12:18-19a 12:19b	12:18-19
The Death of Herod 12:20-23	Herod's Violent Death 12:20-24	Death of Herod Agrippa 12:20-23	The Death of Herod 12:20 12:21-23	The Death of the Persecutor 12:20-23
12:24-25	Barnabas and Saul Appointed 12:25-13:3	Barnabas and Saul in Cyprus (12:24-13:12) 12:24-25	12:24 12:25	Barnabas and Saul Return to Antioch 12:24 12:25

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

The lineage of Herod the Great (for more information consult the index of Flavius Josephus in *Antiquities of the Jews*).

### I. Herod the Great

A. King of Judea (37-4 b.c.)

B. Matt. 2:1-19; Luke 1:5

### II. His Sons

A. Herod Philip (son of Marianne of Simon)

1. Husband of Herodias

2. Tetrarch of Iturea (4 b.c. - a.d. 34)

3. Matt. 14:3; Mark 6:17

B. Herod Philip (son of Cleopatra)

1. Tetrarch of area north and west of the Sea of Galilee (4 b.c. - a.d. 34)

2. Luke 3:1

C. Herod Antipas

1. Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (4 b.c.- a.d. 39)

2. Executed John the Baptist

3. Matt. 14:1-12; Mark 6:14,29; Luke 3:19; 9:7-9; 13:31; 23:6-12,15; Acts 4:27; 13:1

D. Archelaus, Herod the Ethnarch

1. Ruler of Judea, Samaria and Idumea (4 b.c. - a.d. 6)

2. Matt. 2:22

E. Aristobulus (son of Mariamne)

1. his only son was Herod Agrippa I

2. Ruled all of Palestine (a.d. 41-44)

3. Killed James and had Peter imprisoned

4. Acts 12:1-24; 23:35

(a) his son was Herod Agrippa II, Tetrarch of northern territory (a.d. 50-70)

(b) his daughter was Bernice

(1) consort of her brother

(2) Acts 25:13-26:32

(c) his daughter was Drusilla

(1) wife of Felix

(2) Acts 24:24

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 12:1-5

<sup>1</sup>Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them. <sup>2</sup>And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword. <sup>3</sup>When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread. <sup>4</sup>When he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out before the people. <sup>5</sup>So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God.

**12:1 "Herod"** This refers to Herod Agrippa I. He reigned over different areas of Palestine from a.d. 37-44. He was raised in Rome and became friends with Gaius, who followed Emperor Tiberius and who later

became the Emperor Caligula. The Jews readily accepted Herod as a leader because his grandmother (Mariamne) was a Hasmonean/Maccabean (i.e., Jewish patriot) princess. He was a strict follower of Judaism (but possibly for political reasons). For a full discussion of this Herod, see Josephus' *Antiq.* 19.7.3; 19.8.2.

■ **"church"** See Special Topic at Acts 5:11.

■ **"in order to mistreat them"** Herod did this to gain support and approval from the Jewish leadership (cf. Acts 12:3,11). Roman leaders did the same thing (cf. Acts 24:27; 25:9).

Luke uses this term several times (cf. Acts 7:6,19; 12:1; 14:2; 18:10). It was a common term in the Septuagint for ill-treatment. Luke's vocabulary is greatly influenced by the Septuagint.

**12:2 "James, the brother of John, put to death with a sword"** This refers to the Apostle James, who was the brother of John (cf. Luke 5:10; 6:14; 8:51; 9:28,54). He was a member of the inner circle of disciples (cf. Matt. 17:1; 26:37; Mark 5:37; 9:2; 14:33; Luke 9:28). Why James should die and Peter be spared is a mystery of God. Beheading with a sword was the normal method of capital punishment for Roman citizens, but it apparently was odious to Jews.

It is interesting that at this time the early church did not sense the need to replace James as they had Judas (cf. Acts 1:15-20). The reasons are unclear, but possibly it was Judas' treachery, not death, that caused the replacement (cf. Acts 1:15-26).

Some may assert that Paul calling James, the half brother of Jesus and leader of the Jerusalem church, an apostle (cf. Gal. 1:19) constitutes a replacement. The question relates to the official position of the original Twelve versus the ongoing gift of apostleship (cf. Eph. 4:11).

Reading James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* has caused me to think about the possible different authority structure in the first century church.

1. the Jerusalem Apostles
2. the inner circle (Peter, James, John) of the Apostles
3. James the Lord's half-brother, who led the Jerusalem church
4. the Seven (Acts 6) who were leaders of the Greek-speaking Jews
5. later Paul and Barnabas and their sending to the church in Antioch of Syria

To this could be added the sects related to Christianity, Judaizers, Gnostics, Ebionites. Each of these also had their own leadership. The unity that Luke often refers to among Christians was difficult to maintain. The preaching of Jesus and the Scriptures were ambiguous enough to allow multiple interpretations. This is the reason that the "rule of faith" developed in the first centuries. There had to be a standard to evaluate a group's theology. The dynamic Spirit-led emphasis of the NT turned into the organized structure of the eastern and western church centers. Orthodoxy is a significant issue for those generations removed from the Founder and eyewitnesses.

**12:3 "arrest Peter"** This is Peter's third arrest (cf. Acts 4:3; 5:18). Christians are not spared from persecution.

■ **"during the days of Unleavened Bread"** This refers to the Passover Feast (cf. Acts 12:4), combined with the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which lasted eight days (cf. Exod. 12:18; 23:15; Luke 22:1). Both celebrated Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage. It was celebrated on Nissan 14-21, which would be our March or April, depending on the Jewish lunar calendar.

**12:4 "four squads of soldiers"** This would mean four squads of soldiers four times a day, or sixteen men. The number shows Herod's concern over Peter's possible escape (cf. Acts 5:19).

**12:5 "prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God"** The church is praying (cf. Acts 12:12), but will be surprised when God answers! "Fervently" is a very intense adverb (cf. Luke 22:44). It is used only three times in the NT (cf. 1 Pet. 1:22).

## SPECIAL TOPIC: INTERCESSORY PRAYER

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 12:6-17

<sup>6</sup>On the very night when Herod was about to bring him forward, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and guards in front of the door were watching over the prison. <sup>7</sup>And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and woke him up, saying, "Get up quickly." And his chains fell off his hands. <sup>8</sup>And the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me." <sup>9</sup>And he went out and continued to follow, and he did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. <sup>10</sup>When they had passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened for them by itself; and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. <sup>11</sup>When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting." <sup>12</sup>And when he realized *this*, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. <sup>13</sup>When he knocked at the door of the gate, a servant-girl named Rhoda came to answer. <sup>14</sup>When she recognized Peter's voice, because of her joy she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter was standing in front of the gate. <sup>15</sup>They said to her, "You are out of your mind!" But she kept insisting that it was so. They kept saying, "It is his angel." <sup>16</sup> But Peter continued knocking; and when they had opened *the door*, they saw him and were amazed. <sup>17</sup>But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had led him out of the prison. And he said, "Report these things to James and the brethren." Then he left and went to another place.

**12:6 "On the very night"** Luke's writings are characterized by time indicators (cf. Acts 12:3,4,5,6,7,8,10,18). But be careful of interpreting this as western, sequential, chronological history. Luke has a theological evangelistic purpose.

▣ **"between two soldiers"** This verse shows the impossibility of Peter's escape. It is almost as if they expected an attempt to release him (cf. Acts 5:19).

**12:7 "an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared"** It is unusual that the supernatural interventions of the angel of the Lord (cf. Acts 5:19; 7:30,35,38,53; 8:26; 10:3,7,22) and the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 8:29,39; 10:19) are interchanged throughout the book of Acts. Apparently the Spirit speaks intuitively, but the angel is an outward physical manifestation. It is interesting to see the combination of the natural and the supernatural in this account (similar to the plagues of the Exodus).

▣ **"Get up quickly"** This is an aorist active imperative which denotes urgency. Why is the angel in a hurry? Is he not in control of events?

**12:8 "Gird yourself and put on your sandals"** These are both aorist middle imperatives.

▣ **"Wrap your cloak around you and follow me"** This is an aorist middle imperative followed by a present active imperative. The angel was really in a hurry to perform this task! This was one nervous angel!

**12:9** Peter was uncertain whether this was a vision, dream, or reality (cf. Acts 12:11-12; 10:17,19; 11:5).

**12:11 "When Peter came to himself"** Luke uses a similar phrase in describing the Prodigal Son (cf. Luke 15:17). Suddenly the reality of the experience and its implications dawned on him (cf. Acts 12:12).

**12:12 "the house of Mary"** Mary was a very common name. There are several Marys mentioned in the Gospels.

1. the mother of Jesus (cf. Luke 1:27)
2. Mary of Magdala, a disciple from Galilee (cf. Luke 8:2; 24:10)
3. mother of James and John (cf. Luke 24:10)
4. sister of Martha and Lazarus (cf. Luke 10:39,42)
5. wife of Cleophas (cf. John 19:25)
6. mother of John Mark (here)

■ **"the mother of John"** This refers to John Mark's mother. The early church met in this family's house in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 12:12). It was also the site of the Lord's three post resurrection appearances and the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost.

John Mark accompanied Paul and his cousin Barnabas (cf. Col. 4:10) on the first missionary journey (cf. Acts 12:25-13:13). For some reason he deserted the team and returned home (cf. Acts 15:38). Barnabas wanted to include him on the second missionary journey, but Paul refused (cf. Acts 15:36-41). This resulted in Paul and Barnabas separating. Barnabas took John Mark to Cyprus (cf. Acts 15:39). Later, while Paul was in prison, he mentions John Mark in a positive way (cf. Col. 4:10) and still later in Paul's second imprisonment at Rome, just before his death, he mentions John Mark again (cf. 2 Tim. 4:11).

Apparently John Mark became part of Peter's missionary team (cf. 1 Pet. 5:13). Eusebius' *Eccl. His.* 3.39.12 gives us an interesting account of John Mark's relation to Peter.

"In his own book Papias gives us accounts of the Lord's sayings obtained from Aristion or learnt direct from the presbyter John. Having brought these to the attention of scholars, I must now follow up the statements already quoted from him with a piece of information which he sets out regarding Mark, the writer of the gospel:

This, too, the presbyter used to say. 'Mark, who had been Peter's interpreter, wrote down carefully, but not in order, all that he remembered of the Lord's sayings and doings. For he had not heard the Lord or been one of His followers, but later, as I said, one of Peter's. Peter used to adapt his teaching to the occasion, without making a systematic arrangement of the Lord's sayings, so that Mark was quite justified in writing down some things just as he remembered them. For he had one purpose only—to leave out nothing that he had heard, and to make no misstatement about it'" (p. 152).

In this quote Papias refers to "John the elder." Irenaeus says "and these things are borne witness to in writing by Papias, the hearer of John, and a companion of Polycarp." This implies Papias heard it from John the Apostle.

■ **"many were gathered together and were praying"** The grammatical forms of these words reveal that the church had gathered and intended to remain in prayer (perfect passive participle followed by a present middle [deponent] participle).

**12:13 "door of the gate"** This was a small door on the street. There was a larger door upstairs.

■ **"Rhoda"** Her name means "rose." It is uncertain whether she worked for the homeowners or was a member of the prayer meeting.

**12:15 "You are out of your mind"** The church was praying for God to act, but they were extremely surprised (cf. Acts 12:16) when He did.

■ **"They kept saying"** There are two imperfect active indicatives in this context, which implies that Rhoda's affirmation and that of those in the prayer meeting in the upper room's response happened more than once.



▣ **"It is his angel"** Angels play a prominent role in Luke's writings. Apparently the Jews believed that one's guardian angel could take their physical shape (for a good discussion of Jewish sources and beliefs about guardian angels, see *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 2, p. 963). There is no scriptural basis for this belief. This development of angeology may have come from the concept of *fravashi* in Zoroastrianism. Much of rabbinical angelology can be traced to this Persian influence. There is some scriptural evidence for guardian angels for new believers (cf. Matt. 18:10). Angels are servants of the redeemed (cf. Heb. 1:14).

**12:17 "motioning to them with his hand to be silent"** This is obviously an eyewitness detail (cf. Acts 13:16). Luke records this gesture several times (cf. Acts 13:16; 19:33; 21:40).

▣ **"Report these things to James and the brethren"** This shows that James, the half-brother of Jesus, was already the leader of the Jerusalem church (cf. Acts 15:13-21).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: JAMES, THE HALF-BROTHER OF JESUS**

▣ **"went to another place"** No one knows where Peter went, but apparently he did not go to Rome as some supposed because he is present at the Jerusalem Council recorded in Acts 15.

Even though God supernaturally delivered Peter, this did not imply that he could be reckless or expect this miraculous intervention every time. Remember James had been killed! Peter also sends word to the church to expect more physical persecution because of his deliverance.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 12:18-19**

**<sup>18</sup>Now when day came, there was no small disturbance among the soldiers as to what could have become of Peter. <sup>19</sup>When Herod had searched for him and had not found him, he examined the guards and ordered that they be led away to execution. Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea and was spending time there.**

**12:18 "there was no small disturbance"** It is interesting that Luke states things in the negative, often by understatement (cf. Acts 12:18; 15:2; 19:11,23,24; 20:12; 26:19,26; 27:30; 28:2, see footnote #8, p. 134, of G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*). This literary feature is unknown in Hebrew literature, but is used often in Greek literature. Luke was a highly educated Greek!

**12:19 "he examined the guards and ordered that they be led away to execution"** This is the implication of the text (cf. NKJV, NRSV, TEV), but it is not stated explicitly (cf. NJB). Some translations use italics to identify words that are not in the Greek text. If a guard lost his prisoner, he had to bear the prisoner's punishment (cf. Acts 16:27; 27:42, Code of Justinian 9.4.4).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 12:20-23**

**<sup>20</sup>Now he was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; and with one accord they came to him, and having won over Blastus the king's chamberlain, they were asking for peace, because their country was fed by the king's country. <sup>21</sup>On an appointed day Herod, having put on his royal apparel, took his seat on the rostrum and began delivering an address to them. <sup>22</sup>The people kept crying out, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" <sup>23</sup>And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died.**

**12:20 "Now he was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon"** Herod was very angry and continued to be so (periphrastic imperfect). The particular historic incident and person are not known in history, but the region of Tyre and Sidon depended on the agricultural produce from the area of Galilee (cf. 1 Kgs. 5:11; Ezra 3:7; and possibly Ezek. 27:17).

**12:21 "On an appointed day Herod, having put on his royal apparel"** This occurred in a.d. 44. For a more complete account of this event see Josephus' *Antiq.* 19.8.2 (translated by William Whiston, Kregel).

"At which festival, a great multitude was gotten together of the principal persons, and such as were of dignity through his province. On the second day of which shows he put on a garment made wholly of silver, and of a contexture truly wonderful, and came into the theatre early in the morning; at which time the silver of his garment being illuminated by the fresh reflection of the sun's rays upon it, shone out after a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread a horror over those that looked intently upon him: and presently his flatterers cried out, one from one place, and another from another, (though not for his good,) that he was a god: and they added,—'Be thou merciful to us; for although we have hitherto revered thee only as a man, yet shall we henceforth own thee as superior to mortal nature.' Upon this the king did neither rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery. But, as he presently afterwards looked up, he saw an owl sitting on a certain rope over his head, and immediately understood that this bird was the messenger of ill tidings, as it had once been the messenger of good tidings to him; and fell into the deepest sorrow. A severe pain also arose in his belly, and began in a most violent manner. He therefore looked upon his friends, and said,—'I, whom you call a god, am commanded presently to depart this life; while Providence thus reproves the lying words you just now said to me; and I, who was by you called immortal, am immediately to be hurried away by death'" (p. 412).

Herod's temper and the physical condition which accompanied it are also described in gruesome detail in *Antiq.* 17:6:5.

The *Jerome Biblical Commentary* (vol. 2, p. 191) informs us that these gruesome details of a person's death was ancient writer's way of showing what happens to those who offend God.

1. Antiochus IV Epiphanes – II Macc. 9:5-18
2. Herod the Great – Josephus, *Antiq.* 17.6.5

**12:23 "the angel of the Lord"** This refers to the Death Angel (cf. Exod. 12:23; 2 Sam. 24:16; 2 Kgs. 19:35). Death is in the hands of God, not Satan. This is an example of temporal judgment.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 12:24**

**<sup>24</sup>But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied.**

**12:24** This is a characteristic Lukan summary statement (cf. Acts 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:31).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 12:25**

**<sup>25</sup>And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission, taking along with *them* John, who was also called Mark.**

**12:25** This begins the account of Paul's missionary journeys. There is a textual variant in this verse relating to whether they returned "to" Jerusalem (cf. *eis*, MSS  $\chi$  and B) or "from" Jerusalem (cf. *apo*, MS D or *ek*, MSS P<sup>74</sup>, A). Acts 13 begins with Barnabas and Saul in Antioch ("from Jerusalem to Antioch," cf. MS E and Old Latin, Syrian, and Coptic versions).

■ **"Mark"** See note at "Persons Mentioned," Acts 16 Introduction.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the

book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did God spare Peter and not James?
2. Was the assembled church surprised when their prayers were answered? Explain the implication.
3. Do believers need angels if they have the indwelling Holy Spirit?

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# ACTS 13

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Barnabas and Saul Commissioned	Barnabas and Saul Appointed (12:25-13:3)	Barnabas and Saul in Cyprus (12:23-13:12)	Barnabas and Saul are Chosen and Sent	The Mission Sent Out
13:1-3		13:1-3	13:1-2 13:3	13:13
The Apostles Preach in Cyprus	Preaching in Cyprus		In Cyprus	Cyprus: The Magician Elymas
13:4-12	13:4-12	13:4-12	13:4-5 13:6-11a 13:11b-12	13:4-5 13:6-12
Paul and Barnabas at Antioch of Pisidia	At Antioch of Pisidia	Journey to Antioch of Pisidia and Iconium	In Antioch in Pisidia	They Arrive at Antioch in Pisidia
13:13-16a	13:13-41	13:13-16a	13:13-16a	13:13-16a
13:16b-25		14:16b-25	13:16b-20a 13:20b-25	13:16b-25
13:26-41		13:26-41	13:26-41	13:26-31 13:32-37 13:38-39 13:40-41
	Blessing and Conflict at Antioch			
13:42-43	13:42-52	13:42-43	13:42-43	13:42-43
				Paul and Barnabas Preach to the Gentiles
13:44-52		13:44-47 13:48-52	13:44-47 13:48 13:49-52	13:44-47 13:48-49 13:50-52

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in

interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is an account of Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey. The rest of Acts will be given over to Paul's ministry.
- B. It would be very helpful to turn to the map in the back of your Bible or atlas and follow the geographical locations mentioned in Acts 13 and 14.
- C. There is an obvious transition in Acts 13 and 14 from the leadership of Barnabas to the leadership of Paul.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 13:1-3

**<sup>1</sup>Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was *there*, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. <sup>2</sup>While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." <sup>3</sup>Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.**

**13:1 "Antioch"** See note at Acts 11:19.

▣ **"the church"** See Special Topic at Acts 5:11.

▣ **"prophets and teachers"** These two gifts of the Spirit are listed in 1 Cor. 12:28 and Eph. 4:11. The grammatical construction is such that it is uncertain whether the five men listed were both prophets and teachers or if the first three are prophets and the last two are teachers.

The problem with this term is, "How is the NT gift of prophecy related to OT prophets?" In the OT prophets are writers of Scripture. In the NT this task is given to the original twelve Apostles and their helpers. As the term "apostle" is retained as an ongoing gift (cf. Eph. 4:11), but with a changed task after the death of the Twelve, so too, is the office of prophet. Inspiration has ceased; there is no further inspired Scripture. New Testament prophets' primary task is proclamation of the gospel, but also a different task, possibly how to apply NT truths to current situations and needs. See Special Topic at Acts 11:27.

The gift of teacher is mentioned in Acts 13:1 in combination with prophecy, but in Eph. 4:11 it is linked with pastors. In 2 Tim. 1:11 Paul says he is a preacher, apostle, and a teacher. Here it seems to stand independently, as it does in Rom. 12:7. It is also discussed separately in James 3:1ff. This implies that these leadership gifts can be combined in different ways in different believers to meet the need of the church in that day or area. Each of these gifted leaders (cf. Eph. 4:11) proclaimed the gospel, but in different ways (ordering, preaching, instructing).

## [SPECIAL TOPIC: INSPIRATION](#)

## SPECIAL TOPIC: ILLUMINATION

- **"Simeon who was called Niger"** The term *niger* is Latin for dark or black. Some commentators try to relate this Simon to Mark 15:21.
- **"Lucius of Cyrene"** Possibly this is one of the Hellenistic Jews that preached to the Gentiles in Antioch (cf. Acts 11:20). He is probably not the Lucius mentioned in Rom. 16:21.
- **"Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch"** *Manaen* is a Greek form of the Hebrew *Manahem*, which means "comforter." This man was either a foster brother (Greek literature) of Herod Antipas (see Introduction to Acts 12) or he grew up with him (Koine papyri). Luke probably got much of his information about Herod Antipas (the Tetrarch) from conversations with this man.

13:2

NASB	"ministering"
NKJV	"ministered"
NRSV	"worshiping"
TEV	"serving"
NJB	"offering worship"

This is the Greek term *leitourgia* (a compound from "public" and "work") from which we get the English term liturgy. Originally it referred to someone who did public service at their own expense. In this context it implies a period of seeking God's will during a worship service. The verb could refer to the entire church or just the five men listed.

- **"had fasted"** In the OT there is only one fast day a year, the Day of Atonement, Leviticus 16. However, during the first century, rabbinical Judaism had developed two fasts a week. Although fasting is not required of believers, many times it is helpful in discerning God's will (cf. Acts 14:23).

## SPECIAL TOPIC: FASTING

- **"the Holy spirit said"** This is another biblical evidence for the personality of the Holy Spirit (see Special Topic at Acts 1:2). Whether it was audible or intuitive is uncertain (cf. Acts 8:29; 10:19; 11:12; 20:23; 21:11). It is obvious that this was a very specific message (cf. Acts 16:6-7), probably given through one of the prophets.
- **"Set apart"** This is an aorist active imperative. The term *aphorizō* has the same connotation as "holy" (*hagiazō*). It implies set apart and equipped for an assigned divine task (cf. Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:15).
- After "set apart" in the Greek text is the particle *dē*, which denotes intensity (cf. Luke 2:15; 1 Cor. 6:20). It gives an earnestness to the Spirit's call. There is a parallel in Paul's statement of Acts 15:36.
- **"the work to which I have called them"** This is a perfect middle (deponent) indicative. It is the Spirit who calls and equips for ministry tasks (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7,11).

**13:3** The verse has three aorist participles describing the spiritual preparations to send out the first missionaries from the church at Antioch.

1. fasted
2. prayed
3. laid hands on them

This seems to be the united actions of the whole congregation, not just the other prophets and teachers. The whole church should be involved in Great Commission activities!

■ **"laid their hands on them"** This particular verse is one of the ambiguous texts on which our modern practice of ordination is based. However, it is inappropriate as a biblical foundation for our modern denominational practices. There are many physical examples of "laying on of hands" in the Bible.

1. in the OT for the purpose of
  - a. sacrificial identification (cf. Lev. 1:4; 3:2; 4:4; 16:21)
  - b. a blessing (cf. Gen. 48:13ff; Matt. 19:13,15)
  - c. the commissioning of a successor (cf. Num. 27:23; Deut. 34:9)
2. In the NT the background is equally as varied
  - a. for healing (cf. Luke 4:40; 13:13; Acts 9:17; 28:8)
  - b. dedication or commissioning to a task (cf. Acts 6:6; 13:3)
  - c. connected with receiving the Holy Spirit or spiritual gifts (cf. Acts 8:17; 19:6; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6)
  - d. a reference to the basic teachings of Judaism or the church (cf. Heb. 6:2)

This laying on of hands was not an inaugurating experience. These men were already called, gifted, functioning leaders. It is not a new ministry they are called to, but an expansion of what they were already doing.

Ordination tends to encourage a distinction among believers. It gives credence to the clergy-laity dichotomy. The Greek word *cleros* (to inherit by lot) and *laos* (Greek word for people), when used in the NT, always refers to the entire group of believers. All believers are called, gifted, full time ministers of the gospel (cf. Eph. 4:11-12). There is no biblical evidence for separating believers into hierarchal groups. All believers are gifted for ministry to the body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7, 11).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 13:4-12**

**<sup>4</sup>So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus. <sup>5</sup>When they reached Salamis, they began to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; and they also had John as their helper. <sup>6</sup>When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they found a magician, a Jewish false prophet whose name was Bar-Jesus, <sup>7</sup>who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence. This man summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. <sup>8</sup>But Elymas the magician (for so his name is translated) was opposing them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. <sup>9</sup>But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him, <sup>10</sup>and said, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord? <sup>11</sup>"Now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time." And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand. <sup>12</sup>Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord.**

**13:4 "being sent out by the Holy Spirit"** This context does not assert the authority of the local church, but the authority of the Spirit. He is that part of the Trinity (see Special Topic at Acts 2:32) emphasized in Acts. The "new Messianic age" was known as "the age of the Spirit." He calls, gifts, directs, convicts, and empowers (cf. John 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-15). No permanent or effective ministry can occur without His presence and blessing.

■ **"Seleucia"** This was the port city of Antioch of Syria. It was about fifteen miles southwest. Its name goes back to Alexander the Great's general (Seleucid), who ruled this area after Alexander's death.

■ **"Cyprus"** This was Barnabas' home (cf. Acts 4:36) where there was a large Jewish population. In the OT it is known as *Kittim*. This was not the first Christian witness on this island (cf. Acts 11:19-20).

**13:5 "Salamis"** This was the port city on the east coast of the island of Cyprus. It was the commercial center of the island.

- **"they began to proclaim the word of God in the synagogue"** The reason for this is obvious.
  1. these Jews already knew the OT
  2. Jews were the chosen people (cf. Gen. 12:1-3) and had the first opportunity to respond (cf. Acts 3:26; 13:46; 17:2; 18:4,19; 19:8; Rom. 1:16)
  3. in the synagogue services were Gentiles who [a] had already been attracted to the one true God and [b] knew the OT

This became Paul's regular missionary method wherever there was a synagogue.

- **"John"** This refers to John Mark in whose home the disciples met (cf. Acts 12:12). He is also the traditional writer of the Gospel of Mark, which seems to record the eyewitness testimony of the Apostle Peter. He is also the cause of the great argument between Paul and Barnabas which split the missionary team (cf. Acts 15:36-41). However, later on Paul mentions John Mark in a positive way (cf. Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11 and Philemon 24). See fuller note at Introduction to Acts 16.

**13:6 "when they had gone through the whole island"** This probably means that they stopped and preached in every synagogue on the island.

- **"Paphos"** This refers to new Paphos, in contradistinction from the older Phoenician city seven miles away. Both of these cities are named after the Phoenician goddess *Paphian*. This was the god of love also known as *Aphrodite*, *Astarte*, *Venus*, etc. This city was the official political capital of Cyprus.

- **"Bar-Jesus"** This man was a Jewish false prophet. His name means "son of Joshua." We learn from Acts 13:8 that he went by the designation Elymas the magician. This term magician reflects the Greek equivalent of an Aramaic root that means "sorcerer" (cf. Acts 13:10). See Special Topic at Acts 8:9.

**13:7 "the proconsul, Sergius Paulus"** There has been much discussion about the historicity of Luke's accounts. Here is a good example of the accuracy of Luke the historian. He calls this man "a proconsul," which meant Cyprus was a Roman Senatorial province. We learn this occurred in a.d. 22 by decree from Augustus. We also learn from a Latin inscription at Soloi that Sergius Paulus began his proconsulship in a.d. 53. The more information archaeology discovers from the Mediterranean world of the first century, the more Luke's historical accuracy is corroborated.

- **"a man of intelligence"** This term is used with a wide variety of connotations. In this context it implies he was able to rule effectively. Also characterizing him in this way shows that the gospel not only impacted the poor and uneducated, but also the wealthy and educated (cf. *Manaen* 13:1). It is also possible that one of Luke's intents of writing Acts was to show that the gospel did not threaten Roman rule.

**13:8 "Elymas"** It seems that this Greek name is a transliteration of

1. an Arabic term for a wise man (a sage, a diviner, one who can foresee and control the future by manipulating the unseen powers/forces of the unseen realm, AB, vol. 2, p. 487)
2. an Aramaic word for one who interprets dreams

- **"magician"** This is related to the term "magi," which meant Chaldean-Median wise men, like Daniel (cf. Dan. 2:2; 4:9; Matt. 2:1). However, by Paul's day, it was used of itinerant magicians and wandering quacks in the Greco-Roman world. See Special Topic at Acts 8:9.

■ **"the faith"** This term is used in three specific ways in the NT:

1. personal trusting in Jesus Christ as a Savior
2. faithful, godly living
3. theological content of the gospel (i.e., doctrine, cf. Jude 3, 20)



The same ambiguity is seen in Acts 6:7. Here it seems to refer to #3 because of the article and the context. See Special Topics at Acts 3:16 and 6:5.

**13:9 "Paul"** This is the first use of his Roman cognomen in the book of Acts. Paul is from a Greek term that means "little." Some think it refers to Paul's physical size, others to his own personal evaluation of himself as "the least of the apostles" because he persecuted the church. It was probably the second name given to him by his parents at birth.

▣ **"Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit"** The power of the Spirit that guided the early church is described by the term "the filling" (cf. Acts 2:4; 4:8,31; 6:3; 7:55; 9:17; 13:9,52). The ongoing, daily filling of the Spirit is the normal state of all believers (cf. Eph. 5:18). In Acts it is usually associated with a boldness to proclaim the gospel.

▣ **"fixed his gaze"** See fuller note at Acts 1:10.

**13:10** Paul characterizes this Jewish false prophet by several terms.

1. "full by deceit," meaning to entrap with a bait (this is the only use of this term in Luke's writings)
2. "full of all fraud," this is from the Greek word that means to do something lightly or frivolously, but it came to have an evil connotation (cf. Acts 18:14). This term is found only in Acts (cf. Acts 13:10; 18:14).
3. "son of the devil," this is a Semitic idiom (cf. Acts 3:25; 4:36) for one characterized by the actions of the devil (cf. Matt. 13:38; John 8:38,41,44, see Special Topics at Acts 5:3)
4. "enemy of all righteousness," This term is used several times in Luke's writings involving OT quotes (cf. Luke 1:71,74; 20:43; Acts 2:35). All that is like God, this man was against. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS](#) at Acts 3:14.
5. Paul uses the inclusive term "all" three times to show this man's complete volitional wickedness

▣ **"to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord"** This question expects a "yes" answer. The word "right" or "straight" in the NT reflects the OT concept of righteousness, which meant a standard or measuring reed. The NT terms "crooked" or "perverted" reflect the OT terms for sin, which were a deviation from the standard, which is God Himself. This man made everything crooked (i.e., the opposite of righteousness). See Special Topic at Acts 3:14.

**13:11 "the hand of the Lord"** This is a Semitic anthropomorphic phrase referring to the power and presence of YHWH (cf. Luke 1:66; Acts 11:21). In the OT it often refers to God's judgment (cf. Exod. 9:3; 1 Sam. 5:6; Job 19:21; 23:2; Ps. 32:4; 38:2; 39:10), as it does here.

▣ **"you will be blind"** These powerful descriptive terms of evil and rebellion by which Paul characterizes this man and the form of his temporary divine punishment may reflect Paul's own previous life. He looks back now and sees himself in this Jewish false teacher and his manipulation (cf. Acts 9:8).

Blindness is often used in a parabolic sense of a lack of spiritual receptivity (cf. John 9; Acts 9; also note Deut. 28:28-29).

**13:12 "believed when he saw what happened"** This is the same Greek word (*pisteuō*, the noun can be translated as believe, faith, or trust) used throughout the NT for genuine belief. This governor responded to the gospel message. One man's eyes were closed (literally); one man's eyes were opened (metaphorically). This is the mystery of belief and unbelief (cf. John 9). See Special Topics: Faith (noun, verb, and adjective) at Acts 3:16 and OT Faith at Acts 6:5.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 13:13-16a**

**<sup>13</sup>Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; but John left them and returned to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup>But going on from Perga, they**

arrived at Pisidian Antioch, and on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. <sup>15</sup>After the reading of the Law and the Prophets the synagogue officials sent to them, saying, "Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it." <sup>16</sup>Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said,

**13:13 "Paul and his companions"** Obviously the leadership has changed. From now on in the book of Acts Paul's name will be listed first.

▣ **"Perga in Pamphylia"** Perga was the largest city of the small Roman coastal province of Pamphylia (mid-southern Turkey). It was located several miles inland to discourage attacks by sea-faring raiders.

Apparently Paul did not preach here at this time, but did so later (cf. Acts 14:25). There is no historical evidence of a Christian group in this area for several hundred years. He merely passed through this coastal region.

▣ **"John left them and returned to Jerusalem"** Luke records this event, but gives no clue as to why (nor does any other NT author). See Introduction to Acts 16, he returned to the Lord's service!

**13:14 "Pisidian Antioch"** This literally means "Antioch towards Pisidia" because it was located in the ethnic area of Phrygia the Roman Province of Galatia. This was a distinct ethnic group, probably from Europe.

▣ **"on the Sabbath day"** This would denote from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday. The Jews counted time from evening to evening, following Genesis 1.

▣ **"sat down"** This may be an idiom denoting someone who was to speak in the synagogue. Rabbis always taught while seated (cf. Matt. 5:1; Luke 4:20). The synagogues regularly allowed itinerant visitors to speak if they wished (cf. Acts 13:15).

**13:15 "the reading of the Law and the Prophets"** This was the part of the typical order of service in a synagogue in Jesus' day. Originally only the Law of Moses was read, but Antiochus IV Epiphanes forbade this in 163 b.c. The Jews then substituted the reading of the Prophets. During the Maccabean revolt, Judaism was restored and both the Law and the Prophets were continued to be read together as a basic format of synagogue services (cf. Acts 13:27). See Special Topic following.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: HEBREW CANON**

▣ **"the synagogue officials"** These were the men in charge of building maintenance and the order of worship (cf. Luke 8:41,49). They often invited guests to speak.

▣ **"if you have any word of exhortation"** This is a first class conditional sentence, assumed to be true from the perspective of the author of for his literary purposes. This was a normal aspect of synagogue worship. Paul took full advantage of the opportunity.

**13:16 "Paul stood up"** Usually Jewish teachers sit when they teach; however, it was the Greco-Roman custom to stand while teaching. Paul modified his manner and presentation to the audience.

▣ **"motioning with his hand"** Paul gestured for quiet. Luke mentions this eyewitness detail often (cf. Acts 12:17; 13:16; 19:33; 21:40).

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 13:16b-25**

<sup>16</sup>"Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen: <sup>17</sup>The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted

arm He led them out from it. <sup>18</sup>For a period of about forty years He put up with them in the wilderness. <sup>19</sup>When He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land as an inheritance—all of which took about four hundred and fifty years. <sup>20</sup>After these things He gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. <sup>21</sup>Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. <sup>22</sup>After He had removed him, He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who will do all My will." <sup>23</sup>From the descendants of this man, according to promise, God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, <sup>24</sup>after John had proclaimed before His coming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. <sup>25</sup>And while John was completing his course, he kept saying, "What do you suppose that I am? I am not He. But behold, one is coming after me the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie."

**13:16b "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen"** There were two groups present, Jews and Gentile "God-fearers" (cf. Acts 13:26; 10:2,22,35). This sermon is very similar to Stephen's sermon of Acts 7. In many ways Paul was deeply influenced by Stephen's understanding of the OT and the gospel.

**13:17** Paul began his review of OT history with the call of the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in Genesis) and the captivity and deliverance from Egypt (Exodus-Deuteronomy).

▣ **"with an uplifted arm He led them out"** This is typical OT imagery (cf. LXX Exod. 6;1,6) of YHWH in physical terms. It is similar to the anthropomorphic phrase, "His right arm." The Bible speaks of God in human vocabulary (i.e., anthropomorphism) even though He is an eternal, non-physical, all pervasive Spirit. These biblical analogies are the source of many misunderstandings and literal overstatements. The Bible speaks of God in analogy, metaphor, and negation. God is far greater than fallen, time-bound, earth-bound humans can comprehend or express! See Special Topic at Acts 2:33.

**13:18 "For a period of about forty years He put up with them in the wilderness"** This reflects Deut. 1:31 and could be translated "fed as a nurse" (cf. MSS A, C). This reflects the OT books of Exodus and Numbers.

The term "forty" is often a round number. Literally the time from Horeb to Shittim was thirty-eight years with a two year period at Horeb (Sinai). See Special Topic at Acts 1:3.

**13:19 "destroyed seven nations"** The nations of Palestine can be characterized in several ways.

1. collective terms, Canaanite (i.e., lowlander, cf. Gen. 10:18-29; Jdgs. 1:1) or Amorite (i.e., highlander, cf. Gen. 15:16)
2. two nations (Canaanites, Perizzites, cf. Gen. 13:7; 34:30; Jdgs. 1:4-5)
3. three nations (Hivites, Canaanites, Hittites, cf. Exod. 23:28)
4. six nations (Canaanite, Hittite, Amorite, Perizzite, Hivite, Jebusite, cf. Exod. 3:8,17; 33:2; 34:11; Deut. 20:17; Jos. 9:1; 12:8)
5. seven nations (Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, Jebusites, cf. Deut. 7:1; Jos. 3:10; 24:11)
6. ten nations (Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaim, Amonites, Canaanites, Girgashites, Jebusites, cf. Gen. 15:19-21)

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: PRE-ISRAELITE INHABITANTS OF PALESTINE**

▣ **"an inheritance"** The triple compound term *kata + klēros + nemō* is common in the Septuagint, but is used only here in the NT (other texts have *kata + klēros + didōmi*). It implies the casting of lots as a means of dividing the Promised Land among the tribes (cf. Jos. 13-19). The word *klēros* is where we get the English word "clergy," but in the NT it always refers to the body of believers, not an elite group!

■ **"four hundred and fifty years"** This number seems to be arrived at by:

1. 400 year bondage in Egypt (cf. Gen. 15:13)
2. 40 year wilderness wandering period (cf. Exod. 16:35; Num. 14:33-34; 32:13)
3. 7-10 year conquest (cf. Jos. 14:7,10)

The Textus Receptus (KJV) moves the number to Acts 13:20 and seems to involve the Judges (following Josephus, *Antiq.* 8.3.1), but this wording is not in the older and better uncial Greek manuscripts (cf.  $\alpha$ , A, B, C), which fits better with 1 Kgs. 6:1 dating. The dash found in the NASB is to accentuate the proper place of the number.

**13:20** This refers to the period from the book of Judges through 1 Samuel 7.

**13:21** This refers to 1 Sam. 8-10.

■ **"for forty years"** This time phrase is not found in the OT unless the OT manuscript problem connected to 1 Sam. 13:1 includes "forty" (NIV). Josephus, *Antiq.* 6.14.9 also mentions that Saul reigned "forty" years. The Septuagint just omits the entire sentence and starts with 1 Sam. 3:2. "Forty" was obviously a rabbinical tradition.

**13:22 "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart"** This is not a direct quote from the OT but it seems to be a combination of Psalm 89:20 and 1 Samuel 13:14. It needs to be remembered that this sermon by Paul follows the basic pattern of Stephen's historical rendition in Acts 7. That David can be called a man after God's heart, when he was such a notorious sinner (cf. Ps. 32,51; 2 Samuel 11), is a great encouragement to all believers.

This combination quote implies several things.

1. This was a standard practice with the rabbis, which explains many of the unusual OT quotes in the NT.
2. This was already a part of Christian catechism. Paul often quotes from early Christian hymns and possibly other literature.
3. This quote is unique to Paul and shows that Luke must have gotten his summary of this first recorded message of Paul in Acts from Paul himself.

**NASB, NKJV "who will do all My will"**

**NRSV "who will carry out all my wishes"**

**TEV "who will do all I want him to do"**

**NJB "who will perform my entire will"**

This verse is a combination OT allusion. This part of the sentence is not in the OT passages. In the OT context Saul was disobedient and rejected. But David's life also had disobedience. God works with imperfect humans to accomplish His redemptive plan.

**13:23** This is parallel to Acts 7:52. It points back to all the OT promises.

1. a redemption through the seed of a woman, Gen, 3:15
2. a ruler from Judah, Gen. 49:10
3. a coming leader like Moses, the Prophet, Deut. 18:15,18
4. a leader from David, 2 Sam. 7; Ps. 132:11; Isa. 11:1,10; Matt. 1:1
5. a suffering servant, Isa. 52:13-53:12
6. a savior, Luke 2:11; Matt. 1:21; John 1:29; 4:42; Acts 5:31

For Luke #4 is prominent (cf. Luke 1:32,69; 2:4; 3:31; Acts 2:29-31; 13:22-23). The Messiah would be of Jesse's line (cf. Isa. 9:7; 11:1,10; 16:5).

**13:24** John the Baptist's ministry and message is described in Mark 1:1-8; Matt. 3:1-11; Luke 3:2-17; John 1:6-8,19-28. John fulfilled the prophecies of Matt. 3:1; 4:5-6. His preaching of repentance also set the

pattern for Jesus' early preaching (cf. Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:14-15).

John spoke of a Coming One, greater than himself (cf. Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:7; Luke 3:16; John 1:27,30; Acts 13:25).

**13:25 "while John was completing his course"** God had a specific task for John to perform. John's public ministry only lasted eighteen months. But, what a year and a half it was, filled with the Spirit's power and preparing the way for the Messiah.

Paul knew the OT from his youth in synagogue school and his training as a rabbi under Gamaliel in Jerusalem. He heard the gospel

1. from Stephen
2. from believers he persecuted
3. by a special vision from Jesus
4. from a believing Jewish layman from Damascus
5. by Jesus in Arabia
6. when he visited with the other Apostles

He tries to quote Jesus' whenever he can on a subject. Here he quotes the Gospel accounts of His life

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 13:26-41**

**26**"Brethren, sons of Abraham's family, and those among you who fear God, to us the message of this salvation has been sent. **27**For those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers, recognizing neither Him nor the utterances of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled *these* by condemning *Him*. **28**And though they found no ground for *putting Him to death*, they asked Pilate that He be executed. **29**When they had carried out all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb. **30**But God raised Him from the dead; **31**and for many days He appeared to those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now His witnesses to the people. **32**And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, **33**that God has fulfilled this *promise* to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'You are My Son; today have begotten You.' **34**As for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: 'I will give you the holy *and sure blessings* of David.' **35**Therefore He also says in another *Psalm*, 'You will not allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.' **36**For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay; **37**but He whom God raised did not undergo decay. **38**Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, **39**and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses. **40**Therefore take heed, so that the thing spoken of in the Prophets may not come upon *you*: **41**'Behold, you scoffers, and marvel, and perish; For I am accomplishing a work in your days, A work which you will never believe, though someone should describe it to you.'"

**13:26 "sons of Abraham's family, and those among you who fear God"** This refers to both the Jewish hearers (or proselytes) and the Gentiles (God-fearers) attached to Judaism's monotheism and morality.

■ **"this salvation"** This is referring to God's promise to redeem fallen humanity through a Messiah (cf. Gen. 3:15). It includes Gentiles (cf. Gen. 12:5; Exod. 19:5-6; and Acts 28:28 and 13:46).

**13:27** This is such a tragic verse. It succinctly summarizes the blindness of the Jews in Jerusalem about the Scriptures even though they read them continuously. By missing the prophetic signs (cf. Psalm 22;

Isaiah 53; Zechariah; Malachi) and prophecies (Isaiah, Jonah) they became the prophetic sign! He came to His own, but His own received Him not (cf. John 1:11-12).

**13:28** Acts records again and again the spiritual responsibility of the Jews in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 2:23,36; 3:13-15; 4:10; 5:30; 7:52; 10:39; 13:27-28).

**13:29 "they. . .they"** These must refer to different groups. The first were those who sought His death (i.e., Jewish leadership, the crowd before Pilate). The second involves those who wanted a proper burial. This could have involved sincere Jewish people who saw the injustice (similar to Acts 8:2, involving the burial of Stephen) or secret disciples like Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus (cf. John 19:38-42).

■ **"all that was written concerning Him"** Jesus' life was one of fulfilled prophecy. One strong evidence for the inspiration of the Bible and the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth is predictive prophecy (cf. Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 10:43; 13:29; 24:14; 26:22).

It is surely true that many of the details of Jesus' life, which we in the church today call prophecy, are in a sense typology. Many events happened in the life of Israel which later seem to also occur in Jesus' life (one example, Hosea 11:1). Often ambiguous, oblique passages, which would not have been understood in context as prophetic, seem to jump to life as one views Jesus' earthly experience (ex. Psalm 22; Isaiah 53). It takes inspiration and a sense of the flow of redemptive history to fully appreciate the OT foreshadowing of Jesus. I would also add that although inspired NT writers use typology, even allegory, that modern teachers and preachers should not use this method of interpretation! See Bob's Biblical Interpretation Seminar online at [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org)

■ **"the cross"** See notes at Acts 5:30 and 10:29.

**13:30,33,34,37 "But God raised Him from the dead"** The NT affirms that all three persons of the Trinity were active in Jesus' resurrection:

1. the Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:11)
2. the Son (cf. John 2:19-22; 10:17-18)
3. the Father (cf. Acts 2:24,32; 3:15,26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30,33,34,37; 17:31; Rom. 6:4,9; 10:9; 1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 4:14; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; 1 Thess. 1:10).

This was the Father's confirmation of the truth of Jesus' life and teachings. This is a major aspect of the *Kerygma* (i.e., content of the sermons in Acts). See Special Topic at Acts 2:14.

**13:31 "for many days"** Acts 1:3 says "forty days." However, forty is a common OT round number. See Special Topic at Acts 1:3.

■ **"He appeared"** See Special Topic: Jesus' Post-resurrection Appearances at Acts 1:3

**13:32 "the promise made to the fathers"** This refers to the initial promise of YHWH to Abraham for a land and a seed (cf. Gen. 12:1-3; Romans 4). This same promise of God's presence and blessing was repeated to the Patriarchs and to their children (cf. Isa. 44:3; 54:13; Joel 2:32). The OT focuses on the land, while the NT focuses on "the seed." Paul alludes to this very promise in Rom. 1:2-3.

**13:33** This quote from Ps. 2:7, which is a royal messianic psalm about the conflict and victory of God's Promised Messiah. Jesus had been killed by evil forces (human and demonic), but God had raised Him to victory (cf. Rom. 1:4).

This verse and Rom. 1:4 were used by early heretics (adoptionists) to assert that Jesus became Messiah at the resurrection. There is surely a NT emphasis on Jesus being affirmed and glorified because of His obedience, but this must not be taken in isolation from His preexistent glory and deity (cf. John 1:1-5,9-18; Phil. 2:6-11; Col. 1:13-18; Heb. 1:2-3).

This same verb, "raised up" (*anistēmi*), is used in Acts 3:26 of God raising up "His Servant"; in Acts 3:22 of God raising up the Prophet (cf. Acts 7:37; Deut. 18:19). This seems to be a distinct usage from



"raised" from the dead (cf. Acts 13:30,34,37). Jesus was "raised up" before He died!

**13:34 "no longer to return to decay"** This statement refers to Jesus' death and resurrection. He was the first to be resurrected (first fruits of the dead, cf. 1 Cor. 15:20) rather than resuscitated. Many people were brought back to physical life in the Bible, but they all had to die again. Enoch and Elijah were translated to heaven without death, but they were not resurrected.

■ **"I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David"** This is a quote from Isa. 55:3 from the LXX. The quote includes the plural "sure blessings," but does not specify to what this refers. It is something that passed from God to David, to Jesus, then to His followers (plural "you" in the quote). The OT context shows the significance of "you" (cf. Isa. 55:4-5 LXX, "Behold, I have made him a testimony among the Gentiles, a prince and commander to the Gentiles. Nations which know thee not, shall call upon thee, and peoples which are not acquainted with thee, shall flee to thee for refuge, for the sake of the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified thee," The Septuagint, Zondervan, 1976, p. 890).

The blessings and promises to David (i.e., Jews) are now the blessing and promises of the Gentiles (i.e., the entire human race).

**13:35-37** This is the same argument used earlier in Peter's Pentecost sermon (cf. Acts 2:24-32), also taken from Psalm 16. These early sermons in Acts reflect an early Christian catechism. Several OT Messianic texts were strung together. Therefore, often the pronouns and details do not seem to be relevant to the central purpose of the NT author, which was to affirm the physical resurrection of Jesus and the decay of David.

**13:38** Paul is using an OT augmented argument, as does Peter (Acts 2) and Stephen (Acts 7) to reach these synagogue hearers.

Paul promises a full and complete forgiveness of sins, which Judaism could not provide (cf. Acts 13:39), to all who trust Jesus as the Christ (i.e., "This One," Acts 13:38,39).

**13:39 "and through Him everyone"** Notice the universal element. God loves all humans and all humans have the opportunity to respond to Him by faith (cf. Acts 10:43; Isa. 42:1,4,6,10-12; 55; Ezek. 18:23,32; Joel 2:28,32; John 3:16; 4:42; Rom. 3:22,29,30; 10:9-13; 1 Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 2:1; 4:14).

■ **"who believes"** See Special Topics at Acts 3:16 and 6:5.

**NASB, NKJV "is freed from all things" (Acts 13:39)**

**NRSV "is set free from all those sins" (Acts 13:39)**

**TEV "is set free from all the sins" (Acts 13:39)**

**NJB "justification from all sins" (Acts 13:38)**

This is literally "justified" (present passive indicative). This is a legal term which describes our standing before God through Jesus Christ's righteousness (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21). In Hebrew it originally means a "river reed" (see Special Topic at Acts 3:14). It reflects an OT construction term used metaphorically for God as the standard or ruler by which judgement is made.

■ **"which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses"** This was Paul's major theological point (cf. Rom. 3:21-30). The Mosaic law was a tutor to bring us to an understanding of our personal sin and to cause us to desire Christ (cf. Gal. 3:23-29). The OT Law is not a means of salvation, because all sinned (cf. Rom. 3:9-18,23; Gal. 3:22). It had become a death sentence, a curse (cf. Gal. 3:13; Col. 2:14).

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL'S VIEWS OF THE MOSAIC LAW](#)

**13:40-41** Paul calls on his hearers (present active imperative) to respond by trusting Jesus as the Promised Messiah, as the only way to receive forgiveness (cf. John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5).

He quotes Hab. 1:5 from the Septuagint as a warning. In other places in Paul's writings he quotes Hab.

2:4 as an appropriate response (cf. Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11). Paul preaches for a decision. Intellectual assent is not enough; a complete personal surrender to Jesus as the only hope is required. This initial faith and repentant response must be matched by daily Christlike living.

Verse 41 describes the shocking new methodology of salvation of the new covenant in Christ.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 13:42-43**

**<sup>42</sup>As Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people kept begging that these things might be spoken to them the next Sabbath. <sup>43</sup>Now when *the meeting of the synagogue* had broken up, many of the Jews and of the God-fearing proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, were urging them to continue in the grace of God.**

**13:42** This shows the power of the Spirit (1) using Paul's sermon and (2) the hunger for forgiveness and restoration with God within the hearts of humans made in God's image.

**13:43**

<b>NASB</b>	"God-fearing proselytes"
<b>NKJV</b>	"devout proselytes"
<b>NRSV</b>	"devout converts to Judaism"
<b>TEV</b>	"Gentiles who had been converted to Judaism"
<b>NJB</b>	"devout converts"

This phrase is literally "worshiping proselytes." This is a different group from the "ones fearing God" of Acts 13:16,26 (cf. Acts 10:2,22,35).

Verse 43 refers to those Gentiles who had officially become Jews. This required

1. self baptism in the presence of witnesses
2. circumcision for males
3. offering a sacrifice at the Temple in Jerusalem when possible

There are a few references to Jewish proselytes in the NT (cf. Matt. 23:15; Acts 2:11; 6:5; 13:43).

- ▣ **"urging them to continue in the grace of God"** From the context it is difficult to define this phrase.
  1. some of these hearers may have already responded to the gospel in their hearts
  2. those who were faithful to what they understood of the grace of God in the OT are urged to continue to seek God and listen to Paul again (cf. Acts 13:44)

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 13:44-47**

**<sup>44</sup>The next Sabbath nearly the whole city assembled to hear the word of the Lord. <sup>45</sup>But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and *began* contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming. <sup>46</sup>Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. <sup>47</sup>For so the Lord has commanded us, 'I have placed You as a light for the Gentiles, That You may bring salvation to the end of the earth.'"**

**13:44** Paul's message had an obvious impact. This is also hyperbole. Not everyone in the city attended.

**NASB, NRSV,**

**TEV** "the word of the Lord"

**NKJV, NJB,**

**REB** "the word of God"



There is a Greek manuscript variant at this point.

1. Lord is in MSS P<sup>74</sup>, κ, A, B<sup>2</sup>
2. God is in MSS B, C, E

The UBS<sup>4</sup> puts "Lord" in the text, but rates it "C" (difficulty deciding). As with so many variants, this does not change the sense of the text. The gospel is a divine revelation about Jesus, the Messiah/Christ.

**13:45 "when the Jews saw the crowd. . . jealousy"** Whether it was the large turnout or the large number of Gentiles in the crowd that caused the jealousy is uncertain in this context. Jealousy is attributed to Jewish leadership both in Jerusalem and the Diaspora. (cf. Matt. 27:18; Mark 15:10; Acts 17:5).

Later in Romans Paul develops the theological problem of Jewish unbelief (cf. Romans 9-11). He asserts that God has temporarily blinded Israel so that the Gentiles might be saved. However, God will use the salvation of the Gentiles as a means (i.e., jealousy) to cause Israel to respond to Christ, so that all believers will be united through the gospel (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13).

The problem is when does this occur? The same question could be asked of Zech. 12:10. Is this prophecy related to the early church, which was made up of believing Jews, or to a future period? Jealousy is meant for a redemptive purpose (cf. Rom. 10:19; 11:11,14), but the jealousy in this text causes unbelief!

▣ **"they were fill with jealousy"** See note at Acts 3:10.

▣ **"were blaspheming"** As these Jews defended their traditions and attacked Paul's preaching, they themselves were guilty of blasphemy. There is no middle ground here. Either Judaism or Christianity is a true reflection of God's will. They are exclusive!

**13:46 "spoke out boldly"** This is one of the signs in Acts of being Spirit-filled.

▣ **"It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first"** This was the pattern of early missionary preaching. The Jews had priority (cf. Romans 9-11), but God had included Gentiles. Those in the synagogue knew their OT and could check the prophecies. Acts has a series of texts on this concept and pattern (cf. Acts 3:26; 9:20; 13:5,14; 16:13; 17:2,10,17).

▣ **"you repudiate it"** This is a strong verb (present middle indicative) used several times in the Septuagint. Its basic meaning is "to thrust away." It was used of the Israelites in Stephen's sermon (cf. Acts 7:39). It is also used by Paul in Rom. 11:1-2 to assert that God has not rejected His people, but they have rejected His Son, His only means of salvation, His full revelation.

▣ **"judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life"** It is difficult to hold the concept of predestination, which is emphasized so often in Acts, with the concept of mandated individual personal response. No one can come to faith without the drawing of the Spirit (cf. John 6:44,65), but we are judged by whether we respond or not. By their rejection of Paul's preaching of the gospel, they revealed their true selves (cf. John 3:17-21). The blame for lack of response cannot be placed on God. He has provided a way, His Son, but He is the only way! It is the mystery of "unbelief"!

▣ **"we are turning to the Gentiles"** This becomes a regular pattern of gospel proclamation (cf. Acts 18:6; 22:21; 26:20; 28:28; Rom. 1:16).

**13:47** This is a quote from Isa. 49:6 (cf. Acts 42:6) from the Septuagint. Simeon used this quote at the blessing of Jesus in Luke 2:32 to affirm His Messianic task of universal redemption (see Special Topic at Acts 1:8). It is even possible that the "light" in the context refers to Paul and Barnabas' preaching of the gospel to these Gentiles (cf. "Use of the Old Testament in the New," by Darrell Boch, p. 97 in *Foundations for Biblical Interpretation*, Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994). Now Paul uses it to show the universal proclamation of the universal gospel!

The ending phrase, "to the end of the earth," may be an allusion to 1:8. It highlights the universality of the gospel.

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## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 13:48-52

**48**When the Gentiles heard this, they *began* rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. **49**And the word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region. **50**But the Jews incited the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. **51**But they shook off the dust of their feet *in protest* against them and went to Iconium. **52**And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

### **13:48 "When the Gentiles heard this, they *began* rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord"**

Many of these had been in the synagogue for years and had never heard the inclusive, universal message of God's love and acceptance of all humanity by faith in Messiah. When they heard it they enthusiastically received it (cf. Acts 28:28) and passed it on to others (cf. Acts 13:49).

▣ **"as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed"** This is a clear statement of predestination (so common in the rabbis' and Intertestamental Jewish literature), but it is in the same ambiguous relationship as all NT passages that relate to the paradox of God's choice and human's free will (cf. Phil. 2:12, 13). It is a pluperfect passive periphrastic that comes from a military term (*tassō*) which means to "enroll" or "appoint."

This concept of enrolling refers to the two metaphorical books that God keeps (cf. Dan. 7:10; Rev. 20:12). First is the Book of the Deeds of men (cf. Ps. 56:8; 139:16; Isa. 65:6; and Mal. 3:16). The other is the Book of Life (cf. Exod. 32:32; Ps. 69:28; Isa. 4:3; Dan. 12:1; Luke 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Heb. 12:23; Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12-15; 21:27). See Special Topic: Election/Predestination and the Need for a Theological Balance at Acts 2:47.

**13:50 "But the Jews incited the devout women of prominence"** This text gives historical and cultural setting of the exalted place of women in Asia Minor in the first century (cf. Acts 16:14; 17:4).

In this context it refers to proselytes to Judaism who were also leaders in the community or were married to the civic leaders. A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 3, p. 201, makes the point that Gentile women were greatly attracted to Judaism (cf. *Strabo* 7:2 and *Juvenal* 6:542) because of its morality.

▣ **"instigated a persecution against Paul"** Paul refers to this in 2 Tim. 3:11.

**13:51 "they shook off the dust of their feet"** This is a Jewish sign of rejection (cf. Matt. 10:14; Mark 6:11; Luke 9:5; 10:11). It is uncertain whether this refers to (1) dust on their feet and sandals from walking or (2) dust on their robes which was kicked up when they were working.

▣ **"Iconium"** This was a major city of Lycaonia, located in the Roman province of Galatia. It was about eighty miles east, south-east of Pisidian Antioch and directly north of Lystra.

**13:52 "continually filled with joy"** This is an imperfect passive indicative which can mean the beginning of an action or the repeat of an action in past time. The NASB, 1995 update, takes it in the second sense. Only the Holy Spirit can give joy amidst persecution (cf. Rom. 5:3; James 1:2ff; 1 Peter 4:12ff).

The phrase "the disciples" is ambiguous. Does it refer to the new believers, the missionary team, or both?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why can Acts 13:2-3 not be used as a proof-text for ordination by a select group?
2. Why did Paul preach in the synagogue first?
3. Why did John Mark leave the mission team? (cf. Acts 13:13)
4. How is Acts 13:39 related to Galatians 3?
5. Explain Acts 13:48b in relation to predestination and human free will.

# ACTS 14

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Paul and Barnabas at Iconium 14:1-7	At Iconium 14:1-7	Ministry in the Iconium Region and Return 14:1-7	In Iconium 14:1-4 14:5-7	Iconium Evangelism 14:1 14:2 14:3 14:4-7
Paul and Barnabas at Lystra 14:8-18	Idolatry at Lystra 14:8-18	14:8-18	In Lystra and Derbe 14:8-13 14:14-18	Healing of a Cripple 14:8-10 14:11-18
14:19-20	Stoning, Escape to Derbe 14:19-20	14:19-20	14:19-20	End of the Mission 14:19-20
The Return to Antioch in Syria 14:21-28	Strengthening the Converts 14:21-28	14:21-23 14:24-28	The Return to Antioch in Syria 14:21-23 14:24-26 14:27-28	14:21-23 14:24-26 14:27-28

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph

#### 4. Etc.

### How Does Paul's Mission Relate to Galatians?

- A. These two aspects of background material must be dealt with together because two opposing theories of the identities of the recipients affect the dating of the letter. Both theories have logical weight and limited biblical evidence.
- B. The two theories
1. The traditional theory that was unanimous until the eighteenth century.
    - a. It is called the "Northern Galatian Theory."
    - b. It assumes that "Galatia" refers to the ethnic Galatians of the northern central plateau of Turkey (cf. 1 Pet. 1:1). These ethnic Galatians were Celts (Greek *Keltoi* or Latin *Gall*) who invaded this area in the third century b.c. They were called "Gallo-Graecians" to distinguish them from their western European brothers. They were defeated in 230 b.c. by Attalus I, the King of Pergamum. Their geographical influence was limited to northern central Asia Minor or modern Turkey.
    - c. If this ethnic group is assumed, then the date would be the mid 50's during Paul's second or third missionary journey. Paul's traveling companions would be Silas and Timothy.
    - d. Some have linked Paul's illness in Gal. 4:13 to malaria. They assert that Paul went north into the highlands to get away from the marshy, malaria-infested, coastal lowlands.
  2. The second theory is championed by Sir Wm. M. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveler and Roman Citizen*, New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1896.
    - a. Whereas the traditional theory defined "Galatia" as ethnic, this theory defines it as administrative. It seems that Paul often used Roman provincial names (cf. 1 Cor. 16:19; 2 Cor. 1:1; 8:1, etc.) The Roman province of "Galatia" included a larger area than ethnic "Galatia." These ethnic Celts supported Rome very early and were rewarded with more local autonomy and expanded territorial authority. If this large area was known as "Galatia," then it is possible that Paul's first missionary journey to these southern cities of Antioch in Pisidia, Lystra, Derbe and Iconium, recorded in Acts 13-14, is the location of these churches.
    - b. If one assumes this "Southern Theory," the date would be very early—close to, but before, the "Jerusalem Council" of Acts 15, which addresses the same subject matter as the book of Galatians. The Council occurred in a.d. 48-49 and the letter was probably written during the same period. If this is true, Galatians is the first letter of Paul in our New Testament.
    - c. Some evidences for the southern Galatian theory
      - (1) There is no mention of Paul's traveling companions by name, but Barnabas is mentioned three times (cf. Acts 2:1,9,13). This fits the first missionary journey of Paul.
      - (2) It is mentioned that Titus was not circumcised (cf. Acts 2:1-5). This fits best before the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15.
      - (3) The mention of Peter (cf. Acts 2:11-14) and the problem of fellowship with Gentiles fits best before the Jerusalem Council.
      - (4) When the money was taken to Jerusalem several companions of Paul from different areas (cf. Acts 20:4) were listed. None, however, were listed from northern Galatia cities, although we know these ethnic Galatian churches participated (cf. 1 Cor. 16:1).
- For a detailed presentation of the different arguments concerning these theories, consult a technical commentary. They each have valid points. At this point in time there is no consensus, but the "Southern Theory" seems to fit all of the facts best.
- C. Relationship of Galatians to Acts
1. Paul made five visits to Jerusalem, recorded by Luke in the book of Acts
    - a. 9:26-30, after his conversion
    - b. 11:30; 12:25, to bring famine relief from the Gentile churches
    - c. 15:1-30, the Jerusalem Council

- d. 18:22, brief visit
- e. 21:15ff., another explanation of Gentile work
- 2. There are two visits to Jerusalem recorded in Galatians:
  - a. 1:18, after three years
  - b. 2:1, after fourteen years
- 3. It seems most probable that Acts 9:26 is related to Gal. 1:18. Acts 11:30 & 15:1ff. are the setting of unrecorded meetings which are mentioned in Gal. 2:1.
- 4. There are some differences between the Acts 15 and Gal. 2 accounts but this is probably due to
  - a. different perspectives
  - b. different purposes of Luke and Paul
  - c. the fact that Gal. 2 may have occurred sometime before the meeting described in Acts 15 but in conjunction with it.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 14:1-7

**<sup>1</sup>In Iconium they entered the synagogue of the Jews together, and spoke in such a manner that a large number of people believed, both of Jews and of Greeks. <sup>2</sup>But the Jews who disbelieved stirred up the minds of the Gentiles and embittered them against the brethren. <sup>3</sup>Therefore they spent a long time *there* speaking boldly *with reliance* upon the Lord, who was testifying to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands. <sup>4</sup>But the people of the city were divided; and some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles. <sup>5</sup>And when an attempt was made by both the Gentiles and the Jews with their rulers, to mistreat and to stone them, <sup>6</sup>they became aware of it and fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the surrounding region; <sup>7</sup>and there they continued to preach the gospel.**

**14:1 "Iconium"** There is a second century non-canonical book known as *The Acts of Paul and Thekla*, which is reported to be Paul's activities in Iconium. This book possibly contains the only physical descriptions of Paul ever recorded: short, bald, bowlegged, heavy eyebrows, and protruding eyes. It is quite uninspired and yet reflects the impact that the Apostle Paul had in this region of Asia Minor. Most of this area was in the Roman Province of Galatia.

■ **"entered the synagogue"** This was Paul and Barnabas' regular pattern. These hearers, both Jews and Greeks, would be familiar with the OT prophecies and promises.

■ **"a large number of people believed, both of Jews and of Greeks"** This phrase shows the purpose of Acts. The gospel is spreading vigorously among various people groups. The implications of the OT promises to all humanity (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3) are now being realized.

These summary statements relating to the rapid growth of the church are characteristic of Luke's writings.

**14:2 "the Jews who disbelieved"** Salvation is characterized by "believed" (cf. Acts 14:1), spiritual blindness and recalcitrance is characterized by "disobedience" or "disbelief." The refusal to respond to the gospel dooms one to blindness and lostness!

Luke documents the virulent antagonism of Jewish unbelief and active persecution. It is their rejection that opens the door of faith to the Gentiles (cf. Romans 9-11).

■ **"stirred up"** This is a common Septuagint verb for rebellion (cf. 1 Sam. 3:12; 22:8; 2 Sam. 18:31; 22:49; 1 Chr. 5:26), but it is used in the NT only in Acts 13:50 and here.

▣ **"embittered"** This is another common term in the Septuagint to describe evil, oppressive people who mistreat others. Luke uses this term often in Acts (cf. Acts 7:6,19; 12:1; 14:2; 18:10).

**14:3** God used the miraculous to confirm His gracious character and the truthfulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ in this new area (cf. Acts 4:29-30; Heb. 2:4).

**14:4 "But the people of the city were divided"** The word of truth always divides (cf. Acts 17:4-5; 19:9; 28:24; Matt. 10:34-36). Some of the Jews in the Synagogue believed, but others became militant against the gospel.

▣ **"with the apostles"** This refers to both Paul and Barnabas. In this chapter (i.e., 14:4 and 14) is the only time Luke uses this term to refer to anyone except the original Twelve. Barnabas is called an apostle (cf. Acts 14:14). This is also implied in 1 Cor. 9:5-6. This is obviously a wider use of the term "apostle" than the Twelve. James the Just (half brother of Jesus) is called an apostle in Galatians 1:19; Silvanus and Timothy were called apostles in 1 Thess. 1:1 combined with 2:6; Andronicus and Junius (Junia in KJV), are called apostles in Rom. 16:6-7; and Apollos is called an apostle in 1 Cor. 4:6-9.

The twelve Apostles were unique. When they died no one replaced them (except Matthias for Judas, cf. Acts 1). However there is an ongoing gift of apostleship mentioned in 1 Cor. 12:28 and Eph. 4:11. The NT does not provide enough information to describe the functions of this gift. See Special Topic: Send (*Apostellō*) following.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: SEND (APOSTELLŌ)**

**14:5 "with their rulers"** This could refer to the leaders of the city or the leaders of the synagogue. Some early scribes and modern commentators assert two persecutions, (1) Acts 14:2 and (2) Acts 14:5, but the context implies just one.

**NASB, NRSV,**

**TEV** "mistreat"

**NKJV** "abuse"

**NJB** "make attacks"

The Greek term *hubrizō* is more intense than "mistreat," possibly "to run riot," or "to commit violent acts." It is very common in the Septuagint. Luke uses this term often in three senses.

1. insult, Luke 11:45
2. violent act, Luke 18:32; Acts 14:5
3. loss of physical property, Acts 27:10,21

▣ **"stone"** This second descriptive term shows just how violently the opposition planned to attack the believers. Probably the Jewish element chose this specific means because of its OT connection to blasphemy (i.e., Lev. 24:16; John 8:59; 10:31-33).

**14:6 "and fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe"** Iconium was in Phrygia. It was close to the boundary of a racially distinct group. This detail shows the historicity of the book of Acts.

**14:7** The verb is a periphrastic perfect middle, meaning that they preached again and again. This is the theme of Paul's missionary journeys (cf. Acts 14:21; 16:10). Those who trusted Christ under his preaching also sensed the urgency and mandate to present the gospel to others. This was/is the priority (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8)!

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 14:8-18**

**<sup>8</sup>At Lystra a man was sitting who had no strength in his feet, lame from his mother's womb, who had never walked. <sup>9</sup>This man was listening to Paul as he spoke, who, when he had fixed**

his gaze on him and had seen that he had faith to be made well, <sup>10</sup>said with a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he leaped up and *began* to walk. <sup>11</sup>When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they raised their voice, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have become like men and have come down to us." <sup>12</sup>And they *began* calling Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. <sup>13</sup>The priest of Zeus, whose *temple* was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds. <sup>14</sup>But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out <sup>15</sup>and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. <sup>16</sup>In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; <sup>17</sup>and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." <sup>18</sup>*Even* saying these things, with difficulty they restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them.

**14:8 "At Lystra"** This town was Timothy's home (cf. Acts 16:1). This is a Roman colony established by Augustus in a.d. 6. There was probably no synagogue here, so Paul and Barnabas conducted street preaching.

▣ So that there was no possibility of a trick or deception (cf. Acts 3:2). There are three specific descriptive phrases describing this man's permanent condition.

1. no strength in his feet
2. lame from his mother's womb
3. had never walked

▣ **"no strength"** The term *adunatos* usually means "impossible" or literally "unable" (cf. Luke 18:27; Heb. 6:4,18; 10:4; 11:6), but here Luke uses it like the medical writers in the sense of impotent or weak (cf. Rom. 8:3; 15:1).

It is interesting that Luke, in many ways, parallels Peter's and Paul's ministries. Peter and John heal a lame man in Acts 3:1-10 now so too, do Paul and Barnabas.

**14:9 "when he had fixed his gaze on him"** Luke uses this phrase often (cf. Acts 3:4; 10:4). See note at Acts 1:10. Paul saw that this man was listening intently. Therefore, he commanded him to stand up and walk (cf. v 10) and he did!

▣ **"that he had faith to be made well"** This is used in the OT sense of the term "saved," meaning physical deliverance. Notice that Paul's ability to heal was based on the man's faith. This is often, but not exclusively, the case in the NT (cf. Luke 5:20; John 5:5-9). Miracles had several functions:

1. to show the love of God
2. to show the power and truth of the gospel
3. to train and encourage the other believers present

**14:11 "in the Lycaonian language"** Obviously Paul and Barnabas did not understand what the crowd was saying. This was the indigenous language of the region.

**14:12 "calling Barnabas Zeus and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker"** A local tradition asserted that the Greek gods often visited humans in human form (cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 8:626ff). From local inscriptions we learn this was an area where Zeus and Hermes were worshiped (cf. Acts 14:13).

Notice that Barnabas is mentioned first. This is probably because Paul, as the spokesperson, would be



understood by these pagans as the equivalent of Hermes (Mercury); the silent Barnabas must then be the high god Zeus (Jupiter).

**14:13 "gate"** This could refer to the city or, more probably, to the temple of Jupiter (Zeus) which was located just outside the city gate and facing it. It was a time of great confusion and misunderstanding.

**14:14 "apostles"** See note at Acts 14:4.

▣ **"tore their robes"** This is a Jewish sign of mourning and blasphemy (cf. Matt. 26:65; Mark 14:63). It surely would have communicated even to these pagans that there was a problem.

▣ **"rushed out"** This is a common term in the Septuagint for "leaping out" or "rushing out," though it is used only here in the NT. Paul and Barnabas sprang up and out into the midst of the crowd.

**14:15-17** Here is a summary of Paul's first sermon to pagans. It is much like his sermon on Mars Hill (cf. Acts 17:22-33).

**14:15**

**NASB, NKJV "men of the same nature as you"**

**NRSV "we are mortals just like you"**

**TEV "we ourselves are only human beings like you"**

**NJB "we are only human beings, mortal like yourselves"**

The term is *homoioopathēs*, which is a compound of "the same" and "passions." This term is used only here and in James 5:17 in the NT. The locals had thought Paul and Barnabas were gods (*homoioōthentes*, cf. Acts 14:11), which means "made like" men. Paul uses the same root to denote their common humanity. Luke shows the humility of Paul and Barnabas in contradistinction to Herod Antipas in Acts 12:20-23.

▣ **"you should turn from these vain things"** The term "vain" means empty, void, non-existent. Paul is directly confronting their superstitious paganism.

▣ **"to a living God"** This is a play on the term YHWH, which is from the Hebrew verb "to be" (cf. Exod. 3:14). YHWH is the ever-living, only-living God. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: NAMES FOR DEITY](#) at Acts 1:6.

▣ **"who made"** This is a quote from Exod. 20:11 or Ps. 146:6. The Hebrew term *Elohim* (cf. Gen. 1:1) describes God as creator and provider (cf. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, pp. 468-469) as YHWH describes Him as Savior, Redeemer (cf. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, pp. 471-472) and covenant-making God. See special Topic at Acts 1:6.

**14:16 "In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways"** This phrase may be an allusion to Deut. 32:7-8 in which Moses asserts that YHWH establishes the boundaries of the nations. Theologically this affirms God's care and attention to the nations (Gentiles, cf. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 258-259). God desired that they know Him, but the fallenness of humanity caused superstition and idolatry (cf. Rom. 1:18-2:29). However, He continued to pursue them (cf. Acts 14:17).

The Gentile's ignorance of God is contrasted with the Jews' knowledge of God. The irony is that Gentiles respond in mass by faith to the gospel, while Jews respond in mass rejection and persecution toward the gospel (cf. Romans 9-11).

**14:17 "He did not leave Himself without witness"** This is the concept of natural revelation (cf. Ps. 19:1-6; Rom. 1:19-20; 2:14-15). All humans know something about God from creation and an inner moral witness.

▣ **"rains. . . food"** The local pagan tradition said that Zeus was the giver of rain and Hermes was the giver

of food. Paul, following Deuteronomy 27-29, affirms God's control of nature.

These pagans did not know God so the covenant curses of Deuteronomy are replaced by God's patience (cf. Acts 17:30; Rom. 3:25; 4:15; 5:13). Paul was God's unique choice (apostle to the Gentiles) to reach the nations! Paul uses God's creation and provision through nature (cf. Ps. 145:15-16; 147:8; Jer. 5:24; Jonah 1:9) as his point of contact.

It is interesting that there is nothing of the gospel per se in this sermon summary. One assumes that Paul continued in the same line of reasoning as he did in his Athenian sermon in Acts 17:16-34. One wonders whether Luke got this summary from Paul or possibly Timothy (this was his home).

**14:18** This is an eyewitness detail.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 14:19-23**

**<sup>19</sup>But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. <sup>20</sup>But while the disciples stood around him, he got up and entered the city. The next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe. <sup>21</sup>After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, <sup>22</sup>strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." <sup>23</sup>When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.**

**14:19** Jewish opposition in the cities where Paul had preached united in recurrent attacks on him (cf. 2 Cor. 4:7-15; 6:3-10; 11:23-30). Notice that the attack was focused on Paul, not Barnabas. Notice also the fickleness of the pagan crowd. Paul and Barnabas are honored as gods one moment and stoned the next!

■ **"they stoned Paul"** This was not a resuscitation miracle, but an account of Paul's physical stamina and bravery (cf. Acts 14:20-21). 2 Corinthians 11:25 and Galatians 6:17 also refer to this same event. The stoning planned in Acts 14:5 now became a reality!

**14:20 "while the disciples stood around him"** Although it is not specifically stated, I think this was a prayer meeting to which God wondrously responded. Notice how persecution continued to be the mechanism/motivation for the spread of the gospel (i.e., a new city).

**14:21 "After they had preached the gospel to that city"** This refers to Derbe (cf. Acts 14:20). This city was also in the Lycaonian part of the Roman province of Galatia. This was as far eastward as Paul and Barnabas traveled on this missionary journey.

This city also wonderfully responded to the gospel and many were saved.

■ **"they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch"** Apparently they did not preach publicly on this return visit, but were privately organizing and encouraging the believers (cf. Acts 14:22-23).

**14:22** This verse is a summary of Paul's discipleship message. Notice it is focused on (1) perseverance and (2) tribulation. Believers are matured through trials (cf. Rom. 5:3-4; 8:17-18; 1 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 3:12; James 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 4:12-16).

■ **"strengthening"** This term is used several times in the Septuagint in the sense of "to cause to rest on" or "to be established." Luke uses this term several times to describe Paul's follow-up discipleship ministry (cf. Acts 14:22; 15:32,41; 18:23).

■ **"the souls of the disciples"** The term soul (*psuchē*) is used in the sense of the person or their mental activities. This is not the Greek concept of every person having an immortal soul, but the Hebrew concept of soul (*nephesh*, BDB 659, KB 711-713, cf. Gen. 2:7) as a way of referring to a human being (cf. Acts

2:41; 3:23; 7:14; 14:2,22; 15:24; 27:37).

■ **"encouraging them to continue in the faith"** See [SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSEVERANCE](#) following.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NEED TO PERSEVERE**

■ **"the kingdom of God"** This is a difficult phrase to interpret. Jesus used it often in connection to His own ministry. However, the Apostles obviously misunderstood its significance (cf. Acts 1:3,6). In Acts it is almost synonymous with the gospel (cf. Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23,31). However, in Acts 14:22 it takes on eschatological implications. It is this "already" (cf. Matt. 12:28; Luke 16:16) vs. "not yet" (cf. Matt. 24:14,30,36-37; 25:30,31; 2 Pet. 1:11) tension which characterizes this age. See Special Topic at Acts 2:17. The Kingdom has come in Jesus Christ (i.e., First Coming), but its consummation is future (i.e., Second Coming).

**14:23 "they had appointed elders"** The term "elders" (*presbuteros*) is synonymous with the terms "bishop" (*episkopos*) and "pastors" (*poimenos*) in the NT (cf. Acts 20:17,28 and Titus 1:5,7). The term "elder" has a Jewish background (cf. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 244-246 and Frank Stagg, *New Testament Theology*, pp. 262-264), while the term "bishop" or "overseer" has a Greek city-state background. There are only two church officers listed in the NT: pastors and deacons (cf. Phil. 1:1).

The term "appoint" can mean "elect by the show of hands" (cf. 2 Cor. 8:19 and Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, pp. 363, 484). The term is later used of "ordination" by the early church fathers. The real issue is how does "elect by vote" fit this context? A vote by these new churches seems inappropriate (although the church in Jerusalem voted for the Seven in Acts 6 and the church votes to affirm Paul's ministry to the Gentiles in Acts 15).

F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, p. 79 says, "originally indicated appointment or election by a show of hands (literally by stretching out the hand), it had lost this specific force by New Testament times and had come to mean simply 'appoint,' no matter by what procedure." One cannot advocate or reject an ecclesiastical polity by the use of this term in the NT.

Notice that Paul instructs Titus to also appoint "elders" on Crete, but to Timothy in Ephesus Paul says let the church select persons with certain qualifications (cf. 1 Timothy 3). In new areas leaders were appointed, but in established areas leadership traits had a chance to be manifested and be affirmed by the local church.

Notice that Paul's missionary strategy is to establish local churches who will continue the task of evangelism and discipleship in their area (cf. Matt. 28:19-20). This is God's method for reaching the entire world (i.e., local churches)!

■ **"church"** See Special Topic at Acts 5:11.

■ **"having prayed with fasting"** This may be purposefully parallel to 13:2-3. Paul had experienced the Spirit's power and direction at Antioch. He continued this same spiritual pattern. They had to prepare themselves for God to reveal His will. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: FASTING](#) at Acts 13:2.

■ **"in whom they had believed"** This is a pluperfect active indicative, which denotes a settled action in past time. These new elders had believed for a period of time and had proved to be faithful exhibiting leadership qualities.

This grammatical construction of *eis* connected to *pisteuō* (cf. Acts 10:43) is characteristic of John's writings, but is also present in Paul's (cf. Rom. 10:14; Gal. 2:16; Phil. 1:29) and Peter (cf. 1 Pet. 1:8). See the important Special Topics at Acts 3:16 and 6:5.

■ **"they commended them to the Lord"** This does not refer to some type of ordination. The same verb is used in Acts 14:26 of Paul and Barnabas, while in Acts 20:32 for those who were already elders. Ordination is helpful in that it emphasizes the truth that God calls people into leadership roles. It is a

negative and unbiblical if it makes a distinction between believers. All believers are called and gifted for ministry (cf. Eph. 4:11-12). There is no clergy-laity distinction in the NT.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 14:24-28**

**24**They passed through Pisidia and came into Pamphylia. **25**When they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. **26**From there they sailed to Antioch, from which they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had accomplished. **27**When they had arrived and gathered the church together, they *began* to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. **28**And they spent a long time with the disciples.

**14:24** The highland province of Pisidia is just north of the coastal province of Pamphylia. Perga was the chief city of the region. Paul apparently only passed through this city earlier (cf. Acts 13:13), but now returned and preached the gospel (cf. Acts 14:25).

**14:25 "Attalia"** This was the seaport of Perga.

**14:26 "sailed to Antioch"** They did not return to Cyprus. Barnabas will return after the dispute with Paul over John Mark (cf. Acts 15:36-39).

▣ **"they had been commended to the grace of God"** The verb is a periphrastic pluperfect passive. This first missionary journey, initiated and sustained by the Spirit, was a marvelous success.

**14:27 "gathered the church together, they *began* to report all things that God had done"** Notice they were responsible to the church. "Even the Apostle to the Gentiles" reported to a local church (See Special Topic at Acts 5:11). They also acknowledged who accomplished this great accomplishment—YHWH/Spirit.

They did not report to the leaders (cf. Acts 13:1), but to the congregation and later reported on their mission activity to the congregation in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 15:4) and, for that matter, all other congregations along the way (cf. Acts 15:3). I think it was the whole congregation who had laid hands on them and commissioned them on their journey.

▣ **"and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles"** Paul used this phrase "door of faith" quite often (cf. 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3; and also notice Rev. 3:8). God opened a door to all humanity in the gospel that no one could close. The full implication of Jesus' words in Acts 1:8 is now being fulfilled.

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Outline Paul's first missionary journey by geographical sites.
2. Outline both of Paul's sermons; to the Jews and to pagans.
3. How is fasting related to modern Christians?
4. Why did John Mark quit the missionary team?

# ACTS 15

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Council at Jerusalem	Conflict Over Circumcision	Controversy Over Admission of Gentiles	The Meeting At Jerusalem	Controversy at Antioch
15:1-5	15:1-5	15:1-5	15:1-2 15:3-5	15:1-2 15:3-4 Controversy at Jerusalem 15:5-7a
15:6-11	The Jerusalem Council 15:6-21	15:6-21	15:6-11	Peter's Speech 15:7b-11
15:12-21			15:12-18 15:19-21	15:12 James' Speech 15:13-18 15:19-21
The Reply of the Council	The Jerusalem Decree		The Letter to the Gentile Believers	The Apostolic Letter
15:22-29	15:22-29 Continuing Ministry in Syria	15:22-29	15:22-29	15:22-29 The Delegates at Antioch
15:30-35	15:30-35	15:30-35	15:30-34 15:35	15:30-35
Paul and Barnabas Separate	Division Over John Mark	Departure on Second Missionary Journey	Paul and Barnabas Separate	Paul Separates from Barnabas and Recruits Silas
15:36-41	15:36-41	15:36-41	15:36-41	15:36-38 15:39-40

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "A Guide to Good Bible Reading" p. vi)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent,

which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This chapter is often called "The Jerusalem Council."
- B. This was a major turning point, a theological watershed, in the methods and goals of the Early Church. In a sense it is a merging of the two centers of Christendom, Jerusalem and Antioch.
- C. The conversions of non-Jews in Acts 8-11 seem to have been allowed as exceptions (they were not full, practicing pagans), not as a new policy to be vigorously pursued (cf 11:19).
- D. This chapter's relationship to Galatians 2 is disputed. Acts 15 or Acts 11:27-30 could be the background to Galatians 2. See Introduction to Acts 14, C.
- E. It is interesting that the recurrent Pentecostal sign of speaking in tongues (Acts 2, 8 & 10; possibly Acts 15:8) is not mentioned at all as an evidence for the assurance of salvation of Gentiles (i.e., pagans).

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 15:1-5

<sup>1</sup>Some men came down from Judea and *began* teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." <sup>2</sup>And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, *the brethren* determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue. <sup>3</sup>Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren. <sup>4</sup>When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. <sup>5</sup>But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses."

**15:1 "Some men came down from Judea"** This paragraph refers to events in Antioch. "Some men" refers to a group of believing Jews who were committed to both Judaism and Jesus. They saw Jesus as the fulfillment of the OT faith (cf. Matt. 5:17-19), not a rival or substitute for it (cf. Acts 11:2; 15:5; Gal. 2:12). These persons' theology is related to the false Jewish teachers (Judaizers) referred to in Galatians. These men were somehow connected to the church in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 15:24), but they were not official representatives.

Notice it says "down." If you look at a map, it seems to be "up," but for Jews everywhere was "down," theologically, from Jerusalem (cf. Acts 15:2).

- **"began teaching"** This is an imperfect tense, which can mean (1) started to teach or (2) taught again and again.
- **"Unless you are circumcised"** This is a third class conditional sentence, which means potential action. Circumcision was the covenant sign to Abraham and his descendants (cf. Gen. 17:10-11). This

was not a minor matter in Judaism, but related to salvation itself. These men felt that the only way to YHWH was through Judaism (cf. Acts 15:5). This type of people became known as Judaizers (cf. Gal. 1:7; 2:4). They believed in Christ plus conformity to the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Acts 15:5). Righteousness was based on their performance, not on God's free gift. One's relationship with God was achieved by one's performance (cf. Rom. 3:21-30; Gal. 5:2-9). The real issue was who are "the people of God" and how do you characterize them?

**15:2 "Paul and Barnabas had great discussion and debate with them"** Luke uses the expression "great discussion" to show extreme emotion (cf. Luke 23:19,25; Acts 15:2; 19:40; 23:7,10; 24:5). This debate was crucial! It was directed at the heart of the gospel message:

1. How is one brought into right standing with God?
2. Is the New Covenant inseparably linked to the Mosaic Covenant?

The phrase in the NASB, "had a great discussion and debate," is literally "discord and questioning not a little." *Young's Literal Translation of the Bible* (p. 95), has "not a little dissension and disputation." This literary technique of expressing something in a negative understatement is characteristic of Luke's writings. See full note at Acts 12:18.

■ **"the brethren determined that"** This refers to "the church" (cf. Acts 15:3). There are several groups in Acts 15 that relate to the different leadership or polity styles.

1. In verses 2,3,12, and 22 congregational authority is mentioned.
2. In verses 6 and 22 apostolic or episcopal authority (i.e., James) is mentioned, which is Roman Catholic or Anglican polity.
3. In verses 6 and 22 the authority of the elders is mentioned. This seems to parallel Presbyterian polity.

The New Testament records all of these polity structures. There is a development from the authority of the Apostles (who would one day die) to the authority of the congregation, with the pastors being the leadership catalysts (cf. Acts 15:19).

In my opinion the polity structure is not as crucial as the spirituality of the leaders. Great Commission, Spirit-filled leaders are crucial to the gospel. Certain forms of polity fall in and out of favor, usually based on the cultural political model.

■ **"and some others"** A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, p. 224, has an interesting comment on this verse, "Certainly Titus (Gal. 2:1,3), a Greek and probably a brother of Luke who is not mentioned in Acts." This is certainly a possibility, but it is based on several assumptions. We must be careful that because a text (with our presuppositions) can mean or imply something, does not mean that it does! We must be content with the original author's writings and not our expanded assumptions, valid though they may be.

■ **"to the apostles"** The leadership structure of the Jerusalem church is not settled. From several texts it looks as if James, the half-brother of Jesus, was the leader. This appears to be true in this chapter also. Yet, there were other leadership groups (cf. Acts 15:4,22):

1. the Twelve
2. local elders
3. the congregation as a whole

What is uncertain is how James relates to these groups. He is called an apostle in Gal. 1:19. It is also possible he was the acknowledged leader of the group of elders (cf. Peter called himself an elder in 1 Pet. 5:1; John calls himself an elder in 2 John 1 and 3 John 1).

■ **"elders"** In this context "elders" would refer to an older group of leadership modeled on the synagogue pattern. See note at Acts 11:30 or 14:23.

**15:3 "church"** See Special Topic at Acts 5:11.



▣ **"they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria"** This is an imperfect middle indicative. Phoenicia was mostly Gentile, while Samaria was a mixed population of Jews and Gentiles. These areas had previously been evangelized (cf. Acts 8:5ff; 11:19).

▣ **"describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles"** It seems that Paul and Barnabas reported the marvelous work of God among the "nations" to every congregation they came in contact with. To people knowledgeable of the OT, the conversion of the "nations" was a fulfilled prophecy (i.e., Isa. 2:2-4; 42:6; 49:6)!

It is also possible that by widely reporting the success of the mission endeavor that the church in Jerusalem would not be able to quietly and secretly dismiss the issue (cf. Acts 21:18-20).

▣ **"were bringing great joy to all the brethren"** These were Gentile areas. The churches would have been mixed churches. Their response is a prophetic reminder to the Jerusalem church. The world-wide mission started by Hellenists, is confirmed by Hellenist churches.

**15:4 "the church and the apostles and the elders"** Here all their polity groups are mentioned, as in verse 22.

▣ **"they reported all that God had done with them"** This had become a pattern!

**15:5 "But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed"** Faith (perfect active participle) in Jesus as the promised Messiah was the foundation of the church. But within the church there were differences of opinion about how this faith in Christ related to the covenants and promises to Israel. This vocal group ("stood up" is fronted in Greek to show its emphasis) of saved Pharisees felt that the OT was inspired and eternal and therefore must be maintained (cf. Matt. 5:17-19)! One must trust Jesus and obey Moses (i.e., *dei*, necessary [1] to circumcise; [2] to charge them; and [3] to keep; all three are present infinitives). It is this very question that forms the theological content of Romans 1-8 and Galatians! See [SPECIAL TOPIC: PHARISEES](#) at Acts 5:34.

▣ **"it is necessary"** See full note on *dei* at Acts 1:16.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 15:6-11**

**<sup>6</sup>The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. <sup>7</sup>After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. <sup>8</sup>And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; <sup>9</sup>and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. <sup>10</sup>Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? <sup>11</sup>"But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are."**

**15:6 "The apostles and the elders came together"** Here the leadership met in private first. This speaks of the Presbyterian pattern of polity.

**15:7 "After there had been much debate"** The leadership was not unanimous. Some agree with the statement in Acts 15:5. These were all sincere believers. But some were clinging to the familiar while being blinded to the radical nature of the gospel. Even the Apostles were slow to see the full implications (cf. Acts 8:1). Notice the elements of policy making: (1) private discussion; (2) open discussion; (3) vote by the congregation.

▣ **"Peter stood up"** This must have been the way to get to speak to the assembled group (cf. Acts 15:5). This is the last mention of him in Acts. He recalls his experience with Cornelius (cf. Acts 10-11).



■ **"Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe"** God used Peter to witness to His love and acceptance of the nations! God allowed this new radical understanding to proceed in stages.

1. the Samaritans first, Acts 8
2. the Ethiopian Eunuch, Acts 8
3. Cornelius, Acts 10-11

These were not full practicing pagans, but were all related to Judaism. However, 1 and 3 were confirmed by the Pentecost experience, which was evidence for the early church of God's acceptance of other groups.

**15:8 "God who knows the heart"** This was a way of confirming God's complete knowledge (cf. 1 Sam. 1:24; 16:7; Ps. 26:2; 139:1; Pro. 21:2; 24:12; Jer. 11:20; 17:10; Luke 16:15; Rom. 8:27; Rev. 2:23) of the faith of these Gentile converts.

■ **"giving them the Holy Spirit"** This apparently refers to the same type of spiritual experience as Pentecost ("just as He also did to us"). The very same manifestation of the Spirit occurred in Jerusalem, in Samaria, and in Caesarea. It was the sign to the Jewish believers of God's acceptance of other people groups (cf. Acts 15:9; 11:17).

**15:9 "He made no distinction between us and them"** This was the theological conclusion Peter came to in Acts 10:28,34; 11:12. God is no respecter of persons (cf. Gal. 3:28; Eph. 3:11-4:13; Col. 3:11). All humans are made in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). God desires all humans to be saved (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; 1 Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; 2 Pet. 3:9)! God loves the whole world (cf. John 3:16-17).

■ **"cleansing their hearts by faith"** This term is used in the Septuagint to denote Levitical purification. It denotes the removal of that which us separates from God.

This is the very verb used in Peter's experience of the clean and unclean animals in Acts 10:15 and 11:9 (which follows the LXX of Gen. 7:2,8; 8:20).

In the Gospel of Luke it is used for the cleansing of leprosy (cf. Acts 4:27; 5:12,13; 7:22; 17:14,17). It came to be a powerful metaphor for cleansing from sin (cf. Heb. 9:22,23; 1 John 1:7).

The heart is an OT way of referring to the whole person. See Special Topic at Acts 1:24. These Gentiles have been completely cleansed and accepted by God through Christ. The means of their cleansing is faith in the gospel message. They have believed, received, and fully trusted in the person and work of Jesus (cf. Rom. 3:21-5:11; Gal. 2:15-21).

**15:10 "why do you put God to the test"** The OT background of this statement is Exod. 17:2,7 and Deut. 6:16. This Greek term for "test" (*peirazō*) has the connotation of "to test with a view toward destruction." This was a serious discussion! See Special Topic: Greek Terms for "Testing" and Their connotations at Acts 5:9.

■ **"yoke"** This was used by the rabbis for the recitation of the *Shema*, Deut. 6:4-5; therefore, it stands for the Law, written and oral (cf. Matt. 23:4; Luke 11:46; Gal. 5:1). Jesus uses it in Matt. 11:29 for the requirements of the New Covenant in Him.

■ **"which neither our fathers or we have been able to bear"** This reflects the teachings of Jesus (cf. Luke 11:46). This subject is addressed by Paul in Galatians 3. But this is Peter who, like James, feels the weight of Judaism (cf. Gal. 2:11-21).

This phrase admits the theological truth that the Law was not able to bring salvation because fallen humanity could not keep a holy law (cf. Romans 7)! Salvation could not and cannot be based on human performance. However, the saved, gifted, and indwelt believer needs to live a godly life (cf. Matt. 11:30; Eph. 1:4; 2:10). Godliness (Christlikeness, i.e., Rom. 8:29; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 4:13) is always the goal of Christianity, for the purpose of providing opportunities for evangelism, not personal pride nor judgmental legalism.

**15:11** This is a summary of salvation (i.e., "saved," aorist passive infinitive) by grace through faith (for Peter cf. Acts 2-3; for Paul cf. Acts 13:38-39; Rom. 3-8; Galatians 3; Ephesians 1-2). Notice the way of salvation is the same for Jews and Gentiles (cf. Rom. 3:21-31; 4; Eph. 2:1-10).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 15:12-21**

**12**All the people kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. **13**After they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, "Brethren, listen to me. **14**Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. **15**With this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written, **16**After these things I will return, And I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen, And I will rebuild its ruins, And I will restore it, **17**So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, And all the Gentiles who are called by My name,' **18**Says the Lord, who makes these things known from long ago. **19**Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, **20**but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood. **21**For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

**15:12 "All the people kept silent, and they were listening"** Peter's words had settled the group of leaders. From the context it seems that at this point the two missionaries repeated their review of the mission trip a second time. This time the leadership listened! The *Jerome Biblical Commentary* (vol. 2, p. 195) believes it was another meeting separate from the church council of Acts 15:6-11. I think it is the same meeting.

- **"Barnabas and Paul"** Notice that the names are reversed because this was Barnabas' home church.
- **"relating the signs and wonders"** The theological purpose of the Pentecostal tongues in Acts is a sign of God's acceptance, so one wonders whether this particular sign was often repeated as a way of confirmation.

Signs themselves were performed by Jesus (cf. Acts 2:22), the Apostles (cf. Acts 2:43; 3:7; 4:16,30; 5:12), the Seven (cf. Acts 6:8; 8:6,13), and Paul and Barnabas (cf. Acts 14:3; 15:12). God was confirming His presence and power through the gospel by these signs and wonders. These were further evidence to the Judaizing group that God fully accepted full pagans on the basis of grace alone, through faith.

**15:13 "James"** This is not the Apostle James because he was killed in Acts 12:1-2. This was Jesus' half-brother who became the leader of the Jerusalem church and author of the NT book of James. He was known as "James the Just." He was sometimes called "camel knees" because he prayed so often, kneeling. The two main Jerusalem leaders are vocal on this issue (Peter and James). See Special Topic at Acts 12:17.

**15:14 "Symeon"** This is the Aramaic form of Simon, which is Peter (cf. 2 Pet. 1:1).

- **"about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name"** This is the universal emphasis of the OT prophets (ex. Isa. 2:2-4; 42:6; 45:20-23; 49:6; 52:10). The people of God were always to include both Jews and Gentiles (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 9:16; Eph. 2:11-3:13).

The phrase "for His name" may be an allusion to Jer. 13:11 and 32:20 or Isa. 63:12,14.

**15:15-18 "it is written"** This is a free quote from Amos 9:11-12 in the Septuagint. The term "mankind" in verse 17 is *Edom* (the nation) in the Masoretic Text, but the Septuagint has *anthropos* (mankind). James quotes the Septuagint because in this case it uniquely fits his purpose of expressing the universal nature of

God's promise of redemption.

Notice the promised actions are of YHWH. This is similar to Ezek. 36:22-38. Notice the number of "I's"!

This quote from the LXX, which is obviously at variance with the MT, shows that the real issue of faith is not a perfect text, but a perfect God and His plan for mankind. None of us like the textual variants of the OT or NT, but they do not affect believers' faith in the trustworthiness of Scripture. God has effectively and faithfully revealed Himself to fallen humans! Hand-copied ancient texts cannot be used as an excuse to reject this revelation. See Manfred Brauch, *Abusing Scripture*, chapter 1, "The Nature of Scripture," pp. 23-32.

**15:16** It is obvious from the context that James chooses and modifies this quotation from the Septuagint to assert the inclusion of the nations. Did he also choose this text because it asserts the destruction of OT Mosaic religion? The New Covenant is radically different.

1. grace-based, not performance-based (gift not merit)
2. Messiah-focused, not temple-focused (Jesus is the new Temple)
3. world-wide in scope, not focused on the Jewish race

These changes would be devastating to a "circumcision party" of believers. Now the chief Apostle (Peter), the converted rabbi Apostle (Paul), and the leader of the Jerusalem church (James) all agree against them, as does the consensus (vote) of the mother church and the mission churches!

**15:17** What a wonderful universal statement. But also note the "election" phrase, "all the Gentiles who are called by My name" (cf. Dan. 9:19). It denotes a worship experience of some kind (cf. LXX of Deut. 28:10; also note Isa. 63:19; Jer. 14:9).

**15:18** The inclusion of the Gentiles has always been God's plan (cf. Gal. 3:26-29; Eph. 3:3-6, see Special Topic at Acts 1:8). The means of salvation will come from the lineage of King David (cf. Acts 15:16; 2 Chr. 6:33).

**15:19** This is James' conclusion.

**15:20** These guidelines were meant to (1) assure table fellowship in mixed churches and (2) enhance the possibility of local Jewish evangelism. These things have nothing to do with the Gentiles' individual personal salvation! These guidelines were directed at both Jewish sensibilities and pagan worship excesses (cf. Acts 15:29; 21:25).

The Levitical laws were given to accentuate a distinction (social and religious) between Jews and Canaanites. Their very purpose was disfellowship, but here the purpose is just the opposite. These "essentials" are to help maintain fellowship between believers of two cultures!

There are many Greek manuscript variations related to this Apostolic Decree. Some have two items, three items, or four items. For a full discussion of the options, see Bruce M. Metzger's *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, pp. 429-434). Most English translations have the four-fold list.

**NASB, NRSV,**

**REB** "from fornication"

**NKJV, REV,**

**NET** "from sexual immorality"

**NJB** "from illicit marriages"

It is difficult to know for sure if this prohibition was directed towards

1. pagan immoral worship practices (i.e., immorality)
2. Jewish sensibilities about incest (cf. Leviticus 18; see F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, p. 43; NJB)

▣ **"what is strangled and from blood"** Some commentators relate both of these to the Mosaic food laws (cf. Lev. 17:8-16). It is, however, possible that "from blood" refers to murder, which is also a major issue in

Moses' writings.

**15:21** This verse means

1. to assure the legalists that the Torah was being taught to Gentiles in all localities or
2. since there were Jews in every locality, their scruples should be respected so that they may be effectively evangelized (cf. 2 Cor. 3:14-15)

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 15:22-29**

**22**Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas—Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren,<sup>23</sup> and they sent this letter by them, "The apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings.<sup>24</sup> Since we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with *their* words, unsettling your souls,<sup>25</sup> it seemed good to us, having become of one mind, to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,<sup>26</sup> men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>27</sup> Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will also report the same things by word of mouth.<sup>28</sup> For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials:<sup>29</sup> that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell."

**15:22** This delegation was for the purpose of unity (cf. Acts 15:23), not to mandate compliance.

▣ **"Judas called Barsabbas"** This faithful leader, like so many in the NT, is unknown to us. Nothing else in the NT is said about him. But God knows him well!

It is just possible that this man was the brother of Joseph Barsabbas, who was one of the candidates to replace Judas Iscariot in Acts 1:23. If so, they were both sons of a man named Barsabbas.

▣ **"Silas"** He, like Barnabas, was a leader in the church of Jerusalem. He is called Silvanus by Paul and will replace Barnabas as Paul's associate on the second missionary journey. Paul may have chosen him so that when someone accused him of (1) preaching a different gospel than the Twelve or (2) being out of fellowship with the mother church, Silas could answer their concerns and accusations.

**SPECIAL TOPIC: SILAS/SILVANUS**

**15:23** The letter from the Jerusalem Council is directed only to certain churches, apparently which had a large believing Jewish component. By listing only certain regions, James shows that it was not meant as rules for all the Gentile churches. The letter was only for fellowship and evangelism purposes and not for guidelines for ethics or salvation!

Do you as a modern believer totally avoid non-Kosher meats? See

1. Manfred Brauch, *Abusing Scripture*, chapter 7, "The Abuse of Context: Historical Situation and Cultural Reality," pp. 202-249
2. Gordon Fee, *Gospel and Spirit*
3. *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, "How Kosher Should Christians Live?", pp. 527-530 and "To Eat or Not to Eat," pp. 576-578

These are all helpful articles. It is so comforting to read other informed, sincere and Bible-believing Christians struggle with these issues. Their writings give other believers the freedom to think and live based on the light they have. Unity, not uniformity, is the key to healthy, growing, Great Commission churches.

■ **"Cilicia"** This is Paul's home area (cf. Acts 22:3).

**15:24** This verse shows that the church in Jerusalem had become aware that some of their membership, who had no authority or official standing (cf. Acts 15:1), were (1) traveling to these mission churches and (2) demanding conformity to the Mosaic law (cf. Acts 15:1). The verb (*anaskeuazō*) used is a strong military term used only here in the NT for plundering a city.

**15:25**

**NASB** "having become of one mind"

**NKJV** "being assembled with one accord"

**NRSV, NJB** "we have decided unanimously"

**TEV** "we have met together and have all agreed"

This unity among believers was a characteristic of the Spirit's presence (cf. Acts 15:28). Notice this did not mean that there was no discussion or the exchange of strong opinions, but that after a full airing of the issue the believers came to a unified agenda.

This unified theological agreement needed to be published abroad so the same tension and argument would not occur again and again. The Jerusalem church has now taken an official stand on the content of the gospel and its implications for Gentiles!

**15:26** Paul and Barnabas shared not only the victories, but also the hardships of mission work. This vulnerability was not a passing feeling, but a permanent commitment (perfect active participle).

**15:28 "the Holy Spirit and to us"** God was present at this crucial meeting. He expressed His will through the discussion! The Holy Spirit is the one who produced unity. Here both aspects of biblical covenant are highlighted—God's activity and appropriate human response. Notice it was a compromise; each side got something. The grace-alone, faith-alone gospel was affirmed, but Jewish sensibilities were respected. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE PERSONHOOD OF THE SPIRIT](#) at Acts 1:2.

■ **"these essentials"** These do not refer to personal individual salvation, but fellowship between believing Jews and believing Gentiles in local churches.

**15:29** This meant for Gentiles a complete break with their idolatrous past. Christian freedom and responsibility are hard to balance, but they must be (cf. Rom. 14:1-5:13; 1 Cor. 8:1-13; 10:23-28). These pagans' previous worship involved all three of these excluded things!

These "essentials" are listed in various ways in different Greek manuscripts. The real question is to what do they relate?

1. things sacrificed to idols would refer to meat (cf. 1 Cor. 8; 10:23-33)
2. blood could refer to either
  - a. non-kosher meat
  - b. premeditated murder
3. things strangled must refer to non-kosher ways of killing animals, implying that the previous two also relate to food sensibilities of the Jews (i.e., Leviticus 11)
4. fornication could refer to
  - a. participation in pagan worship rituals (as well as the food)
  - b. OT Levitical laws against incest (cf. Lev. 17:10-14, see F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, p. 43)

All of these "essentials" relate not to salvation, but to fellowship within mixed churches and expanded opportunities for Jewish evangelism. See F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, pp. 80-81.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: CHRISTIAN FREEDOM VS. CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY](#)

■ **"if"** Grammatically this is not a conditional sentence. The NJB has "avoid these, and you will do what is

right."

■ **"Farewell"** This is a perfect passive imperative which was used as a common closing wishing strength and health.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 15:30-35**

**<sup>30</sup>So when they were sent away, they went down to Antioch; and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. <sup>31</sup>When they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement. <sup>32</sup>Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message. <sup>33</sup>After they had spent time *there*, they were sent away from the brethren in peace to those who had sent them out. <sup>34</sup>But it seemed good to Silas to remain there. <sup>35</sup>But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching with many others also, the word of the Lord.**

**15:30** This is another congregational meeting. It shows the significance of the gathered local church.

**15:31** This second congregation (i.e., the Gentile church of Antioch) did not see these essentials as negative or restrictive.

**15:32** This verse defines the thrust of NT prophecy. It is primarily the preaching of the gospel and its application; who knows, maybe it is NT evidence for long sermons! See Special Topic: NT Prophecy at Acts 11:27.

**15:33 "in peace"** This NASB translation is awkward. See NKJV or NRSV for a clearer way to translate this verse. This may reflect the Hebrew good-bye, *Shalom* (i.e., "peace", BDB 1022). This is a further way of showing the full support of the Jerusalem church and her leadership.

**15:34** This verse is not included in the Greek manuscripts P<sup>74</sup>,  $\kappa$ , A, B, E, nor the Vulgate Latin translation. It is also omitted by NRSV, TEV, NJB, and NV. It is in a modified form in the other uncial Greek manuscripts (i.e., C and D). It is probably not originally part of Acts. UBS<sup>4</sup> rates its exclusion as "certain" (A).

**15:35** This verse shows how many other first century preachers and teachers we moderns know nothing about. The NT is so selective in its witness about the lives of the other Apostles and other missionaries and preachers. God knows! Acts is not interested in biographies.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 15:36-41**

**<sup>36</sup>After some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, *and see how they are.*" <sup>37</sup>Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also. <sup>38</sup>But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. <sup>39</sup>And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. <sup>40</sup>But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord. <sup>41</sup>And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.**

**15:36 "Let us return"** It was Paul and Barnabas' purpose to return and strengthen the new churches which had been started on their first journey. Notice there was not the divine manifestation about this mission as there was for the first one (cf. Acts 13:2).

**15:38 "Paul kept insisting"** This is an imperfect active indicative. Apparently Paul continued to express his reluctance.

▣ **"who had deserted them"** Exactly why John Mark left the first mission is uncertain (cf. Acts 13:13).

**15:39 "there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another"** The root meaning of this term is "sharp," meaning "to sharpen as a blade." It is used in a positive sense in Heb. 10:24. The verb is also used in Acts 17:6 and 1 Cor. 13:5. They really had an argument!

▣ **"Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus"** Now there are two mission teams.

**15:40 "Paul chose Silas"** Paul chose another leader from the Jerusalem church.

▣ **"being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord"** This would have involved a type of dedicatory prayer service (cf. Acts 6:6; 13:3 14:26; 20:32). This implies the whole church, not a select group.

**15:41 "Cilicia"** Why and how these churches were started is uncertain. Possibly Paul himself started them during his silent years in Tarsus. Cilicia was Paul's home province.

▣ **"churches"** See Special Topic at Acts 5:11.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is this chapter so important?
2. Who are the Judaizer-Christians?
3. Why was James' opinion given so much weight?
4. Who are the elders?
5. Do the restrictions of verses 28-29 refer to salvation or fellowship?

# ACTS 16

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Timothy Accompanies Paul and Silas	Timothy Joins Paul and Silas	Timothy Joins Paul	Timothy Goes with Paul and Silas	Lycaonia: Paul Recruits Timothy 15:41-16:3
16:1-5	16:1-5	16:1-5	16:1-5	16:4 16:5
Paul's Vision of the Man of Macedonia	The Macedonia Call	Through Asia Minor to Troas	In Troas: Paul's Vision	The Crossing into Asia Minor
16:6-10	16:6-10	16:6-10	16:6-10	16:6-8 16:9-10
The Conversion of Lydia	Lydia Baptized at Philippi	Paul and Silas in Philippi	In Philippi: the Conversion of Lydia	Arrival at Philippi
16:11-15	16:11-15	16:11-15	16:11-15	16:11-15
The Imprisonment at Philippi	Paul and Silas Imprisoned		In Prison at Philippi	Imprisonment of Paul and Silas
16:16-24	16:16-24	16:16-18 16:19-24	16:16-22a 16:22b-24	16:16-18 16:19-24
	The Philippian Jailer Saved			The Miraculous Deliverance of Paul and Silas
16:25-34	16:25-34	16:25-34	16:25-28 16:29-30 16:31-34	16:25-28 16:29-34
16:35-40	Paul Refuses to Depart Secretly 16:35-40	16:35-40	16:35 16:36 16:37 16:38-40	16:35-37 16:38-40



## READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

### FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS INTO ACTS 15:36-16:40

#### I. THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY (Acts 15:36-18:23)

A. This mission took much longer than the first journey, possibly lasting 3-4 years.

B. It focused primarily in Macedonia and Achaia, which is modern Greece.

#### C. Brief Outline

1. Barnabas and Paul split, Acts 15:36-40 (fight over John Mark)
2. Syria and Cilicia, Acts 15:41 (when and how these churches began is uncertain.)
3. Lystra and Derbe, Acts 16:1-5 (Timothy joins the team.)
4. Troas (Troy), Acts 16:6-10 (Paul receives a vision to turn west.)
5. Philippi, Acts 16:11-40
6. Thessalonica, Acts 17:1-9
7. Berea, Acts 17:10-14
8. Athens, Acts 17:15-34
9. Corinth, Acts 18:1-17
10. Back to Antioch of Syria, Acts 18:18-22

### PAUL'S CO-LABORERS

#### A. John Mark (John is a Jewish name. Mark is a Roman name, Acts 12:25.)

1. He grew up in Jerusalem. His mother's house is mentioned in Acts 12:12 as the place that the early church in Jerusalem met for prayer.
2. Many have asserted that his house was the site of the Lord's Supper and that the naked man of Mark 14:51-52 was John Mark. Both of these are possible, but they are only speculation.
3. He was the cousin of Barnabas (cf. Col. 4:10).
4. He was the companion of Barnabas and Paul (cf. Acts 13:5).
5. He left the team early and returned to Jerusalem (cf. Acts 13:13).
6. Barnabas wanted to take him on the second journey, but Paul refused (cf. Acts 15:36-41).
7. Later Paul and John Mark were apparently reconciled (cf. 2 Tim. 4:11; Philemon 24).
8. He apparently became close friends with Peter (cf. 1 Peter 5:13).
9. Tradition says that he wrote the Gospel that bears his name by recording Peter's sermons preached in Rome. Mark's Gospel has more Latin terms than any other NT book and was probably written for Romans. This comes from Papias of Hierapolis, as recorded by Eusebius ' *Eccl. His.* 3.39.15.
10. Tradition says he is associated with the establishment of the Alexandrian Church.

## B. Silas

1. He is called Silas in Acts and Silvanus in the Epistles.
2. He, like Barnabas, was a leader in the Jerusalem Church (cf. Acts 15:22-23).
3. He is closely associated with Paul (cf. Acts 15:40; 16:19ff; 17:1-15; 1 Thess. 1:1).
4. He, like Barnabas and Paul, was a prophet (cf. Acts 15:32).
5. He is called an apostle (cf. 1 Thess. 2:6).
6. He, like Paul, was a Roman citizen (cf. Acts 16:37-38).
7. He, like John Mark, is also associated with Peter, even possibly acting as a scribe (cf. 1 Peter 5:12).

## C. Timothy

1. His name means "one who honors God."
2. He was the child of a Jewish mother and a Greek father and lived in Lystra. The Latin translation of Origen's commentary on Rom. 16:21 says Timothy was a citizen of Derbe. This is possibly taken from Acts 20:4. He was instructed in the Jewish faith by his mother and grandmother (cf. 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14-15).
3. He was asked to join Paul and Silas' missionary team on the second journey (cf. Acts 16:1-5). He was confirmed by prophecy (cf. 1 Tim. 1:18; 4:14).
4. He was circumcised by Paul in order to work with both Jews and Greeks.
5. He was a dedicated companion and co-worker of Paul. He is mentioned by name more than any other of Paul's helpers (17 times in 10 letters, cf. 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10; Phil. 1:1; 2:19; Col. 1:5; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2:6; 3:2; 1 Tim. 1:2,18; 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:2; 3:14-15).
6. He is called an "apostle" (cf. 1 Thess. 2:6).
7. Two of the three Pastoral Epistles are addressed to him.
8. He is last mentioned in Hebrews 13:23.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 16:1-5

<sup>1</sup>Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek, <sup>2</sup>and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium. <sup>3</sup>Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. <sup>4</sup>Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe. <sup>5</sup>So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily

**16:1 "Derbe and to Lystra"** These cities are located in the southern part of the Roman Province of Galatia (modern Turkey). Paul visited this area on his first missionary journey (cf. Acts 16:14).

▣ **"And a disciple was there"** Luke uses the term *idou* to introduce this phrase. It was a way of showing emphasis. Timothy will become a major participant in Paul's ministry.

▣ **"the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek"** From 2 Tim. 1:5 we learn that his grandmother was also a Jewish believer or a faith-oriented Jew. His grandmother was named Lois and his mother was named Eunice. His mother, and possibly grandmother, became believers on Paul's first mission.

**16:2 "he was well spoken of"** This is an imperfect passive indicative. People spoke well of Timothy

again and again. One of the qualifications for a church leader was "no handle for criticism," within both the believing and unbelieving communities (cf. 1 Tim. 3:2, 7, 10).

■ **"in Lystra"** Timothy's hometown was Lystra. However, some Greek manuscripts of Acts 20:4 (and Origen's writings) imply that Derbe was his hometown.

**16:3 "Paul wanted this man to go with him"** Notice that Paul calls Timothy. This was not Timothy's choice alone (cf. 1 Tim. 3:1). In a sense Timothy becomes Paul's apostolic delegate or representative.

■ **"had circumcised him"** Paul wanted him to be able to work with Jews (cf. 1 Cor. 9:20; Acts 15:27-29). This was not a compromise with the Judaizers because

1. of the results of the Jerusalem Council (cf. Acts 16:15)
2. he refused to circumcise Titus (cf. Gal. 2:3)

However, Paul's actions surely confused the issue! Paul's methodology of becoming all things to all men in order to win some (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19-23) makes people and their salvation priority!

■ **"father was a Greek"** The imperfect tense implies that he was dead.

**16:4** Paul and Silas reported (i.e., imperfect active indicative) on the results of the Jerusalem Council (cf. Acts 15:22-29). Remember these "essentials" were for two purposes:

1. fellowship within the churches
2. Jewish evangelism (as was Timothy's circumcision)

**16:5** This is another of Luke's summary statements (cf. Acts 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:31). Paul had a heart for discipling (cf. Acts 14:22; 15:36; 15:5). Evangelism without discipleship violates the Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:18-20) and results in "spiritual abortions"!

■ **"churches"** See Special Topic at Acts 5:11.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 16:6-10**

<sup>6</sup>They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; <sup>7</sup>and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them; <sup>8</sup>and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. <sup>9</sup>A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." <sup>10</sup>When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

**16:6 "passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region"** In this text Luke is speaking more of racial, linguistic groupings than of Roman political divisions or provinces. This idiom would refer to the unofficial boundary between these ethnic groups.

■ **"having been forbidden"** This is an aorist passive participle. It is a common term in the Septuagint and in the NT. The Spirit was intimately involved in the actions and decisions of the early church (cf. Acts 2:4; 8:29,39; 10:19; 11:12,28; 15:28; 16:6,7; 21:4; Rom. 1:13). The modern church has lost the dynamism of the early church.

■ **"in Asia"** This refers to the Roman Province of Asia Minor, which was the western end of modern Turkey.

**16:6,7 "the Holy Spirit. . . Spirit of Jesus"** For the personality of the Spirit, see Special Topic at Acts

1:2. See Special Topic following.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: JESUS AND THE SPIRIT**

**16:7 "Mysia"** This was an ethnic area in the northwest of the Roman Province of Asia Minor. It was mountainous with several major Roman roads. Its major cities were Troas, Assos, and Pergamum.

▣ **"Bithynia"** This region was also in northwest Asia Minor, northeast of Mysia. This was not a Roman Province in Luke's day, but was combined with Pontus as one political unit. Peter later evangelized this area (cf. 1 Pet. 1:1). We learn from Philo that there were many Jewish colonies in this area.

**16:8 "passing by Mysia"** In this context, it must mean "passing through" or "around" (cf. BAGD 625). Remember, context determines meaning and not lexicons/dictionaries.

▣ **"Troas"** This city was four miles from ancient Troy. It was founded about 400 years earlier and remained a free Greek city until it became a Roman colony. It was the regular port of departure from Mysia to Macedonia.

**16:9 "A vision appeared to Paul"** God led Paul several times by supernatural means.

1. bright light and Jesus' voice, Acts 9:3-4
2. a vision, Acts 9:10
3. a vision, Acts 16:9,10
4. a vision, Acts 18:9
5. a trance, Acts 22:17
6. an angel of God Acts 27:23

▣ **"a man of Macedonia"** How Paul knew he was from Macedonia is uncertain. Possibly it was because of accent, clothes, ornaments, or simply stated in the vision. Some commentators think the man was Luke (cf. Acts 16:10).

This was a major geographical decision. The gospel turns to Europe!

▣ **"Come over. . . help us"** The first is an aorist active participle, used as an imperative, the second is an aorist active imperative. The vision was very specific and forceful.

**16:10 "we"** This is the first occurrence of the "we" sections in Acts. This refers to Luke's addition to the missionary group of Paul, Silas, and Timothy (cf. Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16). Some commentators have thought that the man Paul saw in Acts 16:9 was Luke, the Gentile physician and author of the Gospel and Acts.

▣ **"Macedonia"** Modern Greece was divided into two Roman Provinces.

1. Achaia in the south (Athens, Corinth, Sparta)
2. Macedonia in the north (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea)

▣ **"concluding"** This is the term *sumbibazō*, which literally means to bring together or unite. Here it has the implication that all that happened was God's leadership to go to Macedonia.

1. the Spirit not letting them preach in Asia, cf. Acts 16:6
2. the Spirit closing off Bythynia, cf. v 7
3. and the vision of Acts 16:9

▣ **"God has called"** This is a perfect passive indicative. The Spirit's leadership was not for safety, but for evangelism. This is always God's will.

**<sup>11</sup>So putting out to sea from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the day following to Neapolis; <sup>12</sup>and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony; and we were staying in this city for some days. <sup>13</sup>And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled. <sup>14</sup>A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. <sup>15</sup>And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.**

**16:11 "ran a straight course"** This is one of many nautical terms used by Luke (cf. chap. 27). They took a direct ship sailing route vessel, not a coastal vessel. Luke knew sailing terms well or interviewed the sailors.

▣ **"Samothrace"** This is a small rocky island rising out of the Aegean Sea about 5,000 feet. It was about halfway between Troas and Philippi.

▣ **"Neapolis"** This is literally "new town." There were several cities in the Mediterranean with this name. This one was the seaport for Philippi, which was about 10 miles away. At this seaport the Ignatian Way, the major Roman road running east to west, ended its eastern trek.

**16:12 "Philippi"** The Greek is plural, probably denoting the unifying of several settlements into one united city. It was located on the famous Roman highway, the Ignatian Way. This city was originally called Kreinides (wells). Philip II of Macedon captured it because of its gold deposits and renamed it after himself.

**NASB, NRSV** "a leading city of the district of Macedonia"  
**NKJV** "the foremost city of that part of Macedonia"  
**TEV** "a city of the first district of Macedonia"  
**NJB** "the principal city of that district"

This phrase is very uncertain. Amphipolis was the "leading town of Macedonia." What Luke meant by this has been greatly disputed. It may have been an honorary title of significance.

▣ **"a Roman colony"** In 42 b.c., Octavian and Mark Antony defeated Cassius and Brutus near this city. In memory of this victory, Octavian made Philippi a Roman colony and retired his troops there. In 31 b.c., after the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra at Attium, Octavian settled more troops there. Other Roman colonies mentioned in the NT are Pisidian Antioch, Lystra, Troas, Corinth, and Ptolema. They had all the privileges of cities in Italy:

1. self-government
2. no taxation
3. special legal perks

Paul often preached and established churches in these Roman colonies.

**16:13 "on the Sabbath"** There were apparently no synagogues in Philippi. This being a Roman colony, it probably did not have ten male Jews in the town, which was the minimum number required to have a synagogue. Apparently there were some God-fearers or proselytes (cf. Acts 16:14; 13:43; 17:4,17; 18:7). Many women were attracted to the morality and ethics of Judaism.

▣ **"to a riverside"** This seems to have been a common place of religious worship (cf. Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews* 14.10.23).

■ **"sat down"** This was the typical rabbinical teaching position, but this is a Roman city and, therefore, probably has no significance. It is just another of Luke's eyewitness details.

**16:14 "A woman named Lydia from the city of Thyatira"** The Roman province of Macedonia had more opportunities for women than any other place in the first century Mediterranean world. Lydia was from a city in Asia Minor (cf. Rev. 2:17ff). It was known for its purple dye, made from mollusks' shells, which was very popular with the Romans. There was a synagogue in her hometown. Her name came from Lydia, the ancient province, where the city was located. She is not mentioned in Paul's later letters, therefore, she may have died.

■ **"worshiper of God"** This refers to God-fearers who were attracted to Judaism but had not yet become full proselytes.

■ **"the Lord opened her heart"** The Bible describes the relationship between God and humanity as a covenant. God always takes the initiative in establishing the relationship and setting the conditions of the covenant (see Special Topic at Acts 2:47). Salvation is a covenant relationship. No one can be saved unless God initiates (cf. John 6:44,65). However, God desires that all humans be saved (cf. John 3:16; 4:42; Titus 2:11; 1 Tim. 2:4; 4:10; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 2:1; 4:14); therefore, the implication is that God, on some level (natural revelation, cf. Ps. 19:1-6 or special revelation, cf. Ps. 19:7-14), confronts every person with their sin (cf. Romans 1-3) and His character.

The mystery is why some respond and some do not! I personally cannot accept that the answer is God's choice of some, but not others. All humans are made in God's image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) and God promises to redeem all of them in Gen. 3:15.

Maybe it is not so important that we understand why, but that we faithfully present the gospel to all and let it do its work in the heart and mind of its hearers (cf. Matt. 13:1-23). Paul preached to Lydia and she and her household responded.

**16:15 "her household had been baptized"** This apparently refers to her family, servants, and workers (cf. Cornelius, Acts 10:2; 11:14; and the Philippian jailer, Acts 16:33). Also, notice that she, like others in the NT, was baptized immediately. It is not an option! See Special Topic: Baptism at Acts 2:38.

The theological question which this verse raises is, "Were children involved in these examples of household conversions in Acts?" If so, then there is a biblical precedent for infant baptism in those "family salvations." Those who assert this as evidence also point toward the OT practice of including children into the nation of Israel as infants (i.e., circumcision at eight days of age, see James D. G. Dunn, pp. 175-176).

Although it is surely possible that faith in Christ immediately affected the whole family (cf. Deut. 5:9 and 7:9) in this societal setting, the question remains, "Is this a universal truth to be practiced in every culture?" I would assert that the NT is a revelation about personal volitional choices related to the awakening sense of guilt. One must recognize his need for a savior. This leads to the further question of, "Are people born sinful in Adam, or are they sinful when they choose to disobey God?" Judaism allows a period of childhood innocence until a knowledge of the Law and a commitment to keep it; for males, age 13, for females, age 12. The rabbis do not emphasize Genesis 3 as much as the church.

The NT is an adult book. It asserts God's love for children, but its message is directed toward adults! However, we live in a democratic, individual-focused society, but the Near East is a tribal, clan, family society!

■ **"If"** This is a first class conditional, which is assumed to be a true believer from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes.

■ **"you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord"** The first verbal is a perfect active indicative. Lydia is asserting that she is now a believer. She was inviting these missionaries to use her house and resources for the gospel. This is in accordance with Jesus' message to the seventy when He sent them out on mission (cf. Luke 10:5-7).

- **"come into my house and stay"** Lydia was an assertive personality type, a business woman! This first verb is an aorist active participle, used as an imperative; the second is a present active imperative.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 16:16-18**

**<sup>16</sup>It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling. <sup>17</sup>Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, "These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation." <sup>18</sup>She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out at that very moment.**

**16:16 "It happened"** Apparently this occurred on another day, possibly the next Sabbath. This was a chance encounter, but God was fully involved for His purposes, as He is in every event, every personal encounter, every day!

- **"a spirit of divination"** There are two terms used in this sentence to describe this slave girl. The first, "divination" (found only here in the NT) has an OT background, but uses different Greek terms in the Septuagint (cf. Lev. 19:31; 20:6,27; Deut. 18:11; 1 Sam. 28:3,7; 2 Kgs. 21:6; 1 Chr. 10:13). This was a demon-possessed person who, by chants, incantations, or the interpreting of natural phenomena (i.e., flight of birds, clouds, remains in a drinking cup, animal liver, etc.) could predict and, to some degree, affect the future.

In this Greek cultural setting the term is *pythōn*, which comes out of Greek mythology where a giant serpent is killed by Apollo. This myth became an oracle rite (i.e., Delphi), where humans could consult the gods. This site was known for its temple snakes (i.e., pythons) who would crawl over people who lay down in the temple and allowed the snake to crawl over them for the purpose of knowing and affecting the future.

- **"by fortune telling"** This term (present active participle, feminine, singular) is used only here in the NT. The root term is common in the Septuagint for "diviner, seer, prophet," usually in a negative context. It means one who raves, thereby denoting the emotional trance which accompanies their prediction. Here it denotes one who predicts the future for profit. The contextual and lexical implication is that the girl was indwelt with an unclean spirit.

**16:17 "Following after Paul. . .kept crying out"** This is a present active participle and an imperfect active indicative. She continued to follow and kept on crying out (cf. Acts 16:18).

- **"These men are bondservants of the Most High God"** Jesus would not accept demonic testimony (cf. Luke 8:28; Mark 1:24; 3:11; Matt. 8:29) and neither would Paul because it could lead to the implication of demonic support.

The term "Most High God" (cf. Mark 5:7; Luke 8:28) is used of YHWH (i.e., *EI, Elyon*) in Gen. 14:18-19; 2 Sam. 22:14 (see Special Topic at Acts 1:6), but it was also used in this culture of Zeus. This spirit was not giving testimony to glorify God, but to associate the gospel with the demonic.

- **"who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation"** There is no article with "way" (cf. NRSV). She was possibly saying that they were one of several ways to the Most High God. This demon is not trying to help Paul's ministry. The purpose of this statement is

1. to identify Paul with divination
2. to present an alternative way, not **the** way of salvation (i.e., faith in Christ)

The NET Bible (p. 2022 #16) has a good discussion of the grammatical issues involved in translating "the way" vs. "a way." It prefers "the way."

The real issue is what the hearers in first century Philippi would have understood. In their cultural setting, "the Most High God" would have referred to *Zeus*, so the presence or absence of the definite article with "way" is not the exegetical issue.

**16:18 "Paul was greatly annoyed"** In this instance Paul acted, not out of love, but out of irritation. Paul was human too! This same strong verb is found in the Septuagint in Eccl. 10:9, where it means hard labor. In the NT it is used only here and in Acts 4:2. It denotes someone who is completely worn out.

▣ **"to the spirit"** Notice Paul does not address the slave girl, but the demon indwelling and controlling her. Paul's exorcism was couched in the same manner as other NT exorcisms (i.e., in the name of Jesus). See the Special Topics: The Demonic and Exorcism at Acts 5:16.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 16:19-24**

**<sup>19</sup>But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities, <sup>20</sup>and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, "These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, <sup>21</sup>and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans." <sup>22</sup>The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order *them* to be beaten with rods. <sup>23</sup>When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; <sup>24</sup>and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.**

**16:19 "saw that their hope of profit was gone"** These "masters" did not care at all that a human being had been freed from the bondage to evil. They were distressed by the monetary loss (cf. Acts 16:16), much like the people in Luke 8:26-39.

▣ **"seized Paul and Silas"** Why Luke and Timothy were not taken is uncertain.

**16:20 "chief magistrates"** This is the term *praetors*. Officially their titles were *duumvirs*, but we learn from Cicero that many liked to be called *Praetors*. Luke is very accurate in his use of Roman governmental officials' titles. This is one of several evidences of his historicity.

**16: 20, 21 "being Jews. . .being Romans"** This shows their racial pride and prejudice. Paul's time in Philippi may be close to Claudius' edict expelling the Jews from Rome, a.d. 49-50 (actually he forbade any Jewish worship practices). Roman anti-Semitism may be seen in Cicero's *Pro Fiasco* 28 and *Javenal* 14.96-106.

▣ **"proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept"** Notice this charge has nothing to do with the slave girl's exorcism. It apparently refers to their preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Judaism was a legal religion in the Roman Empire, but as it became obvious that Christianity was destined to be seen as a separate and, therefore, illegal religion. It was illegal for Jews to attempt to proselytize Romans, and it was illegal for Paul as well.

**16:22 "tore their robes off them and proceeded to order *them*"** The verbal forms imply that the two *Praetors*, moved by the uproar of the crowd, tore the clothes off Paul and Silas themselves (aorist active participle, plural). This would have been highly unusual for them to be such active participants in a judicial event.

1. they tore off (aorist active participle)
2. they ordered to flog (i.e., an imperfect active indicative followed by a present active infinitive)

▣ **"to be beaten with rods"** This type of punishment (i.e., *verberatio*, which was administered by the authority of a city court) was not as severe as Roman scourging. There was no set number for the blows. Paul was beaten like this three times (cf. 2 Cor. 11:25). This is the only recorded one (cf. 1 Thess. 2:2).



**16:24 "inner prison"** This means maximum security. There was a fear factor here (cf. Acts 16:29). Paul's exorcism got their attention.

▣ **"feet in the stocks"** Most jails of that day had chains attached to the walls to which the prisoner was shackled. Therefore, the doors were only latched, not locked. These stocks would spread the feet wide apart and caused great discomfort and added security.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 16:25-34**

**<sup>25</sup>But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; <sup>26</sup>and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. <sup>27</sup>When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. <sup>28</sup>But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!" <sup>29</sup>And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, <sup>30</sup>and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" <sup>31</sup>They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." <sup>32</sup>And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. <sup>33</sup>And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household. <sup>34</sup>And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.**

**16:25 "about midnight"** They probably could not sleep because of the pain of the beating and the stocks.

▣ **"praying and singing hymns of praise to God"** It is possible that the theological content of these prayers and hymns caused the prisoners to trust Christ (i.e., "the prisoners were listening to them") because none of the prisoners escaped when the earthquake opened the doors (cf. Acts 16:26,28, "we are all here").

▣ **"the prisoners were listening"** This is an imperfect middle (deponent) indicative, implying they listened continually to Paul and Silas. The verb *epakroamai* is a rare word in the NT and the Septuagint. Its use in 1 Sam. 15:22 denotes an intense listening with joyfulness. These down-and-out prisoners eagerly heard and responded to a message of God's love, care, and acceptance!

**16:26 "earthquake"** This was a natural event, but with supernatural purpose, timing, and effect (cf. Matt. 27:51,54; 28:2). God had delivered Peter from prison by means of an angel (cf. Acts 4:31), but here an event was chosen that gave Paul a chance to preach the gospel to both the prisoners and the guards.

**16:27 "sword"** This was the small, two-edged sword worn in the belt, which was shaped like a tongue. This was the instrument of capital punishment for Roman citizens. If a jailor lost prisoners, he suffered their fate (cf. Acts 12:19).

**16:28** Paul and Silas' faith and the content of their prayers and songs made a powerful impact on the other prisoners (I think they, too, were saved)!

**16:29 "called for lights"** Notice the plural. There were other jailers.

**16:30 "Sirs, what must I do to be saved"** This reflects mankind's (1) fear of the supernatural and (2) search for peace with God! He wanted the peace and joy that Paul and Silas had exhibited, even in these

unfair and painful circumstances. Notice this man, as so many, knew there must be some kind of human response (cf. Luke 3:10,12,14; Acts 2:37; 22:10).

**16:31 "Believe in the Lord Jesus"** The verb (aorist active imperative) *pisteuō* can be translated "believe," "faith," or "trust." See Special Topics at Acts 2:40, 3:16, and 6:5. It is primarily a volitional trusting response (cf. Acts 10:43). Also notice that it is trust in a person, not a doctrine or a theological system. This man had no Jewish background (i.e., Ninevites in Jonah). Yet the requirements for complete salvation are very simple and just the same! This is the most succinct summary of the gospel in the NT (cf. Acts 10:43). His repentance (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21) was shown by his actions.

■ **"you will be saved, you and your household"** In the ancient world the religion of the head of the house was the religion of all its members (cf. Acts 10:2; 11:14; 16:15; 18:8). How this worked out on an individual level is uncertain, but apparently it involved some level of personal faith on each individual's part. Paul subsequently preached the full gospel message to the jailer and his household (cf. Acts 16:32).

In this instance, not only his household but his prison also!

**16:32 "the word of the Lord"** There is a variant involving this phrase.

1. "The word of the Lord" is in MSS P<sup>45,74</sup>,  $\kappa^2$ , A, C, D, E. The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives it a "B" rating (almost certain).

2. "The word of God" is in MSS  $\kappa^*$ , B

In context the issue is to whom does "Lord" refer?

1. Jesus, Acts 16:31

2. YHWH (cf. Acts 16:25,34; 13:44,48; it is an OT phrase cf. Gen. 15:14; 1 Sam. 15:10; Isa. 1:10; Jonah 1:1)

**16:33 "and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household"** This shows the importance of baptism. Acts mentions it over and over. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: BAPTISM](#) at Acts 2:38. Jesus did it (cf. Luke 3:21) and commanded it (cf. Matt. 28:19) and that settles it (cf. Acts 2:38). It also is consistent with other examples in Acts that baptism occurred immediately after their profession of faith (cf. Acts 10:47-48). In a sense it was their visible and verbal public profession of faith in Christ (i.e., Rom. 10:9-13).

**16:34 "and rejoiced greatly having believed in God with his whole household"** The two verbs are singular referring to the jailor. However, the adverbial phrase implies the inclusion of the man's extended family and servants.

The verb, "believed" is a perfect active participle, implying a settled state. Notice the change in tense from Acts 16:31.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 16:35-40**

<sup>35</sup>Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent their policemen, saying, "Release those men." <sup>36</sup>And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The chief magistrates have sent to release you. Therefore come out now and go in peace." <sup>37</sup>But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out." <sup>38</sup>The policemen reported these words to the chief magistrates. They were afraid when they heard that they were Romans, <sup>39</sup>and they came and appealed to them, and when they had brought them out, they kept begging them to leave the city. <sup>40</sup>They went out of the prison and entered *the house of Lydia*, and when they saw the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.

**16:35 "policemen"** This is literally "rod-bearer" (*hrabdouchosta lictor*). This refers to those involved in official discipline (cf. Acts 16:20). The Italian "fascist" party got their name from this term. A bundle of these

rods (from Latin *fascēs*) was the symbol of political authority.

**16:37 "men who are Romans"** Philippi was a Roman colony with many extra legal privileges which could be in jeopardy from Rome if this unfair treatment of Roman citizens was reported. Beating Roman citizens was a serious violation of their colonial legal status (cf. Acts 16:39; see Livy, "*History*" 10.9.4 or Cicero, "*Pro Rabirio* 4.12-13).

**16:39** The purpose of Paul's protest was possibly to protect the fledgling church at Philippi and to achieve a certain recognized status for them. The leaders, by their actions, imply that gospel preaching was not illegal! The door was open for future evangelistic efforts in Philippi.

**16:40 "and departed"** Luke apparently stayed behind. We find him still here in Acts 20:5-6.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is the Holy Spirit called the Spirit of Jesus?
2. Why did God allow the missionaries to encounter so much opposition and trial?
3. Why did Paul not accept the slave girl's testimony?
4. List the people saved at Philippi.
5. Why were only Paul and Silas imprisoned?
6. Why did the other prisoners not escape?
7. List the elements of salvation in this chapter. Are they different from those in other chapters in Acts?
8. Did this jailer have any background in Judaism or Christianity?
9. What does "his household was saved" mean?
10. Why did Paul make the city officials apologize in person?

# ACTS 17

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Uproar in Thessalonica	Preaching Christ at Thessalonica	From Thessalonica to Athens	In Thessalonica	Thessalonica: Difficulties with the Jews
17:1-9	17:1-4	17:1-9	17:1-4	17:1-4
	Assault on Jason's House			
	17:5-9		17:5-9	17:5-9
The Apostles at Bereoa	Ministering at Berea		In Berea	Fresh Difficulties at Bereoa
17:10-15	17:10-15	17:10-15	17:10-15	17:10-12
				17:13-15
Paul at Athens	The Philosophers at Athens	Paul at Athens	In Athens	Paul in Athens
17:16-21	17:16-21	17:16-21	17:16-21	17:16-18
	Addressing the Areopagus			17:19-21
17:22-28a	17:22-34	17:22-31	17:22-31	17:22a
				Paul's Speech Before the Council of the Areopagans
				17:22b-23
				17:24-28
17:28b-31				
				17:29
				17:30-31
17:32-34		17:32-34	17:32-34	17:32-34

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

Brief Outline of Paul's Message To Intellectual Greeks in Athens (17:15-34). It is similar to Acts 14:15-18.

- A. There is one God, creator of heaven (spirit) and earth (matter)
  1. of whom they are ignorant
  2. who does not dwell in human temples or idols
  3. who is not in need of anything from mankind
  4. who is the only source of real life
  
- B. He is in control of all human history
  1. made all nations from one man
  2. fixes the boundaries of the nations
  
- C. He has placed in humans a desire to know Himself, and He is not hard to find
  
- D. Sin has separated us from Him
  1. he overlooked sins in times of ignorance
  2. we must repent
  
- E. He will judge His creation
  1. there is a set day for judgement
  2. judgement will occur through the Messiah
  3. this Messiah has been raised from the dead to prove His person and work

## The City of Thessalonica

- A. Brief History of Thessalonica
  1. Thessalonica was located at the head of the Thermaic Gulf. Thessalonica was a coastal town on Via Ignatia (the way of the nations) the major Roman road, running eastward from Rome. A seaport, it was also very close to a rich, well-watered, coastal plain. These three advantages made Thessalonica the largest, most important commercial and political center in Macedonia.
  2. Thessalonica was originally named Therma, derived from the hot springs located in the area. An early historian, Pliny the Elder, refers to Therma and Thessalonica existing together. If this is the case, Thessalonica simply surrounded Therma and annexed it (Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991, p. 11). Yet most historians believe Cassander, one of Alexander the Great's generals, renamed Therma in 315 b.c. after Philip of Macedonia's daughter and Alexander's half-sister and his wife, Thessalonica (Strabo VII Fragment 21). Sometime during the early centuries of the spread of Christianity, Thessalonica came to be nicknamed "the orthodox city" because of its Christian character (Dean Farrar, *The Life and Work of St. Paul*, New York: Cassell and Company, Limited, 1904, p. 364). Today Thessalonica is known as Salonika and it still is an important city in Greece.
  3. Thessalonica was a cosmopolitan metropolis similar to Corinth, inhabited by peoples from all over the known world.
    - a. Barbaric Germanic peoples from the north were living there, bringing with them their pagan religion and culture.
    - b. Greeks lived there, coming from Achaia to the south and from the islands of the Aegean

Sea, in turn bringing their refinement and philosophy.

- c. Romans from the west also settled there. They were mostly retired soldiers and they brought their strength of will, wealth, and political power.
  - d. Finally, Jews came in large numbers from the east; eventually one third of the population was Jewish. They brought with them their ethical monotheistic faith and their national prejudices.
4. Thessalonica, with a population of about 200,000, was truly a cosmopolitan city. It was a resort and health center because of the hot springs. It was a commercial center because of its seaport, fertile plains and the proximity of the Ignatian Way.
  5. As the capital and largest city, Thessalonica was also the central political headquarters of Macedonia. Being a Roman provincial capital and home of many Roman citizens (mostly retired soldiers), it became a free city. Thessalonica paid no tribute and was governed by Roman law, since most Thessalonians were Roman citizens. Thus the Thessalonian rulers were called "politarchs." This title appears nowhere else in literature, but it is preserved by an inscription over the triumphal arch at Thessalonica known as the Vardar Gate (Farrar, p. 371n.).

#### B. Events Leading to Paul's Coming to Thessalonica

1. Many events led Paul to Thessalonica, yet behind all the physical circumstances is the direct, definite call of God. Paul had not originally planned to enter the European continent. His desire on this second missionary journey was to revisit the churches in Asia Minor that he had established on his first journey and then to turn eastward. Yet, just as the moment arrived to turn northeastward, God started closing the doors. The culmination of this was Paul's Macedonian vision (cf. Acts 16:6-10). This caused two things to happen: first, the continent of Europe was evangelized and second, Paul, because of circumstances in Macedonia, began writing his Epistles (Thomas Carter, *Life and Letters of Paul*, Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1921, p. 112).
2. Physical circumstances that led Paul to Thessalonica
  - a. Paul went to Philippi, a small town with no synagogue. His work there was thwarted by the owners of a "prophetic," demonic slave girl and the town council. Paul was beaten and humiliated, yet a church was formed. Because of the opposition and physical punishment, Paul was forced to leave, possibly sooner than he had wished.
  - b. Where would he go from there? He passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, which also had no synagogue.
  - c. He came to the largest city in the area, Thessalonica, which did have a synagogue. Paul had made it a pattern to go to the local Jews first. He did this because
    - (1) of their knowledge of the Old Testament;
    - (2) of the opportunity for teaching and preaching that the synagogue presented;
    - (3) of their position as the chosen people, God's covenant people (cf. Matt. 10:6; 15:24; Rom. 1:16-17; 9-11);
    - (4) Jesus had offered Himself first to them, then to the world—so too, Paul would follow Christ's example.

#### Paul's Companions

- A. Paul was accompanied by Silas and Timothy in Thessalonica. Luke was with Paul at Philippi and he remained there. We learn this by the "we" and "they" passages of Acts 16 and 17. Luke speaks of "we" at Philippi, but of "they" as traveling to Thessalonica.
- B. Silas, or Silvanus, was the man Paul picked to go with him on the second missionary journey after Barnabas and John Mark went back to Cyprus
  1. He is first mentioned in the Bible in Acts 15:22, where he is called a chief man among the brethren of the Jerusalem Church.

2. He was also a prophet (cf. Acts 15:32).
  3. He was a Roman citizen like Paul (cf. Acts 16:37).
  4. He and Judas Barsabbas were sent to Antioch by the Jerusalem Church to inspect the situation (cf. Acts 15:22,30-35).
  5. Paul praises him in 2 Cor. 1:19 and mentions him in several letters.
  6. Later he is identified with Peter in writing 1 Peter (cf. 1 Pet. 5:12).
  7. Both Paul and Peter call him Silvanus while Luke calls him Silas.
- C. Timothy was also a companion and fellow-worker of Paul
1. Paul met him at Lystra, where he was converted on the first missionary journey.
  2. Timothy was half Greek (father) and half Jewish (mother). Paul wanted to use him to work with evangelizing the Gentiles.
  3. Paul circumcised him so that he could work with Jewish people.
  4. Timothy is mentioned in the salutation in: 2 Corinthians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians and Philemon.
  5. Paul spoke of him as "my son in the ministry" (cf. 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4).
  6. Paul's general tone throughout his letters implies Timothy was younger and timid. Yet Paul has great confidence and trust in him (cf. Acts 19:27; 1 Cor. 4:17; Phil. 2:19).
- D. It is only fitting in the section on Paul's companions that mention is made of the men who came to Thessalonica and accompanied Paul on his later missions. They are Aristarchus (Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2) and Secundus (Acts 20:4). Also, Demas could have been from Thessalonica (Philem. 24; 2 Tim. 4:10).

### **Paul's Ministry in the City**

- A. Paul's ministry in Thessalonica followed his usual pattern of going to the Jews first and then turning to the Gentiles. Paul preached in the synagogue on three Sabbaths. His message was "Jesus is the Messiah." He used Old Testament Scriptures to show that the Messiah was to be a suffering Messiah (cf. Gen. 3:15; Isa. 53), and not a political temporal Messiah. Paul also emphasized the resurrection and offered salvation to all. Jesus was clearly presented as the Messiah promised of old who could save all peoples.
- B. The response to this message was that some Jews, many devout Gentiles, and many important women accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord. An analysis of these groups of converts is very meaningful in understanding Paul's later letters to this church.
- C. Gentiles comprised most of the members of the church, as seen by the absence of allusions to the OT in either of the two epistles. The Gentiles readily accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord for several reasons.
1. Their traditional religions were powerless superstition. Thessalonica lay at the foot of Mt. Olympus and all knew its heights were empty.
  2. The gospel was free to all.
  3. Christianity contained no Jewish exclusive nationalism. The Jewish religion had attracted many because of its monotheism and its high morals, but it also repelled many because of its repugnant ceremonies (such as circumcision), and its inherent racial and national prejudices.
- D. Many "chief women" accepted Christianity because of these women's abilities to make their own religious choices. Women were more free in Macedonia and Asia Minor than in the rest of the Greco-Roman world (Sir Wm. M. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveler and Roman Citizen*, New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1896, p. 227). Yet the poorer class of women, although free, were still under the sway of superstition and polytheism (Ramsay, p. 229).

- E. Many have found a problem in the length of time that Paul stayed at Thessalonica:
1. Acts 17:2 speaks of Paul's reasoning in the synagogue on three Sabbaths while in Thessalonica.
  2. 1 Thess. 2:7-11 tells of Paul's working at his trade. This was tent-making or as some have suggested working with leather.
  3. Phil. 4:16 supports the longer residence, when Paul received at least two monetary gifts from the church at Philippi while in Thessalonica. The distance between the two cities is about 100 miles. Some suggest that Paul stayed about two or three months and that the three Sabbaths refer only to the ministry to the Jews (Shepard, p. 165).
  4. The differing accounts of the converts in Acts 17:4 and 1 Thess. 1:9 and 2:4 support this view, the key difference in the accounts being the rejection of idols by the Gentiles. The Gentiles in Acts were Jewish proselytes and had already turned from idols. The context implies Paul may have had a larger ministry among pagan Gentiles than Jews.
  5. When a larger ministry might have occurred is uncertain because Paul always went to the Jews first. After they rejected his message, he turned to the Gentiles. When they responded to the gospel in large numbers, the Jews became jealous and started a riot among the rabble of the city.
- F. Because of a riot Paul left Jason's house and hid with Timothy and Silas, or at least they were not present when the mob stormed Jason's house looking for them. The Politarchs made Jason put up a security bond to insure peace. This caused Paul to leave the city by night and go to Berea. Nevertheless, the church continued its witness of Christ in the face of much opposition.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 17:1-9

<sup>1</sup>Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. <sup>2</sup>And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, <sup>3</sup>explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ." <sup>4</sup>And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women. <sup>5</sup>But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people. <sup>6</sup>When they did not find them, they *began* dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also; <sup>7</sup>and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." <sup>8</sup>They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. <sup>9</sup>And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them

**17:1 "through Amphipolis and Apollonia"** These two cities were located on the Roman highway, Ignatian Way (i.e., the Road of the Nations), a major east-west road of over 500 miles, which linked the eastern and western parts of the empire and which formed the main street of Thessalonica.

▣ **"Thessalonica"** See Introduction to this chapter.

▣ **"where there was a synagogue"** This was Paul's pattern and sequence for proclamation (cf. Acts 17:2; 3:26; 13:46; Rom. 1:16; 2:9,10; Acts 9:20; 13:5,14; 14:1; 17:2,10,17; 18:4,19; 19:8), probably



because he felt the gospel was first for the Jews (cf. Rom. 1:16) because of OT prophecy. Also, many God-fearers also attended, knew, and respected the Old Testament.

**17:2 "for three Sabbaths"** This means he spoke in this synagogue on only three Sabbaths. He was probably in the city longer than three weeks (cf. Phil. 4:16), but not for an extended period.

▣ **"reasoned with them from the Scriptures"** Paul matched Messianic prophecies with Jesus' life, teaching, death, and resurrection. He took this pattern from Stephen (Acts 7) and his rabbinical training

**17:3**

**NASB** "explaining and giving evidence"

**NKJV** "explaining and demonstrating"

**NRSV, NJB** "explaining and proving"

**TEV** "explaining the Scriptures, and proving from them"

The first word is *dianoigō*, which is used of Jesus opening the Scriptures for the two on the road to Emmaus (cf. Luke 24:32,45). It was also used of Jesus opening their eyes so that they recognized Him (cf. Luke 24:31). This same word was used in Acts 16:14 for God opening Lydia's heart to understand the gospel.

The second term, *paratithēmi*, is used often in Luke's writings for placing food before someone, but here it implies "to place the truth before" or "to commend" (cf. Acts 14:23; 20:32). Twice in Luke (cf. Luke 12:48; 23:46) it is used of entrusting something to another. Paul carefully and meticulously gave to the hearers the gospel (i.e., deposit, *parathēkē*, 1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:12,14). Some responded (some Jews, some God-fearers, and several leading women).

▣ **"Christ had to suffer"** The term "had" (*dei*) is an imperfect active indicative, which denotes necessity (see full note at Acts 1:16). A suffering Messiah was predicted in the OT (cf. Gen. 3:15; Ps. 22; Isa. 52:13-53:12; Zech. 12:10), but was never clearly seen by the rabbis. It was forcibly asserted by Apostolic preachers (cf. Luke 24:46; Acts 3:18; 26:23; 1 Pet. 1:10-12). This truth was the major stumbling block to the Jews (cf. 1 Cor. 1:22-23). See note at Acts 3:18.

▣ **"and rise again from the dead"** This is a common element in all the sermons of Peter, Stephen, and Paul in Acts (part of the *kerygma*, see Special Topic at Acts 2:14). It is a central pillar of the gospel (cf. 1 Corinthians 15).

▣ **"This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ"** There are many variations in the Greek manuscripts of the last words of this sentence.

1. "the Christ, the Jesus" – MS B
2. "the Christ, Jesus" – some Vulgate and the Coptic translations
3. "Christ Jesus" – MSS P<sup>74</sup>, A, D
4. "Jesus Christ" – MS  $\kappa$
5. "Jesus the Christ" – MS E and Bohairic Coptic version
6. "the Christ" – the Georgerian version

Many scholars choose the wording of #1 (Vaticanus) because it is so unusual (UBS<sup>4</sup> gives it a "C" rating).

In this synagogue setting "the Christ" would mean the promised Anointed One of the OT, the Messiah (see Special Topic at Acts 2:31). There were three anointed offices in the OT: kings, prophets, priests. Jesus fulfills all three of these functions (cf. Heb. 1:1-3). This anointing was a symbol of God's choice and equipping of a ministry task. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: ANOINTING IN THE BIBLE \(BDB 603\)](#) in the Bible at Acts 4:27.

The early church acknowledged again and again that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah (cf. Acts 2:31-32; 3:18; 5:42; 8:5; 9:22; 17:3; 18:5,28), following Jesus' own clear and repeated affirmations.

**17:4 "joined"** This Greek verb (aorist passive indicative) is found only here in the NT. It literally means "to

assign by lot." In this context it connotes "to follow" or "join with." The "lot" was an OT way of knowing God's will. The implication of

1. the preposition (*pros*)
2. the root (*klēpoō*)
3. the passive voice implies a divine action

God opened their hearts as He did Lydia's (cf. Acts 16:24; also notice similar thought in 1 Pet. 5:3).

■ **"God-fearing Greeks"** These were followers of Judaism who had not yet become full converts, which involved

1. being circumcised
2. self baptism
3. offering a sacrifice when possible at the Temple in Jerusalem

■ **"and a number"** This is another example of Juke's use of *litotes* (a purposeful understatement, cf. Acts 12:18; 15:2; 19:11,23,24; 20:12; 26:19,26; 27:20; 28:2), usually in the form of negation. Here the phrase is literally "not a few," placed at the end of the sentence for emphasis.

■ **"leading women"** Women had greater freedom in Macedonia (Lydia) than other parts of the Mediterranean world. The pattern set at Pisidian Antioch was repeating itself (cf. Acts 13:43,45,50). The western family of Greek manuscripts adds a phrase in Acts 17:4 asserting that these women were the wives of leading men.

**17:5 "the Jews, becoming jealous"** Jewish unbelief is sad to me (cf. Acts 14:2), but jealousy (cf. Acts 5:17) is tragic! These were not motivated by religious zeal like Saul's, but jealousy! The number of converts (cf. Acts 13:45), not the content of the preaching, is what bothered them.

Luke uses the term "Jews" often in a pejorative, negative sense (cf. Acts 12:3; 13:45; 14:2; 17:13), as does Paul (cf. 1 Thess. 2:15-16). It becomes synonymous with those who oppose and resist the gospel.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"some wicked men from the marketplace"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"some evil men from the marketplace"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"some ruffians in the market places"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"worthless loafers from the streets"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"a gang from the market place"</b>

This term describes one who hangs around the marketplace without working, a lazy good-for-nothing.

■ **"a mob"** This word is found only here in the NT and is very rare in Greek literature. It is not found in the Septuagint. "Mob" is the contextually implied meaning. Luke was an educated man with a large vocabulary (i.e., medical, nautical, etc.).

**17:6 "dragging Jason"** Some speculate that the Jason mentioned in Rom. 16:21 is this same person, but this is uncertain.

■ **"and some brethren"** This construction implies that Jason was not yet a believer. Exactly how Jason welcomed the missionary team is uncertain. It is possible that

1. Paul or Silas worked for him
2. they rented space from him
3. they stayed in his home

The verb welcome in Acts 17:7 means "to receive as a guest" (cf. Luke 10:38; 19:6; James 2:25).

■ **"city authorities"** This term "politarch" means city leader. This was the special name for local governmental leaders in Macedonia. It is a very rare word, used only here and in Acts 17:8 in the NT, or in Greek literature and its use shows Luke's knowledge of the area and supports the historicity of Acts (NASB Study Bible, p. 1607, but the word has been found in a Greek inscription on an arch on the Ignatian

Way in Thessalonica). Luke was an accurate historian in an age when this was rare. He does have a faith agenda, which believers affirm as inspiration.

**NASB** "upset the world"  
**NKJV, NRSV**  
**NJB** "turned the world upside down"  
**TEV** "caused trouble everywhere"

This implies a charge of sedition (cf. Acts 21:38; also note 16:20; 24:5). This is a very strong term. Note Paul's use of it in Gal. 5:12. We know from 1 Thess. 2:14-16 that this church faced great persecution.

One wonders if this is hyperbole or they knew of the spread of this new sect of Judaism.

**17:7 "to the decrees of Caesar"** Some think this relates to Claudius' (a.d. 41-54) edict of a.d. 49-50, which outlawed Jewish rituals in Rome. This edict, in effect, caused the Jewish population of Rome to leave. However, I think the context is clear that it refers to their preaching of the gospel. It was illegal for anyone to proselytize a Roman.

- **"saying that there is another king, Jesus"** This charge may be due to
1. Paul's heavy emphasis on eschatology in his preaching at Thessalonica
  2. the terms the Christians used for Jesus being the same terms that the Romans used of Caesar (king, lord, and savior)

**17:8**  
**NASB, TEV** "the city authorities"  
**NKJV** "rulers of the city"  
**NRSV** "city officials"  
**NJB** "the city counselors"

This is the Greek term *politarchs*, which were annual appointees in the cities of Macedonia. They were not Roman but local leaders (AB, vol. 5, pp. 384-389).

**17:9 "a pledge"** Probably this was a large monetary security bond, which was put up by the recent converts (cf. Acts 17:4,6,10), to assure that Paul did not continue to preach in the city. Some relate this to 1 Thess. 2:18.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 17:10-15**

**<sup>10</sup>The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. <sup>11</sup>Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. <sup>12</sup>Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men. <sup>13</sup>But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there as well, agitating and stirring up the crowds. <sup>14</sup>Then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy remained there. <sup>15</sup>Now those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they left.**

**17:10 "Berea"** This was a large city in Paul's day about 60 miles west, very close to the Ignatian Highway. It also had a Jewish community, one that was open to listening to Paul and checking his theology from the texts he cited from the OT.

■ **"They went into the synagogue of the Jews"** The text implies that soon after they arrived, even after an all-night journey, they immediately went to the synagogue. Maybe it just happened to be the Sabbath or maybe they knew they would be followed by the agitators. Time was of the essence. Modern western believers have lost the urgency and priority of evangelism!

**17:11 "these were more noble-minded"** This term was used for wealthy, educated, upper class people (cf. LXX Job 1:3; Luke 19:12). This literal definition does not fit the Jews of Berea; therefore, it is metaphorical for someone more willing to hear new ideas and evaluate them. This open attitude may have been characteristic of the leading citizens of the city who worshiped at the synagogue (cf. Acts 17:12).

■ **"examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so"** This is the way to determine truth. Paul's preaching method was to quote the OT and then show how it applied to Jesus.

The phrase ("whether these things were so") contains a fourth class conditional sentence (i.e., *ei* with the optative mood, cf. Acts 17:27; 20:16; 24:19; 27:12), which denotes that which is farthest removed from reality (less likely). Some responded; some did not (the mystery of the gospel).

**17:12 "many of them believed"** This implies that many of the Jews of the synagogue and many of the "God-fearers" responded. See Special Topics at Acts 3:16 and 2:40.

■ **"prominent"** This term is a compound from "good" and "form" or "appearance." It was used of honorable, reputable, and influential people (cf. Acts 13:50 and Joseph of Arimathea, Mark 15:43).

**17:13** This shows the purposeful opposition of Paul's Jewish antagonists. Many of these were sincere Jews acting out of religious motives (as Saul had). However, their methods reveal their spiritual status.

**17:14 "as far as the sea"** This may mean

1. Paul traveled to Athens by coastal boat
2. Paul took the coastal road to Athens

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 17:16-21**

**<sup>16</sup>Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols. <sup>17</sup>So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing *Gentiles*, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present. <sup>18</sup>And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, "What would this idle babbler wish to say?" Others, "He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities," — because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. <sup>19</sup>And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming? <sup>20</sup>"For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean." <sup>21</sup>(Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.)**

**17:16 "Athens"** This was the greatest city of Greece's past cultural heritage and still the intellectual center of the Roman world. It was steeped in tradition, superstition and immorality.

■ **"his spirit"** The Greek uncial manuscripts of the NT did not have

1. space between the words
2. punctuation marks
3. capitalization (all letters were capitals)
4. verse and chapter divisions

Therefore, only context can determine the need for capitals. Usually capitals are used for

1. names for deity
2. place names
3. personal names

The term "spirit" can refer to

1. the Holy Spirit (cf. Mark 1:5)
2. the conscious personal aspect of humanity (cf. Mark 8:12; 14:38)
3. some being of the spiritual realm (i.e., unclean spirits, cf. Mark 1:23)

In this context it refers to Paul as a person.

There are several places in Paul's writings where this grammatical construction is used to describe what the Holy Spirit produces in the individual believer

1. "not a spirit of slavery," "a spirit of adoptions, Rom. 8:15
2. "a spirit of gentleness," 1 Cor. 4:21
3. "a spirit of faith (faithfulness), 2 Cor. 4:13
4. "a spirit of wisdom and of revelation," Eph. 1:17

It is obvious from the context Paul is using "spirit" as a way of referring to himself or other humans (1 Cor. 2:11; 5:4; 2 Cor. 2:13; 7:13; Rom. 1:9; 8:16; Phil. 4:23).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"was being provoked within him"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"was provoked within him"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"was deeply distressed"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"greatly upset"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"was revolted"</b>

This is an Imperfect passive indicative of *paroxunō*, which basically means "to sharpen," but here is used figuratively to "stir up." This is the term (in its noun form) that is used to describe Paul and Barnabas' fight over John Mark in Acts 15:39. It is used positively in Heb. 10:24.

**17:17** Paul was concerned with both Jews ("reasoning in the synagogue") and Gentiles, both those attracted to Judaism (god-fearers) and those who were idolatrous pagans ("those who happened to be present in the market place"). Paul addressed these various groups in different ways: to the Jews and God-fearers he used the OT, but to the pagans he tried to find some common ground (cf. Acts 17:22-31).

**17:18 "Epicurean"** This group believed that pleasure or happiness was the highest good and goal of life. They believed in no personal, physical afterlife. "Enjoy life now" was their motto (a form of hedonism). They held that the gods were unconcerned with humans. They got their name from Epicurus, an Athenian philosopher, 341-270 b.c., but they overstated his basic conclusion. Epicurus saw pleasure in a wider sense than personal, physical pleasure (i.e., healthy body and tranquil mind). "Epicurus is reported to have said, 'If thou wilt make a man happy, add not unto his riches, but take away from his desires'" (*The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, vol. IV, p. 153).

■ **"Stoic"** This group believed that god was (1) the world-soul or (2) immanent in all creation (pantheism). They asserted that humans must live in harmony with nature (i.e., god). Reason was the highest good. Self-control, self-sufficiency, and emotional stability in every situation was their goal. They did not believe in a personal afterlife. Their founder was Zeno, a philosopher from Cyprus, who moved to Athens about 300 b.c. They got their name from the fact that he taught in the painted *stoa* in Athens.

■ **"idle babbler"** This word was used of sparrows eating seeds in a field. It came to be used metaphorically of itinerant teachers who picked up pieces of information here and there and tried to sell them. The *R.S.V. Interlinear* by Alfred Marshall translates it as "ignorant plagiarist." The NJB has "parrot."

■ **"proclaimer of strange deities"** This is literally "foreign *daimōn*" used in the sense of spiritual powers or gods (cf. 1 Cor. 10:20-21). These Athenian philosophers were religious polytheists (Olympic pantheon).

1. It is just possible that these Athenian Greek philosophers took Paul's words as referring to two gods

(Jerome Biblical Commentary, vol. 2, p. 199).

- a. goddess of health
  - b. goddess of resurrection (i.e., Anastasis)
2. It is even possible they saw one as
- a. male (Jesus)
  - b. female (resurrection is a feminine noun)
3. Paul's gospel terminology (cf. NET Bible) itself may be the source of the confusion related to one God in three persons (i.e., the Trinity, see Special Topic at Acts 2:32).
- a. Father
  - b. Son
  - c. Spirit

■ **"because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection"** The stumbling block of the gospel for the Jews was "a suffering Messiah" and for the Greeks it was "the resurrection" (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18-25). A personal, bodily afterlife did not fit into the Greek understanding of the gods or mankind. They asserted a divine spark in every person, trapped or imprisoned by a physical body. Salvation was deliverance from the physical and reabsorption into an impersonal or semi-personal deity.

**17:19 "took him and brought him to the Areopagus"** The term *areopages* means the hill of Ares (the god of war). In the Roman pantheon, the war god was named Mars. In the golden days of Athens, it was the philosophical forum of this renowned intellectual city. This was no judicial trial, but an open city forum in the presence of a council of city leaders.

This is a sample of Paul's preaching to pagans, as 13:16ff was to God-fearing Gentiles. Thank God for these synopses of Paul's messages.

■ **"May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming"** Here is the difference between intellectual curiosity (cf. Acts 17:20-21) and revelation. God has made us curious (cf. Eccl. 1:8-9,18; 3:10-11), but human intellect cannot bring peace and joy. Only the gospel can do this! Paul discusses the difference between human wisdom and God's revelation in 1 Corinthians 1-4.

**17:19-20** These words are very socially polite. This was, in a sense, a university setting.

**17:21** This verse seems to be an authorial comment. It shows that the politeness of Acts 17:19-20 was not true intellectual inquiry, but a current cultural fad. They just enjoyed hearing and debating. They were trying to relive Athens' past glory. The tragedy is they could not differentiate between human wisdom and divine revelation (and so it is today in our universities)!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 17:22-31**

**<sup>22</sup>So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. <sup>23</sup>For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'to an unknown god.' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. <sup>24</sup>The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; <sup>25</sup>nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things; <sup>26</sup>and He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, <sup>27</sup>that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; <sup>28</sup>for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.' <sup>29</sup>Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image**

formed by the art and thought of man.<sup>30</sup> Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent,<sup>31</sup> because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

**17:22 "you are very religious"** This is literally "to fear the gods (*daimōn*)." This can mean (1) in a negative sense, "superstitious," as in the King James Version, or (2) in a positive sense, "very precise in the practice of religious detail" (NKJV, NJB cf. Acts 25:19). These men had an intellectual curiosity and respect for religious matters, but only within certain parameters (their traditions).

■ **"all"** Notice the number of times in this sermon that Paul uses the inclusive "all" or phrases that parallel it.

1. "all respects," Acts 17:22
2. "all things," Acts 17:24
3. "all life and breath," Acts 17:25
4. "all things," Acts 17:25
5. "every nation," Acts 17:26
6. "all the face of the earth," Acts 17:26
7. "each one of us," Acts 17:27
8. "we" (twice), Acts 17:28
9. "all everywhere," Acts 17:30
10. "the world" (lit. The inhabited earth), Acts 17:31
11. "all men," Acts 17:31

Paul's good news was that God loved all humans (i.e., made in His image, cf. Gen. 1:26-27) and has provided a way for them to know Him (i.e., original purpose of creation was fellowship with God, cf. Gen. 3:8) and be forgiven (i.e., from the effects of the fall, cf. Gen. 3).

**17:23 "inscription, 'to an unknown god'"** The Greeks were afraid they may have forgotten or left out of their worship an important deity who might cause trouble if neglected, so they regularly had monuments of this type (cf. Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 1:1:4 and Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius* 6:3:5). It shows their fear of the spiritual realm and their polytheism.

■ **"Therefore what you worship in ignorance"** There is a word play between "unknown" (*agnōētō*) and "ignorance" (*agnoountes*). We get the English word "agnostic" from this Greek word. Paul was adapting the gospel presentation to pagans who believed in an impersonal world soul.

■ **"This I proclaim to you"** Paul is clearly asserting that he is not a "babbling" (Acts 17:18) and that he does know the high God they are ignorant of.

**17:24 "The God who made the world and all things in it"** Paul's first theological point is God is creator (cf. Gen. 1-2; Ps. 104; 146:6; Isa. 42:5). The Greeks believed that spirit (God) and matter (atoms) were both co-eternal. Paul asserts the Genesis 1 concept of creation where a personal, purposeful God creates both the heavens and the earth (this planet and the universe).

■ **"does not dwell in temples made with hands"** This is a quote from (1) the OT (cf. 1 Kings 8:27; Isa. 66:1-2) or (2) a Greek philosopher, Euripides, Fragment 968. There are several quotes in this context from Greek writers (cf. Acts 17:25; 28). Paul was also trained in Greek scholastics.

**17:25 "as though He needed anything"** This same thought is found in (1) Euripides' *Heracles* 1345f; (2) Plato's *Euthyphro* 14c; (3) Aristobulus, Fragment 4; or (4) Psalm 50:9-12. The Greek temples were often seen as the place where the gods were fed and cared for.

■ **"since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things"** This may be an allusion to Isa. 42:5. This is Paul's theological way of asserting (1) God's love for humanity (mercy, grace) and (2) God's gracious provision for humanity (providence). A similar truth was made by Zeno, the founder of the Stoic school, recorded in Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 5:76:1. Notice the "*autos*," He Himself! What a wonderful truth for Gentile pagans to hear and receive.

**17:26 "He made from one"** The western family of Greek manuscripts adds "one blood." However, the Greek manuscripts P<sup>74</sup>, κ, A, and B omit the term (the UBS<sup>4</sup> gives its omission a "B" rating [almost certain]). If original it refers to Adam. If it is an allusion to Greek philosophy it reflects the unity of humanity from one stock. This phrase and the next one clearly assert the solidarity of all humanity (possibly an allusion from Mal. 2:10, or even the LXX of Deut. 32:8), and theologically it asserts that humans are made in God's image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27).

The rest of this verse may also allude to the Genesis account. Mankind is commanded to be fruitful and fill the earth (cf. Acts 1:28; 9:1,7). Humans were reluctant to separate and fill the earth. The Tower of Babel (cf. Gen. 10-11) shows God's mechanism to accomplish this.

■ **"having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation"** Paul asserts that God not only created all things, but directs all things. This may be an allusion to Deut. 32:8 (LXX). However, this truth is also asserted elsewhere in the OT (cf. Job 12:23; Ps. 47:7-9; 66:7).

**17:27** The first phrase may be another quote from the Greek poet, Aratus.

■ **"if"** This is a fourth class conditional which means the farthest removed from reality. Humans must recognize their need. Both verbs are aorist active optatives.

**NASB, NKJV,**

**NRSV** "they might grope for Him"

**TEV** "as they felt around for him"

**NJB** "feeling their way towards him"

The word means "to touch" or "to feel" (cf. Luke 24:39). This context implies a groping due to darkness or confusion. They are trying to find God, but it is not easy. Paganism is a blinding force which characterizes the fall, as does idolatry and superstition (cf. Romans 1-2), but God is present!

■ **"He is not far from each one of us"** What a wonderful truth. God created us, God is for us, God is with us (cf. Psalm 139)! Paul is forcibly asserting God's love, care, and presence with all humans. This is the truth of the gospel (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13).

Paul may be alluding to Deut. 4:7 or Jer. 23:23-24, but extrapolating it to all humans. This is the hidden secret of the New Covenant!

**17:28 "even some of your own poets have said"** The previous phrase, "in Him we live and move and exist," is a quote from

1. Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus*. He was the head of the Stoic school from 263-232 b.c. or
2. Aratus's (from Soli, a city near Tarsus) *Phainomena*, line 5. Aratus was from Cilicia and lived from 315-240 b.c. This quote emphasizes either
  - a. God's immanence (cf. Acts 17:27) or
  - b. God's creation of all humans (cf. Acts 17:26).

Paul also quotes the Epicureans in 1 Cor. 15:32 and Menander, *Thais*, in 1 Cor. 15:33. Paul was trained in Greek literature and rhetoric, probably at Tarsus, which was a major university town.

■ **"For we also are His children"** This is another quote, possibly from Epimenides, quoted by Diogenes Laertius in *Lives of the Philosophers* 1:112.

**17:29** This is Paul's conclusion and refutation of idolatry (cf. Ps. 115:1-18; Isa. 40:18-20; 44:9-20; 46:1-7;



Jer. 10:6-11; Hab. 2:18-19). The tragedy of fallen humanity is that they seek spiritual truth and fellowship from manmade things that cannot hear, answer, or help!

**17:30 "overlooked the times of ignorance"** This is a surprising aspect of God's mercy (cf. Rom. 3:20,25; 4:15; 5:13,20; 7:5,7-8; 1 Cor. 15:56). But now they have heard the gospel and are spiritually responsible!

■ **"God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere"** This statement asserts

1. there is only one God
2. He wants all humans everywhere to repent

It shows the universalism of God's mercy and love (cf. John 3:16; 4:42; 1 Tim. 2:4; Titus 2:11; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 2:1; 4:14). This is not universalism in the sense that all will be saved (cf. Acts 17:32-33), but in the sense that God desires all humans to repent and trust Jesus for salvation. Jesus died for all! All can be saved! The mystery of evil is that not all will be saved.

■ **"repent"** The Hebrew term means "a change of action," while the Greek term refers to a "change of mind." Both are crucial. Both schools of philosophy mentioned in Acts 17:18 would have rejected this, but for different reasons. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: REPENTANCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT](#) at Acts 2:38.

**17:31 "because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world"** Paul's message has clearly and repeatedly asserted God's mercy and provision. But this is only half the message. The God of love and compassion is also the God of justice who desires righteousness. Humans made in His image will give an account of their stewardship of the gift of life (i.e., Ps. 96:13; 98:9). The NT theme that God will judge the world (hyperbole on the known world) is recurrent (ex. Matt. 10:15; 11:22,24; 16:27; 22:36; 25:31-46; Rev. 20:11-15).

■ **"through a Man whom He has appointed"** This concept of a Judgement Day based on our faith relationship to a resurrected man, Jesus of Nazareth (YHWH's agent in judgment), was unheard of and incredible to these Greek intellectuals (cf. 1 Cor. 1:23), but the heart of the gospel witness (cf. Acts 10:42; Matt. 25:31-33).

■ **"by raising Him from the dead"** This theme is repeated many times in Acts (cf. Acts 2:24,32; 3:15,26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30,33, 34,37; 17:31). It is the heart of the gospel affirmation that God the Father accepted the life, teaching, and substitutionary death of Jesus. The fullest teaching text on the subject of (1) Jesus' resurrection and (2) the resurrection of believers is 1 Corinthians 15.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 17:32-34**

**<sup>32</sup>Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some *began* to sneer, but others said, "We shall hear you again concerning this." <sup>33</sup>So Paul went out of their midst. <sup>34</sup>But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.**

**17:32 "when they heard of the resurrection of the dead"** The Greeks, except the Epicureans, believed in the immortality of the soul, but not of the body. The resurrection was the major stumbling block for the Greeks (cf. Acts 17:18; 1 Cor. 1:23).

■ **"sneer"** This term is used only here in the NT, but the intensified form appears in Acts 5:30 and 26:21. Its root (*chleusma* or *chleusmos*) is used in the Septuagint several times for "derision" or "mockery" (cf. Job 12:4; Ps. 79:4; Jer. 20:8).

■ **"but others said, 'We shall hear you again concerning this'"** Paul's message of God's love and care for all people was so radically new that these hearers were attracted, but not fully convinced.

**17:34 "some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius"** There are three possible responses to the gospel:

1. rejection, "some began to sneer" (Acts 17:32)
2. delayed decision, "we shall hear you again concerning this (Acts 17:32)
3. belief, "some joined Paul and believed" (Acts 17:34; 1 Thess. 1:9-10)

This parallels the parable of the sower (cf. Matthew 13).

▣ **"Dionysius the Areopagite"** He must have been a regular attender of these philosophical discussions on Mars Hill. At least one intellectual became a believer.

Eusebius, *Eccl. His.* 3:4:6-7 and 4:23:6 says he became the first bishop of Athens or Corinth. If true, what a great transformation! The gospel is in the transformation business!

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did Paul bypass certain larger cities like Amphipolis and Apollonia?
2. Why was Christ's suffering so upsetting to the Jews?
3. Why is Berea's response to the gospel so noteworthy and encouraging?
4. Why was Paul so stirred over Athen's spiritual situation?
5. Why is Paul's sermon on Mars Hill so significant? (vs. 22-24)

# ACTS 18

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Paul at Corinth	Ministering at Corinth	Founding of the Church in Corinth	In Corinth	Foundation of the Church of Corinth
18:1-4	18:1-17	18:1-4	18:1-4	18:1-4
18:5-11		18:5-11	18:5-8	18:5-11
			18:9-11	The Jews Take Paul to Court
18:12-17		18:12-17	18:12-13	18:12-17
			18:14-17	
Paul's Return to Antioch	Paul Returns to Antioch	End of the Second Missionary Journey and Beginning of the Third	The Return to Antioch	Return to Antioch and Departure for the Third Journey
18:18-23	18:18-23	18:18-21	18:18-21	18:18
				18:19-21
		18:22-23	18:22-23	18:22-23
Apollos Preaches at Ephesus	Ministry of Apollos	Apollos in Ephesus	Apollos in Ephesus and Corinth	Apollos
18:24-28	18:24-28	18:24-28	18:24-28	18:24-26
				18:27-28

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

#### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

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## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 18:1-4

<sup>1</sup>After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth. <sup>2</sup>And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them, <sup>3</sup>and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers. <sup>4</sup>And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

**18:1 "he left Athens and went to Corinth"** Corinth was 50 miles west of Athens on a narrow strip of land (isthmus). Paul was alone in Athens and even for a little while in Corinth (cf. Acts 18:5). Paul had eye problems (thorn in the flesh, cf. 2 Cor. 12). It was very hard for him to be alone.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: THE CITY OF CORINTH

**18:2 "a Jew named Aquila. . . Priscilla"** His wife, Priscilla, also called Prisca, is usually mentioned first (cf. Acts 18:18,26; 1 Cor. 16:19; 2 Tim. 4:19), which was highly unusual in this patriarchal culture (see [SPECIAL TOPIC: WOMEN IN THE BIBLE](#) at Acts 2:17). Her name matches a wealthy Roman family name (gens Prisca). She is never said to be a Jew. What a great love story it would be if she were a wealthy Roman lady who fell in love with an itinerant Jewish tentmaker or leather worker! They befriended and worked together with Paul in that trade. They helped disciple Apollos.

■ **"recently"** In *A Translator's Handbook on the Acts of the Apostles*, p. 347, Newman and Nida make an interesting point about this adverb, *prospatōs*. Originally it means "freshly killed," but it came to be used metaphorically as "recent." This is a good example of how etymology is not always a good indication of meanings. Words must be understood in their contemporary and contextual setting. Many of the misinterpretations of the Bible come from the failure of the modern interpreter to recognize the ancient metaphorical or idiomatic usage.

■ **"having come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome"** In *Historia Contra Paganus* 7.6.15, Orosius says the date of this edict was a.d. 49. Suetonius, in *Life of Claudius* 25.4, tells us that it was over rioting in the Jewish ghetto at the instigation of one *Chrestus*. The Romans confused Christus with Chrestus (cf. Tacitus, *Annals* 25:44:3). Dio Cassius in *Histories* 60.6, says the Jews were not expelled, but forbidden to practice their ancestral customs.

The participle, "having come," is perfect active participle, implying that the move was thought to be permanent or long term. Claudius' edict (command) is a perfect passive infinitive.

**18:3 "because he was of the same trade"** This is usually thought to be tent-making, but the word can refer to leather working. Paul's rabbinical background demanded that he have a secular job or trade. No rabbi could take money for teaching. Cilicia, Paul's home area, was noted for its goat hair and skins.

**18:4 "he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath"** Paul was active every Sabbath both "reasoning" and "trying to persuade" (these are both imperfect tense). Paul went to the Jews first because

1. it was Jesus' example (cf. Matt. 10:5-6)
2. they knew the OT
3. the God-fearing Greeks there were generally responsive to his message (cf. Rom. 1:16)

The synagogue developed during the Babylonian exile as a place of worship, education, and prayer. It was designed to foster and maintain Jewish culture.

## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 18:5-11

<sup>5</sup>But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul *began* devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. <sup>6</sup>But when

they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." <sup>7</sup>Then he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next to the synagogue. <sup>8</sup>Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized. <sup>9</sup>And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid *any longer*, but go on speaking and do not be silent; <sup>10</sup>for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city." <sup>11</sup>And he settled *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

**18:5 "Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia"** They apparently brought a love offering from the believers at Philippi, which allowed Paul to preach full time (cf. 2 Cor. 11:9; Phil. 4:15). Timothy also brought news about the church at Thessalonica in response to which Paul wrote 1 and 2 Thessalonians (cf. Acts 17:14). It seems that, just as Luke had been left in Philippi to disciple the new believers, Timothy was left at Thessalonica and Silas at Berea. Paul was very concerned with the training of new Christians (i.e., the Great Commission is making and teaching disciples, not just decisions). He wanted to leave an active, growing, reproducing church in every city he visited.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"Paul began devoting himself completely to the word"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"Paul was constrained by the Spirit"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"Paul was occupied with proclaiming the word"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"Paul gave his whole time to preaching the message"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"Paul devoted all his time to preaching"</b>

There is a Greek manuscript variant in this phrase. The oldest and best texts have the dative of *Logos* (cf. MSS P<sup>74</sup>, κ, A, B, D, E, along with the Vulgate, Peshitta, and Coptic translations). The UBS4 rates it "B" (almost certain). The Textus Receptus has "Spirit" (*pneumati*), which is found only in much later Minuscule Greek manuscripts (three from the tenth century are the oldest).

■ **"solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ"** Compare 9:22 with 17:3 concerning Paul's method of persuasion (imperfect passive indicative of *sunechō*, which means to constrict or press), which was very much like Stephen's method and enthusiasm (cf. Acts 7). See note at Acts 2:40. This often repeated theological assertion (i.e., Jesus is the Messiah, see note at Acts 17:3) is the key to all others!

**18:6 "resisted and blasphemed"** These are both present middle participles, which emphasize continuing personal involvement. Unfortunately this became the all too common response from the Jews of the Diaspora.

■ **"he shook out his garments"** This was a Jewish symbol for rejection (cf. Neh. 5:13; Acts 13:51; Luke 9:5; 10:11). See complete note at Acts 13:51.

■ **"Your blood be on your own heads"** This OT idiom has several connotations.

1. the responsibility of a watchman, both individually and collectively, Ezek. 3:16ff; 33:1-6
2. a personal responsibility, Jos. 2:19; 2 Sam. 1:16; Ezek. 18:13; Acts 18:6; 20:26
3. a corporate responsibility of the ancestors or nations, 2 Sam. 3:28-29; 2 Kgs. 2:33
4. NT combination of # 2 and #3, Matt. 27:25

Life was in the blood (cf. Lev. 17:11,14). The shedding of blood made someone responsible to God for that death (cf. Gen. 4:10; 9:4-6).

■ **"I am clean"** This is an OT sacrificial metaphor of personal responsibility. Paul was no longer spiritually responsible (cf. Ezekiel 33) for the Jews to hear the gospel in this city. He shared the message and they

would not respond. Are we clean?

■ **"From now on I will go to the Gentiles"** This evangelistic procedure and curse became normative for Paul (cf. Acts 13:46; 18:6; 26:20; 28:28). Paul felt obligated to preach to the house of Israel first, following Jesus (cf. Matt. 10:6; 15:24; Mark 7:27). He explains this theologically in Rom. 1:3,5,9-11 and emotionally in Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17 (cf. Rom. 11:13; 15:16; Gal. 1:16; 2:7-9; Eph. 3:2,8; 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 4:17).

**18:7 "Titus Justus"** There are several possibilities as to the identity of this "worshiper of God" who lived next to the synagogue in Corinth.

1. His full name is Gaius Titus Justus and the church in Corinth met in his home (cf. Rom. 16:23)
2. He may be the Gaius mentioned in 1 Cor. 1:14 who was baptized by Paul
3. There is a Greek manuscript variant connected with this name.
  - a. *Titiou loustou*, MSS B, D<sup>2</sup> (UBS<sup>4</sup> gives this a "C" rating)
  - b. *Titou loustou*, MSS κ, E, P
  - c. *loustou*, MSS A, B<sup>2</sup>, D<sup>\*</sup>
  - d. *Titou*, Peshitta and Coptic translations

■ **"a worshiper of God"** An inscription from Aphrodisias (3<sup>rd</sup> century), uses the phrase "worshiper of God" for those Gentiles attached to and attending the synagogue. So "God fearers" (10:1-2,22; 13:16,26) is synonymous to "worshiper of God" (cf. Acts 13:50; 16:14; 18:6-7).

This phrase is hard to define. The same phrase is used of Lydia in Acts 16:14 and several Greeks at Thessalonica in Acts 17:4 and in Berea in Acts 17:17. They seem to be Greeks who were attracted to Judaism, attended the synagogue when possible, but were not full proselytes. However, the phrase "a God-fearing proselyte" is used to describe full proselytes at the synagogue in Perga of Pamphylia in Acts 13:43.

**18:8 "Crispus"** This man was the organizer and superintendent of the local synagogue (cf. 1 Cor. 1:14).

■ **"believed in the Lord with all his household"** Acts records several instances where the head of a house converts and the entire extended family is baptized (cf. Acts 11:14; 16:15,31-34; 18:8, See [SPECIAL TOPIC: BAPTISM](#) at Acts 2:38). Westerners forget the place of the extended family in the ancient Mediterranean world. Family was priority. Individuality was not emphasized. Although this is different from our individualistic understanding of evangelism, that does not make it inappropriate or less real.

However, it is also to be noted that not all the members of saved families who attended church were saved. Onesimus was a slave in Philemon's house where the church met, but he was not saved until he met Paul in prison.

For "believed" see Special Topics at Acts 2:40 and 3:16.

■ **"many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized"** Many at Corinth readily accepted Paul's message, but Paul was discouraged and had to be energized by a special divine vision (cf. Acts 18:10b). The Corinthian churches (house churches) were Paul's most difficult, problematic congregations. He loved them, but they caused him great personal pain (cf. 1 and 2 Corinthians).

There is a relevant parallel to this context in 1 Cor. 1:14-17. I have included here one of my notes from my commentary on 1 Corinthians. See it online free at [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org)

**"1 Cor. 1:17 "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach"** This is not meant to disparage baptism, but to react to the factious spirit in the church of Corinth that was lifting up certain leaders. However, this statement does indicate that baptism was not seen as a "sacramental" agency of grace. It is surprising that some interpret Paul's writings in a sacramental sense when in all his writings he specifically mentions the Lord's Supper only once in 1 Corinthians 11 and baptism twice, in Rom. 6:1-11 and Col. 2:12. However, baptism is the will of God for every believer.

1. it is the example of Jesus

2. it is the command of Jesus

3. it is the expected, normal procedure for all believers

I do not believe it is the channel for receiving the grace of God or the Spirit. It was that public opportunity for new believers to express their faith in a very public and decisive way. No NT believer would ask, "Must I be baptized to be saved?" Jesus did it! Jesus commanded the church to do it! Do it!" Baptism is still a major decisive public declaration of one's personal faith, especially in non-Christian cultures.

**18:9 "Do not be afraid *any longer*"** This is a present middle imperative with a negative particle, which usually means to stop an act already in process. This may be an allusion to Gen. 26:24 or Deut. 1:29-33; 20:1, where Isaac was afraid. Paul was afraid and needed Christ's encouragement. Luke records these special visions of encouragement in Acts 22:17-18; 23:11; 27:23-24. If a man like Paul grew weary in well-doing, does it surprise you that you do, too? Jesus is with us also (cf. Acts 18:10; Matt. 28:20)! The Great Commission is still the guiding goal, the main thing (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8).

▣ **"but you go on speaking and do not be silent"** These are both imperatives (present active and aorist active). Fear must not silence the gospel proclaimer! Our emotions go up and down, but Acts 1:8 is still the guiding light (cf. 2 Tim. 4:2-5).

**18:10 "I am with you"** There is no greater promise (cf. Gen. 26:24; Exod 3:12; 33:4; Ps. 23:4; Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5). Notice He is with us, not for our personal comfort or security, but for evangelistic boldness (so too, the purpose of the filling of the Spirit in Acts). The Spirit's presence is for proclamation, not personal peace alone.

▣ **"for I have many people in this city"** The phrase "I have many people" is an allusion to the OT use of this term for Israel (i.e., the people of God), but now in the NT it refers to those in Corinth (Jews and Gentiles) who would respond to the gospel message. There is no more Jew or Greek (cf. Rom. 3:22; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11). The church is now called by OT titles (cf. Gal. 6:16; 1 Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6).

This is an emphasis of God's predestination and foreknowledge (cf. Romans 9; Ephesians 1). Oh, if we could only see the book of Life now! The church's witness is effective (cf. Rev. 13:8). Personal assurance is for evangelistic boldness, not the confirmation of a ticket to heaven when believers die!

**18:11** This verse helps establish a possible chronology for Paul's missionary travels. Although the phrase is ambiguous, it implies a preaching mission of eighteen months in Corinth.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 18:12-17**

**<sup>12</sup>But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat, <sup>13</sup>saying, "This man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law." <sup>14</sup>But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrong or of vicious crime, O Jews, it would be reasonable for me to put up with you; <sup>15</sup>but if there are questions about words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves; I am unwilling to be a judge of these matters." <sup>16</sup>And he drove them away from the judgment seat. <sup>17</sup>And they all took hold of Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and *began* beating him in front of the judgment seat. But Gallio was not concerned about any of these things.**

**18:12 "Gallio"** From biblical and extra-biblical sources we learn that this was a fair and competent political leader. His brother, Seneca, says of him, "Even those who love my brother Gallio to the utmost of their power do not love him enough" and "no man was ever as sweet to one as Gallio is to all." This political appointee helps us to date Paul's journeys. He was a proconsul for two and one half years starting



in a.d. 51.

- **"Gallio was proconsul of Achaia"** Luke is an accurate historian. The names of Roman officials in this area had changed since a.d. 44; "proconsul" (cf. Acts 13:7; 19:38) was correct because Emperor Claudius gave this province to the Senate.
- **"the Jews with one accord"** Luke uses this phrase many times to express the unity of the believers (cf. Acts 1:14; 2:1,46; 4:24; 5:12; 8:6; 15:25), but here it denotes the unity of the jealousy and anti-gospel rebellion of the Jews of Corinth (cf. Acts 18:6). Other examples of the use of this phrase in a negative sense are 7:57; 12:20; and 19:29. The term "Jews" often has a pejorative sense in Luke's writings.
- **"brought him before the judgment seat"** This is the word *bēma* (literally, "step"). It was the seat or raised platform of Roman justice (cf. Matt. 27:19; John 19:13; Acts 25:6,10,17; 2 Cor. 5:10).

**18:13 "to worship God contrary to the law"** This Jewish claim that Christianity was a violation of their laws and, therefore, not a part of Judaism, was a very important legal issue. If Gallio had ruled on this charge, Christianity would have become an illegal religion. But, as it was, Christianity enjoyed political protection (it was seen as a sect of Judaism, which was a legal religion) under Roman law until Nero's persecution, 10-12 years later.

It is even possible that one of Luke's purposes in writing Acts was to document that Christianity was not a threat to Roman authority. Every Roman official is recorded as recognizing this fact.

**18:14 "if"** This is a second class conditional sentence. It is a rare construction that makes a false statement in order to make a point or continue a discussion. It is often called "contrary to fact" condition. This should be translated "if it were a matter of wrong or of vicious crime, which it is not, then it would be reasonable for me to put up with you, which it is not."

**18:15 "if"** This is a first class conditional sentence. The legal issue was, in reality, a religious issue. Gallio wisely recognized the true motive of the Jews. He could not and would not act as a judge in these kinds of matters.

**18:16 "he drove them away"** This is the only occurrence of this verb in the NT, but it was used several times in the Septuagint (cf. 1 Sam. 6:8; Ezek. 34:12). It is an intensified form of *elaunō*, which means to expel forcibly.

**18:17 "they all took hold of Sosthenes"** "They all" refers to the Jews of Acts 18:12 or possibly to Greeks, which shows the underlying anti-Semitism of these Greek cities. A Sosthenes is mentioned in 1 Cor. 1:1; whether he is the same one or not is uncertain, but it is a rather rare name. This Sosthenes had taken Crispus' place as leader of the synagogue. Why the Jews should beat him is uncertain. Maybe he let Paul speak at the synagogue.

- **"But Gallio was not concerned about any of these things"** This Roman political leader, unlike Pilate, would not be swayed by the crowd.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 18:18-21**

**<sup>18</sup>Paul, having remained many days longer, took leave of the brethren and put out to sea for Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila. In Cenchrea he had his hair cut, for he was keeping a vow. <sup>19</sup>They came to Ephesus, and he left them there. Now he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. <sup>20</sup>When they asked him to stay for a longer time, he did not consent, <sup>21</sup>but taking leave of them and saying, "I will return to you again if God wills," he set sail from Ephesus.**



**18:18 "Cenchrea"** This was one of two seaports of Corinth. It was located on the Aegean Sea, on the east side of the narrow isthmus on which Corinth was located. It is mentioned again as the site of a church in Rom. 16:1.

▣ **"keeping a vow"** This refers to a chronologically limited Nazarite vow described in Num. 6:1-21 (cf. F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, p. 52). Paul does this again in Acts 21:24 (see note there). The cutting or shaving of the head would denote the end of the vow.

Both A. T. Robertson and M. R. Vincent think this was not a Nazarite vow because it could only be terminated in Jerusalem according to Jewish custom. Paul did become all things to all men to win some (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19-23). We can be sure this vow was for evangelism, not legalism! And, of course, there is always the possibility that it was Aquilla who shaved his head.

**18:19 "Ephesus"** This was a large commercial city in western Asia Minor. After the harbor at Miletus was destroyed by silt from the Maeander River, the commercial trade moved up the coast to Ephesus, which also had a natural harbor. By the NT period the best days of Ephesus had passed. It was still a large and influential city, but nothing like its past glory.

1. It was the largest city of the Roman province of Asia Minor. It was not the capital, though the Roman governor lived there. It was a commercial center because of its excellent natural harbor.
2. It was a free city, which allowed it to have local government and much freedom, including no garrison of Roman soldiers.
3. It was the only city which was allowed to hold the bi-annual Asian games.
4. It was the site of the Temple to Artemis (Diana in Latin), which was one of the seven wonders of the world of its day. It was 425' x 220' with 127 columns, which were 60' tall; 86 of them were overlaid with gold (see Pliny's *Hist. Nat.* 36:95ff). The image of Artemis was thought to have been a meteor which resembled a many-breasted female figure. This meant that there were many cultic prostitutes present in the city (cf. Acts 19). It was a very immoral, multi-cultural city.
5. Paul stayed in this city more than three years (cf. Acts 18:18ff; 20:13).
6. Tradition asserts that it became John's home after Mary's death in Palestine.

▣ **"he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews"** Paul loved his people (cf. Rom. 9:1-5). He tried without fail to reach them with and for the gospel.

**18:20** These Jews were like the Bereans. They were willing to listen. Why Paul was unwilling to stay is not stated in the text, but in Acts 18:21 it shows he was willing to return at God's direction at a later date.

**18:21 "I will return to you again if God wills"** Paul believed his life was in God's hands, not his own (cf. Rom. 1:10; 15:32; 1 Cor. 4:19; 16:7). This is the biblical worldview (cf. Heb. 6:3; James 4:15; 1 Pet. 3:17). Paul will return and Ephesus will become his major focus on the third missionary journey.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 18:22-23**

**<sup>22</sup>When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and went down to Antioch. <sup>23</sup>And having spent some time there, he left and passed successively through the Galatian region and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.**

**18:22** Verse 21 ends with Paul sailing from Ephesus. Verse 22 has him landing in Palestine (Caesarea) and visiting the church in Jerusalem ("he went up," theologically speaking) and then (down) to Antioch of Syria. It must be remembered that Luke is not recording a daily exhaustive travel itinerary, but jumping from one significant theological event to another. Acts is not modern history, but it is a good, accurate history! Verse 22 ends the second missionary journey and verse 23 begins the third missionary journey.

▣ **"the church"** See Special Topic at Acts 5:11.

■ **"the Galatian region and Phrygia"** This phrase "Galatian region" is still the source of controversy among scholars as to whether this refers to racial or political divisions within modern central Turkey.

The Phrygian region is first mentioned in Acts 2:10. Some who experienced Pentecost were from this area. Paul was forbidden to preach in this area in Acts 16:6.

One wonders if the phrase "strengthening all the disciples" in the latter part of Acts 18:23 refers to Pentecost converts in Phrygia or Paul's converts in Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium, which were in the Pisidian southern part of the Roman province of Galatia.

This is the beginning of Paul's third missionary journey (cf. Acts 18:23-21:16).

■ **"strengthening all the disciples"** Paul took the Great Commission of Matt. 28:19-20 seriously. His ministry involved both evangelism (cf. Matt. 28:19) and discipleship (cf. Acts 15:36; Matt. 28:20).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 18:24-28**

**<sup>24</sup>Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. <sup>25</sup>This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John; <sup>26</sup>and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. <sup>27</sup>And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace, <sup>28</sup>for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.**

**18:24-28** This seems to be an account related to either

1. Priscilla and Aquila
2. John the Baptist's followers (it is not in chronological sequence)
3. its function as a letter of recommendation for Apolos by Paul

**18:24 "a Jew named Apollos"** It is highly unusual for a Jew to be named after a Greek god. He was a highly educated and eloquent preacher (cf. Acts 18:24-19:1). His ministry in Corinth was helpful, but became problematic when one of the three factions (supporters of Paul, Peter, Apollos, cf. 1 Cor. 1-4) took him as their champion. He refused to return to Corinth (cf. 1 Cor 16:12).

■ **"an Alexandrian by birth"** This was the second largest city of the Roman Empire, known for its large library and academic flavor. It had a large Jewish population (for which the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek, the Septuagint) and was the home of Philo, a famous Jewish, neo-Platonist, allegorical scholar.

■ **"came to Ephesus"** Acts is not a detailed, chronological writing. Paul had just left (cf. Acts 18:23).

■ **"an eloquent man"** This term in Koine Greek can mean either eloquent or educated. In the Septuagint *logios* is used of the oracles of God. Apollos was obviously more gifted in public speaking (Greek rhetoric) than Paul (compare 1 Cor. 1:17; 2:1; 2 Cor. 10:10; and 11:6). He was a powerful preacher!

■ **"and he was mighty in the Scriptures"** The term "Scriptures" refers to the OT (cf. 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 1:23-25; 2 Pet. 1:20-21), with the exception of 2 Pet. 3:15-16, where Paul's writings (by analogy) are attributed inspired status. Apollos knew his OT well.

The word "mighty" is *dunatos*, which is used of Jesus' might in word and deed in Luke 24:19, and of Moses in Acts 7:22.

**18:25 "This man had been instructed"** This is a periphrastic pluperfect passive (cf. Luke 1:4). He had been trained in the teachings of Jesus, but only up to a certain level or time period. Curtis Vaughan, *Acts*, p. 118, footnote #2, lists the things Apollos may have known and preached.

1. John was the forerunner of the Messiah.
2. He pointed out the Messiah as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.
3. Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah.

I also think that repentance was probably emphasized in his preaching because it was in both John's and Jesus' preaching.

■ **"in the way of the Lord"** "The way" was the first title used to describe the followers of Jesus in Acts (cf. Acts 9:2; 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22; John 14:6). It was used often in the OT (cf. Deut. 5:32-33; 31:29; Ps. 27:11; Isa. 35:8), where it speaks of lifestyle faith. It is uncertain whether it has that meaning in this text (cf. Acts 18:26).

Apollos also knew something about Jesus, but apparently it was His early earthly ministry and not the post-Calvary, post-resurrection gospel.

■ **"being fervent in spirit"** This is literally "burning in spirit." This phrase is meant to describe the enthusiasm of Apollos for what he did know and understand about the life and teachings of Jesus.

■ **"being acquainted only with the baptism of John"** This phrase about Apollos may have been the literary technique that Luke used to introduce the followers of John in Acts 19:1-7. There were several heresies that developed in first century Palestine connected with John the Baptist's teaching and preaching.

John was the last OT prophet who prepared for the coming of the Messiah (cf. Isa. 40:3; Matt. 3:3), but he was not the first gospel preacher. If Apollos' preaching focused too much on John, then he missed the full significance of Jesus. Both John and Jesus emphasized "repentance," "faith," and "godly living." Both initially called the Jews to a new commitment to faith and practice (covenant faithfulness and personal faith in YHWH). However, Jesus' message developed into the bold assertion of His central place (e.g., John 10 and 14), possibly this is what Apollos lacked.

**18:26 "he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue"** This verb is used of Paul speaking to the Jews in the synagogue in Acts 13:46; 14:3; 19:8 and before Festus in Acts 26:26. Apollos was a powerful and effective preacher.

■ **"in the synagogue"** Notice Priscilla and Aquila were also there. This was Paul's regular custom also.

■ **"Priscilla and Aquila"** She is mentioned first several times, Acts 18:18,26; Rom. 16:3; 2 Tim. 4:19. This is highly unusual. Possibly she was the strongest personality or of Roman nobility. In Acts 18:2, Aquila is said to be Jewish, but never Priscilla. They were forced to leave Rome under Emperor Claudius' edict in a.d. 49. They met and befriended Paul in Corinth and followed him to Ephesus. The three of them were tent makers.

■ **"took him aside"** This term is used to describe someone being accepted or received as a friend. It is uncertain how or where Priscilla and Aquila did this for Apollos. They may have talked to him privately or taken him home with them. Notice they did not embarrass him or challenge him publicly!

■ **"explained to him the way of God more accurately"** He was teachable, which is rare for gifted, educated humans! He obviously responded to their fuller information about Jesus.

**18:27 "he wanted to go across to Achaia"** The Greek manuscript D adds "at the urging of Corinthian Christians." He was their kind of preacher (Greek rhetorical style).

■ **"the brethren. . .wrote"** Letters of recommendation from one church to another are referred to in Rom. 16:1; 2 Cor. 3:1; and 2 John. This was the early church's way of avoiding false and disruptive traveling preachers.

■ **"he greatly helped those who had believed through grace"** There are two ways to understand this

phrase.

1. this refers to believers already saved by grace (NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV)
2. this refers to God's gracious empowering of Apollos (NJB)

The main verb, helped, (contributed) is an aorist middle indicative. Apollos was a blessing!

The participle "believed" is a perfect active, implying they were already believers. Apollos was functioning as a discipler, not an evangelist, in Corinth.

**18:28** Apollos used the OT in the same way as Peter, Stephen, and Paul. Demonstrating from the OT that Jesus was the Messiah was a recurrent pattern in the sermons to the Jews in Acts (see note at Acts 17:3).

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is Priscilla listed first so often in the New Testament?
2. How did Paul get to know Priscilla and Aquila? Why?
3. Did Priscilla and Aquila ever return to Rome? How do we know?
4. Compare Paul and Apollos' preaching styles.
5. Was Apollos a Christian before he visited with Aquila and Priscilla?

# ACTS 19

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Paul at Ephesus	Paul at Ephesus	Paul's Long Ministry in Ephesus	Paul in Ephesus	The Disciples of John at Ephesus
19:1-7	19:1-10	19:1-7	19:1-2a 19:2b 19:3a 19:3b 19:4 19:5-7	19:1-7    Foundation of the Church at Ephesus
19:8-10		19:8-10	19:8-10	19:8-10
The Sons of Sceva	Miracles Glorify Christ		The Sons of Sceva	The Jewish Exorcists
19:11-20	19:11-20	19:11-20	19:11-14  19:15 19:16-20	19:11-12 19:13-17  19:18-19 19:20
The Riot at Ephesus	The Riot at Ephesus		The Riot in Ephesus	Paul's Plans
19:21-27	19:21-41	19:21-22	19:21-22	19:21-22
		19:23-27	19:23-27	Ephesus: The Silversmiths' Riot 19:23-31
19:28-41		19:28-41	19:28-34	19:32-41
			19:35-41	

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in

interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 19:1-7

**<sup>1</sup>It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples. <sup>2</sup>He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they *said* to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." <sup>3</sup>And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" And they said, "Into John's baptism." <sup>4</sup>Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus." <sup>5</sup>When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup>And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they *began* speaking with tongues and prophesying. <sup>7</sup>There were in all about twelve men.**

**19:1 "upper country"** This refers to an alternate route through the higher (i.e., elevation) country and to the churches started on Paul's previous missionary activity in South Galatia.

■ **"Ephesus"** Michael Magill, *NT TransLine*, p. 413, #25, has an informative note.

"This was the capital city of Asia, where Paul was forbidden to go in Acts 16:6. He stopped there briefly in Acts 18:19-21, planning to return. Now he spends over two years here, 19:10."

■ **"disciples"** The term implies they were believers (cf. Acts 19:2, "when you believed," see Special Topics at Acts 3:16 and 6:5) in Jesus as the Messiah through John the Baptist's messages or possibly through Apollos' preaching.

The Spirit apparently sent Paul by this upper route for the very purpose of helping these "disciples" know and experience the full truth of the gospel.

**19:2 "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed"** The fact that they are called "disciples" (Acts 19:1) and the statement "when you believed" imply they were believers. This question links (1) the personal reception of the Spirit at the time one believed (aorist active indicative and aorist active participle) and (2) the Spirit's preparatory action, without which no one could even believe (cf. John 6:44,65; Rom. 8:9). There are levels and stages of the Spirit's work (cf. Acts 8:11, 15-17). The book of Acts itself should warn modern interpreters not to be dogmatic in the "necessary" elements and order of salvation. Acts records what occurred, not what should occur every time. Salvation is a personal relationship which involves the whole person, but often this is a progressive experience as the relationship deepens and more scriptural information is understood. See Special Topic at Acts 2:40.

■ **"No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit"** John's preaching could not have produced spiritual effect without the Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:6-11; 1 Cor. 12:3; 1 John 4:2). John mentioned the Spirit in his preaching (cf. Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:32-33), but it must be remembered that his was a message of preparation, not fulfillment (cf. Isa. 40:3; Matt. 3:3). John was the last OT prophet and

transitional preacher and preparer for the coming of the Messiah. He pointed people to Jesus (cf. John 1:19-42).

**19:3 "Into what then were you baptized"** They were followers of John the Baptist. Apparently they were faithful to the light they had, but needed further clarification about the life, death, resurrection, and ascension (i.e., the gospel) of Jesus, just like Apollos (cf. Acts 18:24-28).

**19:3-4 "John's baptism"** John's baptism involved repentance and expectation (cf. Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:15). However, it must be consummated by faith in Jesus. From history we know that there were several heretical groups that formed in the first century claiming to be followers of John the Baptist (*Recognitions of Clement*, chapter 60). Recording this account may have been Luke's way of nullifying the effect of these groups. John's ministry pointed away from himself and to Jesus (cf. John 1:19-42).

**19:4 "believer in Him"** See Special Topics: Believe at Acts 3:16 and 6:5.

**19:5 "They were baptized"** See Special Topic at Acts 2:38.

■ **"in the name of the Lord Jesus"** Luke describes baptism as "in the name of Jesus" (cf. Acts 2:38; 8:12,16; 10:48). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAME OF THE LORD](#) at Acts 2:21. Matthew describes baptism as "in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (cf. Matt. 28:19). The baptism formula is not the key to salvation, but the heart of the person being baptized. To view the formula as the key is to place the emphasis in the wrong place. Salvation is not the sacramental correctness of a rite, but an entering into a repentant/faith relationship with Jesus. See note at Acts 2:38.

As far as we know, Apollos, who also only knew the baptism of John, was not rebaptized! The Spirit was obvious in his powerful preaching and teaching.

**19:6 "Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them"** The laying on of hands is often mentioned in connection with the Spirit (cf. Acts 8:16-17; 9:17), but not always (cf. Acts 10:44, see Special Topic at Acts 6:6). The Bible links the Spirit with the believer in three different ways:

1. at the time of belief
2. at the time of baptism
3. with laying on of hands

This diversification should warn us against dogmatism in the matter. Acts is not intended to teach a set pattern, but to describe the dynamic movement of the Spirit.

I must admit that these twelve disciples of John speaking in tongues is surprising to me. Usually in Acts tongues are evidence for the believing Jewish proclaimers that God

1. has accepted a new group or
2. broken down a geographical barrier (see full note at Acts 2:4b)

What new group did these men represent? They were already disciples (cf. Acts 19:1). Why did Luke choose to record this event? He chooses to introduce it with Apollos in Acts 18. This just does not fit the pattern, which probably means that modern interpreters are trying to fit an agenda or interpretive grid over Luke's writing that just does not fit! Maybe this event of speaking in tongues is more like those in Corinth!

There is an interesting variety in the way the NT describes the coming of the Spirit to individuals.

1. came upon (*erchomai* plus *epi*), cf. Matt. 3:16; Luke 19:6 [just *epi*, 2:25]
2. baptized with, cf. Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; 11:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5
3. descended upon, cf. Matt. 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22
4. coming upon (*eperchomai* plus *epi*), cf. Luke 1:35; Acts 1:8
5. filled with, cf. Luke 1:15,41,67; Acts 2:4; 4:8,31; 9:17; 13:9,52
6. poured out (*ekcheō*), cf. Acts 2:17-18,33; 10:45; Titus 3:6
7. received, cf. Acts 2:33,38; 8:15,17,19; 10:47; 19:2
8. given, Acts 5:32; 10:45; 15:8
9. fallen upon (*epiptō*), cf. Acts 8:16; 10:44; 11:15

■ **"and prophesying"** This term has OT connotations of ecstatic behavior (cf. 1 Sam. 10:10-12; 19:23-24). The context may support this interpretation. However, this term in I & 2 Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor. 11:4,5,9; 14:1,3,4,5,24,31,39) implies a bold proclamation of the gospel. It is difficult to define prophecy in the NT. Since the filling of the Spirit is often linked with a bold proclamation of the gospel, this may be the intent of this context also. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: NEW TESTAMENT PROPHECY](#) at Acts 11:27.

**19:7 "There were in all about twelve men"** Twelve is one of several numbers often used symbolically in the Bible, but here it seems to be historical. See Special Topics: Twelve at Acts 1:22 and Symbolic Numbers in Scripture at Acts 1:3.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 19:8-10**

**<sup>8</sup>And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading *them* about the kingdom of God. <sup>9</sup>But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. <sup>10</sup>This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.**

**19:8 "he entered the synagogue"** This was his standard pattern (cf. Acts 9:20; 13:5,14; 14:1; 17:2, 10; 18:4,19,26).

■ **"speaking out boldly"** This is a perfect middle indicative. It was one of the results of being "Spirit filled" (cf. Acts 4:13,29,31; 9:28,29; 14:3; 18:26). Paul prays for this very thing in Eph. 6:19.

■ **"three months"** This synagogue at Ephesus apparently allowed Paul to preach, teach, and reason with them for many Sabbaths. This in itself shows a degree of openness to the gospel and is a tribute to Paul's God-given abilities.

■ **"the kingdom of God"** This is the central theme of Jesus' preaching. It refers to the reign of God in human lives now that will one day will be consummated over all the earth, as it is in heaven (cf. Matt. 6:10). See Special Topic at Acts 1:3.

**19:9 "some were becoming hardened and disobedient"** All who hear the gospel have a choice (cf. Acts 17:32, 34). This reflects the parable of the sower (cf. Matthew 13; Mark 4). It is the mystery of the iniquity (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4).

The term "hardened" (*sklērunō*) is an imperfect passive indicative (disobedient is an Imperfect active indicative), which implies the beginning of an action or a repeated action in past time. This is the very word used in Rom. 9:18 to describe God's hardening of Israel's heart and also the repeated verb in Hebrews 3 and 4 (cf. Acts 3:8,13,15; 4:7) dealing with Israel's hardness of heart during the Wilderness Wandering Period. God does not actively harden the hearts of humans whom He loves and are made in His image, but He does allow human rebellion to manifest itself (cf. Rom. 1:24,26,28) and personal evil to influence His created ones (cf. Eph. 2:1-3; 4:14; 6:10-18).

■ **"speaking evil of the Way before the people"** The gospel is so radically different from the exclusivism and performance-oriented mind set of Judaism that there was no common ground possible if the basic tenets of the gospel were rejected.

Luke's recurrent pattern of aggressive Jewish opposition to the gospel continues (cf. Acts 13:46-48; 18:5-7; 19:8-10; 28:23-28).

■ **"the Way"** See the notes at Acts 18:25 and 19:23.

■ **"the school of Tyrannus"** The codex Bezae, D, from the fifth century, adds that Paul taught from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., when most of the city had a rest period and the building was available. This may be an item of oral tradition. Paul would work at his trade during regular business hours and then teach during the



rest period (cf. Acts 20:34).

There have been several theories as to the identification of Tyrannus.

1. He was a sophist mentioned by Suidas. Suidas wrote in the tenth century, but used reputable sources back to classical times. His literary work is like an encyclopedia of political, literary, and ecclesiastical persons.
2. He was a Jewish rabbi (Meyer) who operated a private school for teaching the law of Moses, but there is no textual evidence for this position.
3. This was a building which was originally a gymnasium but later a lecture hall owned by or named after Tyrannus.

Paul had to leave the synagogue and apparently there were too many converts to use a house, so he rented a lecture hall. This allowed him some contact with the population of Ephesus.

**19:10 "two years"** In Acts 20:31 Paul states the length of his entire time in the province (three years).

▣ **"all who lived in Asia heard"** This is an obvious hyperbole. Jesus often spoke in overstatements. It is simply part of the idiomatic nature of eastern literature.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: EASTERN LITERATURE**

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 19:11-20**

**<sup>11</sup>God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, <sup>12</sup>so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out. <sup>13</sup>But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches." <sup>14</sup>Seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. <sup>15</sup>And the evil spirit answered and said to them, "I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" <sup>16</sup>And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. <sup>17</sup>This became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified. <sup>18</sup>Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices. <sup>19</sup>And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and *began* burning them in the sight of everyone; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. <sup>20</sup>So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.**

**19:11** This is not the first time God used extraordinary miracles to confirm His truth and His speaker (cf. Acts 3:1-10; 5:15; 8:6,13; 9:40-42; 13:11-12; 14:8-11). Superstition and occult practices were widespread and entrenched in Ephesus. God, being rich in mercy, allowed His supernatural power and authority, resident in His Messiah, to express itself through Paul to these Satanic-bound people. Oh, the mercy of God!

**19:12 "handkerchiefs"** These were possibly sweat bands tied around the head during work.

▣ **"aprons"** This refers to work aprons, somewhat like carpenters' aprons. These healings showed God's compassion, power, and confirmed the gospel and the ministry of Paul.

▣ **"the evil spirits went out"** Here these demons (cf. Luke 10:17) are called "evil spirits" (cf. Matt. 12:45; Luke 7:21; 8:2; 11:26; Acts 19:12,13,15,16). But Luke also calls them "unclean spirits" (cf. Acts 5:16; 8:7; see Special Topics at Acts 5:3 and 5:16). In Acts 16:16 the demon is called "the spirit of python (divination)." All of these phrases seem to be synonymous.

Paul often speaks of demonic categories like "all rule and authority and power and dominion" (Eph. 1:21), "the rulers and the authorities in heavenly *places*" (Eph. 3:10), or "against the rulers, against the power, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*" (Eph. 6:12). These must refer to some levels of organized demonic spirits. But how, why, where, and who are all speculative because the Bible does not choose to reveal a detailed description of the spiritual realm. It does clearly reveal Christ's power (and His Apostles') over Satan and his kingdom of darkness and death. Jesus' "name" is above every name! Knowing Him brings salvation, peace, wholeness, restoration, and health.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: ANGELS IN PAUL'S WRITINGS**

**19:13-16 "Jewish exorcists"** Jewish exorcists were common (cf. Luke 11:19). This context clearly shows that exorcism is not by magic formula (names), but by personal relationship with Jesus. If this passage were not so sad it would be funny! Josephus tells of a Jewish exorcism rite in *Antiq.* 8.2.5 by one Eleazar, using Solomon's incantations.

**19:13 "evil spirits"** This refers to the demonic. The NT speaks often of this spiritual reality, but does not discuss its origin or details about its organization or activities. Curiosity, fear, and practical ministry needs have caused much speculation. There is never a gift of exorcism listed in the NT, but the need is obvious. Some helpful books are

1. *Christian Counseling and the Occult* by Kouch
2. *Biblical Demonology and Demons in the World Today* by Unger
3. *Principalities and Powers* by Montgomery
4. *Christ and the Powers* by Hendrik Berkhof
5. *Three Crucial Questions About Spiritual Warfare* by Clinton E. Arnold

See Special Topic: The Demonic at Acts 5:16.

**19:14 "Sceva, a Jewish chief priest"** Modern scholars cannot find this name in any other writings. It is problematic for a Jewish high priest (*archiereus*) to be in Ephesus. There was a local synagogue, but the only Jewish temple was in Jerusalem. Luke uses this very word several times in his Gospel and Acts for the High Priest and his family in Jerusalem.

Some speculate that this man was somehow connected to the family of the High Priest, or possibly head of one of the twenty-four orders of priests set up by David (cf. 1 Chr. 24:7-19).

If this man and his sons were priests, it is surprising they did not use YHWH as the powerful name to control the spirits as does the magic or occult.

**19:15 "I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul"** This first verb is *ginōskō*; the second is *epistamai*. They are somewhat synonymous. Both are used often in Acts, but in this context there is obviously a distinction made between this demon's knowledge of Jesus as the Christ and Paul as His spokesperson.

**19:17** Luke records this account to show how the Spirit was magnifying (imperfect passive indicative) Jesus (cf. John 14:25; 16:13-14).

**19:18 "those who had believed"** This is a perfect passive participle. The question is, were they believers in the occult or does this phrase refer to their new belief in the gospel? It is also possible that new believers in the gospel still were initially influenced by their past superstitions. See Special Topic: Greek Verb Tenses Used for Salvation at Acts 2:40.

Previous occultists may have been convinced by what happened to the Jewish exorcists in Acts 19:13-16. The message of this incident, which showed the power of the person/name of Jesus, spread rapidly (cf. Acts 19:17). These people would have been very conscious of the power of "the name."

■ **"kept coming"** This is an imperfect middle indicative.

■ **"confessing and disclosing their practices"** The ancient Mediterranean was awash in the occult. It

was common belief that revealing one's magical formula made it ineffective. This was their way of repudiating their past occultic activities. There is a type of magic literature famous in the ancient world called "Ephesian writings"! This incident shows the gospel's superiority over the occult (cf. Acts 19:20).

### SPECIAL TOPIC: CONFESSION

**19:19 "magic"** See Special Topic at Acts 8:9.

The "books" (*bibulous*) could refer to large books or small scrolls of papyri on which oaths or curses were written. These were worn as amulets. The huge price shows (1) how superstitious these people were and (2) how the gospel had set them free!

■ **"burning them in the sight of everyone"** These were very expensive and sought after books and parchments. Their burning was these new believers' public repentance and profession of faith in Christ, not "the powers"!

**19:20** The gospel message is personified (i.e., the word of the Lord) and summarized. Luke's summaries help us divide Acts into six sections (cf. Acts 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:31).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 19:21-22**

**<sup>21</sup>Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." <sup>22</sup>And having sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.**

**19:21**

**NASB** "Paul purposed in the spirit"

**NKJV** "Paul purposed in the Spirit"

**NRSV** "Paul resolved in the Spirit"

**TEV, NJB** "Paul made up his mind"

**TEV (footnote)** "Paul, led by the Spirit, decided"

Here is a combination of God's sovereignty and mankind's freewill. It is uncertain whether this use of the term "spirit" refers to:

1. the Holy Spirit or
2. the human spirit (cf. Acts 7:59; 17:16; 18:25; Rom. 1:9; 8:16; 1 Cor. 2:11; 5:4; 16:18; 2 Cor. 2:11; 7:13; 12:18; Gal. 6:18; Phil. 4:23).

If it is the Holy Spirit, this is another example of divine leadership combined with appropriate human response.

Luke often has a brief comment to introduce events which occur later in his account. It is surely possible that Luke has Paul deciding to go to Jerusalem as a result of God's leading (i.e., *die*, Acts 19:21; see full note at Acts 1:16), not as the result of the riot caused by Demetrius and the guild of silversmiths in Ephesus (cf. Acts 19:23-41).

■ **"I must also see Rome"** Paul needed (*dei*) to visit the church at Rome (cf. Acts 9:15; Rom. 1:10) on his way to Spain (cf. Rom. 15:24, 28). He wanted them to know him and support his mission work. He also wanted to add his blessing/gift to their situation.

**19:22 "Erastus"** There is a man by this name mentioned in Rom. 16:23. He is called the city treasurer of Corinth. This name occurs again in 2 Tim. 4:20. It may refer to the same person, but this is uncertain.

■ **"he himself stayed in Asia for a while"** The gospel had gloriously spread, affecting and converting the province (cf. 1 Cor. 16:9).

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**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 19:23-27**

<sup>23</sup>About that time there occurred no small disturbance concerning the Way. <sup>24</sup>For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, was bringing no little business to the craftsmen; <sup>25</sup>these he gathered together with the workmen of similar *trades*, and said, "Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business. <sup>26</sup>"You see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods *at all*. <sup>27</sup>"Not only is there danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis be regarded as worthless and that she whom all of Asia and the world worship will even be dethroned from her magnificence."

**19:23 "the Way"** This was the earliest designation for Christianity. It speaks of the OT concept (ex. Ps. 1:1,6; 5:8; 25:4,8,9,12; 27:11; 37:5,7,23,34; 119:101, 105) of lifestyle faith (cf. Acts 9:2; 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22; also possibly 18:25-26).

**19:24 "silver shrines"** This refers to small silver images (1) of the Temple of Artemis or (2) the meteorite which looked like a multi-breasted woman. Archaeology has found many silver images of this goddess, but none of the shrine (temple) itself. It was one of the seven wonders of the world. See note at Acts 18:19, #4.

▣ **"Artemis"** The Artemis who was worshiped at Ephesus is not to be identified with Diana of the Roman pantheon. This goddess is closer to Cybele, the mother goddess. This religious practice had much in common with the fertility cults of Canaan (see M. R. Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol. 1, p. 271).

▣ **"was no little business"** This persecution had an economic basis (cf. Acts 19:25,27). See full note on Luke's purposeful understatements (i.e., *litotes*) at Acts 12:18.

▣ **"craftsmen"** From this Greek word we get the English word "technician." In the ancient Mediterranean world guilds or associations of craftsmen were very popular and powerful. Paul would have been a part of the tent-making guild.

**19:26-27** This gives us an insight into the success and permeation of Paul's ministry in Asia.

▣ **"that gods made with hands are not gods *at all*"** This reflects the OT concept of the vanity of idolatry (cf. Deut. 4:28; Ps. 115:4-8; 135:15-18; Isa. 44:9-17; Jer. 10:3-11).

**19:27** There are numerous passages in Greek literature of the first century that mention Artemis of the Ephesians. Apparently there were thirty-nine separate cities of the Mediterranean world which were involved in the fertility worship of this mother goddess.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 19:28-41**

<sup>28</sup>When they heard *this* and were filled with rage, they *began* crying out, saying, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" <sup>29</sup>The city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia. <sup>30</sup>And when Paul wanted to go into the assembly, the disciples would not let him. <sup>31</sup>Also some of the Asiarchs who were friends of his sent to him and repeatedly urged him not to venture into the theater. <sup>32</sup>So then, some were shouting one thing and some another, for the assembly was in confusion and the majority did not know for what reason they had come together. <sup>33</sup>Some of the crowd concluded *it was* Alexander, since the Jews had put him forward; and having motioned with his hand, Alexander was intending to make a defense to

the assembly. <sup>34</sup>But when they recognized that he was a Jew, a *single* outcry arose from them all as they shouted for about two hours, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" <sup>35</sup>After quieting the crowd, the town clerk said, "Men of Ephesus, what man is there after all who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of the *image* which fell down from heaven? <sup>36</sup>So, since these are undeniable facts, you ought to keep calm and to do nothing rash. <sup>37</sup>For you have brought these men *here* who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess. <sup>38</sup>So then, if Demetrius and the craftsmen who are with him have a complaint against any man, the courts are in session and proconsuls are *available*; let them bring charges against one another. <sup>39</sup>But if you want anything beyond this, it shall be settled in the lawful assembly. <sup>40</sup>For indeed we are in danger of being accused of a riot in connection with today's events, since there is no real cause *for it*, and in this connection we will be unable to account for this disorderly gathering." <sup>41</sup>After saying this he dismissed the assembly.

**19:28** This verse shows how closely the ancient world held religion and local traditions. Many people made their daily living in ways connected to the local pagan temples.

▣ **"Great is Artemis of the Ephesians"** This fertility goddess was often called "the Great." This may have been the temple's worship slogan.

**19:29 "rushed. . .into the theater"** The ruins of this very large Roman amphitheater still remain today. It held between 25 and 56 thousand people (estimates differ).

▣ **"with one accord"** Acts often uses the phrase "one accord" to describe the unity and fellowship of believers (cf. Acts 1:14; 2:1,46; 4:24; 5:12; 8:6; 15:25), but also of how evil can unite (cf. Acts 7:57; 12:20; 18:12). Unity itself is not the goal. It is the purpose of the unity which is crucial!

▣ **"Gaius"** He was from Derbe (cf. Acts 20:4). This was a very common name, so definite identification is difficult (cf. 1 Cor. 1:14; 3 John 3).

▣ **"Aristarchus"** He was from Thessalonica (cf. Acts 20:4; 27:2; Col. 4:10-11; Phil. 2:4).

**19:30 "the disciples would not let him"** Paul was a strong-willed man! However, he allowed other believers to influence some decisions (cf. Acts 19:31).

**19:31 "some of the Asiarchs"** This term means "local elected officials," but was used in several senses. This is another technical term for local political officials used so accurately by Luke. Apparently they had become believers also, or at least friends of Paul. Again Luke shows that Christianity was not a threat to the local governmental authorities. It is verses like this one that cause some commentators to surmise that Acts was written to be read at Paul's trial in Rome. Again and again the church came into conflict with Jews, but not with government!

**19:32 "the assembly"** This is the same Greek word (*ekklesia*) used for the church. In Acts 19:32,39, and 41 it refers to an assembly of townspeople.

The early church chose this term because of its use in the Septuagint for "the assembly of Israel." See Special Topic: Church (*ekklesia*) at Acts 5:11.

▣ **"the majority did not know for what reason they had come together"** It was a typical mob scene.

**19:33 "Alexander"** The local Jews wanted it to be understood that they were a separate group from these itinerant Christian missionaries, but it backfired on them. Whether this is the same man mentioned in 2

Tim. 4:14 is uncertain, but 1 Tim. 1:20 makes it doubtful.

▣ **"having motioned with his hand"** This was a cultural way of seeking silence so that one could speak (cf. Acts 12:17; 13:16; 19:33; 21:40).

▣ **"a defense"** We get the English term "apology" from this Greek term, which referred to a legal defense. Luke used this verb often (cf. Luke 12:11; 21:14; Acts 19:32; 24:10; 25:8; 26:1,2,24) and the noun in Acts 22:1 and 25:16.

**19:34** This shows either (1) the anti-Semitism of the Greco-Roman world or (2) this crowd's anger at Paul's ministry.

**19:35 "the town clerk"** This was the chief civil official, who acted as liaison with the Roman government in these cities with famous temples. The term is *grammateus*. It is used most often in Acts for Jewish scribes (cf. Acts 4:5; 6:12; 23:9). In the Septuagint it referred to Egyptian leaders who submitted records to higher authorities (cf. Exod. 5:6) and to Jewish officers (cf. Deut. 20:5).

▣ **"city of the Ephesians is guardian of the temple"** The word for guardian is literally "temple sweeper" (*neōkos*, temple warden). This had become an honorific title, although originally it referred to the lowest temple servants.

▣ **"the image which fell down from heaven"** It was apparently a meteor shaped like a woman with many breasts. This was a perfect idol for a fertility cult. The term "heaven" is literally "which fell from Zeus (*dios*)."

**19:37** The cause of the riot had no true basis and, therefore, was liable for Roman judicial discipline (cf. Acts 19:40).

**19:38-39 "let them bring charges against one another"** Let them go through the proper channels provided for complaints. These two verses also have two first class conditional sentences.

**19:38 "proconsuls"** There were two kinds of Roman provinces, those controlled by the Emperor and those controlled by the Senate (Augustus, *Acts of Settlement*, 27 b.c.). The Roman provinces were governed by

1. senatorial provinces governed by proconsuls or propraetors
2. imperial provinces governed by legatus pro praetors
3. other lesser or problem provinces governed by praefectus
4. free cities governed by local leaders, but under Roman guidelines
5. client states like Palestine governed by local leaders, but with limits and restrictions

Ephesus was in a Senatorial province and thereby had a "proconsul." Proconsuls are mentioned three times:

1. Sergius Paulus, Cyprus, Acts 13:7-8,12
2. Annaeus Gallio, Achaia, Acts 18:12
3. no specific name, but the category, Ephesus, Acts 19:38

**19:39-41 "assembly"** This is the word *ekklesia*, which was used by the Greek city-states for a town assembly. It came to be used for the gathered church because in the Septuagint it translated the Hebrew term for "assembly" (*Qahal*).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in

interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Are we to view Acts 19:2-6 as a proof-text for
  - a. rebaptism of some believers
  - b. the laying on of hands to receive the subsequent blessing of speaking in tongues?
2. Define prophesying (Acts 19:6).
3. Why does Acts record Paul's encounter with both Apollos and these twelve disciples of John the Baptist?
4. Are Acts 19:11-12 normative for the church in all ages and cultures? Why/why not?
5. Why is exorcism not included in the lists of spiritual gifts?
6. Why are believers not given more biblical information on this subject?
7. What was the purpose of these miraculous events? (cf. Acts 19:17)

# ACTS 20

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Paul's Journey to Macedonia	Journeys in Greece	The Last Visit to Greece	To Macedonia and Achaia	Paul Leaves Ephesus
20:1-6	20:1-6	20:1-6	20:1-6	20:1-6
Paul's Farewell Visit to Troas	Ministering in Troas	Paul's Return to Palestine (20:7-21:14)	Paul's Last Visit to Troas	Troas: Paul Raises a Dead Man to Life
20:7-12	20:7-12	20:7-12	20:7-12	20:7-12
The Voyage from Troas to Miletus	From Troas to Miletus		From Troas to Miletus	From Troas to Miletus
20:13-16	20:13-16	20:13-16	20:13-16	20:13-16
Paul Speaks to the Ephesian Elders	The Ephesian Elders Exhorted		Paul's Farewell Speech to the Elders of Ephesus	Farewell to the Elders of Ephesus
20:17-24	20:17-38	20:17-18a 20:18b-24	20:17-24	20:17-18a 20:18b-21 20:22-24
20:25-35		20:25-35	20:25-31 20:32-35	20:25-27 20:28 20:29-32
20:36-38		20:36-38	20:36-38	20:33-35 20:36-38

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph



3. Third paragraph

4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 1-6

- A. This is a very brief and, therefore, somewhat confusing summary of Paul's ministry in Macedonia and Greece on his third missionary journey.
- B. The best way to sort out Paul's ministry in this area is to consult his letters, especially I and 2 Corinthians.
- C. Luke attempts to detail Paul's movements by using time markers and place names, but its brevity causes confusion.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 20:1-6

**<sup>1</sup>After the uproar had ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and when he had exhorted them and taken his leave of them, he left to go to Macedonia. <sup>2</sup>When he had gone through those districts and had given them much exhortation, he came to Greece. <sup>3</sup>And *there* he spent three months, and when a plot was formed against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. <sup>4</sup>And he was accompanied by Sopater of Berea, *the son* of Pyrrhus, and by Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. <sup>5</sup>But these had gone on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas. <sup>6</sup>We sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and came to them at Troas within five days; and there we stayed seven days.**

**20:1 "After the uproar had ceased"** This phrase is ambiguous. It does not mean to imply that Paul left Ephesus immediately because of the riot started by Demetrius. Paul did not leave because of the riot, but because his evangelistic work was finished, as Demetrius' own statements made obvious (cf. Acts 19:26).

▣ **"Paul sent for the disciples and when he had exhorted them"** Paul was concerned with both evangelism and discipleship (cf. Acts 20:2; Matt. 28:18-20). The gospel, although received individually, becomes a family to which service is due (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7). The goal of local believers was a church!

**20:2 "he had gone through those districts"** This possibly refers (1) to Illyricum (cf. Rom. 15:19) or (2) to the Macedonian cities of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea.

▣ **"he came to Greece"** Greece (*Hellas*) means the Roman Province of Achaia (cf. Acts 19:21). This refers mainly to the city of Corinth. Paul had an extended ministry in this area. During this time he wrote Romans. He was worried about the church in Corinth, as 1 Cor. 16:5-9 and 2 Cor. 2:12-13 clearly show.

**20:3** This verse relates to Paul's travel plans. He often had to change them because of circumstances. In this instance Paul thought it unwise (i.e., a plot by Jews) to board a pilgrim ship heading toward Jerusalem, so he traveled by land.

▣ **"a plot was formed against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail"** He was possibly planning to sail on a Pilgrim ship that stopped at all ports on the way taking Jewish pilgrims to the festivals in Jerusalem.

▣ **"Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Timothy, Tychicus, Trophimus"** These are probably

men from various churches sent to accompany Paul's special monetary gift to the church in Jerusalem (cf. 1 Cor. 16:1-3; 2 Cor. 8-9).

1. Sopater is possibly the Sospater of Rom. 16:21.
2. Aristarchus is mentioned in Acts 19:29; 27:2 and Col. 4:10.
3. Tychicus is mentioned in Eph. 6:21-22; Col. 4:7-8; 2 Tim. 4:12 and Titus 3:12.
4. Gaius is mentioned in Acts 19:29.
5. Trophimus is mentioned in Acts 21:29 and 2 Tim. 4:20.

The following is taken from my commentary on 1 Corinthians (see [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org) ).

**"the collection"** *Logia* is a term which has been found in the Greek papyri in Egypt as a gift of money for a religious purpose, but not related to a regular tax (cf. Moulton, Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, p. 377). It is uncertain whether in this context it refers to a regular gift or extra gift to the church. Paul began this concern for the poor in Judea from a conversation with James, Peter, John, and Barnabas in Gal. 2:10; 6:10. This specific offering was begun by the church at Antioch where Paul and Barnabas served, Acts 11:27-30. This offering is mentioned in several NT books (cf. Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 8-9; 1 Cor. 16:1). It was an attempt to seal the relationship between the Hebrew mother church and the Gentile churches.

Paul calls this one-time contribution by several names.

1. almsgiving, Acts 24:17
2. fellowship, Rom. 15:26,27; 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:13
3. an indebtedness, Rom. 15:27
4. service, Rom. 15:27; 2 Cor. 9:12"

From 2 Cor. 8:6,16 it seems that Titus may have also been a church representative. It is so strange that Luke never mentions Titus in Acts. The theory has been that Titus was Luke's brother and that modesty caused him to omit his name. This may also explain the unnamed brother in 2 Corinthians 8:18, who many think was Luke (Origen recorded in Eusebius' *His. Eccl.* 6.25.6; A. T. Robertson's, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, p. 245).

F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, comments on Titus and Luke being brothers.

"One explanation of Luke's silence about one who was such a trusted lieutenant of Paul's is that Titus was Luke's brother; cf. W. M. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveler and the Roman Citizen* (London, 1895), p. 390; *Luke the Physician and Other Studies* (London, 1908), pp. 17 f.; A. Souter, 'A Suggested Relationship between Titus and Luke', *Expository Times* 18 (1906-7), p. 285, and 'The Relationship between Titus and Luke', *ibid.*, pp. 335 f. But if this relationship is maintained, then the possibility that Luke is the 'brother' of 2 Corinthians 8:18 f. (see. p. 320) is ruled out: Paul's purpose in sending this 'brother' along with Titus was that he should be an independent guarantor of the probity of the administration of the relief fund, and this purpose would have been frustrated if critics had been given an opportunity to draw attention to a blood-relationship between the two. Nothing could have been better calculated to foster already existing suspicions" (p. 339 footnote #5).

**20:5 "us"** Luke begins again his eyewitness account, which was discontinued in Philippi (cf. Acts 16). The "we" sections are identified as 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; and 27:1-28:1b.

**20:6 "the days of Unleavened Bread"** This seven-day feast in mid-April was combined with the one-day Passover feast (cf. Exodus 13). Paul's Jewish background influenced the way he viewed the calendar. We know nothing of Jews or a synagogue at Philippi, so Paul did not keep this feast for witnessing purposes (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19-23). Perhaps it is just mentioned because he was planning his travel to be in Jerusalem by Pentecost (cf. Acts 20:16).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 20:7-12**

**<sup>7</sup>On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.**

<sup>8</sup>There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered together. <sup>9</sup>And there was a young man named Eutychus sitting on the window sill, sinking into a deep sleep; and as Paul kept on talking, he was overcome by sleep and fell down from the third floor and was picked up dead. <sup>10</sup>But Paul went down and fell upon him, and after embracing him, he said, "Do not be troubled, for his life is in him." <sup>11</sup>When he had gone back up and had broken the bread and eaten, he talked with them a long while until daybreak, and then left. <sup>12</sup>They took away the boy alive, and were greatly comforted.

**20:7 "On the first day of the week when we were gathered together to break bread"** This shows the early Church's procedure of meeting on Sundays (the first workday of the week) to have a communal fellowship meal (Acts 20:11) and the memorial supper ("breaking bread" is a NT idiom for the Lord's Supper). Jesus Himself set the precedent of Sunday worship by His three post-resurrection appearances (cf. John 20:19,26; 21:1; Luke 24:36; 1 Cor. 16:2).

The *Helps for Translator* series (*The Acts of the Apostles* by Newman and Nida, p. 384) says that Luke is referring to Jewish time and that this would have been Saturday evening (cf. TEV), but most translations are more literal, "the first day of the week." This is the only use of this phrase in Acts. Paul uses the phrase "first day of the week" only in 1 Cor. 16:2, where it implies Sunday.

■ **"prolonged his message"** Paul wanted to teach and encourage as much as possible (cf. Acts 20:2,31).

■ **"until midnight"** The Jews began the day at twilight or evening because of Genesis 1, while the Romans began the day at midnight.

**20:8 "There were many lamps"** This must have been a hot, stuffy, even smokey, atmosphere. It almost seems Luke is trying to explain why Eutychus fell asleep.

**20:9 "a young man"** The term here denotes a man in the prime of life. A different term is used in Acts 20:12. It denotes a child. Eutychus was a young adult.

■ **"Eutychus. . .was sinking into a deep sleep, and as Paul kept on talking"** This present passive participle shows the biblical evidence both for long sermons and sleeping listeners!

■ **"was picked up dead"** Apparently he was dead! See verse 12.

**20:10 "fell on him and embraced him"** Paul acted much like Elijah and Elisha in the OT, who also raised the dead in this same manner (cf. 1 Kings 17:21; 2 Kings 4:34). He tells his audience not to be troubled, but in point of fact, I feel sure Paul was distressed by this event!

■ **"Do not be troubled"** This is a present imperative with a negative article which usually means to stop an act already in process.

**2:12**

**NASB, TEV "and were greatly comforted"**

**NKJV, NRSV "they were not a little comforted"**

**NJB "and were greatly encouraged"**

The NKJV and NRSV are literal and show Luke's propensity for negated understatement (cf. Acts 12:18; 15:2; 19:11,23,24; 20:12; 26:19,26; 27:20; 28:2).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 20:13-16**

<sup>13</sup>But we, going ahead to the ship, set sail for Assos, intending from there to take Paul on

board; for so he had arranged it, intending himself to go by land. <sup>14</sup>And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene. <sup>15</sup>Sailing from there, we arrived the following day opposite Chios; and the next day we crossed over to Samos; and the day following we came to Miletus. <sup>16</sup>For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.

**20:13 "the ship"** Paul's travel plans had to be changed because of a plot against his life, which had been planned to occur at sea (cf. Acts 20:3). Perhaps Paul wanted to know who was on this ship before he boarded. Paul went overland from Troas to Assos, where he would be picked up by the ship from Troas. All of the people mentioned in Acts 20:4 were already on this ship.

**20:14 "came to Mitylene"** This is the chief city of the island of Lesbos. It is the largest island off the coast of Asia Minor (western Turkey).

**20:15-16** It is amazing how much Luke knew about sailing. He uses many technical sailing terms in his accounts ("we" sections) of Acts. Several of the "we" sections involve sea travel. Obviously he was a well educated man who traveled extensively.

**20:15 "Chios"** This is another island in the Aegean Sea. It is a long, narrow island very near the coast.

■ **"Samos"** This is yet another island off the west coast of Asia Minor, close to Ephesus.

■ **"Miletus"** This was once a large and important maritime city on the southern coast of Ephesus at the mouth of the Maeander River. Paul landed here and sent for the church leaders at Ephesus. It was about a thirty-mile trip.

**20:16 "Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus"** This seems to imply that Paul had some volitional control over the ship. If so, then either (1) they had hired a ship all to themselves or (2) they picked a ship that did not stop at Ephesus.

■ **"if"** This is a fourth class conditional (*ei* with optative mood), which expresses a wish.

■ **"Pentecost"** This was the Jewish feast fifty days after Passover. Paul missed Passover Feast because of verse 3.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO ACTS 20:17-21:16

A. There is an element of self defense in this passage, as if some were continuing to attack Paul personally (cf. Acts 20:33).

B. This is the only example in Acts of Paul preaching to believers. In Acts 13:16ff he is addressing Jews, while in Acts 14:15ff and 17:22ff he is addressing pagan Greeks.

C. This message has many parallels to Paul's letters, as one would expect. Paul's unique vocabulary is readily reflected in this farewell admonition. This shows Luke's faithfulness in recording the testimonies of others.

## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 20:17-18a

<sup>17</sup>From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church. <sup>18</sup>And when they had come to him, he said to them,

**20:17 "Miletus"** This port was about 30 miles south of Ephesus.

■ **"elders"** From this word (*presbuteros*) we get "Presbyter" or "Presbyterian." Because of Acts 20:17,28 and Titus 1:5,7 the terms "elders" (*presbuteroi*) and "bishops" (*episcopoi*) are synonymous with the term "pastor" (*poimenos*, cf. Eph. 4:11). The term "elder" had a Jewish background (Jewish tribal leaders) and "bishop" or "overseer" had a Greek city-state political/administrative background.

There are only two groups of local church leaders mentioned in the NT—pastors and deacons (cf. Phil. 1:1). There may be three groups listed in 1 Timothy 3, which includes the widows' role or deaconesses (cf. Rom. 16:1).

Notice that the term is plural. This probably refers to house-church leaders (cf. Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 4,6,22-23; 16:4; 21:18; 1 Tim. 5:17, 19; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Pet. 5:1).

■ **"the church"** This Greek term (*ekklesia*) is the word used for a town assembly (cf. 19:39). However, it was used to translate the OT phrase "the congregation (*qahal*) of Israel" in the Septuagint. The early church chose it to describe the new body of believers because it identified them with the OT people of God. The NT church saw themselves as the true fulfillment of the OT promise because Jesus of Nazareth was the true Messiah. See Special Topic at Acts 5:11.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 20:18b-24**

**18**"You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, **19**serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; **20**how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, **21**solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. **22**And now, behold, bound in spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, **23**except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. **24**But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God."

**20:18 "You yourselves know. . .how I was with you the whole time"** Paul's walk and talk confirmed his relationship with Christ. The fact that Paul states this so strongly in Acts 20:18-19 shows the presence of critics.

**20:19 "serving the Lord with all humility"** This term begins a list of Christian virtues which produces unity (cf. Eph. 4:2-3). "Humility" is a uniquely Christian virtue which was not included in the Greek moralists' (Stoics) list of virtues. Both Moses (cf. Num. 12:3) and Jesus (cf. Matt. 11:29) are described by this term. Paul uses it several times (cf. Eph. 4:2; Phil. 2:3; Col. 2:18,23; 3:12).

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: VICES AND VIRTUES IN THE NT**

■ **"with tears and with trials"** Paul lists the physical and emotional things that he faced as the Apostle to the Gentiles in 2 Cor. 4:7-12; 6:3-10; 11:24-28. Ministry costs!

■ **"through the plots of the Jews"** There are several examples of these "plots" in Acts (cf. Acts 9:24; 13:45,50; 14:2,4,5,19; 17:5,13; 18:12; 20:3; 21:27; 23:12,27,30; 24:5-9,18-19).

**20:20 "did not shrink"** This is a sailing term (cf. Acts 20:27, an aorist middle indicative) for striking the sails when a ship approaches the dock.

■ **"anything that was profitable"** Paul taught them everything related to the gospel: how to receive it,

how to live it, how to defend it, and how to promote it.

■ **"teaching you publicly and from house to house"** This probably means that not only did Paul teach in open public group meetings (not secret meetings), but also within individual houses (or possibly separate house churches). The point is they knew quite well how Paul acted among them and also what Paul said.

Paul must have been attacked by some local group. This was his way of deflecting the criticism

**20:21 "testifying to both Jews and Greeks"** There is one message for both groups. Often the presentation is varied but the content is the same, as the sermons in Acts (*kerygma*, see Special Topic at Acts 2:14) show. Paul made it a priority to present the gospel to the Jews first (cf. Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:18,24).

■ **"repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ"** Repentance is a change of mind (Greek word), followed by a change of action (Hebrew word). It is one of at least two requirements for salvation. The other is faith in our Lord Jesus (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; see Special Topic at Acts 3:16). One is negative (turning from self and sin). One is positive (turning to embrace Jesus and His atonement of our behalf). Both are required. I have come to believe that there are several NT requirements: certainly initial repentance and faith and continuing repentance and faith, but also obedience and perseverance.

There are some variants in the ancient Greek texts about "our Lord Jesus Christ." The title "Christ" is omitted in manuscript B (Vaticanus), but it is present in P<sup>74</sup>,  $\kappa$ , A, and C. Like the vast majority of these variants, they do not change the sense of the text. The UBS<sup>4</sup> Greek text believes the shorter reading is "almost certain" because there is no reason why any scribe would delete it, but there is evidence of them expanding parallel phrasing to the expected full phrasing (see Appendix Two: Textual Criticism).

**20:22**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"bound in the spirit"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"bound in the spirit"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"a captive of the Spirit"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"in obedience to the Holy Spirit"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"in captivity to the Spirit"</b>

This is a perfect passive participle. It shows Paul's sense of divine leadership (cf. Acts 18:21; 19:21; 20:23; 1 Cor. 4:19; 7:40; 16:7). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: SPIRIT \(PNEUMA\) IN THE NEW TESTAMENT](#) at Acts 2:2 and the note at Acts 19:21. The Holy Spirit is mentioned in Acts 20:23.

**20:23 "the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying the bonds and afflictions await me"** This was probably done through different prophets being used by the Holy Spirit to warn Paul (cf. Acts 9:16; 21:4, 10-12). Often God sends and uses what seems negative, in purposeful, positive ways (cf. Isa. 55:8-11). Paul was not detoured by personal hardship as long as he believed it served God's purposes.

**20:24 "I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself"** This type of thinking is the opposite of fallen human self-centered thinking. Christians have a different world view. They have died to self and sin and are alive to God (cf. Romans 6; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Gal. 2:20; 1 John 3:16). Death to the tyranny of self brings the freedom of selfless service.

■ **"finish my course"** This is an athletic term for running a race. Paul loves to use athletic metaphors. He often speaks of his life as an athletic event (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24-27; Gal. 2:2; 5:7; Phil. 2:16; 3:14; 2 Tim. 2:5; 4:7). Paul believed God had a specific will, plan, purpose for his life.

■ **"the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus"** Paul received his call on the Damascus road (cf. Acts 9). All believers are called and gifted ministers (cf. Eph. 4:11-12). This realization, this worldview will change the way we live (cf. 2 Cor. 5:18-20). We are men and women on mission! We are saved to

serve. We are all stewards of the gospel and the gift!

■ **"the gospel of the grace of God"** Fallen mankind's only hope is in the unchanging, gracious mercy of God. The Triune God has provided everything we need for abundant life. Our hope is in who He is and what He has done.

It is surprising how seldom Luke uses the noun "gospel" (not at all in Luke and only twice in Acts, 15:7; 20:24), but he uses the verb many, many times in both of his books.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 20:25-35**

**25**"And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face. **26**Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. **27**For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. **28**Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. **29**I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; **30**and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. **31**Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. **32**And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build *you* up and to give *you* the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. **33**I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes. **34**You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my *own* needs and to the men who were with me. **35**In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

**20:25 "I know that all of you. . .will see my face no more"** He was planning to go to Spain (cf. Rom. 15:24,28), but this possibly contextually refers to his upcoming, predicted imprisonment and possible death at Jerusalem. If the Pastoral Epistles describe Paul's fourth missionary journey then he did return to this very area again.

1. Ephesus, 1 Tim. 1:3; 3:14; 4:13
2. Miletus, 2 Tim. 4:20
3. Possibly even Troas, 2 Tim. 4:13.

Paul lived by faith in God's leadership. He did not know the specific future.

■ **"preaching the kingdom"** See note at Acts 2:34.

**20:26 "I am innocent of the blood of all men"** This is a Jewish idiom, like Acts 18:6, or more specifically, Ezek. 3:16ff and 33:1ff. Paul had faithfully presented the gospel (cf. 2 Cor. 2:17). Now those who responded and those who rejected bear the burden of their own decision. One to service, the other to destruction (cf. 2 Cor. 2:15-16).

**20:27 "I did not shrink"** See note at Acts 20:20.

■ **"the whole purpose of God"** We must always proclaim God's full message, not just our favorite part! This may be an allusion to the Judaizers who claimed that Paul left out part of the message (i.e., Mosaic Law-Judaism) or to the charismatics of 2 Corinthians 12 who thought Paul was devoid of spiritual experiences. God's purpose is that humans be restored to full fellowship with Himself, which was the purpose of creation (cf. Gen. 1:26,27; 3:8; 12:3).

**20:28 "Be on guard for yourselves"** This is a present active imperative. This admonition is also in 1

Cor. 16:13; Col. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:6,10. The Christian life has both a divine and a human aspect. God always takes the initiative and sets the agenda, but believers must respond and continue to respond. In one sense we are responsible for our spiritual lives (cf. Phil. 2:12-13). What is true of individual believers, is true for church leaders (cf. 1 Corinthians 3).

■ **"and for all the flock"** This is a metaphor for the people of God (cf. Psalm 23; Luke 12:32; John 21:15-17). It is also the origin of the term "pastor." See note at Acts 20:17. Church leaders are responsible to God for themselves and their churches (cf. 1 Corinthians 3).

■ **"the Holy Spirit has made you"** This shows the divine call of God in choosing church leaders.

■ **"overseers"** See note at Acts 20:17.

■ **"the church of God"** "God" is found in the ancient Greek manuscripts P<sup>74</sup>, A, C, D, and E, while "Lord" is found in MSS  $\kappa$  and B. Paul uses the phrase "church of God" often, but never the phrase "church of the Lord." The context supports "the church of the Lord" because the next phrase, "with His own blood," which surely refers to Christ. However, this is just the kind of editorial scribal change that one would expect (see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, pp. 480-482). Therefore the UBS<sup>4</sup> Greek text retains "God," but gives it a "C" rating. "Lord" would be the most unusual and difficult reading (see Appendix Two: Textual Criticism).

This text serves as a good example of how scribes changed texts for theological reasons. A good discussion is found in Bart D. Ehrman's *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, pp. 87-89. Scribes altered texts to make them stronger doctrinally against the Christological heresies of their day. Acts 20:28 offers a variety of changes probably related to internal historical/theological tensions.

Before we throw up our hands in despair, we must remember that the New Testament has a superior textual tradition, far better than any other ancient writing. Although we cannot be absolutely sure of the exact wording of the original autographs, we still have a trustworthy and accurate text! The original words are in the variants. These variants do not affect any major doctrines!! See *Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism* ed. David Alan Black.

■ **"He purchased with His own blood"** This reflects the OT concept of sacrificial substitution (cf. Leviticus 1-7; Isaiah 53). This emphasis is surprisingly not mentioned much in the *kerygma* of Acts (see James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the NT*, pp. 17-18). It is also possibly a strong reference to Jesus' deity (i.e., "church of God"). Paul often uses phrases which point to this truth (cf. Rom. 9:5; Col. 2:9; Titus 2:13).

It is also possible to translate this Greek phrase as "through His own," meaning near relative (i.e., His Son Jesus). F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the book of the Acts*, p. 416 #59, says this phrase should be translated "by means of the blood of His own one," which he asserts is well attested in the Egyptian Koine papyri literature.

**20:29 "savage wolves will come in among you"** This is a metaphor based on the previously used metaphors of "flock" and "shepherd." This accentuates the problem of the false teachers, both from without (Acts 20:29) and within (Acts 20:30). They both came in sheep's clothing (cf. Matt. 7:15-23; Luke 10:3; John 10:12, also in interbiblical apocalyptic literature, I Enoch 89:10-27; IV Ezra 5:18). Believers must test those who claim to speak for God (cf. 1 John 4:1). Test them by their faithfulness to the gospel, both in word and deed (cf. Acts 20:18-24; Matthew 7; Rom. 16:17-18).

**20:30 "speaking perverse things"** "Speaking" is a present active participle, while "perverse things" is a perfect passive participle, used as a substantive (direct object). Its basic meaning is "to twist." It is used to describe human society (cf. Luke 9:41; Phil. 2:15). This activity is described (different term) in 2 Pet. 3:15-16.

■ **"to draw away the disciples after them"** The theological question is, "Are those drawn away,



spiritually lost or confused?" (cf. Matt. 24:24). It is impossible to be dogmatic, but true faith continues! (cf. 1 John 2:18).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: APOSTASY (APHISTĒMI)**

**20:31 "be on the alert"** This is a present active imperative (cf. Mark 13:35), which is parallel to Acts 20:28, "Be on guard for yourselves" (present active imperative). God's leaders and God's church must be on constant watch for false teachers—not those who disregard our personal preferences, but those who disregard the gospel and its lifestyle implications.

▣ **"for three years"** This refers to Paul's stay in Ephesus. This time indication includes all of Paul's activity in the area. He stayed longer with these believers than with any other city, church, or area. They knew the gospel. Now they must protect it and spread it!

**20:32 "commend you to God"** This means "entrust to" (cf. Acts 14:23). We are responsible to God for the gospel we have been entrusted with (cf. 1 Tim. 1:18). We are responsible to pass it on to others who will pass it on (cf. 2 Tim. 2:2).

The name "God" is found in MSS P<sup>74</sup>, κ, A, C, D, and E. The term "Lord" is found in MS B. UBS<sup>4</sup> gives *Theos* a "B" rating (almost certain).

▣ **"and to the word of His grace"** This is a synonymous phrase for "the gospel." See note at Acts 20:24.

▣ **"able to build you up"** Notice that it is the person and truth of God (the gospel) that leads to maturity (cf. Acts 9:31). Paul uses this metaphor often. This Greek word can be translated both "build up" or "edify" (cf. 1 Corinthians 14). This is the goal of the gospel, not just the maturity of the individual believer, but of the whole church.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: EDIFY**

▣ **"and to give you the inheritance"** In the OT God was the inheritance of the Levites and Priests. In the NT God is all believers' inheritance because believers are God's children through the person and work of Christ (cf. Rom. 8:15,17; Gal. 4:1-7; Col. 1:12).

NT believers, like the OT Israelites, are priests (cf. 1 Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6). We are meant to minister to the lost world.

▣ **"among all those who are sanctified"** This is a perfect passive participle. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: NEW TESTAMENT HOLINESS/SANCTIFICATION](#) at Acts 9:32.

**20:33 "silver or gold or clothes"** These were items of wealth. Paul is defending his actions and motives. In the NT greed and sexual exhortation are often hallmarks of false teachers (cf. 1 Cor. 3:10-17).

**20:34 "ministered to my own needs"** Paul refused to take help from the churches he currently served because of the constant accusation by the false teachers concerning his motives. Paul supported himself (cf. 1 Cor. 4:12; 9:3-7; 2 Cor. 11:7-12; 12:13; 1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:6-13). Also Paul, being a trained rabbi, would have personal qualms about accepting money for teaching. However, he asserts that ministers of the gospel should be paid (cf. 1 Cor. 9:3-18; 1 Tim. 5:17-18).

There is an excellent brief history of the first century Mediterranean world by James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era*. It mentions that Paul alludes to working with his own hands to provide his physical needs in all three missionary journeys (cf. p. 28).

1. First journey, 1 Cor. 4:12; 9:6; 1 Thess. 2:9
2. Second journey, Acts 18:3
3. Third journey, Acts 19:11-12; 20:34; 2 Cor. 12:14

**20:35** Notice that the believers' hard labor is not for personal gain or luxury, but for the sake of others in

need in Christ's name (cf. 2 Cor. 9:8-11). Paul's quote from Jesus is not found in any of the Gospels. Therefore, it must be an oral tradition.

This "weak" is not used here in the sense of over scrupulous Christians (cf. Rom. 14:1; 15:1; 1 Cor. 8:9-13; 9:22), but physically needy. Paul worked to support himself and other believers in need.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 20:36-38**

**<sup>36</sup>When he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. <sup>37</sup>And they began to weep aloud and embraced Paul, and repeatedly kissed him, <sup>38</sup>grieving especially over the word which he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they were accompanying him to the ship.**

**20:36 "knelt down"** This was not the usual posture of prayer from Paul's Jewish background. This was possibly a special commitment ritual (cf. Acts 20:32; 21:5).

**20:37 "embraced Paul"** The NKJV is more literal, "fell on Paul's neck." Thank God for church leaders who come to help us!

**20:38 "grieving especially over the word which he had spoken"** This refers to Acts 20:25.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why was Paul traveling with so many men from different cities in Acts 20:4?
2. What is the theological purpose of Acts 20:7-10?
3. Why is Acts 20:13 so confusing?
4. Why does Paul defend himself to the Ephesian elders?
5. Why was Paul going to Jerusalem if prophets were warning him about the severe consequences of his visit? (Acts 20:22-23)
6. Why are false prophets common in every age and place? Are they redeemed? Are those who follow them redeemed? What is a false prophet?
7. Why should Acts 20:36-38 cause us to love and pray for our local leaders?

# ACTS 21

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Paul's Journey to Jerusalem	Warnings on the Journey to Jerusalem	Paul Returns to Palestine (20:7-21:14)	Paul Goes to Jerusalem	The Journey to Jerusalem
21:1-6	21:1-14	21:1-6	21:1-6	21:1-6
21:7-14		21:7-14	21:7-11	21:7-14
	Paul Urged to Make Peace	Paul's Conformity to Judaism	21:12-13 21:14	Paul's Arrival in Jerusalem
21:15-16	21:15-25	21:15-16	21:15-16	21:15-16
Paul Visits James			Paul Visits James	
21:17-26	Arrested in the Temple 21:26-36	21:17-26	21:17-25 21:26	21:17-25 21:26
Paul Arrested in the Temple		Paul's Arrest and Defense (21:27-22:29) 21:27-36	Paul is Arrested in the Temple 21:27-29 21:30-36	Paul's Arrest 21:27-29 21:30-36
Paul Defends Himself	Addressing the Jerusalem Mob (21:37-22:21)	21:37-40	Paul Defends Himself (21:37-22:5) 21:37a 21:37b-38 21:39 21:40-22:2	21:37-40

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five

modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

This chapter is surprising in what is not said! There is no mention of Paul's emphasis on a contribution from the Gentile churches to the Jerusalem church.

James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the NT*, pp. 272-278, makes an interesting conjecture that there was tension between James (known for his allegiance to the traditions of Judaism) and Paul over the place of the Oral Traditions in the life of a believing Jew.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 21:1-6

**<sup>1</sup>When we had parted from them and had set sail, we ran a straight course to Cos and the next day to Rhodes and from there to Patara; <sup>2</sup>and having found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. <sup>3</sup>When we came in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left, we kept sailing to Syria and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unload its cargo. <sup>4</sup>After looking up the disciples, we stayed there seven days; and they kept telling Paul through the Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup>When our days there were ended, we left and started on our journey, while they all, with wives and children, escorted us until we were out of the city. After kneeling down on the beach and praying, we said farewell to one another. <sup>6</sup>Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home again.**

**21:1 "ran a straight course"** This is a nautical term meaning to sail a direct course (cf. Acts 16:11). Luke was very familiar with sailing terms (cf. Acts 21:3). Most of the "we" sections of Acts involve sailing.

- **"Cos"** The name means "summit." It is the name of both an island and its largest city. This island was the home of Hippocrates (fifth century b.c.) and it was the site of a large medical school. It was a free state considered to be part of the Roman province of Asia. It was located about forty miles south of Miletus.
- **"Rhodes"** This is also the name of an island and its chief city. This commercial island was famous for (1) its roses and (2) its university, which specialized in rhetoric and oratory. In the past (29 b.c.) it was world famous for its bronze, 104' tall colossus of a man that stood by the harbor. The statue functioned as a lighthouse.
- **"Patara"** The Western family of Greek manuscripts (cf. P<sup>41</sup>, D) and some Old Latin versions add "and Myra" (most likely an addition from 27:5), which was the chief port for ships to Syria. The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives the shorter reading an "A" rating (certain).

Patara was a coastal city in Lycia. It was famous for its oracle of Apollo, which at one time rivaled even Delphi.

**21:2 "and having found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia"** This must have been a larger ship. The smaller ships hugged the coastline. This ship saved them a lot of time by taking a direct route.

**21:3 "came in sight of Cyprus"** This must have brought thoughts of Barnabas and the first missionary journey.

■ **"Tyre"** This was the coastal capital of Phoenicia.

**21:4 "the disciples"** There was a church in this city which was probably started after the persecution of Stephen (cf. Acts 8:4; 11:19). In this period believers would seek out other believers to stay with (cf. Acts 21:7,16).

■ **"telling Paul through the Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem"** This refers to the presence of prophets in this local congregation (cf. Acts 20:23; 21:10-12). Their message concerning persecution was true and yet apparently Paul's trip was God's will (cf. Acts 21:14). Jesus, through Ananias, had told Paul about his life's work (cf. Acts 9:15-16). Suffering would be part of it, but also he would witness to kings.

**21:5 "After kneeling down on the beach and praying"** This is a beautiful picture of Christian love and concern. It may have been a special service, like Acts 20:32,36.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 21:7-14**

**<sup>7</sup>When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, and after greeting the brethren, we stayed with them for a day. <sup>8</sup>On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him. <sup>9</sup>Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses. <sup>10</sup>As we were staying there for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. <sup>11</sup>And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" <sup>12</sup>When we had heard this, we as well as the local residents *began* begging him not to go up to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup>Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." <sup>14</sup>And since he would not be persuaded, we fell silent, remarking, "The will of the Lord be done!"**

**21:7 "Ptolemais"** This city was named after Alexander the Great's general who ruled in Egypt and was an ancestor of Ptolemy II who built this city in 26 b.c. This is the only natural port on the Palestinian coast. In the OT it was called Acco (cf. Judges 1:31). Today it is called by its Crusader name, Acre.

■ **"the brethren"** In Acts this is synonymous to "disciples" (cf. Acts 21:4,16). It designated believers in Jesus Christ.

■ **"we stayed with them"** See note at Acts 21:4.

**21:8 "we left"** Whether they left by land or sea is uncertain.

■ **"Caesarea"** This is the Roman headquarters of Palestine. It was a coastal city with a small manmade harbor. Philip the Evangelist lived here (cf. Acts 8:40).

■ **"the evangelist"** This term is surprisingly used only three times in the NT (cf. Eph. 4:11 and 2 Tim. 4:5). We are not certain exactly what this ministerial gift encompassed. The term itself means "one who proclaims the gospel."

■ **"who was one of the seven"** This refers to the Jerusalem church's problem of complaining of unfair food distribution by the Greek-speaking widows. The church elected seven men to handle this need. All of them had Greek names. These seven were powerful preachers. They were the first to catch the worldwide vision of the gospel (cf. Acts 6).

**21:9 "had four virgin daughters. . . prophetesses"** Remember Luke has a special concern for women. We need to rethink our position on women in leadership positions (cf. Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:16-21) in the church based on all of NT evidence. See Special Topic: Women in the Bible at Acts 2:17. A book that has helped me in this area is Gordon Fee, *Gospel and Spirit*.

Church tradition says that they moved to Asia Minor (Phrygia) and that his daughters lived long and served God to a very old age. We learn this tradition from Eusebius' quotes from both Polycrates and Papias (cf. *Eccl. Hist.* 3:31:2-5).

**21:10 "a prophet named Agabas"** There are at least two ways to understand this term.

1. in the Corinthian letters this refers to sharing or proclaiming the gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 14:1)
2. the book of Acts mentions prophets (cf. Acts 11:27-28; 13:1; 15:32; 21:10, even prophetesses, 21:9)

The problem with this term is, how does the NT gift of prophecy relate to OT prophets? In the OT prophets are the writers of Scripture. In the NT this task is given to the original twelve Apostles and their helpers. As the term "apostle" is retained as an ongoing gift (cf. Eph. 4:11), but with a changed task after the death of the Twelve, so too, is the office of prophet. Inspiration (see Special Topic at Acts 13:1) has ceased; there is no further inspired Scripture (cf. Jude Acts 21:20). New Testament prophets' primary task is proclamation of the gospel, but they also show how to apply NT truths to current situations and needs. See Special Topic: Prophecy in the NT at Acts 11:27.

**21:11** Agabas, like the OT prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, acted out his revelation.

**21:12 "began begging him"** This is an imperfect active indicative. It can mean (1) to begin an action or (2) a repeated action in past time.

**21:13** It is hard to balance this prophetic action with Paul's sense that going to Jerusalem was God's will (cf. v.4).

▣ **"the name of the Lord Jesus"** See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAME OF THE LORD](#) at Acts 2:21.

**21:14 "The will of the Lord be done"** This is a present middle imperative, used in the sense of a prayer. God did have a plan and purpose for Paul's life. Paul felt he knew God's will even in the face of specific and recurring prophecy about the problems which lay ahead. Paul must have felt that these prophecies were for his spiritual and mental preparation and not a prohibition.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE WILL \(\*thelēma\*\) OF GOD](#)

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 21:15-16**

**<sup>15</sup>After these days we got ready and started on our way up to Jerusalem. <sup>16</sup>Some of the disciples from Caesarea also came with us, taking us to Mnason of Cyprus, a disciple of long standing with whom we were to lodge.**

**21:15 "we got ready"** The King James Version has "took up our carriages" (NKJV has "packed"). This is a graphic word used of travel preparation and is found only here in the NT.

▣ **"Jerusalem"** It was about 64 miles away.

**21:16 "Mnason"** This was a Jewish Christian from Cyprus (like Barnabas). He would have been one of the Hellenistic Jews, like the Seven of Acts 6. Apparently he had been a believer from the early days; possibly Luke interviewed him for his Gospel while staying in Palestine during Paul's imprisonment at Caesarea.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS INTO ACTS 21:17-23:30

### A. BRIEF OUTLINE OF ACTS 21:17-26:32 (Paul's imprisonment and defense both in Jerusalem and Caesarea.)

1. Riot and arrest at the Temple Acts 21:17-40
2. Paul's defense before the mob Acts 22:1-22
3. The Roman Interrogation Acts 22:23-30
4. The Sanhedrin Interrogation Acts 23:1-10
5. The conspiracy to murder Paul Acts 23:11-35
6. Paul before Felix Acts 24:1-23
7. Paul before Felix and Drucilla privately Acts 24:24-27
8. Paul before Festus Acts 25:1-12
9. Paul before Agrippa II and Bernice Acts 25:13-26:32

### B. COMMON ELEMENTS OF PAUL'S DEFENSE

Common Elements	Paul before Mob	Paul before Sanhedrin	Paul before Felix	Paul before Festus	Paul before Agrippa II
1. His Jewish Background	22:3		24:14,17-18		26:4
2. His Pharisaic training and zeal	22:3	23:6-9	24:15,21		26:5-8
3. His Persecution of "The Way"	22:4-5				26:9-11
4. His Personal testimony of his conversion	22:6-16				26:12-16
5. His Call to specific ministry by God	22:17-22				26:17-23

### C. COMPARISON OF SADDUCEES AND PHARISEES

	<u>SADDUCEES</u>	<u>PHARISEES</u>
Origin	Maccabean Period	Maccabean Period
Name Means	"Zadokities"?	"Separated Ones"?
Social Status	Priestly Aristocracy	Middle Class Laymen
Scriptural Question	Written Law only (especially Genesis through Deuteronomy)	All of the Oral & Written Law plus the Prophets and Writing sections of the OT canon
Theology	Conservative – just the opposite of Pharisees, who were accused of being influenced by Zoroastrianism (cf 23:8)	Progressive – highly developed angeology – belief in life after death and resurrection – very structured rules for daily life

#### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 21:17-26

**17**After we arrived in Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. **18**And the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. **19**After he had greeted them, he *began* to relate one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. **20**And when they heard it they *began* glorifying God; and they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law; **21**and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs. **22**"What, then, is *to be done*? They will certainly

hear that you have come. <sup>23</sup>"Therefore do this that we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow; <sup>24</sup>take them and purify yourself along with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads; and all will know that there is nothing to the things which they have been told about you, but that you yourself also walk orderly, keeping the Law. <sup>25</sup>"But concerning the Gentiles who have believed, we wrote, having decided that they should abstain from meat sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication." <sup>26</sup>Then Paul took the men, and the next day, purifying himself along with them, went into the temple giving notice of the completion of the days of purification, until the sacrifice was offered for each one of them.

**21:17** It was a good sign that the Jerusalem believers gave Paul and these Gentile converts a hearty welcome (cf. Luke 8:40; 9:11; Acts 2:41; 18:27; 21:17; 24:3; 28:30), but there was also prejudice in the Jerusalem church (cf. Acts 21:20-21).

**21:18-19 "Paul went in with us to James"** There is no special mention here of the gift from the Gentile churches (cf. Acts 24:17). Paul made a similar report to James in Acts 15:12. James is the half-brother of Jesus and the respected leader of the Jerusalem Church (cf. Acts 12:17; 15:13).

**21:18 "and all the elders were present"** Notice that there is no mention of the Apostles. Apparently they were on mission trips out of the country, or maybe they were dead. This use of the term "elders" reflects its Jewish usage (cf. Acts 4:5,8,23; 6:12; 11:30; 15:2,4,6,22,23; 16:4; 23:14; 24:1,25; 25:15; Heb. 11:2; James 5:14), not its later use by the church for pastors (cf. Acts 14:23; 20:17,18,23; 1 Tim. 5:17,19; Titus 1:5; 1 Pet. 5:1; 2 John 1; 3 John 1).

**21:19** Some commentators think that Paul received a cool reception and that the money from the Gentile churches was not appreciated. Here is their line of reasoning.

1. Paul stayed at a Hellenistic Jew's home, not one of the leaders of the Jerusalem church.
2. There is no expression of gratitude for the gift. It is not even mentioned.
3. The leadership immediately tell Paul how disliked he is among thousands in the Jerusalem church.
4. The church is never said to have supported Paul in prison or at his trials.

It must be said that there was conflict and confusion about Paul's message and mission. However, Acts 21:19 seems to be positive to me!

**21:20 "how many thousands there are among the Jews"** What a wonderful witness of the power of the gospel and the love of God to Jewish people in Jerusalem. There was a believing Jewish remnant. May be Zech. 12:10 has been fulfilled!

■ **"who have believed"** This is a perfect active participle (see Special Topics at Acts 3:16 and 6:5). This surely implies true saving faith. One can be saved without complete understanding and even despite misunderstanding of all theological issues, (cf. Acts 1:6; Luke 19:11).

Paul would characterize these as "weak" Christians (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13; 1 Cor. 8; 10:23-33). He would bend over backward to encourage them, as long as their "weakness" did not affect the gospel (the Judaizers of Galatians).

■ **"they are all zealous for the Law"** This shows the large number of converted Pharisees, zealots, or Essenes. However, conversion did not remove their religious bias. These were similar to the Judaizers of Galatians. It is remarkable how Paul loved and supported "weak" believers, but would not tolerate "false teachers" or those who misrepresented the gospel.

**21:21 "they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses"** The phrase "having been told" reflects the Hebrew idiom "re-echo," which implies oral teaching. This is combined with the present tense verb (teaching) to show that the Jews in



Jerusalem had repeatedly been told about Paul's activity in a biased sense. These charges were more serious than preaching to Gentiles, which caused so much trouble (cf. Acts 15).

The term "to forsake" is a strong term which comes into English as "apostasy" (cf. 2 Thess. 2:3). The theological issue related to how believing Jews should relate to the OT was not yet settled! In some sense this mirrors the issues of "Messianic synagogues"!

**21:23 "We have four men who are under a vow"** Apparently these were members of the church. This refers to a limited Nazarite vow (cf. Num. 6:1-8). Paul had earlier taken a similar vow (cf. Acts 18:18). We are very uncertain about the details of this limited vow (cf. *Nazir* 1:3).

**21:23-25** This passage gives us insight into Paul's view about Jewish Christians' relationship to the Mosaic Law. Paul may have continued to observe Jewish traditions (cf. Acts 18:18; 20:6), at least when trying to evangelize Jews (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19-23). This is possibly an affirmation of Messianic Jewish fellowships in our day.

**21:24 "pay their expenses"** Paul may not have taken a Nazarite vow himself at this point, but paid for the required sacrifice for the others. The rabbis taught that it was a great honor to pay for the Nazarites vow (*Ned.* 10a).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: NAZARITE VOW**

■ **"shave their heads"** The Nazarite vow is discussed in Numbers 6. Those who took permanent vows were not allowed to cut their hair. However, the temporary vow was characterized by the shaving of the head at the end of the time period. This verse shows how Paul tried to conform to the culture to which he was trying to preach (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19-23; 10:23-33).

**21:25 "we wrote"** This refers to the official statement of the Jerusalem Council (cf. Acts 15:19-20, 28-29). This document mainly removed the ritualistic and dietary barriers between believing Jewish and believing Gentile groups in mixed churches of the diaspora (outside Palestine). It, however, did not relate to believing Jews' relationship to the Mosaic Covenant.

**21:26 "went into the temple"** This is what would cause the trouble, not solve it!

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 21:27-36**

**<sup>27</sup>When the seven days were almost over, the Jews from Asia, upon seeing him in the temple, began to stir up all the crowd and laid hands on him, <sup>28</sup>crying out, "Men of Israel, come to our aid! This is the man who preaches to all men everywhere against our people and the Law and this place; and besides he has even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place." <sup>29</sup>For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple. <sup>30</sup>Then all the city was provoked, and the people rushed together, and taking hold of Paul they dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut. <sup>31</sup>While they were seeking to kill him, a report came up to the commander of the *Roman* cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion. <sup>32</sup>At once he took along *some* soldiers and centurions and ran down to them; and when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. <sup>33</sup>Then the commander came up and took hold of him, and ordered him to be bound with two chains; and he began asking who he was and what he had done. <sup>34</sup>But among the crowd some were shouting one thing *and* some another, and when he could not find out the facts because of the uproar, he ordered him to be brought into the barracks. <sup>35</sup>When he got to the stairs, he was carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob; <sup>36</sup>for the multitude of the people kept following them, shouting,**

## "Away with him!"

**21:27 "Jews from Asia"** Paul's old enemies had come to Jerusalem for the feast also. Now Paul was on Judaism's turf.

**21:28 "this is the man who preaches"** These Asian Jews interpreted Paul's preaching as against Judaism instead of fulfilling the OT promises. These charges are similar to the ones made against Stephen (cf. Acts 6:13). Paul himself may have stated this; he surely agreed with this Jewish theological position (cf. Acts 22:20) before his Damascus encounter with Christ. The message of Christ undermined the legalism and ritualism of popular first century Judaism! This is seen not only in Paul's universalism—salvation available to "all men"—but also the theological assertion of exclusivistic salvation only in and through faith in Christ.

▣ **"he has even brought Greeks into the temple"** This supposed incident would have occurred in the Court of Israel, where the Nazarite vows were performed in the southeast corner. It was lawful for the Gentiles to enter the outer court of the Temple only. This was a false charge (cf. Acts 21:29).

**21:29 "Trophimus the Ephesian"** These Jews from Asia (Ephesus) knew both Paul and Trophimus and had earlier planned Paul's death (cf. Acts 20:3). Now they saw their opportunity to play on Jewish racial biases and have Paul killed (cf. Acts 21:31,36).

**21:30 "the doors were shut"** This was apparently the gate between the Court of Israel and the Court of the Women. The Temple had its own police force of Levites who kept order. This action was to

1. keep the Temple from being defiled
2. keep Paul from trying to return to the Temple for safety

These Jews acted in exactly the same manner as did the mob at Ephesus (cf. Acts 19).

**21:31 "the commander of the Roman cohort"** This is literally a leader of a thousand. This would be the highest-ranking official in the Roman army (equestrian) who was stationed in Jerusalem during feast days when the population swelled to three times its normal number. His job was to keep order.

▣ **"the cohort"** They lived in Fortress Antonia, which overlooked the Temple Court. It was built by Herod the Great as a palace, but was used by the Romans as a military headquarters (cf. Josephus, *Wars* 5.5.8).

**21:32 "some soldiers and centurions"** A centurion was literally the leader of a hundred. The Fortress Antonia overlooked the Temple area. It was heavily garrisoned, especially during feast days.

**21:33 "to be bound with two chains"** This could mean (1) hands and feet or (2) between two Roman soldiers. Apparently the soldiers thought he was an insurrectionist (cf. Acts 21:38).

**21:34-35** This shows the violence and frenzy of the mob (cf. Acts 21:30).

**21:35 "the stairs"** These stairs that ran from the Fortress Antonia into the temple area had been alluded to in Acts 21:32, "ran down." There were two sets of these access stairs, each going into a different division of the temple. The Romans wanted to quell any rioting quickly. Feast days were often days of nationalistic unrest.

**21:36 "Away with him"** These are the same words which were shouted at Jesus (cf. Acts 22:22; Luke 23:18; John 19:15). There are many parallels between the treatment of Paul and Jesus by the Jews and Romans.

## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 21:37-40

<sup>37</sup>As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the commander, "May I say

something to you?" And he said, "Do you know Greek?"<sup>38</sup> "Then you are not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?"<sup>39</sup> But Paul said, "I am a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no insignificant city; and I beg you, allow me to speak to the people."<sup>40</sup> When he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the stairs, motioned to the people with his hand; and when there was a great hush, he spoke to them in the Hebrew dialect, saying,

**21:37 "Do you know Greek"** The Colonel was surprised that Paul spoke Koine Greek because he apparently thought that Paul was an Egyptian insurrectionist that he had heard about (cf. Acts 21:38 and Josephus' *Antiq.* 2.13.5; 20.8.6). This Egyptian rebellion occurred between a.d. 52-57.

**21:38 "men of the Assassins"** This is *sicarii*, a Latin term for assassins or dagger men. They are often called "zealots" in the NT (cf. Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). They were a group of Jews committed to the violent overthrow of the Romans.

A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 3, p. 382, mentions that this very word was used by Josephus to describe this Egyptian insurrectionist's followers (cf. Josephus, *Wars* 2.13.5; *Antiq.* 20.8.6,10).

**21:39 "a citizen of no insignificant city"** This is an idiom (*litotes*, see note at Acts 12:18), which Paul used to assert his citizenship in a world-class university town. The text does not say if the Roman officer was impressed.

**21:40 "he had given him permission"** This commander still wanted to know what this was all about!

▣ **"motioned to the people with his hand"** This was apparently a well known hand gesture for silence so that a person could speak (cf. Acts 12:17; 13:16; 19:33; 21:40; 26:1). This may have been a rhetorical gesture that Paul learned while studying rhetoric at Tarsus.

▣ **"he spoke to them in the Hebrew dialect"** Paul spoke to the mob in Aramaic (the Jews had learned to speak Aramaic during their years under Persian rule). This quieted the mob for a period (cf. Acts 22:2).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. If prophets in every city told Paul not to go to Jerusalem, why did he go?
2. How were/are believing Jews to relate to the Mosaic Covenant?
3. Was the Asian Jews' charges against Paul in Acts 21:28a true?
4. Does this commander's comment (Acts 21:38) imply that few Jews knew Greek or that he thought Paul was an Egyptian?

# ACTS 22

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Paul Defends Himself	Addressing The Jerusalem Mob	Paul's Arrest and Defense	Paul Defends Himself	Paul's Address to the Jews of Jerusalem
21:37-22:5	21:37-22:21	(21:27-22:29) 21:37-22:1	(21:37-22:5)	22:1-5
		22:2		
		22:3-5	22:3-5	
Paul Tells of His Conversion			Paul Tells of His Conversion	
22:6-11		22:6-11	22:6-11	22:6-11
22:12-16		22:12-16	22:12-16	22:12-16
Paul Sent to the Gentiles			Paul's Call to Preach to the Gentiles	
22:17-21		22:17-21	22:17-21	22:17-21
Paul and the Roman Tribune	Paul's Roman Citizenship			Paul the Roman Citizen
22:22-29	22:22-29	22:22-29	22:22-25	22:22-29
			22:26	
			22:27a	
			22:27b	
			22:28a	
			22:28b	
			22:29	
Paul Before the Council	The Sanhedrin Divided		Paul Before the Council	His Appearance Before the Sanhedrin
(22:30-23:11) 22:30-23:5	22:30-23:10	22:30	(22:30-23:11) 22:30	(22:30-23:11) 22:30

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of

the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 22:1

**<sup>1</sup>"Brethren and fathers, hear my defense which I now offer to you."**

22:1

NASB	"Brethren and fathers"
NKJV	"Men, brethren and fathers"
NRSV	"Brothers and fathers"
TEV	"My fellow Jews"
NJB	"My brothers, my fathers"

*A Translator's Handbook on the Acts of the Apostles*, by Newman and Nida says this implies men of Paul's age and those older than he (cf. p. 419). However, I think this must be an idiom (Stephen used the same introductory statement in Acts 7:2) because Paul was over sixty by this point and this does not fit the age of the mob.

There would have been some believers in this crowd. Possibly the term "the brothers" uniquely refers to them. However, Paul always identified with his race and nationality (cf. Rom 9:1-5; Phil. 3:5).

▣ **"defense"** We get the English term "apology" from this Greek word (*apologia*). It means a legal verbal defense. This term is used several times in Acts related to Paul's trials (cf. Acts 25:16; 2 Tim. 4:16).

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 22:2

**<sup>2</sup>And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew dialect, they became even more quiet; and he said,**

**22:2 "Hebrew dialect"** This refers to Aramaic. All of the places in the Gospels where Jesus' actual words are recorded are in Aramaic. This was a cognate language to ancient Hebrew. It was the language of the Persian Empire. The Jews learned it while under their control. For example, in Nehemiah 8, where Ezra read the Law of Moses in Hebrew, Levites had to interpret it into Aramaic for the people (cf. Neh. 8:7).

▣ **"they became even more quiet"** Paul's polite introduction, combined with his fluent Aramaic and the fact that many in this mob knew him or knew of him, caused an immediate, surprising calm. They wanted to hear what he had to say—a perfect preaching opportunity to the leaders of Judaism.

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 22:3-5

**<sup>3</sup>"I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today. <sup>4</sup>I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons, <sup>5</sup>as**

**also the high priest and all the Council of the elders can testify. From them I also received letters to the brethren, and started off for Damascus in order to bring even those who were there to Jerusalem as prisoners to be punished."**

**22:3 "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus"** Paul is trying to identify himself with this Jewish crowd. He is asserting his Jewishness (cf. 2 Cor. 12:22; Phil. 3:5-6). He would have been considered a Greek-speaking Jew of the diaspora.

The phrase "but brought up in this city" can refer grammatically either to (1) Tarsus or (2) Jerusalem. Contextually, Jerusalem is implied. If so, then Paul's training in Greek rhetoric must have occurred somewhere besides Tarsus.

▣ **"educated under Gamaliel"** This was a very respected rabbi (cf. Acts 5:34-40). He is quoted in the *Mishnah* several times. Paul was a student of the liberal rabbinical school of Hillel. This crowd would have been impressed by this statement. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: GAMALIEL](#) at Acts 5:34.

▣ **"strictly according to the law of our fathers"** This would imply that he was a Pharisee (cf. Acts 23:6; 26:5) and a zealous one at that (cf. Acts 22:4; Gal. 1:14; Phil. 3:6). The Pharisees were committed to stringent obedience to the Oral Traditions (i.e., Talmud), which interpreted the Old Testament.

▣ **"as you all are today"** Paul acknowledges their enthusiasm and commitment. He was once like them!

**22:4 "I persecuted"** Throughout Paul's ministry he looked back on these days with deep regret. He mentions this often (cf. Acts 9:1,13,21; 22:4,19; 26:10-11; Gal. 1:13,23; Phil. 3:6; 1 Tim. 1:13). Paul often refers to himself as the least of the saints because of these actions (cf. 1 Cor. 15:9; 2 Cor. 12:11; Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 1:15).

▣ **"this Way"** This was the earliest name for the Christian Church (cf. Acts 9:2; 19:9,23; 22:4; 28:14,22). It refers to

1. Jesus as "the Way" (cf. John 14:6)
2. biblical faith as a lifestyle (cf. Deut. 5:32-33; 31:29; Ps. 27:11; Isa. 35:8)

▣ **"to the death"** Paul had some Christians put to death (cf. Acts 8:1,3; 26:10)! He was surely involved in Stephen's death (cf. Acts 7:58, 8:1).

▣ **"binding and putting both men and women into prisons"** The fact that Paul did this to women really shows the intensity of his persecutions.

**22:5** Paul is sharing the circumstances that led up to his Damascus road conversion to faith in Jesus (cf. Acts 9).

▣ **"the Council of the elders"** This is literally "all the elders." Luke uses this same term for the Sanhedrin in Luke 22:66. This is not the normal term used of this official body of Jewish leaders in Jerusalem (Sanhedrin). It may have referred to a small administrative sub-committee.

▣ **"I also received letters"** F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, has an interesting discussion and documentation of the Sanhedrin's rights of extradition from surrounding countries (p. 72). For more historical information see I Macc. 15:21 and Flavius Josephus.

▣ **"those who were there"** This phrase implies that these were believing Jews who had fled the persecution in Jerusalem.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 22:6-11**

**6**"But it happened that as I was on my way, approaching Damascus about noontime, a very

bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me,<sup>7</sup> and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'<sup>8</sup> And I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.'<sup>9</sup> And those who were with me saw the light, to be sure, but did not understand the voice of the One who was speaking to me.<sup>10</sup> And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Get up and go on into Damascus, and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.'<sup>11</sup> But since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me and came into Damascus."

**22:6 "about noontime"** This is an added detail not found in Acts 9:3.

**22:7** This is a repeat of Acts 9:4.

**22:8**

**NASB, NJB "Jesus the Nazarene"**

**NKJV, NRSV,**

**TEV "Jesus of Nazareth"**

Paul shares his personal testimony three times in Acts 9:1-31; 26:4-18, but here and 26:9 are the only places where he uses this designation. Literally, this is "Jesus the Nazarene." This is a term of derision in Acts 24:5, but a term of prophecy in Matt. 2:23. It is possible that it is not a geographical designation, but a Messianic title from "branch" (cf. Isa. 11:1; 53:2) from the Hebrew word *nēser* (cf. Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12). See Special Topic at Acts 2:22.

▣ **"whom you are persecuting"** See full note at Acts 9:4.

**22:9 "but did not understand the voice"** There is no contradiction between the accounts of Paul's conversion in Acts 9:7 and 22:9. The Greek grammar implies that his companions heard the sound, but did not understand the words. See 9:7 for a fuller discussion.

**22:10 "all that has been appointed for you"** This is a perfect passive indicative. It reflects the words of Jesus to Ananias in Acts 9:15-16. Paul had a very specific and difficult mission to accomplish. In several ways Paul's vision and commission follow that of OT prophets (cf. Isa. 6; Jer. 1; Ezek. 2-3).

**22:11** I think this was the cause of Paul's "thorn in the flesh." Some theories regarding Paul's thorn in the flesh are:

1. early Church Fathers, Luther, and Calvin, say it was spiritual problems with his fallen nature (i.e., "in the flesh")
2. Chrysostom says it was a problem with persons (cf. Num. 33:55; Jdgs. 2:3)
3. some say it was epilepsy
4. Sir William Ramsay says it was malaria
5. I think it was ophthalmia, a common eye problem (compare Gal. 4:13-15 and 6:11) exacerbated or caused by this initial blindness on the Damascus road (cf. Acts 9, possibly an OT allusion in Jos. 23:13)

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 22:12-16**

<sup>12</sup>"A certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, *and* well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, <sup>13</sup>came to me, and standing near said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' And at that very time I looked up at him. <sup>14</sup>And he said, 'The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an

**utterance from His mouth. <sup>15</sup>For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. <sup>16</sup>Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name."**

**22:12** This is a much fuller description of Ananias than 9:10. He was a lay person who apparently, like Paul, was devout by the standard of the Mosaic Law. This may imply he was also a Pharisee.

1. Luke similarly describes Simeon, the one who saw Jesus in the temple as a child (cf. Luke 2:25).
2. Luke also uses it of Jews of the diaspora who came to Jerusalem on Pentecost when the Spirit came with power (cf. Acts 2:5).
3. Luke uses it a third time of the men who buried Stephen after his stoning (cf. Acts 8:2).

Therefore, this term does not relate to a believer in Christ as much as a sincere follower of Judaism. He is called a "disciple" in Acts 9:10; therefore, he had become a believer. Yet, even though he was a Christian, he still had the respect of the Jewish community in Damascus.

**22:13** Ananias' ministry to Paul shows us that there is no clear division of believers in the NT between clergy (special ordained group) and laity. Jesus' words were his authority to:

1. lay hands (cf. Acts 9:12,17) on Paul and command healing (aorist active imperative, Acts 22:13, See Special Topic at Acts 6:6)
2. reveal Jesus' will for Paul's ministry (Acts 22:15)
3. tell Paul to be baptized (Paul may have baptized himself as Jews required of proselytes, Aorist middle imperative, Acts 22:16)
4. be the instrument of Paul being filled with the Spirit (cf. Acts 9:17)

You can see Ananias' heart when he calls this vicious persecutor and murder (cf. Acts 9:13-14) "Brother Saul."

**22:14 "The God of our fathers"** This phrase was used to describe the Deity of Jewish worship. Paul wants to make clear that it was YHWH (see Special Topic at Acts 1:68) who contacted him and commissioned him through His Son, Jesus. Paul was not called by any other god than Judaism's God!

▣ **"to know His will"** YHWH's primary will is for humans is to know Jesus (cf. John 6:29,40). God's further will for Paul was to be the missionary Apostle to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 9:15; 22:15; 26:16).

▣ **"to see the Righteous One"** This is a Messianic title (cf. Ps. 45; 72; Acts 3:14; 7:52; 1 John 2:1). Paul would have the privilege of a personal revelation of the glorified Jesus (as did Stephen, cf. Acts 7:55-56). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS](#) at Acts 3:14.

▣ **"and to hear an utterance from His mouth"** This seems to refer to the voice from heaven in Acts 22:7-8 (i.e., *Bat Kol*, cf. Deut. 4:12; 1 Kgs. 19:12-13; Job 4:16; Jer. 25:30; Ezek. 1:25,28; Joel 3:16; Amos 1:2; Luke 3:22; 9:35; Acts 10:13,15), but it could just as much refer to Acts 22:17-21. It is also possible that it refers to several special visions which Paul had throughout his ministry. See list at Acts 22:17-21.

**22:15 "a witness. . .to all men"** This is the marvelous truth that the gospel of Jesus Christ is for **all** men (cf. John 3:16; 4:42; 1 Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 2:1; 4:14). Not all will receive, not all may clearly hear, but all are included in God's love and Jesus' sacrifice and Paul's preaching! This is the very truth that this mob rejected (cf. Acts 22:22).

Paul purposefully does not use the word "Gentile" that Ananias passed on to him from Jesus (cf. Acts 9:15). Paul knew how explosive this derogatory term *go'im* (the nations or Gentiles) was to these ultra-conservative Jews. Their biases and racial arrogance had even robbed the OT prophets of their inclusive prophecies!

▣ **"what you have seen and heard"** This first verb is a perfect active indicative; the second is an aorist active indicative. Why they are different tenses is uncertain. They seem to be parallel. Paul will carry the



memory of this personal encounter with the risen Christ throughout his life. He mentions it three times in Acts. He probably gave his personal testimony in every synagogue.

**22:16 "be baptized and wash away your sins"** These are both aorist middle imperatives. This is an OT allusion to the ceremonial ablutions (cf. Lev. 11:25,28,40; 13:6,34,56; 14:8-9; 15:5-13,21-22,27; 16:26,28; 17:15-16; Num. 8:7,21; 19:19; Deut. 23:11). It is used here as a symbol of our spiritual cleansing in Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:26; Titus 3:5; Heb. 10:22). Baptism was the early Church's public profession of faith. See notes and Special Topic at Acts 2:38 for a fuller theological discussion.

Notice that the middle voice refers to both baptism (aorist middle imperative) and cleansing (aorist middle imperative). Paul could not wash away his sins, but he could baptize himself (Jewish practice for proselytes). Often it is said that immersion is the only NT pattern (cf. Romans 6 and Colossians 2), but here baptism is linked to the metaphor of washing (cf. Acts 2:38; 1 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:26; Titus 3:5; Heb. 10:22). Theologically 1 Pet. 3:21 shows that it is a symbol, not a sacrament!

Modern interpreters must be careful of basing too much on the middle or passive voice because these were merging into the passive form in Koine Greek. Paul is said to have been baptized (PASSIVE) in Acts 9:18. The mode of Paul's baptism is not the issue, but his baptism itself is!

■ **"calling on His name"** The "name" is not a magical formula, but a public acknowledgment of Jesus' ownership and the beginning of a personal relationship with Him (aorist middle participle used as an imperative), which issues in a Christlike attitude and lifestyle. The early Church's baptismal formula as stated orally by the candidate was "Jesus is Lord" (cf. Rom. 10:9-13; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Tim. 2:22). The exact words or formula is not the key (sacramentalism), but the heart of the candidate (believe, receive). See note at Acts 2:38 and Special Topic at Acts 2:21.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 22:17-21**

**17**"It happened when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I fell into a trance, **18**and I saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about Me.' **19**And I said, 'Lord, they themselves understand that in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in You. **20**And when the blood of Your witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing by approving, and watching out for the coats of those who were slaying him.' **21**And He said to me, 'Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'"

**22:17-21** This is another example of Paul's special visions (cf. Acts 18:9-10; 23:11; 27:23-24). In this context it fits the prophecy of Acts 22:14.

**22:17 "when I returned to Jerusalem"** In Paul's testimony in both Acts 9 and here, it seems to imply that he returned to Jerusalem soon after his conversion, but Gal. 1:11-24 reveal a long period (up to three years) before Paul returned.

■ **"fell into a trance"** See note at Acts 10:10.

**22:18** Jesus speaks two aorist active imperatives to Paul: "make haste" and "get out." Jesus' warning is illustrated in the Hellenistic Jews' plot to kill Paul, recorded in Acts 9:29.

**22:19 "Lord"** The grammatical antecedent to this could be either "the God of our fathers" (Acts 22:14) or "the Righteous One" (Acts 22:14). The Jewish mob would have understood YHWH, but any believers present there would have understood Jesus. The transference is common in OT quotes used of Jesus in the NT. It is the ambiguity of "triune monotheism" (see Special Topics at Acts 2:32 and 2:39)!

■ **"I used to imprison and beat"** These are periphrastic imperfect actives, which denotes continued action in the past. See full note at Acts 22:4.

▣ **"those who believed in You"** See the related Special Topics at Acts 2:40, 3:16, and 6:5.

**22:20** See note at Acts 7:58-59 and 8:1. Paul describes his previous grievous acts by using three periphrastic imperfect participles.

1. He was standing there with the mob.
2. He was consenting to the stoning.
3. He was holding the cloaks of those stoning Stephen.

Stephen's sermon and death had a profound influence on Paul.

**22:21 "I will send you far away to the Gentiles"** This is an obvious reference to Paul's missionary journeys and ultimately, witness before Roman governmental officials in Palestine and also in Rome before Caesar (cf. Acts 23:11). He knew this statement would inflame the crowd!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 22:22-29**

<sup>22</sup>They listened to him up to this statement, and *then* they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he should not be allowed to live!" <sup>23</sup>And as they were crying out and throwing off their cloaks and tossing dust into the air, <sup>24</sup>the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, stating that he should be examined by scourging so that he might find out the reason why they were shouting against him that way. <sup>25</sup>But when they stretched him out with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman and uncondemned?" <sup>26</sup>When the centurion heard *this*, he went to the commander and told him, saying, "What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman." <sup>27</sup>The commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman?" And he said, "Yes." <sup>28</sup>The commander answered, "I acquired this citizenship with a large sum of money." And Paul said, "But I was actually born a *citizen*." <sup>29</sup>Therefore those who were about to examine him immediately let go of him; and the commander also was afraid when he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had put him in chains.

**22:22** Their statement is idiomatic and has two parts.

1. "take (present active imperative) from the earth such a man" (cf. Luke 23:18; Acts 21:36)
2. "not fitting (imperfect active indicative) for him to live" (cf. Acts 25:24)

Their racial and religious biases are revealed. All humans are historically and culturally conditioned.

**22:23**

NASB	"throwing off their clothes"
NKJV	"tore off <i>their</i> clothes"
NRSV	"throwing off their cloaks"
TEV	"waving their clothes"
NJB	"waving their cloaks"

This tearing off and waving of clothes or the throwing of them into the air were OT signs of mourning over a blasphemy (*Greek-English Lexicon*, Louw and Nida, vol. 1, p. 213, cf. Acts 14:14).

▣ **"tossing dust into the air"** Paul was lucky that there were no rocks available. Putting dust on one's head was a sign of mourning (cf. Jos. 7:6; 1 Sam. 4:12; 2 Sam. 1:2; Job 2:12), here mourning over blasphemy (cf. Isa. 47; Lam. 2; Micah 1:10).

**SPECIAL TOPIC: GRIEVING RITES**

**22:24 "the commander"** This is the word *chiliarch* (cf. Acts 22:27-29), which means a leader of 1000, as

the term *centurion* (cf. Acts 22:25,26) implies a leader of 100. However, the numbers are relative. He was the officer in charge of the Roman garrison in Jerusalem.

■ **"the barracks"** This refers to the Fortress Antonia, which overlooked and connected to the Temple area. It was built in the Persian Period during Nehemiah's day (cf. Neh. 2:8; 7:2). Herod the Great renamed it after Marc Antony. During feast days Jerusalem swelled to three times its normal population. The Romans moved large numbers of troops from Caesarea into the Fortress Antonia for security purposes.

■ **"examined by scourging"** This implies "beat the information out of him." Scourging was a cruel form of torture. Many died from it. It was much more severe than Jewish flogging or Roman beating with rods. A leather whip with pieces of metal, stone or bones sewn into the strands was used to whip prisoners.

**22:25 "stretched him out"** Usually the victims were bent over and bound to a low post for the scourging to be performed.

■ **"Is it lawful"** These soldiers were about to transgress their own law in several points:

1. a Roman citizen could not be bound (cf. Acts 21:33 and 22:29)
2. a Roman citizen could not be scourged (cf. Livy, *History* 10:9:4; Cicero, *Pro Rabirio* 4:12-13)
3. Paul had not been tried and found guilty (cf. Acts 16:37)

**22:27 "are you a Roman"** The "you" is emphasized. This Roman officer could not believe Paul was a Roman citizen.

**22:28 "I acquired this citizenship with a large sum of money"** There were three ways to be a Roman citizen:

1. by birth
2. given for special service to the state
3. purchased (Dio Cassius, *Rom. Hist.* 60:17:5-6)

This soldier's name implies that he purchased his citizenship under Claudius and that he was a Greek (Claudius Lysias, cf. Acts 23:26). Claudius' wife, Messaline, often sold Roman citizenships for large sums of money.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 22:30**

**<sup>30</sup>But on the next day, wishing to know for certain why he had been accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Council to assemble, and brought Paul down and set him before them.**

**22:30 "he. . .ordered. . .the chief priests and all the Council to assemble"** This shows the Roman power. The Sanhedrin was forced to meet, possibly in the Fortress Antonio. This seems to be an unofficial, informal meeting.

Paul had to face the local charges but in a Roman setting.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did Paul even want to defend himself to this mob?
2. Why does Luke record three times Paul's testimony of his conversion on the road to Damascus?
3. How does the Spirit's use of Ananias refute Apostolic succession?

4. List Paul's special visions. Why did he need this many supernatural encounters?
5. How does the outcome of Paul's defense before this mob in the temple fit God's plan?

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# ACTS 23

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Paul Before the Council	The Sanhedrin Divided	Paul Before the Sanhedrin	Paul Before the Council	His Appearance Before the Sanhedrin
22:30-23:5	22:30-23:10	(22:30-23:10) 22:30-23:5	(22:30-23:11)	(22:30-23:11)
			23:1-3	23:1-5
			23:4	
			23:5	
23:6-10		23:6-10	23:6	23:6-10
			23:7-9	
	The Plot Against Paul	Paul is Sent to Caesarea	23:10	
23:11	23:11-22	23:11	23:11	23:11
The Plot Against Paul's Life			The Plot Against Paul's Life	The Conspiracy of the Jews Against Paul
23:12-22		23:12-15	23:12-15	23:12-15
		23:16-22	23:16-18	23:16-22
			23:19	
			23:20-21	
			23:22	
Paul Sent to Felix the Governor	Sent to Felix		Paul is Sent to Governor Felix	Paul Transferred to Caesarea
23:23-30	23:23-35	23:23-25	23:23-25	23:23-25
		23:26-30	23:26-30	23:26-30
23:31-35		23:31-35	23:31-35	23:31-35

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

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This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent,

which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 23:1-5

<sup>1</sup>Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, "Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day." <sup>2</sup>The high priest Ananias commanded those standing beside him to strike him on the mouth. <sup>3</sup>Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Do you sit to try me according to the Law, and in violation of the Law order me to be struck?" <sup>4</sup>But the bystanders said, "Do you revile God's high priest?" <sup>5</sup>And Paul said, "I was not aware, brethren, that he was high priest; for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.'"

### 23:1

NASB, NRSV "looking intently at"

NKJV "looking earnestly at"

TEV "looked straight at"

NJB "looked steadily at"

See full note at Acts 1:10. Luke uses this term often. Here he uses it of Paul. Paul uses it only in 2 Cor. 3:7,13.

▣ **"the Council"** See Special Topic: Sanhedrin at Acts 4:5.

▣ **"Brethren"** Paul calls Jews "brothers" several times (Acts 13:26,38; 22:1,5; 23:1,5,6). The Jews call Paul brother in Acts 13:15. Ananias called him brother in Acts 9:17, as does the church in Jerusalem in Acts 21:20.

However, Jewish believers are also called by this title (e.g., Acts 9:30; 10:23; 11:1,12; 12:17; 15:3,7,13,22). The word is linked with "disciple" in Acts 11:29; 18:27. It is also used of Greek believers in Acts 16:2,40. Thus the term is ambiguous and must be linked to a specific text and group.

▣ **"I have lived my life. . .before God"** This is a perfect middle (deponent) indicative of *politeuō* from which we get the English word political or policy. This term is used with the connotation of a citizen (cf. Phil. 1:27). Paul is asserting that he has faithfully discharged the responsibilities of being a member of Judaism before God.

NASB "a perfectly good conscience"

NKJV "in all good conscience"

NRSV "a clear conscience"

TEV "my conscience is perfectly clear"

NJB "a perfectly clear conscience"

Paul uses the term "conscience" often in the Corinthian letters (cf. Acts 4:4; 8:7,10,12; 10:25,27,28,29; 2 Cor. 1:12; 4:2; 5:11). It refers to that moral inner sense of what is appropriate or inappropriate (cf. Acts 23:1). The conscience can be affected by our past lives, our poor choices, or by the Spirit of God. It is not a flawless guide, but it does determine the boundaries of individual faith. Therefore, to violate our conscience, even if it is in error or weak, is a major faith problem.

The believer's conscience needs to be more and more formed by the Word of God and the Spirit of God (cf. 1 Tim. 3:9). God will judge believers (i.e., weak or strong, cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13) by the light they have, but all of us need to be open to the Bible and the Spirit for more light and to be growing in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

▣ **"before God up to this day"** Paul makes this same assertion in 2 Cor. 1:12; 2 Tim. 1:3. He does admit that he did covet (cf. Rom. 7:23, esp. Acts 23:7). His theological argument in Romans 1-8 is based on every person's violation of law and conscience (cf. Acts 3:9-23; 4:15; 5:20).

**23:2 "The high priest Ananias"** In Hebrew his name would be Hananiah. This is not the same as the Ananias of Luke 3:2, John 18:13, or Acts 4:6, but a later one (Ananias, son of Nebedaeus or Nedebacus) who was appointed by Herod Chalcis, who reigned from a.d. 48-59 (Josephus, *Antiq.* 20.9.2).

The writings of Josephus tell us much about this High Priest.

1. when he became High Priest, *Antiq.* 20.5.2; *Wars*, 2.12.6.
2. when he and his son (Ananus) were sent in bonds to Rome, *Antiq.* 20.6.2
3. when he was killed by insurrectionists along with his brother, *Wars* 2.17.9

Josephus is often our only ancient contemporary source for Jewish events and persons in Palestine.

▣ **"to strike him on the mouth"** This was a sign of blasphemy (cf. John 18:22).

**23:3 "God is going to strike you"** This is recorded in great detail in Josephus, *Wars* 2.17.9.

▣ **"you whitewashed wall"** It is uncertain exactly what Paul was saying.

1. the Jews used this metaphor for hypocrisy (cf. Matt. 23:27)
2. it could be an allusion to Ezek. 13:10-15

▣ **"in violation to the Law"** This may be an allusion to Lev. 19:15. Also see John 7:51.

**23:5 "I was not aware brethren, that he was high priest"** The theories for Paul's not knowing are his

1. poor eyesight
2. not being familiar with him because Paul had been gone from Jerusalem for several years
3. not recognizing the High Priest because he was not wearing his official robes
4. he did not know who spoke
5. the inappropriateness of his actions (i.e., sarcasm)

▣ **"for it is written"** Paul shows he knows and respects the Law by quoting Exod. 22:28.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 23:6-10**

**<sup>6</sup>But perceiving that one group were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, Paul began crying out in the Council, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!" <sup>7</sup>As he said this, there occurred a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. <sup>8</sup>For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. <sup>9</sup>And there occurred a great uproar; and some of the scribes of the Pharisaic party stood up and began to argue heatedly, saying, "We find nothing wrong with this man; suppose a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?" <sup>10</sup>And as a great dissension was developing, the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them and ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force, and bring him into the barracks.**

**23:6 "perceiving"** Paul may have realized that he could not get a fair hearing from this Sadducean high priest.

■ **"Sadducees"** See Special Topic at Acts 4:1.

■ **"Pharisees"** Paul had been a Pharisee (cf. Acts 26:5; Phil. 3:5-6) from a family of Pharisees. See Special Topic at Acts 5:34.

■ **"I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead"** Paul threw out a theological issue that the Sadducees and Pharisees disagreed about. The Sadducees denied the afterlife, while the Pharisees affirmed it (cf. Job 14:14; 19:23-27; Isa. 25:8; 26:19; Dan. 12:2). This set the two factions of the council against each other (cf. Acts 23:7-10).

**23:7 "the assembly was divided"** This term's basic meaning is "to tear" (cf. Luke 5:36; 23:45). It came to be used metaphorically of division within groups (cf. Acts 14:4; 23:7). The division between these two Jewish sects was always just under the surface. Paul fanned the flames.

**23:8 "nor an angel, nor a spirit"** Verse 8 is a comment by Luke on his source. Does this phrase imply there are two categories of spiritual beings or one? The origin of both is biblically ambiguous, but Heb. 1:5, 13, and 14 imply they are the same.

What the Sadducees denied was the dualism of good and evil spiritual beings (Zoroastrian dualism). The Pharisees had elaborated the OT concept into rigid Persian dualism and even developed a hierarchy of angelic and demonic (seven leaders of each). The best source I have found for first century Jewish angelology is Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Appendix XIII.

**23:9**

**NASB** "there arose a great uproar"

**NKJV** "there arose a loud outcry"

**NRSV** "then a great clamor arose"

**NJB** "the shouting grew louder"

This same phrase is found in the Septuagint of Exod. 12:30 (also note Exod. 3:7; 11:6; Esth. 4:3; Isa. 58:4; 65:19). The word "cry" (*kraugē*) is also in Matt. 25:6; Luke 1:42; Eph. 4:31; Heb. 5:7; Rev. 21:4. Only context can determine the kind of loud "cry" (i.e., positive or negative).

Another emotional word "to argue heatedly" (*diamachomai*) is also used in the LXX in Dan. 10:20. Paul's comment caused a loud, emotional confrontation, which is exactly what he wanted!

■ **"the scribes"** These were the legal experts in both the oral (Talmud) and written law (OT). Most of them were Pharisees.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: SCRIBES**

■ **"this man"** The use of this noun phrase in this context shows it is not automatically a negative phrase.

■ **"suppose"** This is a partial or incomplete first class conditional sentence. These scribes were asserting that Paul had seen something from the spiritual realm, but exactly what they were not sure. Their immediate and forceful defense of Paul shows how biased they were for their own group. Apparently they disliked Sadducees more than a supposedly renegade Pharisee.

Because this is an incomplete grammatical structure, the Textus Receptus, following the uncial Greek manuscripts H, L, and P, adds, "Let us not fight against God," which is taken from Acts 5:39.

**23:10 "ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force"** Twice now the Roman government had saved Paul's life in Jerusalem. No wonder Paul saw the government as a minister of God (cf. Romans 13). This may relate to "the one who restrains" in 2 Thess. 2:6-7.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 23:11**



**<sup>11</sup>But on the night *immediately* following, the Lord stood at his side and said, "Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also."**

**23:11 "the Lord stood at his side"** Here is another personal vision to encourage Paul (cf. Acts 18:9-10; 22:17-19; 27:23-24). Paul was not a man without discouragement and doubt.

- ▣ **"Take courage"** This is a present active imperative. This is the only use of this term in Luke's writings. Paul must have shared this with Luke. Jesus uses the term several times (cf. Matt. 9:2,22; 14:27; John 16:33).
- ▣ **"you must witness at Rome also"** It was God's will for Paul to be imprisoned so that he might appear before Caesar. The gospel will be preached in Rome (cf. Acts 19:21; 22:21)!  
For "must" see full note at Acts 1:16.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 23:12-15**

**<sup>12</sup>When it was day, the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. <sup>13</sup>There were more than forty who formed this plot. <sup>14</sup>They came to the chief priests and the elders and said, "We have bound ourselves under a solemn oath to taste nothing until we have killed Paul. <sup>15</sup>"Now therefore, you and the Council notify the commander to bring him down to you, as though you were going to determine his case by a more thorough investigation; and we for our part are ready to slay him before he comes near *the place*."**

**23:12-15** This paragraph informs us of the assassination pact of some of the Jews. This is another premeditated murder (cf. Acts 23:21) like the one the Jews planned for Jesus.

**23:13 "more than forty"** Forty is a Jewish idiom for a long, indefinite period of time, but here it is used of persons, so it is probably literal. See Special Topic: Numbers in Scripture at Acts 1:3.

**23:14 "the chief priests and the elders"** This was an abbreviated way of referring to the Sanhedrin. See Special Topic at Acts 4:5.

NASB	"we have bound ourselves under a solemn oath"
NKJV	"we have bound ourselves under a great oath"
NRSV	"we have strictly bound ourselves by an oath"
TEV	"we have taken a solemn vow"
NJB	"we have made a solemn vow"

These English translations are an attempt to translate a cognate idiomatic phrase, "with a curse we curse ourselves." These oath-takers did not kill Paul. I wonder if they starved to death? Apparently the oral tradition allowed a way out of these blood oaths. See Special Topic following.

**[SPECIAL TOPIC: CURSE \(ANATHEMA\)](#)**

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 23:16-25**

**<sup>16</sup>But the son of Paul's sister heard of their ambush, and he came and entered the barracks and told Paul. <sup>17</sup>Paul called one of the centurions to him and said, "Lead this young man to the commander, for he has something to report to him." <sup>18</sup>So he took him and led him to the commander and said, "Paul the prisoner called me to him and asked me to lead this young**

man to you since he has something to tell you." <sup>19</sup>The commander took him by the hand and stepping aside, *began* to inquire of him privately, "What is it that you have to report to me?" <sup>20</sup>And he said, "The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down tomorrow to the Council, as though they were going to inquire somewhat more thoroughly about him. <sup>21</sup>"So do not listen to them, for more than forty of them are lying in wait for him who have bound themselves under a curse not to eat or drink until they slay him; and now they are ready and waiting for the promise from you." <sup>22</sup>So the commander let the young man go, instructing him, "Tell no one that you have notified me of these things." <sup>23</sup>And he called to him two of the centurions and said, "Get two hundred soldiers ready by the third hour of the night to proceed to Caesarea, with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen." <sup>24</sup>*They were* also to provide mounts to put Paul on and bring him safely to Felix the governor. <sup>25</sup>And he wrote a letter having this form:

**23:16 "the son of Paul's sister"** We have many questions about Paul's family, but it is shrouded in silence. How he knew of the plan is also unknown. He was possibly a Pharisee also.

**23:21** This attack would have also involved the killing of the Roman guards!

**23:23** The contingent of troops to accompany Paul was apparently either (1) 200 infantry, 70 cavalry, and 200 lancers or (2) 200 lancers and 70 cavalry. The western family of Greek manuscripts has a long descriptive addition (cf. NKJV).

▣ **"the third hour"** This is obviously Roman time. They started counting the night at 6 p.m. This would be 9 p.m.

▣ **"Caesarea"** This was the headquarters for the Roman occupational forces in Palestine.

NASB, NKJV,  
NRSV, TEV "spearmen"  
NJB "auxiliaries"  
REB "light-armed troops"  
NASB  
(footnote) "additional mounts" or "pack animals"  
NEB "bowman"

The meaning of the term *dexiolabos* is uncertain. It is literally "one posted or armed on the right side" (*dexios*). It refers to

1. some type of light armed soldier (bow or spear)
2. one who is bound to prisoners on the right side
3. one who holds a second horse
4. one who is on the flank

So many options show that moderns do not exactly know the meaning.

**23:24 "Felix"** The Roman historian Tacitus (*Histories* 5:9, *Annals* 12:54) called Antonius Felix cruel and lustful. He gained his position through his brother, Pallas (both of whom were freed slaves), who was a close friend to Emperor Claudius. He served as the eleventh procurator of Palestine from a.d. 52-59.

**23:25 "form"** See Special Topic: Form (*tupos*) at Acts 7:43.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 23:26-30**

<sup>26</sup>"Claudius Lysias, to the most excellent governor Felix, greetings. <sup>27</sup>When this man was

arrested by the Jews and was about to be slain by them, I came up to them with the troops and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman. <sup>28</sup>"And wanting to ascertain the charge for which they were accusing him, I brought him down to their Council; <sup>29</sup>and I found him to be accused over questions about their Law, but under no accusation deserving death or imprisonment. <sup>30</sup>When I was informed that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once, also instructing his accusers to bring charges against him before you."

**23:26-30** This is the required letter of explanation of Paul's case by the officer in charge (cf. Acts 25:12ff). It states the flow of the events, but does so in such a way as to make Lysias look good.

**23:26** This is the verse in which we are told the Chiliarch's name.

**23:29** This verse fits Luke's pattern of showing that Christianity and its leaders, when accused before governmental officials, were always acquitted and deemed innocent. Rome had nothing to fear from "the Way"!

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 23:31-35**

<sup>31</sup>So the soldiers, in accordance with their orders, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris. <sup>32</sup>But the next day, leaving the horsemen to go on with him, they returned to the barracks. <sup>33</sup>When these had come to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him. <sup>34</sup>When he had read it, he asked from what province he was, and when he learned that he was from Cilicia, <sup>35</sup>he said, "I will give you a hearing after your accusers arrive also," giving orders for him to be kept in Herod's Praetorium.

**23:31 "brought him by night to Antipatris"** This city was built by Herod the Great and named after his father, Antipater II. This was a very long march of possibly 30-40 miles. The exact site of the city is uncertain. The reason the foot soldiers returned (cf. Acts 23:32) at this point is because

1. this was primarily a Gentile area
2. the topography was open and flat, so there was little danger of surprise attack

**23:33 "the governor"** This is literally "procurator." Luke is very precise in his titles for local and Roman officials.

**23:34 "asked from what province he was"** This was to ascertain jurisdiction. Since Paul was also from an Imperial Province Felix could try the case. There were three divisions of jurisdiction in the Roman Empire:

1. Imperial (Caesar)
2. Senatorial
3. local (like the Herods)

**23:35 "after your accusers arrive"** This should have been the Jews from Asia who accused Paul in the Temple of bringing a Gentile into the restricted Jewish area. The fact that they did not appear should have resulted in a dismissal of the charges. But, as often happens, local politics affects justice!

■ **"kept in Herod's Praetorium"** The Romans were kind to Paul while he was in their custody (cf. Acts 24:23). Paul stayed in a palace built by Herod the Great, which had previously been used for his personal residence, but now had become Roman Headquarters.

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Compare Paul's defenses and list the common elements.
2. Did Paul see himself as a faithful Jew?
3. Do we know anything about Paul's extended family from Acts?

# ACTS 24

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Case Against Paul 24:1-9	Accused of Sediton 24:1-9	Paul Before Felix 24:1-2a 24:2b-8 24:9	The Case Against Paul 24:1-2a 24:2b-9	The Case Before Felix 24:1-9
Paul Defends Himself Before Felix 24:10-21	The Defense Before Felix 24:10-21	24:10a 24:10b-21	Paul's Defense Before Felix 24:10a 24:10b-16 24:17-21	24:10a Paul's Speech Before the Roman Governor 24:10b-13 24:14-16 24:17-21
24:22-23	24:22-27	24:22-23	24:22-23	24:22-23
Paul Held in Custody 24:24-26 24:27	Felix Procrastinates 24:22-27	24:24-26 24:27	Paul Before Felix and Dursilla 24:24-26 24:27	Paul's Captivity at Caesarea 24:24-26 24:27

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 24:1-2a

<sup>1</sup>After five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders, with an attorney named Tertullus, and they brought charges to the governor against Paul. <sup>2</sup>After Paul had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying to *the governor*,

**24:1 "the high priest Ananias"** See full note at Acts 23:2. Wow! The high priest himself came from Jerusalem to Caesarea. Paul was really a thorn in their flesh!

- **"came down"** For Jews, Jerusalem is always "up" and all other geographical locations are "down."
- **"elders"** In the OT this term referred to older tribal leaders. By the post-exilic time it began to be used of wealthy, influential people of Jerusalem. Often in the NT the Sanhedrin is described as "the High Priests, scribes, and elders." These were probably members of the Sanhedrin who were supporters of the Sadducees. The temple leadership had seen the potential problem when Pharisees were present (cf. Acts 23:6-10).
- **"Tertullus"** This was a hired lawyer (advocate) or orator (cf. NKJV). It is a form of the Greek word *rēma* or "spoken word." Apparently he presented the Sanhedrin's case in an acceptable Roman legal form, possibly in Latin.

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 24:2b-9

<sup>2b</sup>"Since we have through you attained much peace, and since by your providence reforms are being carried out for this nation, <sup>3</sup>we acknowledge *this* in every way and everywhere, most excellent Felix, with all thankfulness. <sup>4</sup>But, that I may not weary you any further, I beg you to grant us, by your kindness, a brief hearing. <sup>5</sup>For we have found this man a real pest and a fellow who stirs up dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. <sup>6</sup>And he even tried to desecrate the temple; and then we arrested him. [We wanted to judge him according to our own Law. <sup>7</sup>But Lysias the commander came along, and with much violence took him out of our hands, <sup>8</sup>ordering his accusers to come before you.]By examining him yourself concerning all these matters you will be able to ascertain the things of which we accuse him." <sup>9</sup>The Jews also joined in the attack, asserting that these things were so.

**24:2b-4** This introduction was not only an attempt at flattery (probably expected), but baseless in fact. Felix was a cruel man (cf. Tacitus, *Histories* 5.9 and *Annals* 12.2). Felix was only in his position because of his brother, Pallas, who, along with Felix, was a freedman of Antonia (Marc Antony's daughter), Claudius, the Emperor's mother. He was later removed by Nero at the request of the people (cf. Josephus, *Wars* 2.12.8-13.7 and *Antiq.* 20.7.7-8.9).

**24:2b "attained much peace"** Some think this refers to his attempt to stop the activity of the Jewish extremists called *sicarii* (dagger men). See Josephus' *Wars* 2.13.2.

**24:5 "we have found this man"** It is Luke's purpose throughout Acts to show the Roman world that the charges against Christianity are false. This is why Luke records so many appearances before Roman courts and officials. Paul was accused of three things:

1. being a troublemaker

2. being a leader of a new sect
3. temple desecration

NASB	"a real pest"
NKJV	"a plague"
NRSV	"a pestilent fellow"
TEV	"a dangerous nuisance"
NJB	"a perfect pest"

This comes from a word meaning plague (cf. Luke 21:11). In the OT (LXX) it also had the meaning of plague, but could be used metaphorically of a person (cf. Pro. 19:25).

- **"throughout the world"** This is surely a purposeful overstatement and yet what a compliment to the effectiveness of Paul's ministry in the diaspora.
- **"ringleader"** This is a compound Greek term from "first" and "to stand." It was used in the Septuagint of Job 15:24, "a captain of the first rank." It is found only here in the NT and not at all in the Koine papyri found in Egypt.
- **"the sect"** The term *haireisis* originally meant "division" or "faction" (literally, "to make a choice"). It came to have a negative connotation, as can be seen in our English term "heresy," which comes from this Greek term. The Sadducees are addressed by this term in Acts 5:17 and the Pharisees in Acts 15:5. In this context in Acts, Paul considers Christianity an integral part of the historical Jewish faith and hope (cf. Acts 24:14).
- **"the Nazarenes"** This term refers to the followers of Jesus of Nazareth. Some assert that the term comes from the city of Nazareth but others relate it to *nezer* (BDB 666) or "branch," a title for the Messiah (cf. Isa. 11:1; 53:2). See Special Topic at Acts 2:22.

**24:6** Notice the charge made against Paul in Acts 21:28 that he desecrated the temple, has now been changed to "he tried to desecrate the temple." They really had a weak case. Paul's effective preaching was really the problem.

**24:7** The parenthesis in the NASB shows a textual addition found in the uncial MS E (8<sup>th</sup> century) and several minuscules starting the 9<sup>th</sup> century. The longer reading is found in NKJV. It seems to change the one/ones wanting to hurt Paul from the Jewish leadership to Lysias.

The UBS<sup>4</sup> excludes the addition and rates the shorter version (MSS P<sup>74</sup>, κ, A, D, some Old Latin, Vulgate, Coptic, and Georgian versions) as a "B" (almost certain). The UBS3 included the longer reading but gave it a "D" rating (high degree of doubt).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 24:10-21**

**<sup>10</sup>When the governor had nodded for him to speak, Paul responded: "Knowing that for many years you have been a judge to this nation, I cheerfully make my defense, <sup>11</sup>since you can take note of the fact that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship. <sup>12</sup>Neither in the temple, nor in the synagogues, nor in the city *itself* did they find me carrying on a discussion with anyone or causing a riot. <sup>13</sup>Nor can they prove to you *the charges* of which they now accuse me. <sup>14</sup>But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets; <sup>15</sup>having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. <sup>16</sup>In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience *both* before God and before**

men. <sup>17</sup>Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings; <sup>18</sup>in which they found me *occupied* in the temple, having been purified, without *any* crowd or uproar. But *there were* some Jews from Asia—<sup>19</sup>who ought to have been present before you and to make accusation, if they should have anything against me. <sup>20</sup>Or else let these men themselves tell what misdeed they found when I stood before the Council, <sup>21</sup>other than for this one statement which I shouted out while standing among them, 'For the resurrection of the dead I am on trial before you today.'"

**24:10** As the attorney for the Sanhedrin used a formal introduction (probably culturally expected), so too, does Paul.

▣ **"defense"** We get the English term "apology" or "apologetics" from this Greek term. It originally meant a legal oral defense in court.

**24:11-12** Paul asserts that his public activities in Jerusalem were anything but abnormal and contentious. He was accused of desecrating the temple, but in reality, he was performing an acceptable ritual.

**24:14 "The Way"** This was the early title for Christians which emphasized that Jesus is the way to God (John 14:6) and a lifestyle fellowship (cf. Acts 9:2; 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:22 and possibly 18:25-26).

▣ **"I do serve the God of our fathers"** Paul clearly asserts in this verse that what he preaches about Jesus in no way violates the OT. Jesus is the fulfillment of Israel's hopes and promises. He does not see Christianity as something new and different but a fulfillment (cf. Jesus in Matt. 5:17-19).

▣ **"the Law. . .the Prophets"** These are two of the threefold divisions of the OT canon:

1. The Torah (Law) — Genesis - Deuteronomy
2. The Prophets
  - a. former prophets — Joshua - Kings (except Ruth)
  - b. latter prophets — Isaiah - Malachi (except Lamentations and Daniel)
3. The Writings
  - a. megilloth — Ruth, Esther, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and Lamentations
  - b. wisdom literature — Job, Psalms, Proverbs
  - c. post-exilic history — 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah

**24:15 "having a hope in God which these men cherish themselves"** Paul is asserting that his religious orientation is the same as these accusers (cf. Acts 24:16), except in his view of the resurrection. Paul is trying to defend himself by showing that the conflict is over theological issues within Judaism, which Rome did not want to become involved with.

For "hope" see [SPECIAL TOPIC: HOPE](#) at Acts 2:25.

▣ **"there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked"** This refers to the theology of the Pharisees, not the Sadducean leadership of the temple. Josephus, *Antiq.* 18.1.3, even asserts that some Pharisees denied the resurrection of the wicked (for a modern view of annihilation see Edward Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes*). The Bible is replete with this concept of a general resurrection (cf. Isa. 25:8; Dan. 12:2; Matt. 25:46; John 5:29; Rom. 2:6-11; Rev. 20:11-15). Paul saw Christianity as the natural fulfillment of the OT (cf. Matt. 5:17-19). It was not something new!

**24:16 "I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience"** This same phrase is what angered the High Priest so much in Acts 23:1-2. Paul repeats it again in his presence. It is similar to his discussion of personal effort in 1 Cor. 9:24-27. The self-control he preached to Felix (cf. Acts 24:25) was not an easy thing to accomplish and maintain. Self-control is one of the fruits of the Spirit in Gal. 5:22 and possibly the capstone of the list of fruits!



**24:17 "I came to bring alms to my nation"** For "alms" see Special Topic at Acts 3:2. This probably refers to the contribution from the Gentile churches to the church in Jerusalem (cf. Rom. 15:25-27; 1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9). It is surprising it is not mentioned in Acts 21:15ff. This may show that it was not received well by all of the church in Jerusalem (see James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*). Intrenched racism is hard to deal with even for believers.

■ **"and to present offerings"** This refers to

1. the conclusion of Paul's limited Nazarite vow (cf. Acts 21:24)
2. his paying for others' limited Nazarite vows (cf. Acts 21:24)

Because this phrase seems to be linked grammatically to "bring alms," it is possible that they both refer to Jewish rituals, not the offerings from the churches.

**24:18 "they found me occupied in the temple, having been purified"** This Jewish ritual procedure was at the instigation of James and the elders of the church (cf. Acts 21:17-26). It was meant to placate the legalistic Jewish believers in the church, but in reality, it inflamed the Greek-speaking Jews from Asia.

**24:18-19 "Jews from Asia who ought to have been"** This was an important legal point in Paul's defense (cf. Acts 24:19). The eyewitnesses' accusers were not present! Those who were accusing Paul of world-wide mischief had no experiential evidence (cf. Acts 24:20)!

Asia is a geographical reference to Jewish people from southern and western Turkey, then called Asia Minor.

**24:19b "if"** This is a fourth class conditional, a way to express a contingency which is the farthest removed from possibility. A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, p. 420, calls it a mixed condition with a second class conclusion (i.e., but they are not present, Acts 24:19a). His *Grammar* (p. 1022) lists other mixed conditional sentences in Luke's writings (cf. Luke 17:6 and Acts 8:31).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 24:22-23**

**<sup>22</sup>But Felix, having a more exact knowledge about the Way, put them off, saying, "When Lysias the commander comes down, I will decide your case." <sup>23</sup>Then he gave orders to the centurion for him to be kept in custody and yet have some freedom, and not to prevent any of his friends from ministering to him.**

**24:22** Apparently Felix had heard about Jesus and Christianity. Probably as a Roman official he had been briefed about the local situation to which he would be assigned.

Felix's wife was Jewish (cf. Acts 24:24), which meant he had an experiential opportunity to know about the teaching of Judaism. The Way was considered a sect within Judaism and was, therefore, a "legal" religion in the Roman Empire.

**24:23** This shows that Felix did not see Paul as a threat and allowed some freedom and access. Here again is a Roman official who does not sense Christianity as a political problem. This was surely one of Luke's purposes in writing his Gospel!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 24:24-27**

**<sup>24</sup>But some days later Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>25</sup>But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, "Go away for the present, and when I find time I will summon you." <sup>26</sup>At the same time too, he was hoping that money would be given him by Paul; therefore he also used to send for him quite often and converse with him. <sup>27</sup>But after two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by**

## Porcius Festus, and wishing to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul imprisoned.

**24:24 "Drusilla"** She was the youngest, and apparently beautiful, daughter of Herod Agrippa I and the sister of Bernice and Agrippa II. She was Felix's third wife, whom he took from the Azizus, the King of Emesa (cf. Josephus, *Antiq.* 20.7.2).

**NASB, NRSV,**  
**TEV, NJB** "Christ Jesus"  
**NKJV** "Christ"

Option #1 is found in MSS P<sup>74</sup>, κ<sup>\*</sup>, B, E, and the Old Latin, Vulgate versions. The shorter reading is found in MSS κ<sup>C</sup>, A, C, and the Peshitta and Coptic versions. The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives the longer version a "B" rating (almost certain).

One wonders if in this context "Christ" should be translated "Messiah" (MS 044 has "the Messiah").

■ **"faith"** This is a crucial theological word. See Special Topics at Acts 2:40; 3:16; and 6:5. Remember these theological terms in Koine Greek are based not on Greek usage, but the Septuagint. Luke knows the Septuagint well. It was the OT for the church.

**24:24-25** Paul preached the gospel often (cf. Acts 24:26b) to Felix and Drusilla. This was exactly what Jesus wanted him to do (cf. Acts 9:15). He was convicted, but also greedy (i.e., he wanted Paul to bribe him) and put off his decision (cf. Acts 24:26).

**24:26** Apparently Paul had some funds during this prison period. Possibly from (1) a personal inheritance or (2) help from the churches (i.e., Philippi or Thessalonica). Felix called for Paul often, not to hear him speak, but in hopes of receiving a bribe.

**24:27 "after two years had passed"** Many believe that it was during this period that Luke gathered eyewitness information from those in Palestine for his Gospel (cf. Luke 1:1-4). This must have been a discouraging time to an aggressive man like Paul! However, he did not seek freedom by means of bribery. He knew he was in God's will.

■ **"Porcius Festus"** There is some disagreement between the Roman historians, Suetonius and Tacitus, over the beginning date of his office. Felix was put on trial in a.d. 55, but it is uncertain whether he was convicted and removed then or in a.d. 59. Festus died in a.d. 62, while still in office (cf. Josephus, *Antiq.* 20.9.1). There is little known about him (cf. Josephus, *Antiq.* 20.8.9-10; *Wars* 2.14.1).

■ **"Felix left Paul imprisoned"** It was customary to release all the prisoners at the time of the change of administrations. This verse shows the political situation in Palestine and the weakness of the Roman leaders, as well as the power of the Sanhedrin.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What does the term "Nazarene" mean?
2. What are the implications of the first title for the church in Acts being "the Way"?
3. Explain the significance of Acts 24:15.

# ACTS 25

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Paul Appeals to Caesar	Paul Appeals to Caesar	Appeal to the Emperor	Paul Appeals to the Emperor	Paul Appeals to Caesar
25:1-5	25:1-12	25:1-5	25:1-5	25:1-5
25:6-12		25:6-12	25:6-8	25:6-12
			25:9	
			25:10-11	
			25:12	
Paul Brought Before Agrippa and Bernice	Paul Before Agrippa	Paul's Defense Before Agrippa (25:13-26:32)	Paul Before Agrippa and Bernice	Paul Appears Before King Agrippa
25:13-22	25:13-27	25:13-22	25:13-21	25:13-22
			25:22a	
			25:22b	
25:23-27		25:23-27	25:23-27	25:23-26:1

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

#### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

##### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 25:1-5**

<sup>1</sup>Festus then, having arrived in the province, three days later went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea. <sup>2</sup>And the chief priests and the leading men of the Jews brought charges against

Paul, and they were urging him, <sup>3</sup>requesting a concession against Paul, that he might have him brought to Jerusalem (*at the same time, setting an ambush to kill him on the way*). <sup>4</sup>Festus then answered that Paul was being kept in custody at Caesarea and that he himself was about to leave shortly. <sup>5</sup>"Therefore," he said, "let the influential men among you go there with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, let them prosecute him."

**25:1 "Festus"** This was Felix's successor. He was a nobler personality, but obviously under the same political pressure and mind set. He was in office for two years and died in a.d. 62 while still in office (cf. Josephus, *Antiq.* 20.8.9).

■ **"three days later"** This shows how upset and persistent the Jewish leadership was concerning Paul. Festus also wanted to make a good first impression.

**25:2 "the chief priest and the leading men of the Jews"** This may refer to the Sanhedrin, which was made up of 70 Jewish leaders from Jerusalem. They formed the highest judicial body of the Jews in both politics and religion. See Special Topic at Acts 4:5. However, it could also refer to the other wealthy and elite citizens of Jerusalem who would be very anxious to meet the new Roman procurator and begin to establish a good relationship with him.

It is surely possible that it refers to both groups. After two years there was a new high priest, Ishmael ben Fabus (a.d. 56-62). He, too, wanted to establish himself and a good way to do this was to attack the renegade Pharisee, Paul.

■ **"they were urging him"** This is an imperfect active indicative. They asked again and again.

**25:3** This shows animosity against Paul on the part of these religious leaders. They saw Paul as an enemy from within!

■ **"(at the same time, setting an ambush to kill him on the way)"** The tactics of the Jewish leadership had not changed (cf. Acts 23:12-15).

**25:5 "if"** This is a first class conditional sentence which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his purposes (cf. A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 3, p. 429). Dr. Bruce Tankersley, the Koine Greek specialist at East Texas Baptist University, says it might be third class because there is no verb in the protasis. Festus assumed Paul was guilty. Why else would the Jerusalem leaders be so persistent, and so tenacious?

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 25:6-12**

<sup>6</sup>After he had spent not more than eight or ten days among them, he went down to Caesarea, and on the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought. <sup>7</sup>After Paul arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many and serious charges against him which they could not prove, <sup>8</sup>while Paul said in his own defense, "I have committed no offense either against the Law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar." <sup>9</sup>But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me on these *charges*?" <sup>10</sup>But Paul said, "I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried. I have done no wrong to *the* Jews, as you also very well know. <sup>11</sup>If, then, I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die; but if none of those things is *true* of which these men accuse me, no one can hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar." <sup>12</sup>Then when Festus had conferred with his council, he answered, "You have appealed to Caesar, to Caesar you shall go."

**25:6-9** These events showed Paul that he had no real hope for justice with Festus. He knew what awaited him in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 25:3). He also knew Jesus wanted him to go to Rome (cf. Acts 9:15).

**25:6 "After he had spent not more than eight or ten days among them"** I would imagine the Jewish leaders wine and dined Festus. They manipulated all the Roman officials.

**25:8** Paul asserts that he is innocent of all charges against

1. the Law of Moses (cf. Acts 21:21,28)
2. the temple (cf. Acts 21:28; 24:6)
3. Caesar (cf. Acts 16:21; 17:7)

Numbers 1 and 2 are exactly what Stephen was charged with in Acts 6:13-14.

**25:10-11** Paul asserts that he was already before the proper authority and in the proper place. Luke records in Acts 25:11 Paul's official appeal to Caesar.

The right of appeal to Caesar initially started with Octavian in 30 b.c. (cf. Dio Cassius, *History*, 51.19). This initial dictate was expanded to forbid blinding, scourging, and torture to any Roman citizen who appealed to Caesar (cf. Paulus, *Sententiae* 5.26.1).

There is a good discussion of Roman Law of the first century in A. N. Sherwin-White's *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*, "lecture four: Paul before Felix and Festus," pp. 48-70.

**25:11 "If. . . if"** These are two first class conditional sentences which are assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his purpose. These two usages in context show how this grammatical construction was used to make a point. The first is false to reality (but exactly the same condition used by Felix in Acts 25:5); the second is true to reality.

■ **"I do not refuse to die"** Paul recognized the power of the state (cf. Rom. 13:4). The OT perspective on capital punishment can be found in Gen. 9:6. See an interesting discussion of capital punishment in *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 114-116.

<b>NASB, TEV</b>	<b>"no one can hand me over to them"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"no one can deliver me over to them"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"no one can turn me over to them"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"no one has the right to surrender me to them"</b>

The term *charizomai* basically means "to gratify" or "grant as a favor." Paul realized that Festus was trying to impress the Jewish leadership by giving them himself!

However, it is possible that Festus is trying to abide by a decree from Julius Caesar (cf. Josephus, *Antiq.* 14.10.2), which encouraged Roman officials in Palestine to allow the wishes of the high priest.

■ **"I appeal to Caesar"** This was the legal right of every Roman citizen in capital punishment cases (Pliny the Younger, Letters 10.96). At this point in history, Nero was the Caesar (a.d. 54-68).

**25:12 "his council"** This refers to Festus' Roman legal experts, not the Jewish leaders.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO ACTS 25:13-26:32

### BACKGROUND

#### A. Herod Agrippa II (Marcus Julius Agrippa)

1. He is the son of Herod Agrippa I (cf. Acts 12), who was the political ruler of Judea and who had control of the Temple and Priesthood (a.d. 41-44) and grandson of Herod the Great.
2. He was educated in Rome and was pro-Roman. He returned to Rome after the Jewish war of a.d. 70 and died there in a.d. 100.

3. At the age of 17 his father died, but he was too young to assume his kingdom.
4. In a.d. 50 Herod Chalcis, Agrippa II's uncle, the King of Chalcis (a small kingdom in Northern Palestine), died and Agrippa II was given his kingdom by Emperor Claudius. Also, he was given control over the Temple and the High Priesthood.
5. In a.d. 53 he exchanged this small kingdom for the tetrarches of Herod Philip (Iturea and Trachonitis) and Lysanius (Abilene).
6. Later, Emperor Nero added certain cities and villages around the Sea of Galilee to his control. His capital was Caesarea Philippi, which he renamed Neronias.
7. For historical reference cf:
  - a. Josephus *Jewish Wars* 2.12.1,7-8; 15.1; 16.4; 7.5.1
  - b. Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews* 19.9.2; 20.5.2; 6.5; 7.1; 8.4; 9.6.

#### B. Bernice

1. She was the oldest daughter of Herod Agrippa I.
2. She was the sister of Agrippa II, and for a period of time may have been his incestuous lover (there is no evidence of this, only rumor). Later she was a mistress to Emperor Titus while he was a general. He was the Roman general who destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in a.d. 70.
3. She was Drusilla's sister (cf. Acts 24:24).
4. She was married to Herod Chalcis (Herod Agrippa I's brother, her uncle), but when he died she moved in with her brother.
5. She later married Polemon, King of Cilicia, but left him to return to her brother who had just been given the title of "King."
6. She was the mistress of Emperor Vespasian.
7. Historical references
  - a. Josephus *Jewish Wars* 2.1.6; 15.1; 17.1.
  - b. Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jew* 19.9.1; 15.1; 20.1.3
  - c. Tacitus' *History* 2.2
  - d. Seutonius' *Life of Titus* 7
  - e. Dio Cassius' *Histories* 65.15; 66.18
  - f. Juvenal's *Satire* 61.156-157

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 25:13-22

<sup>13</sup>Now when several days had elapsed, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea and paid their respects to Festus. <sup>14</sup>While they were spending many days there, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying, "There is a man who was left as a prisoner by Felix; <sup>15</sup>and when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews brought charges against him, asking for a sentence of condemnation against him. <sup>16</sup>I answered them that it is not the custom of the Romans to hand over any man before the accused meets his accusers face to face and has an opportunity to make his defense against the charges. <sup>17</sup>So after they had assembled here, I did not delay, but on the next day took my seat on the tribunal and ordered the man to be brought before me. <sup>18</sup>When the accusers stood up, they *began* bringing charges against him not of such crimes as I was expecting, <sup>19</sup>but they *simply* had some points of disagreement with him about their own religion and about a dead man, Jesus, whom Paul asserted to be alive. <sup>20</sup>Being at a loss how to investigate such matters, I asked whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and there stand trial on these matters. <sup>21</sup>But when Paul appealed to be held in custody for the Emperor's decision, I ordered him to be kept in custody until I send him to

Caesar." <sup>22</sup>Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I also would like to hear the man myself."  
"Tomorrow," he said, "you shall hear him."

**25:13 "King Agrippa"** This refers to Agrippa II. He was the brother of Drusilla and Bernice. He was educated in Rome and was very loyal to Rome's policies and programs.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: BERNICE**

**25:13-19** This again reveals one of Luke's literary and theological purposes, which was to show that Christianity was not a political threat to Rome (cf. Acts 25:25). In the early decades of the first century Christianity was considered a sect of Judaism, which was acknowledged by Rome as a legal religion. Rome wanted no part of disputes between Jewish religious sects!

**25:18 "they began charges against him not of such crimes as I was expecting"** This shows the intensity and nature of the Jewish opposition. It was not political, but religious.

<b>NASB, NRSV,</b>	
<b>NJB, NIV</b>	"crimes"
<b>NKJV</b>	"such things"
<b>TEV</b>	"evil crimes"
<b>REB</b>	"charges"
<b>NET Bible</b>	"evil deeds"
<b>ASV</b>	"evil things"

There are several variants.

1. *ponērōn* – genitive plural in MSS  $\kappa^2$ , B, E, meaning "things of evil" (cf. Acts 28:21)
2. *ponērau* – accusative neuter singular in MSS P<sup>74</sup>, A, C<sup>\*</sup>
3. *ponēra* – accusative neuter plural in MSS  $\kappa^*$ , C<sup>2</sup>
4. omit – MSS L, P, and some Lectionaries (cf. NKJV)

UBS<sup>4</sup> puts option #1 in the text with a "C" rating (difficulty in deciding).

Felix was surprised that the charges were not serious and had to do with Jewish religious matters, not legal matters.

**25:19 "religion"** This is literally a compound term from "fear" and "gods." This term can mean "superstition," which was exactly what these Roman leaders thought about the Jewish religion. However, Festus would have not wanted to insult his Jewish dignitaries, so he used an ambiguous term (so too, Paul, Acts 17:22).

Verses 18-19 show again that Roman justice found no fault with Paul or Christianity.

▣ **"about a dead man, Jesus, whom Paul asserted to be alive"** The resurrection was one the central pillars of the sermons (*kerygma*, see Special Topic at Acts 2:14) in Acts (cf. Acts 26:8). Christianity stands or falls on this theological assertion (cf. 1 Corinthians 15).

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 25:23-27**

<sup>23</sup>So, on the next day when Agrippa came together with Bernice amid great pomp, and entered the auditorium accompanied by the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. <sup>24</sup>Festus said, "King Agrippa, and all you gentlemen here present with us, you see this man about whom all the people of the Jews appealed to me, both at Jerusalem and here, loudly declaring that he ought not to live any longer. <sup>25</sup>But I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death; and since he himself appealed to the Emperor, I decided to send him. <sup>26</sup>Yet I have nothing definite about him to write

to my lord. Therefore I have brought him before you *all* and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the investigation has taken place, I may have something to write. <sup>27</sup>For it seems absurd to me in sending a prisoner, not to indicate also the charges against him."

**25:23** What a wonderful opportunity to preach the gospel!

■ **"the commanders"** This is the term *chiliarch*, which means leaders of a thousand, as centurion means leader of a hundred. We learn from Josephus' *Antiq.* 19.19.2, that there were five auxiliary cohorts in Caesarea at this period. Therefore, possibly five military men are referred to here.

■ **"the prominent men of the city"** This would refer to the civic leaders of Caesarea.

Notice the groups in the assembly.

1. a Roman procurator
2. an Idumean regional king
3. Roman military leaders
4. prominent civic leaders of Caesarea

■ **25:26 "the Emperor"** This term is *sebastos*, which was the Greek equivalent of the Latin term *augustus*. Its basic etymology is "revere," "adore," "venerate," or "worship." It was first used of Octavian in 27 b.c. by the Senate. Here, it is used of Nero (a.d. 54-68). Nero seems to have expanded the worship of the Emperor cult.

**25:26 "I have nothing definite about him to write"** Festus had the same problem as Lysias, the commander from Jerusalem. He was bound by Roman law to write an indictment against Paul along with any evidence or judicial opinion. Paul was a mystery to these Roman leaders.

■ **"lord"** This is the Greek word *kurios*, which means owner, master, ruler. This is the first documented use of *kurios* as a stand-alone title for Nero. This title was rejected by the Emperors Octavian/Augustus and Tiberias because they felt it was too close to the Latin *rex* (king), which caused the Roman populace and Senate discomfort. However, it appears often during and after Nero's day. Vespasian and Titus used the term "savior" and Domitian used "god" to describe themselves (cf. James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World* p. 101). The term *kurios* became the focus of the persecution against Christians, who could use only this term for Jesus Christ. They refused to use it in the incense offering and pledge of allegiance to Rome.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did the Jewish leaders fear and hate Paul?
2. How does this chapter reflect one of Luke's purposes in writing Acts?
3. What was Paul's purpose in defending himself before Agrippa and Bernice?



# ACTS 26

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Paul Defends Himself Before Agrippa	Paul's Early Life	Paul's Defense Before Agrippa (25:13-26:32)	Paul Defends Himself Before Agrippa	Paul Appears Before King Agrippa 25:13-26:1
26:1-11	26:1-11	26:1	26:1	Paul's Speech Before King Agrippa
		26:2-3	26:2-3	26:2-3
		26:4-8	26:4-8	26:4-8
		26:9-11	26:9-11	26:9-11
Paul Tells of His Conversion	Paul Recounts His Conversion		Paul Tells of His Conversion	
26:12-18	26:12-18	26:12-18	26:12-18	26:12-18
Paul's Testimony to Jews and Gentiles	Paul's Post-conversion Life		Paul Tells of His Work	
26:19-23	26:19-23	26:19-23	26:19-23	26:19-23
Paul Appeals to Agrippa to Believe				His Hearers' Reactions
26:24-29	26:24-32	26:24-29	26:24	26:24-29
			26:25-27	
			26:28	
			26:29	
26:30-32		26:30-32	26:30-32	26:30-32

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph

4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 26:1

<sup>1</sup>Agrippa said to Paul, "You are permitted to speak for yourself." Then Paul stretched out his hand and *proceeded* to make his defense:

**26:1 "stretched out his hand"** This was a gesture of greeting and oratorical introduction (cf. Acts 12:17; 13:16 and 21:40, in which gestures of the hand are used for attention and silence).

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 26:2-3

<sup>2</sup>"In regard to all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, I consider myself fortunate, King Agrippa, that I am about to make my defense before you today; <sup>3</sup>especially because you are an expert in all customs and questions among *the* Jews; therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently.

**26:2-3** Paul introduces his defense in a typical formal and flattering way, as he did in his trial before Felix (cf. Acts 24:10), which was probably a culturally expected necessity.

**26:2 "In regard to all the things of which I am accused by the Jews"** Agrippa II had been put in charge of the Temple and Priesthood by Rome. Although pro-Roman and educated in Rome, he understood the intricacies of the Jewish faith (cf. Acts 26:3).

▣ **"fortunate"** This is the same term which introduces each of the Beatitudes of Matt. 5:3-12; Luke 6:20-22; and Ps. 1:1 in the Septuagint.

### 26:3

NASB, NKJV "all customs and questions"

NRSV "all customs and controversies"

TEV "all of the Jewish customs and disputes"

NJB "customs and controversy"

The first term is *ethōn*, from which we get the English word "ethnic," or the cultural aspect of a particular people group.

The second term *dzētēmatōn* is used often in Acts to denote debates and arguments over aspects of rabbinical Judaism (cf. Acts 15:2; 18:15; 23:19; 25:19; 26:3). These were not uncommon because of the existence of several factions within first century Judaism : Sadducees, Pharisees (also the theological factions of Shammai and Hillel), and the zealots.

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 26:4-8

<sup>4</sup>"So then, all Jews know my manner of life from my youth up, which from the beginning was spent among my *own* nation and at Jerusalem; <sup>5</sup>since they have known about me for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that I lived as a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion. <sup>6</sup>"And now I am standing trial for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers; <sup>7</sup>*the promise* to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly serve *God* night and day. And for this hope, O King, I am being accused by Jews. <sup>8</sup>"Why is it considered incredible among you people if God does raise the dead?"

**26:4 "all Jews know my manner of life"** Paul has repeated this several times (cf. Acts 22:3-5; 23:1; 24:16; 25:8). Paul had lived an exemplary life among the Jews in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 26:5).

▣ **"my own nation"** It is uncertain where Paul grew up. This could refer to (1) Tarsus in Cilicia or (2) Jerusalem.

**26:5 "if"** This is a third class conditional sentence which means potential action. In this context Paul knows they could testify about his past, but they would not.

▣ **"Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion"** This was a theological sect of Judaism which emerged during the Maccabean Period. It was committed to the oral and written tradition. See Special Topic at Acts 5:34.

**26:6 "the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers"** This refers to the OT prophecy of (1) the coming of the Messiah or (2) the resurrection of the dead (cf. Acts 23:6; 24:15; Job 14:14-15; 19:25-27; Dan. 12:2). Paul saw "the Way" as the fulfillment of the OT (cf. Matt. 5:17-19; Galatians 3).

For "hope" see Special Topic at Acts 2:25 and the Special Topic: The *Kerygma* at Acts 2:14.

**26:7 "our twelve tribes"** The tribal lineage (children of Jacob) was still very important to the Jews. Many of the ten northern tribes never came back from Assyrian exile (722 b.c.). We know some tribal information from the NT.

1. Mary, Joseph, and Jesus were from the tribe of Judah (cf. Matt. 1:2-16; Luke 3:23-33; Rev. 5:5)
2. Anna's tribe is identified as Asher (cf. Luke 2:36)
3. Paul's tribe is identified as Benjamin (cf. Rom. 11:1; Phil. 3:5)

Herod the Great was jealous of this and had the Temple records, which showed genealogies, burned.

For "twelve" see Special Topic at Acts 1:22.

▣ **"hope"** One wonders exactly which hope Paul is referring to. From the larger context one would assume the resurrection (cf. Acts 26:8). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: HOPE](#) at Acts 2:25.

▣ **"as they earnestly serve God night and day"** Paul loved his racial group (cf. Rom. 9:1-3). He knew how hard they tried to serve YHWH. He also uniquely knew the danger of legalism, dogmatism, and elitism.

"Night and day" was an idiom of intensity and regularity (cf. Acts 20:31; Luke 2:37).

**26:8 "Why is it considered incredible among you people"** Paul is speaking to two groups:

1. Agrippa and other Jews present
2. the Gentiles present, such as Festus

▣ **"if"** This is a first class conditional sentence which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes.

▣ **"God does raise the dead"** This phrase speaks of the Jewish hope of a general resurrection (see Job 14:14-15; 19:25-27; Isa. 25:8; 26:19; Dan. 12:2-3), but Paul had Christ's resurrection specifically in mind (cf. 1 Cor. 15:1-28). These Sadducean accusers would be getting very nervous at this point (cf. Acts 23:1-10).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 26:9-11**

**<sup>9</sup>"So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. <sup>10</sup>And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. <sup>11</sup>And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities."**

**26:9** Paul (*egō*, "I" and *emautō*, "myself") confesses his misdirected religious enthusiasm, which he now realizes was not the will of God (cf. 1 Tim. 1:13). He thought that by persecuting the followers of Jesus he was serving God and pleasing God. Paul's world and worldview totally changed on the Damascus road (cf. Acts 9).

■ **"the name"** This Semitic idiom means "the person of" (cf. Acts 3:6,16). This is no magic formula, but a personal relationship!

■ **"Jesus of Nazareth"** See Special Topics at Acts 2:22.

**26:10 "the saints"** Literally this is "the holy ones." Paul knew now exactly whom he had persecuted and killed, God's people! What a shock, sorrow, and enlightenment Paul's Damascus vision must have been, a total reorientation of thought and life!

For "saints" see Special Topic at Acts 9:13.

■ **"having received authority"** Paul was the "official" persecutor for the Sanhedrin.

■ **"when they were being put to death"** This shows the intensity of the persecution. The "Way" was not a minor issue; it was a life-and-death issue and it still is!

■ **"cast my vote against them"** This is the technical word in Greek for an official vote either in the Sanhedrin or a local synagogue. But because no local synagogue could/would vote on death issues, it was probably the Sanhedrin. If it was in the Sanhedrin, then Paul had to have been married. The term originally meant "a pebble," which was used to cast a vote—either a black one or a white one (cf. Rev. 2:17)

**26:11 "tried to force"** This is an imperfect tense of a Greek term that means to force or compel (cf. Acts 28:19), but here it is used in the sense of tried. It refers to a repeated action in past time.

■ **"to blaspheme"** Saul attempted to force them to publicly affirm their faith in Jesus as the Messiah and then condemn them. In later persecutions, believers were forced to reject faith in Christ, but this context is a different cultural situation.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"being furiously enraged"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"being exceedingly enraged"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"I was so furiously enraged"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"I was so furious"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"my fury against them was so extreme"</b>

This is a very intense adverb ("much more") and participle (present middle [deponent]). Festus uses the same root for Paul (i.e., rave in Acts 26:24)

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 26:12-18**

<sup>12</sup>While so engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, <sup>13</sup>at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me. <sup>14</sup>And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' <sup>15</sup>And I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. <sup>16</sup>But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; <sup>17</sup>rescuing you from the *Jewish* people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, <sup>18</sup>to

**open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me."**

**26:12** Luke records Paul's personal testimony three times in Acts, 9:1-31; 22:3-21, and here. God's mercy and election towards Saul are so obvious. If God in Christ can forgive and use this man, He can forgive and use anyone!

**26:13** See full note in Acts 9:3.

The fact that there is variation in details in all three places where Paul shares his conversion speaks to the accuracy of Luke's recording of Paul's legal defenses (and, thereby, also the sermons) in Acts!

**26:14** See full note at Acts 9:4.

Frank Stagg, *New Testament Theology*, has a great paragraph on the vital connection between Jesus and His church.

"The most important fact about judgment is that we are judged in relation to Christ. In turn, this is a judgment in relation to his people. Our true relationship to him is reflected in our relationship to his people. To serve them is to serve him and to neglect them is to neglect him (Matt. 25:31-46). Never does the New Testament allow one to divorce his relationship to Christ from that to other people. To persecute them is to persecute him (Acts 9:1-2,4-5; 22:4,7-8; 26:10-11,14-15). To sin against the brethren is to sin against Christ (1 Cor. 8:12). Though we are not saved by our works, we are judged by them; for they reflect our true relationship to Christ and his grace. Judgment is merciful toward them that accept judgment, and judgment is merciful toward them who are merciful (Matt. 5:7)" (p. 333).

■ **"Hebrew dialect"** In Paul's three personal testimonies in Acts, this is the only one in which the detail of Jesus speaking Aramaic is mentioned. See full note at Acts 22:2.

■ **"Saul, Saul"** This last half of Acts 26:14 and the last part of Acts 26:15, as well as Acts 26:16-18, are a quote from Jesus to Paul on the Damascus road.

■ **"It is hard for you to kick against the goads"** This phrase is unique to this context, possibly because it was a Greek/Latin proverb, not Jewish. Paul always knew to what audience he was speaking and how to communicate to them! This is referring to

1. a pointed stick used by those who directed oxen to pull carts and plows
2. projections on the front of the cart or wagon to keep the animals from kicking backward

This proverb was used to denote the human futility of resisting divine initiatives.

**26:15** See complete note at Acts 9:5.

■ **"Jesus whom you are persecuting"** This shows the close connection between Jesus and His church, (cf. Matt. 10:40; 25:40,45). To hurt them is to hurt Him!

**26:16** **"But get up and stand on your feet"** These are both aorist active imperatives. This sounds very familiar to the prophetic call of Jeremiah 1:7-8 and Ezekiel 2:1,3.

■ **"for this purpose I have appeared to you"** God had a specific assignment for Paul. Paul's conversion and call are not typical, but extraordinary! God's mercy is powerfully demonstrated as well as God's election for Kingdom service and kingdom growth.

■ **"I have appeared to you. . . I will appear to you"** These are both forms of *horaō*. The first is aorist passive indicative and the second is future passive indicative. In a sense Jesus is promising Paul future personal encounters. Paul had several divine visions during his ministry (cf. Acts 18:9-10; 22:17-21; 23:11; 27:23-24). Paul also mentions a training period in Arabia in which he was taught by Jesus (cf. Gal.

1:12,17,18).

■ **"to appoint"** This is literally "to take into the hand." It was an idiom of destiny (cf. Acts 22:14; 26:16).

■ **"a minister and a witness"** The first term literally referred to an "under-rower" on a ship. It came to be used idiomatically for a servant.

From the second term, *martus*, we get the English term "martyr." It had a double meaning:

1. a witness (cf. Luke 11:48; 24:48; Acts 1:8,22; 5:32; 10:39,41; 22:15)

2. a martyr (cf. Acts 22:20)

Both connotations were the personal experience of most of the Apostles and many, many believers throughout the ages!

**26:17 "rescuing you"** This is a present middle participle. In the middle voice this word usually means to select or choose. Normally it is translated "rescue or deliver" (cf. Acts 7:10,34; 12:11; 23:27). God's providential care is evident here. Paul received several of these visions during his ministry in order to encourage him. This possibly alludes to the Septuagint's reading of Isa. 48:10 or possibly Jer. 1:7-8,19.

■ **"from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles"** Paul will suffer opposition from both groups (cf. 2 Cor. 11:23-27).

■ **"to whom I am sending you"** The "I" is emphatic (*egō*) here as in Acts 26:15. The verb is *apostellō* (present active indicative), from which we get the term "Apostle." As the Father sent Jesus, so Jesus sends His witnesses, apostles (cf. John 20:21).

**26:18 "to open. . .turn"** These are both aorist infinitives. This may be an allusion to Isa. 42:7. The Messiah will open blind eyes as a metaphor for opening spiritual eyes (cf. John 9). Gospel knowledge and understanding must precede the call to a volitional response (repentance and faith). Satan tries to close our minds and hearts (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4) and the Spirit tries to open them (cf. John 6:44,65; 16:8-11).

■ **"from darkness. . .from the dominion of Satan"** Notice the parallelism. "Dominion" is the Greek term *exousia*, usually translated authority or power (cf. NKJV, NRSV, TEV). The world is under the influence of personal evil (cf. Eph. 2:2; 4:14; 6:10-18; 2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:12-13, see Special Topic at Acts 5:3).

In the OT, particularly the prophecies of Isaiah, the Messiah (see Special Topic at Acts 2:31) was to bring sight to the blind. It was both a physical prediction and also metaphorical for truth (cf. Isa. 29:18; 32:3; 35:5; 42:7,16).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: AUTHORITY (EXOUSIA)**

■ **"to light. . .to God"** Notice the parallelism. Ancient humans feared darkness. It became a metaphor for evil. Light, on the other hand, became a metaphor for truth, healing, and purity. A good parallel passage on the light of the gospel is John 3:17-21.

■ **"that they may receive"** The verbal in this phrase is another aorist infinitive. There is no "may" in the Greek text (cf. TEV, NJB). The only condition in this context is "by faith in Me" clause, which is put last in the Greek sentence for emphasis. All of God's blessings are contingent on a faith response (i.e., receive, cf. John 1:12) to His grace (cf. Eph. 2:8-9). This is the NT counterpoint of conditional covenants in the OT.

■ **"forgiveness of sins"** Luke uses this term (*aphesis*) often.

1. In Luke 4:18 it is used in an OT quote from Isa. 61:1, where it means release, which reflects the LXX usage of Exod. 18:2 and Lev. 16:26.

2. In Luke 1:77; 3:3; 24:47; Acts 2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18, it means "the removal of the guilt of sin," which reflects the LXX usage of Deut. 15:3, where it is used of the cancellation of a debt.

Luke's usage may reflect the New Covenant promise of Jer. 31:34.

- **"and an inheritance"** This is the Greek term *klēros*, which denotes the casting of lots (cf. Lev. 16:8; Jonah 1:7; Acts 1:26) to determine an inheritance, as in Gen. 48:6; Exod. 6:8; and Jos. 13:7-8. In the OT the Levites did not have a land inheritance, only the 48 Levitical cities (cf. Deut. 10:9; 12:12), but the Lord Himself was their inheritance (cf. Num. 18:20). Now in the NT all believers are priests (cf. 1 Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6). The Lord (YHWH) is our inheritance; we are His children (cf. Rom. 8:15-17).
- **"those who have been sanctified"** This is a perfect passive participle. Believers (faithers) have been and continue to be sanctified by faith in Christ (cf. Acts 20:21). See Special Topic at Acts 9:32. Neither Satan nor the demonic can take this away (cf. Rom. 8:31-39).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 26:19-23**

**19**"So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, **20**but *kept* declaring both to those of Damascus first, and *also* at Jerusalem and *then* throughout all the region of Judea, and *even* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance. **21**"For this reason *some* Jews seized me in the temple and tried to put me to death. **22**"So, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; **23**that the Christ was to suffer, *and* that by reason of *His* resurrection from the dead He would be the first to proclaim light both to the *Jewish* people and to the Gentiles."

**26:19 "So, King Agrippa"** See note at Acts 25:13, Intro. Paul was trying to reach this man for the gospel (cf. Acts 26:26-29).

- **"I did not prove disobedient"** The Greek term *peithō* is from the name of the goddess of persuasion. In this context it has the alpha privative, which negates it, thereby denoting "disobedience" (cf. Luke 1:17; Rom. 1:30; 2 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:16; 3:3). So, in a sense, this was a forceful way in Koine Greek to negate something, but in this context, it is a literary way of affirming Paul's obedience!
- **"heavenly vision"** This refers to Paul's Damascus road encounter with the resurrected, glorified Christ.

**26:20 "Damascus. . . Jerusalem"** See Acts 9:19-25,27 for Paul's ministry in Damascus; 9:26-30 for Paul's ministry in Jerusalem and possibly 9:31 for Paul's ministry in Judea.

- **"repent and turn to God"** Paul's message (cf. Acts 20:21) was the same as
  1. John the Baptist's (cf. Matt. 3:1-12; Mark 1:4-8)
  2. Jesus' early message (cf. Mark. 1:15)
  3. Peter (cf. Acts 3:16,19)

The Greek term repent means a change of mind. The Hebrew word means a change of action. Both are involved in true repentance. See Special Topic at Acts 2:38. The two New Covenant requirements (which are also old Covenant requirements) for salvation are repentance (turning from self and sin) and faith (turning to God in Christ).

- **"performing deeds appropriate to repentance"** The believer's lifestyle (present active participle) confirms his/her initial faith commitment (cf. Matt. 3:8; Luke 3:8; Eph. 2:8-10, James and 1 John). God wants a people who reflect His character. Believers are called to Christlikeness (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; 2:10). The gospel is
  1. a person to welcome
  2. truth about that person to believe
  3. a life like that person's to live

**26:21** It was not Paul's theological views, but his preaching to and inclusion of "the Gentiles" (cf. Acts

26:20) that caused the riot in the Temple.

■ **"tried to put me to death"** This is an imperfect middle (deponent) indicative (tried again and again) with an aorist middle infinitive (to kill). The Jews (cf. Acts 9:24) from Asia (cf. Acts 20:3,19; 21:27,30) tried to kill Paul several times.

**26:22 "testifying both to small and great"** This is an inclusive Semitic idiom. It is Paul's affirmation (like Peter's, cf. Acts 10:38) that he, like God, is not respecter of persons (cf. Deut. 10:17; 2 Chr. 19:7, see fuller note at Acts 10:34). He preaches to all humans.

■ **"stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said"** Paul is asserting that his message and audience (i.e., Gentiles) are not an innovation, but OT prophecy. He is simply following OT guidelines (see Special Topic at Acts 1:8), promises and truths.

**26:23** Notice that Paul's message consisted of three parts:

1. the Messiah suffered for human forgiveness
2. the Messiah's resurrection was first fruits of all believers' resurrection
3. this Good News was for Jews and Gentiles

These three theological aspects must be combined with verse 20 which shows how we personally receive Christ (repentance, turning from self and sin; faith, turning to God in Christ).

■ **"that the Christ was to suffer"** For the basic theological points of the Apostolic sermons in Acts see Special Topic at Acts 2:14. It was the stumbling block for the Jews (cf. 1 Cor. 1:23), but it was an OT prediction (cf. Gen. 3:15; Psalm 22; Isaiah 53). This same truth is found in Luke 24:7,26,44-47.

The Greek "the Christ" reflects the Hebrew title "the Messiah." Paul asserts that Jesus, who was crucified, was truly the Christ, the Promised One, the Anointed One (cf. Acts 2:36; 3:6,18,20; 4:10,26; 13:33; 17:3; 26:23, see special Topic: Messiah at Acts 2:31).

■ **"that by reason of His resurrection from the dead"** Because of this text, and Rom. 1:4, there developed an early heresy called "adoptionism" (see glossary), which asserted that the human Jesus was rewarded for a good life by being raised from the dead. However, this aberrant Christology ignored all the texts about His pre-existence, such as John 1:1; Phi. 2:6-11; Col. 1:15-17; and Heb. 1:2-3. Jesus has always existed; He has always been divine; He was incarnated in time.

■ **"the light"** Light is an ancient metaphor of truth and purity (cf. Acts 26:18; Isa. 9:2; 42:6-7).

■ **"to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles"** There is only one gospel for both groups (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13). This was the mystery that had been hidden from the ages, but is now fully revealed in Christ. All humans are made in the image of the one creator God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). Genesis 3:15 promises that God will provide salvation for fallen humanity. Isaiah affirms the universality of the Messiah (e.g., Isa. 2:2-4; 42:4,6,10-12; 45:20-25; 49:6; 51:4; 52:10; 60:1-3; and also Mic. 5:4-5).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 26:24-29**

**<sup>24</sup>While Paul was saying this in his defense, Festus said in a loud voice, "Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you mad." <sup>25</sup>But Paul said, "I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth. <sup>26</sup>For the king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner. <sup>27</sup>King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do." <sup>28</sup>Agrippa replied to Paul, "In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian." <sup>29</sup>And Paul said, "I would wish to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains."**



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**26:24 "Festus said in a loud voice"** Paul's message was unbelievable to him. His world-view and culture, education, and position biased his ability to understand.

▣ **"Your great learning is driving you mad"** In a roundabout way this shows the depth, clarity, and persuasiveness of Paul's defense.

**26:25 "of sober truth"** The Greek term *sōphrosunē* comes from two Greek words, "sound" and "mind." They mean a balanced approach to life and thinking. It is the antonym of "out of your mind" and "mad" (cf. Acts 26:24).

▣ **"the truth"** See Special Topic below.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: "TRUTH" IN PAUL'S WRITINGS](#)

**26:26-28 "the king knows about these matters"** There has been much discussion about these verses. Apparently Paul wanted to use Agrippa II to confirm his testimony and if possible bring him to acceptance of its truth. Verse 28 could be translated, "Do you want me to be a Christian witness?"

**26:26 "I speak to him also with confidence"** Luke often uses this term in Acts, it is always connected with Paul (cf. Acts 9:27,28; 13:46; 14:3; 18:26; 19:8). It is usually translated "speaking with boldness" (cf. 1 Thess. 2:2). This is one of the manifestations of being Spirit-filled. It was the object of Paul's prayer request in Eph. 6:20. Gospel proclamation with boldness is the Spirit's goal for every believer.

▣ **"for this has not been done in a corner"** Peter made this same assertion again and again to his first hearers in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 2:22,33). The facts of the gospel were verifiable and historical.

**26:27** Paul knew that Agrippa was knowledgeable of the OT. Paul is claiming that his gospel message was clearly discernable from OT Scriptures. It was not a "new" or "innovative" message! It was fulfilled prophecy.

#### **26:28**

**NASB** "In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian"

**NKJV** "You almost persuade me to become a Christian"

**NRSV** "Are you so quickly persuading me to become a Christian"

**TEV** "In this short time do you think you will make me a Christian"

**NJB** "A little more, and your arguments would make a Christian of me"

There is a lexical option about how to understand *oligō* (meaning small or little), "in a short time" (NASB, NRSV, TEV), or "with little effort" (NKJV, NJB). This same confusion is also present in Acts 26:29.

There is also a textual variant related to this phrase: "to do" or "to make" (*poiēō*) in the manuscripts P<sup>74</sup>, κ, A (UBS<sup>4</sup> gives it an "A" rating), or "to become" in MS E and the Vulgate and Peshitta translations.

The meaning in the larger context is obvious. Paul wanted to present the gospel in such a way that those who knew and affirmed the OT (Agrippa) would be brought under conviction or at the least, affirm the relevance of these OT prophecies.

▣ **"Christian"** The people of "the Way" (followers of Christ) were first called Christians at Antioch of Syria (cf. Acts 11:26). The only other place this name appears in Acts is on the lips of Agrippa II, which means the name had become widely known.

**26:29 "I would wish to God"** Verse 29 is a partial Fourth class conditional sentence (*an* with the optative mood), which expresses a desire that might remotely come to reality. It is usually a prayer or wish. Paul wished all of his hearers, Roman and Jewish, would come to faith in Christ like himself.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 26:30-32**

<sup>30</sup>The king stood up and the governor and Bernice, and those who were sitting with them,  
<sup>31</sup>and when they had gone aside, they *began* talking to one another, saying, "This man is not  
doing anything worthy of death or imprisonment." <sup>32</sup>And Agrippa said to Festus, "This man  
might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

**26:30** How did Luke get this information? It was a private conversation between governmental leaders (and their families).

1. a servant have heard this and passed it on to Luke?
2. Luke assumes what they said by subsequent statements
3. Luke uses this opportunity to reinforce his literary purpose of showing that neither Paul or Christianity is a threat to Rome

**26:31-32 "This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar"** This shows one of Luke's major purposes in writing Acts, which was to show that Christianity was not treasonous to Rome. This is a second class conditional sentence which makes a false assertion to accentuate a truth. This man might have been set free (which he was not) if he had not appealed to Caesar (which he did).

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How is this defense different from the defense before Festus and Felix?
2. How does Paul's personal testimony fit into his overall defense?
3. Why was a suffering Messiah so alien to the Jews?
4. Why is verse 28 so difficult to interpret?
5. How does the discussion of Festus, Agrippa and Bernice (Acts 26:30-31) fit into Luke's overarching literary purpose in Acts?

# ACTS 27

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Paul Sails for Rome 27:1-8	The Voyage to Rome 27:1-8	The Voyage to Malta 27:1-8	Paul Sails for Rome 27:1-6	The Departure for Rome 27:1-3 27:4-6
	Paul's Warning Ignored 27:9-12		27:7-8 27:9-12	27:7-8 27:9-12
The Storm at Sea 27:13-20 27:21-26 27:27-32 27:33-38	In the Tempest 27:13-38		Storm at Sea 27:13-20 27:21-26 27:27-32 27:33-38	Storm and Shipwreck 27:13-20 27:21-26 27:27-32 27:33-38
The Shipwreck 27:39-44	Shipwrecked on Malta 27:39-44		The Shipwreck 27:39-41 27:42-44	27:39-41 27:42-44

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

#### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Luke had a vast knowledge, covering sailing (A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 3, p. 456, says Luke used nine compounds with *pleō*, to sail) as well as literature, medicine, history and theology. Here is a list of technical, nautical terms and phrases
1. sailed (cf. Acts 13:4; 14:26; 20:15; 27:1)

2. under the shelter of (cf. Acts 27:4,7)
3. weighed anchor (cf. Acts 27:13)
4. *auraquilo* (cf. Acts 27:14)
5. face the wind (cf. Acts 27:15)
6. running under the shelter of (cf. Acts 27:16)
7. undergirding (cf. Acts 27:17)
8. sea anchor (*skeuos*) (cf. Acts 27: 17)
9. ship's tackle (*skeuēn*) (cf. Acts 27:19)
10. soundings (cf. Acts 27:28[twice])
11. athoms (cf. Acts 27:28[twice])
12. four anchors from the stern (cf. Acts 27:29,40)
13. the ropes of the rudders (cf. Acts 27:40)
14. hoisting the foresail to the wind (cf. Acts 27:40)
15. tacking (MSS P<sup>74</sup>, κ, A, cf. Acts 28:13)

B. One older book that has been such a help to commentators is James Smith's *The Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul*, 1848.

C. This trip to Rome was attempted at a dangerous time of the year for sailing (cf. Acts 27:1,4,7,9,10,14). Usually November-February was the most dangerous time to travel, with a two to three week marginal period before and after. The regular grain shipments to Rome took ten to fourteen days, but because of the wind direction the return could take sixty days.

D. There are three different, possibly four, ships mentioned in this passage

1. a coastal ship which stopped at every port and hugged the coastline.
2. two Egyptian grain ships that ferried grain from Egypt to Italy
3. possibly a barge trip between Naples to a landing 43 miles south of Rome

It is interesting to follow Luke's account of this voyage on a map of the Mediterranean.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 27:1-8

<sup>1</sup>When it was decided that we would sail for Italy, they proceeded to deliver Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan cohort named Julius. <sup>2</sup>And embarking in an Adramyttian ship, which was about to sail to the regions along the coast of Asia, we put out to sea accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica. <sup>3</sup>The next day we put in at Sidon; and Julius treated Paul with consideration and allowed him to go to his friends and receive care. <sup>4</sup>From there we put out to sea and sailed under the shelter of Cyprus because the winds were contrary. <sup>5</sup>When we had sailed through the sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia. <sup>6</sup>There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy, and he put us aboard it. <sup>7</sup>When we had sailed slowly for a good many days, and with difficulty had arrived off Cnidus, since the wind did not permit us to go farther, we sailed under the shelter of Crete, off Salmone; <sup>8</sup>and with difficulty sailing past it we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea.

**27:1 "When it was decided that we would sail for Italy"** Festus sent them at a dangerous time of the year for sailing. The "we" refers to Paul and Luke (possibly others). Most of the "we" sections of Acts have a sailing component (cf. Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16).

■ **"some other prisoners"** We do not know anything about them except they were imperial prisoners

heading for Rome.

- **"centurion"** These men are always presented in positive terms in the NT (cf. Matt. 8; Luke 7; 23:47; Acts 10; and Paul's trials, 21-28).
- **"of the Augustan cohort"** They were thought to be official couriers between Rome and the provinces (cf. W. M Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveler and Roman Citizen*, pp. 315, 348), but this is only undocumented supposition before Emperor Hadrian (a.d. 117-138).

**27:2 "an Adramyttian ship"** This was a small coastal ship which stopped at every port. The home port of this ship was the seaport of Mysia in Asia Minor. This is the first stage of the long and dangerous trip to Rome.

- **"Aristarchus"** His home was in Thessalonica; possibly he was returning home (cf. Acts 19:29; 20:4; Col. 4:10; Philemon 24). He may have been accompanied by Secundas (cf. Acts 20:4 and some western Greek manuscripts of this verse).

**27:3 "Sidon"** This is a Phoenician city about sixty-seven miles north of Caesarea. It was the ancient capital of Phoenicia, but had long since been eclipsed by Tyre.

NASB	"with consideration"
NKJV, NRSV	"kindly"
TEV	"was kind"
NJB	"was considerate"

This is a compound term from "love" (*philos*) and "humanity" (*anthrōpos*). The term is used twice in Acts, the noun in Acts 28:2 (cf. Titus 3:4) and the adverb here in Acts 27:3. Julius was a compassionate person (somewhat surprising for a Roman occupational soldier). He probably had heard about Paul's case.

- **"his friends"** This probably refers to the Christians there. Julius trusted Paul, but possibly a Roman guard went with him.
- **"receive care"** The text does not specify what kind of attention (emotional, physical, financial).

**27:4 "under the shelter of Cyprus"** This is a confusing phrase because it makes English readers think "south of Cyprus," but in reality, it meant north. The other names mentioned are on the southern and western coast of modern Turkey.

**27:6 "Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy"** This was a larger ship (276 people on board plus huge amounts of grain) from Egypt on her way to Rome. Moderns know of these large ships from pictures on the walls of Pompeii and from Lucian's writings, around a.d. 150. Myra was the major port for these large grain ships.

**27:7 "Cnidus"** This was a free maritime city on the southwest coast of the Roman province of Asia. Most Rome-bound ships used this port (cf. Thucydides, *Hist.* 8.35). It had two harbors because it was located on a peninsula.

- **"Salmone"** This was a city on the eastern tip of the island of Crete. Because of the time of the year they tried to work their way west by sailing close to the island.

**27:8 "Fair Havens"** This is a bay near the southern city of Lasea on Crete. It is not a harbor, but a bay. It would have been difficult to stay here all winter.

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## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 27:9-12

<sup>9</sup>When considerable time had passed and the voyage was now dangerous, since even the fast was already over, Paul *began* to admonish them, <sup>10</sup>and said to them, "Men, I perceive that the voyage will certainly be with damage and great loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives." <sup>11</sup>But the centurion was more persuaded by the pilot and the captain of the ship than by what was being said by Paul. <sup>12</sup>Because the harbor was not suitable for wintering, the majority reached a decision to put out to sea from there, if somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, facing southwest and northwest, and spend the winter *there*.

**27:9** There were certain times of the year (winter months) when the rapid movement of storm fronts and wind directions made sailing dangerous in the Mediterranean.

▣ **"the fast"** This refers to the Day of Atonement (cf. Leviticus 16). It is the only fast day mentioned in the writings of Moses. This would make the voyage sometime between September and October. October was the marginal period for sea travel.

▣ **"Paul began"** This is an Imperfect tense which can refer to (1) continuous action in past time or (2) the beginning of an action. In context option #2 is best.

**27:10** Paul issues a strong and specific warning. However, in reality, this did not occur. Was Paul giving his personal opinion ("I perceive"), or did God change His mind and decide to spare the people on board (cf. Acts 27:24)?

### 27:11

NASB	"the pilot and the captain"
NKJV	"the helmsman and the owner"
NRSV	"the pilot and the owner"
TEV, NJB	"the captain and the owner"

This phrase denotes two separate people.

1. the pilot (*kubernētēs*), which refers to the helmsman, the one who steers the ship (cf. Rev. 18:17)
2. the captain (*nauklēros*, compound of "ship" [*naus*] and "to inherit" or "a lot" [*klēros*]), although the word could mean "ship owners" (cf. F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, p. 507, quotes Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveler*, p. 324, who quotes *Inscriptiones Graecae*, 14.918). Its use in the Koine Papyri is "captain." The exact difference between these two terms is uncertain (cf. Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, p. 548 vs. Harold Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, p. 275), but probably on a ship of this size (Alexandrian grain ship) there were several levels of leaders, as well as regular sailors.

**27:12 "if"** This is a fourth class conditional sentence. Those who made the decision to sail knew it would be dangerous but thought they could make it.

▣ **"Phoenix"** This is a harbor on the southern shore of Crete, westward of Fair Havens. There is some doubt from ancient sources about its exact location (Strabo, *Geography*, 10.4.3 vs. Ptolemy, *An Egyptian Geography* 3.17.3). They were still sailing close to the shore along the southern coast of Crete.

▣ **"facing southwest and northwest"** Apparently at Phoenix there were two towns separated by a piece of land jutting into the sea. One harbor would be favorably related to winds from one direction and the other favorably related to winds from the other direction. The time of year determined which harbor was best.

## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 27:13-20

**13**When a moderate south wind came up, supposing that they had attained their purpose, they weighed anchor and *began* sailing along Crete, close *inshore*. **14**But before very long there rushed down from the land a violent wind, called Euraquilo; **15**and when the ship was caught *in it* and could not face the wind, we gave way *to it* and let ourselves be driven along. **16**Running under the shelter of a small island called Clauda, we were scarcely able to get the *ship's boat* under control. **17**After they had hoisted it up, they used supporting cables in undergirding the ship; and fearing that they might run aground on *the shallows* of Syrtis, they let down the sea anchor and in this way let themselves be driven along. **18**The next day as we were being violently storm-tossed, they began to jettison the cargo; **19**and on the third day they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. **20**Since neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small storm was assailing *us*, from then on all hope of our being saved was gradually abandoned.

27:14

NASB, NRSV "a violent wind"

NKJV "a tempestuous wind"

TEV "a very strong wind"

NJB "a hurricane"

This Greek word is *tuphōn* (typhoon) + *ikos* (like). This was a sudden, very violent wind. It was probably intensified by the 7,000 foot mountains on Crete.

NASB "Euraquico"

NKJV "Euroclydon"

NRSV, TEV "the northeaster"

NJB "the north-easter"

This was a special name the sailors had given for this type of wind during this season. It is made up of (1) a Greek term, "east wind" (*euros*) and (2) a Latin term "north wind" (*aquilo*). It was a strong, sudden northeast wind.

Because this became a technical nautical term (*eukakulōn*), it was misunderstood by later scribes who altered it in several ways to try to make the context make sense.

**27:15 "could not face the wind"** Ancient ships had eyes painted on each side of the bow. Later human or animal figures were placed on the bow (cf. Acts 28:11). Even today we personify ships as females. This phrase is literally "against" (*anti*) plus "eye" (*ophthalmos*). They could not head the ship into the wind.

**27:16 "Clauda"** This small island is about fifty miles off the southern coast of Crete. They were now helpless in the face of a strong northeastern wind. They took advantage of the brief shelter from the wind to do what they could to prepare the ship for rough seas.

There are several Greek manuscript variants as to the name of this island.

1. *Kauda*, MSS P<sup>74</sup>, κ<sup>2</sup>, B

2. *Klauda*, MSS κ<sup>\*</sup>, A

3. *Klaudēn*, MSS H, L, P, and many later minuscule manuscripts

4. *Gaudēn*, the Greek text used by Jerome

5. *Klaudion*, some minuscule manuscripts

UBS<sup>3</sup> and UBS<sup>4</sup> give #1 a "B" rating (almost certain). The first two options may be the Greek form and the Latin form of the name.

■ **"to get the ship's boat under control"** This refers to a smaller boat in tow (cf. Acts 27:30, 32). This

trailing boat formed a drag which made it difficult to steer the larger ship.

**27:17 "used supporting cables in undergirding the ship"** This refers to wrapping special ropes around the hull to help hold it together in storms (cf. Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 2.5.18).

▣ **"the shallows of Syrtis"** These are moving sand bars off the coast of northern Africa. They were called Syrtis Major and Syrtis Minor (cf. Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 5.4,27). They were the graveyard of many a sailing ship. To avoid the Syrtis Major the sailors steered the ship sideways, so as to drift slowly southward.

▣ **"sea anchor"** The key to properly interpreting this context is the term "lowered." What did they lower: (1) a sea anchor or (2) part of the sail? The purpose was to slow the ship down, but at the same time allow some control.

A sea anchor is not an anchor that gripped the bottom, but a parachute-like sheet which used the weight of the water it contained to slow down the ship from drifting southward (cf. old Latin text and NASB, NRSV, and NJB).

There are several English translations which translate this as "lower the sail" (cf. NKJV, TEV, NJB, and Peshitta in English). The Greek term literally means "a thing" (cf. Louw & Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, vol. 2, p. 223) and must be interpreted in light of a specific context. There are several specific papyri texts which use it for a sail (cf. Moulton & Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, p. 577). If so, they lower part of the sails but not all of them. They had to retain some control and attempt to travel sideways as slowly as possible.

**27:18-19** This shows how violent and dangerous this storm seemed to these seasoned sailors (cf. Acts 20).

**27:18 "jettison the cargo"** This act shows that these sailors were truly afraid for their lives.

**27:19 "the ship's tackle"** Exactly to what this refers is unknown, possibly the main sail and its rigging. The term is ambiguous. This very same term refers to the sea-anchor, or part of the sails, in Acts 27:17.

**27:20 "neither sun nor stars appeared for many days"** This phrase apparently reveals that they had no clue as to where they were. They were afraid of the coast of north Africa, but they could not tell how close they were (cf. Acts 27:29). Without stars or the sun they could not navigate or discern their position.

▣ **"from then on all hope of our being saved was gradually abandoned"** This sets the stage for Paul's encouragement based on his previous vision (cf. Acts 27:21-26). Their resources were gone!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 27:21-26**

**<sup>21</sup>When they had gone a long time without food, then Paul stood up in their midst and said, "Men, you ought to have followed my advice and not to have set sail from Crete and incurred this damage and loss. <sup>22</sup>Yet now I urge you to keep up your courage, for there will be no loss of life among you, but *only* of the ship. <sup>23</sup>For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me, <sup>24</sup> saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.' <sup>25</sup>Therefore, keep up your courage, men, for I believe God that it will turn out exactly as I have been told. <sup>26</sup>"But we must run aground on a certain island."**

**27:21 "they had gone a long time without food"** There are at least three possible meanings in relation to Acts 27:33:

1. maybe they were seasick from the violent, protracted storm
2. they were praying and fasting for the religious purpose of being spared (i.e., pagan ritual, cf. Acts



27:29)

3. they were so busy trying to save the ship, eating became a lesser issue

▣ **"you ought to have followed my advice"** This is Paul's "I told you so!" It provided Paul the opportunity to act as the Spirit's spokesman.

**27:22 "but only of the ship"** Notice the use of *dei* in Acts 27:26. See full note on *dei* at Acts 1:16. It is used three times in this chapter (Acts 27:21,24,26).

**27:23 "an angel of the God"** Several times Jesus or an angel appeared to Paul to encourage him (cf. Acts 18:9-10; 22:17-19; 23:11; 27:23-24). God had an evangelistic plan and purpose for Paul's life (cf. Acts 27:26; 9:15) and a storm was not going to stop it.

**27:24 "Do not be afraid, Paul"** This is a present middle (deponent) imperative with the negative participle which usually means stop an act already in process (cf. Acts 23:11; Pro. 3:5-6).

▣ **"God has granted you all those who are sailing with you"** This first verb is a perfect middle (deponent) indicative. God had a plan and purpose for Paul's ministry (cf. Acts 9:15; 19:21; 23:11). He must (*dei*) witness in Rome before her governmental and military leaders.

Paul's life and faith impacted the destiny of his companions. This same extension of grace can be seen in Deut. 5:10; 7:9; 1 Cor. 7:14. This does not remove personal responsibility, but accentuates the potential influence of believing family, friends, and co-workers.

**27:25** Paul's admonition of Acts 27:22, "to keep up your courage," a present infinitive, is repeated, "keep up your courage," which is a present active imperative.

▣ **"for I believe God"** Paul's encounter with the living Christ enabled him to trust God's word ("it will turn out exactly as I have been told" perfect passive indicative). Faith is the hand that receives the gifts of God—not only salvation, but providence.

Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament* has a great statement and quote from Romaine, *Life of Faith*.

"We now approach the N.T. with a clear distinction between faith on the one hand, and trust and hope on the other. Faith is the taking God at His word, while trust and patience and also hope are the proper fruits of faith, manifesting in various forms the confidence which the believer feels. A message comes to me from the Author of my existence; it may be a threat, a promise, or a command. If I take it as 'yea and amen,' that is Faith; and the act which results is an act of **amunah** or faithfulness to God. Faith, according to Scripture, seems to imply a word, message, or revelation. So the learned Romaine says in his *Life of Faith*:—'Faith signifies believing the truth of the Word of God; it relates to some word spoken or to some promise made by Him, and it expresses the belief which a person who hears it has of its being true; he assents to it, relies upon it, and acts accordingly: this is faith.' Its fruit will vary according to the nature of the message received, and according to the circumstances of the receiver. It led Noah to build an ark, Abraham to offer up his son, Moses to refuse to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, the Israelites to march round the walls of Jericho. I believe God that it shall be even as it has been told me—this is a picture of the process which the Bible calls faith" (pp. 104-105).

For "believe" see Special Topic at Acts 2:40; 3:16; and 6:5.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 27:27-32**

**<sup>27</sup>But when the fourteenth night came, as we were being driven about in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors began to surmise that they were approaching some land. <sup>28</sup>They took soundings and found it to be twenty fathoms; and a little farther on they took another sounding and found it to be fifteen fathoms. <sup>29</sup>Fearing that we might run aground somewhere**

on the rocks, they cast four anchors from the stern and wished for daybreak. <sup>30</sup>But as the sailors were trying to escape from the ship and had let down the *ship's* boat into the sea, on the pretense of intending to lay out anchors from the bow, <sup>31</sup>Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, "Unless these men remain in the ship, you yourselves cannot be saved." <sup>32</sup>Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship's boat and let it fall away.

**27:27 "the fourteenth night"** This time fits exactly the distance covered in their drifting configuration (i.e., sea anchor). They traveled 476 miles at 36 miles per 24-hour period.

▣ **"Adriatic Sea"** This refers to the south central Mediterranean (Adria). It does not refer to the Adriatic Sea of our day.

▣ **"*began to surmise that they were approaching some land*"** They possibly heard the breakers or saw certain birds or fish.

**27:28 "sounding"** This is from the verb that means "to heave the lead," which refers to dropping a weighted rope, marked to denote the depth of the water.

▣ **"fathom"** This was the space between the arms outstretched. It denoted the measurement used by sailors to express the depth of the water.

**27:29** It was still dark. They did not know exactly where they were. They wanted to slow down or stop the ship's approach to land until they could see where the ship was heading.

**27:30** These sailors were not men of faith. They would do whatever they could to save themselves.

**27:31** There were some conditions (third class conditional sentence) connected to Paul's updated vision and God's promise.

▣ **"saved"** This is the OT sense of physical deliverance (cf. James 5:15). Knowing Paul, these sailors, soldiers, and fellow passengers also heard the gospel, which brings the NT sense of the term spiritual salvation. What a tragedy to be saved from physical death to die an eternal death!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 27:33-38**

<sup>33</sup>Until the day was about to dawn, Paul was encouraging them all to take some food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have been constantly watching and going without eating, having taken nothing. <sup>34</sup>Therefore I encourage you to take some food, for this is for your preservation, for not a hair from the head of any of you will perish." <sup>35</sup>Having said this, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of all, and he broke it and began to eat. <sup>36</sup>All of them were encouraged and they themselves also took food. <sup>37</sup>All of us in the ship were two hundred and seventy-six persons. <sup>38</sup>When they had eaten enough, they *began to lighten the ship by throwing out the wheat into the sea.*

**27:34 "not a hair from the head of any of you will perish"** Paul uses words similar to Jesus' words (cf. Luke 12:7; 21:18). This was a Hebrew idiom of protection (cf. 1 Sam. 14:45; 2 Sam. 14:11; 1 Kgs. 1:52).

**27:35** This does not refer to the Lord's Supper, but it does show Paul's faith, even in the midst of crisis. Paul's faith influenced others (cf. Acts 27:36).

**27:37 "two hundred and seventy-six"** This includes crew and passengers.

1. Manuscript B (fourth century) has "76"

2. MSS  $\kappa$  (fourth century) and C (fifth century) have "276"

3. Manuscript A (fifth century) has "275"

4. All modern English translations have 276

UBS<sup>4</sup> gives it a "B" rating (almost certain).

**27:38** This was a large grain ship from Egypt. They had already thrown overboard all other cargo and rigging (cf. Acts 27:18).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 27:39-44**

**<sup>39</sup>When day came, they could not recognize the land; but they did observe a bay with a beach, and they resolved to drive the ship onto it if they could. <sup>40</sup>And casting off the anchors, they left them in the sea while at the same time they were loosening the ropes of the rudders; and hoisting the foresail to the wind, they were heading for the beach. <sup>41</sup>But striking a reef where two seas met, they ran the vessel aground; and the prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern *began* to be broken up by the force of the waves. <sup>42</sup>The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, so that none of them would swim away and escape; <sup>43</sup>but the centurion, wanting to bring Paul safely through, kept them from their intention, and commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land, <sup>44</sup>and the rest *should follow*, some on planks, and others on various things from the ship. And so it happened that they all were brought safely to land.**

**27:39** They could still control the ship to some degree (cf. Acts 27:40).

There is a Greek manuscript variant related to "drive the ship onto it" (cf. MSS  $\kappa$ , A, B<sup>2</sup>) and "land the ship *safely*" (cf. MSS B\* and C). These two words sound very similar (*exōsai* vs. *eksōsai*). Ancient Greek manuscripts were often read by one and copied by many. Similar sounding terms were often confused.

**27:40** These reefs along the shore caused many a ship wreck. In this case a reef developed where the ocean waves and the bay waters met.

**NASB, NKJV,**

**NJV** "rudders"

**NRSV, TEV** "steering-oars"

This refers to the dual rudders, which were typical on larger ships. James 3:4 uses this same word for "rudder."

▣ **"the foresail"** This is a rare term, but it must refer to a small sail on the bow (cf. Juvenal, *Sat.* 12.69).

**27:42 "The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners"** If they escaped the soldiers would have had to bear their penalty!

**27:43** Paul's words, faith, and actions had convinced the leader of the Roman contingent to trust him and protect him.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Luke's account of Paul's sailing to Rome has many nautical technical terms. What is the implication of this?
2. Why is Acts 27:20 so theologically significant?

# ACTS 28

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Paul on the Island of Malta	Paul's Ministry on Malta	Paul in Malta	In Malta	Waiting in Malta
28:1-10	28:1-10	28:1-6 28:7-10	28:1-6 28:7-10	28:1-6 28:7-10
Paul Arrives at Rome	Arrival at Rome	The Journey to Rome	From Malta to Rome	From Malta to Rome
28:11-15	28:11-16	28:11-15	28:11-15 In Rome	28:11-14 28:15-16
28:16		28:16	28:16	
Paul Preaches in Rome	Paul's Ministry at Rome	Paul and the Jews of Rome		Paul Makes Contact with the Roman Jews
28:17-22	28:17-31	28:17-22	28:17-20 28:21-22	28:17-20 28:21-22 Paul's Declaration to Roman Jews
28:23-29		28:23-29	28:23-27 28:28	28:23-27 (26-27) 28:28
		Conclusion	28:29	Epilogue
28:30-31		28:30-31	28:30-31	28:30-31

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 28:1-6

<sup>1</sup>When they had been brought safely through, then we found out that the island was called Malta. <sup>2</sup>The natives showed us extraordinary kindness; for because of the rain that had set in and because of the cold, they kindled a fire and received us all. <sup>3</sup>But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened itself on his hand. <sup>4</sup>When the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they *began* saying to one another, "Undoubtedly this man is a murderer, and though he has been saved from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live." <sup>5</sup>However he shook the creature off into the fire and suffered no harm. <sup>6</sup>But they were expecting that he was about to swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had waited a long time and had seen nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and *began* to say that he was a god.

**28:1 "they had been brought safely through"** This is the term *sōzō* (cf. Acts 27:31) with *diá* prefixed. It was used regularly for someone reaching safety (cf. Acts 23:24; 27:44; 28:1,4). Luke even uses it for physical healing in Luke 7:3.

The aorist passive participle shows that Luke attributed the safety as being provided by God (passive voice) according to His word (cf. Acts 27:21-26).

■ **"Malta"** The Phoenician sailors also called this island Melita, which was a Canaanite term that meant "refuge." This was originally a Phoenician colony. It is located between Sicily and North Africa. It is only eighteen miles long and eight miles wide, but its location afforded great maritime commercial value. It has several good harbors.

**28:2 "natives"** This is literally "barbarians." This is not a derogatory title, but simply refers to anyone who did not speak Greek or Latin.

NASB	"extraordinary kindness"
NKJV, NRSV,	
NJB	"unusual kindness"
TEV	"were very friendly"

This intensified phrase has the term *philanthrōpos*, which is literally "lover of men" as in Acts 27:3. The specific care and provision given by the natives was because they saw Paul's miraculous encounter with a serpent on the beach. This, and other miraculous acts (cf. Acts 28:7-10), opened the door for evangelism! Paul always had a mind toward gospel proclamation (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19-23).

**28:3 "Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks"** This really shows Paul's humility. He worked along with all the others. No elitism since the road to Damascus!

■ **"a viper. . .fastened itself on his hand"** This term's basic meaning is "to attach." It can mean "a bite" or "coiled around."

**28:4 "the creature"** This term for "creature" became the medical term for poisonous snakes (cf. Acts 10:12).

■ **"justice has not allowed him to live"** "Justice" or "Fate" was the name of one of their gods. They were expressing the irony of the situation, similar to Amos 5:19. Verse 6 shows that the native islanders were superstitious polytheists.

**28:6** These islanders had personal experience with the snakes on the island. Their radical change of attitude is similar to the pagan reactions to the miraculous in Acts 14:11-13.

▣ **"to swell up"** This is one of many medical terms used by Luke (cf. Acts 28:8). It is found only here in the NT.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 28:7-10**

**<sup>7</sup>Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the leading man of the island, named Publius, who welcomed us and entertained us courteously three days. <sup>8</sup>And it happened that the father of Publius was lying *in bed* afflicted with *recurrent* fever and dysentery; and Paul went in to see him and after he had prayed, he laid his hands on him and healed him. <sup>9</sup>After this had happened, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases were coming to him and getting cured. <sup>10</sup>They also honored us with many marks of respect; and when we were setting sail, they supplied us with all we needed.**

**28:7 "the leading man"** This word means some type of governmental official, literally, "the first" (cf. Acts 13:50; Luke 19:47, "of people"; 16:12, "of a city"). It has been found in two inscriptions on this island, one Greek and one Latin. Rome had allowed this island self-rule and at some point, full Roman citizenship.

**28:8 "lying *in bed* afflicted with *recurrent* fever and dysentery"** Malta was known for its fever which came from microbes in their goats' milk.

▣ **"laid his hands on him and healed him"** See Special Topics: Laying on of Hands at Acts 6:6.

**28:9** Both of these verbs are imperfect, which implies repeated or continuing action in past time (indicative mood). They kept coming. God kept healing them through Paul.

The Greek verb behind the English translation "getting cured" is *therapeuō*, from which we get the English "therapy." The term can be used for "service" as well as "healing." Only a specific context can determine which one is appropriate.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 28:11-15**

**<sup>11</sup>At the end of three months we set sail on an Alexandrian ship which had wintered at the island, and which had the Twin Brothers for its figurehead. <sup>12</sup>After we put in at Syracuse, we stayed there for three days. <sup>13</sup>From there we sailed around and arrived at Rhegium, and a day later a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli. <sup>14</sup>There we found *some* brethren, and were invited to stay with them for seven days; and thus we came to Rome. <sup>15</sup>And the brethren, when they heard about us, came from there as far as the Market of Appius and Three Inns to meet us; and when Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage.**

**28:11 "an Alexandrian ship"** This was probably another large grain ship going to the Bay of Naples from Egypt (cf. Acts 27:6,38).

▣ **"ship which had wintered at the island"** The Mediterranean Sea was too stormy to navigate during the winter months. The shipping lanes opened back up in late February or March.

▣ **"the Twin Brothers for its figurehead"** This refers to Zeus' twin sons, Castor and Pollox. They were the patrons of sailors in the Roman pantheon. Poseidon had given them power and control over wind, waves, and storms. Their special constellation was Gemini. Apparently there was a carving of them on the bow, two little elf-like men.

**28:12 "Syracuse"** This was the principal city of Sicily located on the eastern coast. This port was eighty miles north of Malta.

**28:13 "sailed around"** The ancient uncial manuscripts  $\kappa$  (Siniaticus), and B (Vaticanus) have "weighing anchor," which was a technical sailing term (so characteristic of Luke), but other ancient manuscripts P<sup>74</sup>,  $\kappa^C$ , and A have "passing by," like 16:8.

■ **"Rhegium"** This is the city at the southwestern tip of Italy.

■ **"Puteoli"** This was the grain importing center for Rome in the Bay of Naples. They traveled about 180 miles in two days.

**28:14 "There we found some brethren"** There were existing Christian congregations in Italy (cf. Acts 28:15) and Rome who embraced Paul.

**28:15 "Market of Appius"** This was the end of the barge trip from the south of Italy and the beginning of the great Roman highway called the Appian Way. It was forty-three miles to Rome.

■ **"Three Inns"** This was a rest stop about thirty-three miles from Rome.

■ **"Paul. . .took courage"** Paul apparently had become discouraged again. He seems to have been prone to this. Jesus appeared to him personally several times to encourage him.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 28:16**

**<sup>16</sup>When we entered Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him.**

**28:16 "When we entered Rome"** This was not the way Paul expected to come to Rome. But, this was God's way to arrange for Paul to speak to the Roman governmental, military, and religious leaders.

■ **"Paul was allowed to stay by himself with the soldier who was guarding him"** Paul was placed under house arrest. The testimony of the officer who brought him was instrumental in this decision.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 28:17-22**

**<sup>17</sup>After three days Paul called together those who were the leading men of the Jews, and when they came together, he began saying to them, "Brethren, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. <sup>18</sup>And when they had examined me, they were willing to release me because there was no ground for putting me to death. <sup>19</sup>But when the Jews objected, I was forced to appeal to Caesar, not that I had any accusation against my nation. <sup>20</sup>For this reason, therefore, I requested to see you and to speak with you, for I am wearing this chain for the sake of the hope of Israel." <sup>21</sup>They said to him, "We have neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren come here and reported or spoken anything bad about you. <sup>22</sup>But we desire to hear from you what your views are; for concerning this sect, it is known to us that it is spoken against everywhere."**

**28:17 "Paul called together those who were the leading men of the Jews"** This was Paul's standard approach (cf. Rom. 1:16; 2:9). He explains his current circumstances and opens the door for a gospel presentation.



**28:18-19** Here again Luke's apologetic purpose can be clearly seen! Christianity was not a threat to the Roman government.

**28:19 "the Jews objected"** This phraseology seems strange spoken to Jewish leaders in Rome. Luke uses *Ioudaios* (Jews) in two senses.

1. nationality – Acts 2:5,11; 9:22; 10:22,28; 11:19; 13:56; 14:1; 16:1,3,20; 17:1; 17:10,17; 18:2,4,5,19; 19:10,17,34; 20:21; 21:21,39; 22:3,12; 24:5,9; 24:24,27; 25:8,9,24; 20:7; 28:17
2. those who had eyewitness knowledge of the last week of Jesus' life – Acts 2:15; 10:39

He also used it in different evaluations.

1. in a negative sense – Acts 9:23; 12:3,11; 13:45,50; 14:2,4,5,19; 17:5,13; 18:12,14,28; 19:13,14,33; 20:3,19; 21:11,27; 22:30; 23:12,20,27; 24:19; 25:2,7,10,15; 26:2,21; 28:19
2. in a positive sense – Acts 13:43; 14:1; 18:2,24; 21:20

Possibly the best text in Acts which shows the different connotations of this term is Acts 14:1-2.

**28:20 "for the sake of the hope of Israel"** Paul is addressing these Jewish leaders in such a way as to establish a relationship with his audience. He tries to find a common ground with these Jewish leaders in "the hope of Israel." For Paul, that referred to Jesus, for them, the Promised Coming One, the Messiah or possibly to the resurrection!

**28:21** This lack of information about Paul is surprising in light of Paul's ministry on three mission journeys and the events and rumors in Jerusalem.

**28:22** It is obvious that the news about Jesus was spreading and that many were responding to the gospel. In Jewish circles this was not good news! However, these Jewish leaders were willing to give Paul a hearing.

■ **"This sect"** See Special Topic: Jesus the Nazarene at Acts 2:22.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 28:23-29**

**<sup>23</sup>When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening. <sup>24</sup>Some were being persuaded by the things spoken, but others would not believe. <sup>25</sup>And when they did not agree with one another, they *began* leaving after Paul had spoken one *parting* word, "The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers, <sup>26</sup>saying, 'Go to this people and say, You will keep on hearing, but will not understand; And you will keep on seeing, but will not perceive; <sup>27</sup>For the heart of this people has become dull, And with their ears they scarcely hear, And they have closed their eyes; Otherwise they might see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart and return, And I would heal them.' <sup>28</sup>Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also listen." <sup>29</sup>[When he had spoken these words, the Jews departed, having a great dispute among themselves.]**

**28:23 "they came. . .in large numbers. . .from morning until evening"** Paul explained the Christian faith to these Jews all day! What a marvelous opportunity.

■ **"the kingdom of God"** This was the central theme of Jesus' preaching and teaching (parables). It is a present reality in the lives of believers and a future consummation of God's reign over all the fallen earth (cf. Matt. 6:10). This phrase is obviously not related to Israel only, but it was an integral part of Israel's hope (cf. Acts 28:20). See Special Topic at Acts 1:3.

■ **"the Law of Moses and from the Prophets"** This is two of the three divisions of the Hebrew canon (see Special Topic at Acts 13:15 and the note at Acts 24:14) which stood for the entire OT (cf. Matt. 5:17; 7:12; 22:40; Luke 16:16; 24:44; Acts 13:15; 28:23). Paul's methodology (Christological typology and predictive prophecy) was to set the OT texts alongside the life of Jesus.

**28:24** This reflects the mystery of the gospel. Why some believe and some do not is the mystery of a sovereign God and human free will.

In one sense Paul's ministry to the Jewish leaders in Rome is a microcosm of Paul's ministry. He first shared with the Jews. He shared Jesus' fulfillment of OT Scriptures. Some believed, but most did not. This too, was predicted in the OT (cf. Isa. 6:9-10).

**28:25-27 "The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah"** This reveals Paul's view of the mystery of Israel's unbelief! The quote in verses 26-27 is from Isa. 6:9-10. Jesus used this verse often of human unbelief (cf. Matt. 13:14-15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:39-40). By this time Paul had already penned Romans 9-11 (why has Israel rejected her Messiah?). Israel of the OT would not/did not fully believe either. There was a remnant of faith, but a majority of unbelief.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE REMNANT, THREE SENSES**

**28:28 "this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles"** This may be an allusion to Psalm 67, especially Acts 28:2. This universal aspect of Christianity is what caused the riot in Jerusalem and was an ongoing problem for many Jews. This is logical from Gen. 1:26,27; 3:15; 12:3. It was prophesied in Isaiah, Micah, and Jonah. It is clearly stated as God's eternal plan by Paul in Eph. 2:11-3:13! See Special Topic at Acts 1:8.

■ **"they will also listen"** This is the truth of Romans 9-11. The Jews rejected the Messiah because He did not fit their expectations and because the gospel opened the door of faith to all people.

The NT issue really is not Jew vs. Gentile, but believer vs. unbeliever. The issue is not who is your mother, but is your heart open to God's Spirit and God's Son?!

**28:29** This verse is omitted in the ancient Greek manuscripts P<sup>74</sup>, κ, A, B, and E. It does not appear in any Greek manuscript before P, which dates to the sixth century a.d. UBS<sup>4</sup> rates its exclusion as "A" (certain).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ACTS 28:30-31**

**<sup>30</sup>And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, <sup>31</sup>preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.**

**28:30 "two full years"** This was possibly

1. the normal period of time required to see the Caesar
2. the time needed to get new papers from Festus
3. the mandatory waiting period for witnesses from Asia or Jerusalem
4. close to the legal statute of limitations

It was during this time that Paul wrote his prison letters (Colossians, Ephesians, Philemon, and Philippians).

■ **"in his own rented quarters"** Paul had some source of income.

1. he worked at tent making or leather working
2. he was helped by churches (Thessalonica and Philippi)
3. he had some inherited funds

■ **"welcoming"** Luke uses this term often with the connotation of "heartily welcome" (cf. Acts 18:27; 28:30)

and *paradechōmai* in Acts 15:4). It is used of the crowd welcoming Jesus in Luke 8:40 and 9:11. It is used of welcoming the gospel as preached by Peter in Acts 2:41.

■ **"all who came"** This was the problem. Paul's gospel had a universal reach. It was "good news" for all humans, not just Jews!

**28:31 "preaching. . .teaching"** The early, post-apostolic church made a distinction between these two ways of presenting truth. The body of sermons recorded in Acts (Peter, Stephen, Paul) is called the *Kerygma* (proclamation, cf. Acts 20:25; 28:31; Rom. 10:8; Gal. 2:2; 1 Cor. 9:27; 2 Tim. 4:2), while the teaching of Jesus interpreted in the Epistles is called the *Didache* (teaching, cf. Acts 2:42; 5:28; 13:12; Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 14:20).

■ **"the kingdom of God"** This was the subject of Jesus' preaching. It refers to the reign of God in man's hearts now that will one day be consummated on earth as it has been in heaven. This passage also shows that the topic is not only for Jews. See Special Topic at Acts 1:3.

■ **"the Lord"** "Lord" is the translation of the Hebrew term *adon*, which meant "owner, husband, master, or lord" (see [SPECIAL TOPIC: NAMES FOR DEITY](#) at Acts 1:6). The Jews became afraid of pronouncing the sacred name YHWH lest they take it in vain and break one of the Ten Commandments. Whenever they read the Scriptures, they substituted *Adon* for YHWH. This is why our English translations use all capitals Lord for YHWH in the OT. By transferring this title (*kurios* in Greek) to Jesus, the NT authors assert His deity and equality with the Father.

■ **"Jesus"** "Jesus" is the name given to the baby in Bethlehem by the angel (cf. Matt. 1:21). It is made up of two Hebrew nouns: "YHWH," the covenant name for deity, and "salvation" (i.e., Hosea). It is the same Hebrew name as Joshua. When used alone it often identifies the man, Jesus of Nazareth, son of Mary (e.g., Matt. 1:16, 25; 2:1; 3:13,15,16).

■ **"Christ"** "Christ" is the Greek translation of the Hebrew *Messiah* (i.e., an Anointed One, see Special Topic at Acts 2:31). It asserts Jesus' OT title as YHWH's promised One sent to set up the new age of righteousness.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"with all openness, unhindered"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"with all confidence, no one forbidding him"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"with all boldness and without hindrance"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"speaking with all boldness and freedom"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"with complete fearlessness and without any hindrance from anyone"</b>

This verse shows that the Roman authorities did not consider Christianity subversive or dangerous. The Greek text ends with the adverb "unfettered" or "unhinderedly." This seems to emphasize the ongoing nature of the task of proclamation and the power of the Spirit.

Many have assumed, based on Acts 1:1 use of "first," which implies more than two, that Luke planned to write a third volume. Some even think that this third volume may be the Pastoral Letters (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus).

For the Greek term (*parrhēsia*), translated "openness" by NASB, see Special Topic at Acts 4:29.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why does Acts end with Paul still in prison? Why does it end so abruptly?
2. Why does Luke take so much time in describing Paul's trip and stay in Rome?
3. Why did Paul always try to witness to the Jews first?
4. Explain the difference between the *Kerygma* and *Didache*.

# BRIEF DEFINITIONS OF GREEK GRAMMATICAL TERMS

Koine Greek, often called Hellenistic Greek, was the common language of the Mediterranean world beginning with Alexander the Great's (336-323 b.c..) conquest and lasting about eight hundred years (300 b.c.-a.d. 500). It was not just a simplified, classical Greek, but in many ways a newer form of Greek that became the second language of the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean world.

The Greek of the New Testament was unique in some ways because its users, except Luke and the author of Hebrews, probably used Aramaic as their primary language. Therefore, their writing was influenced by the idioms and structural forms of Aramaic. Also, they read and quoted the Septuagint (Greek translation of the OT) which was also written in Koine Greek. But the Septuagint was also written by Jewish scholars whose mother tongue was not Greek.

This serves as a reminder that we cannot push the New Testament into a tight grammatical structure. It is unique and yet has much in common with (1) the Septuagint; (2) Jewish writings such as those of Josephus; and (3) the papyri found in Egypt. How then do we approach a grammatical analysis of the New Testament?

The grammatical features of Koine Greek and New Testament Koine Greek are fluid. In many ways it was a time of simplification of grammar. Context will be our major guide. Words only have meaning in a larger context, therefore, grammatical structure can only be understood in light of (1) a particular author's style; and (2) a particular context. No conclusive definitions of Greek forms and structures are possible.

Koine Greek was primarily a verbal language. Often the key to interpretation is the type and form of the verbals. In most main clauses the verb will occur first, showing its preeminence. In analyzing the Greek verb three pieces of information must be noted: (1) the basic emphasis of the tense, voice and mood (accidence or morphology); (2) the basic meaning of the particular verb (lexicography); and (3) the flow of the context (syntax).

## I. TENSE

A. Tense or aspect involves the relationship of the verbs to completed action or incomplete action. This is often called "perfective" and "imperfective."

1. Perfective tenses focus on the occurrence of an action. No further information is given except that something happened! Its start, continuation or culmination is not addressed.
2. Imperfective tenses focus on the continuing process of an action. It can be described in terms of linear action, durative action, progressive action, etc.

B. Tenses can be categorized by how the author sees the action as progressing

1. It occurred = aorist
2. It occurred and the results abide = perfect
3. It was occurring in the past and the results were abiding, but not now = pluperfect
4. It is occurring = present
5. It was occurring = imperfect
6. It will occur = future

A concrete example of how these tenses help in interpretation would be the term "save." It was used in several different tenses to show both its process and culmination:

1. aorist - "saved" (cf. Rom. 8:24)
2. perfect - "have been saved and the result continues" (cf. Eph. 2:5,8)
3. present - "being saved" (cf. I Cor. 1:18; 15:2)
4. future - "shall be saved" (cf. Rom. 5:9, 10; 10:9)

C. In focusing on verb tenses, interpreters look for the reason the original author chose to express

himself in a certain tense. The standard "no frills" tense was the aorist. It was the regular "unspecific," "unmarked," or "unflagged" verb form. It can be used in a wide variety of ways which the context must specify. It simply was stating that something occurred. The past time aspect is only intended in the indicative mood. If any other tense was used, something more specific was being emphasized. But what?

1. perfect tense. This speaks of a completed action with abiding results. In some ways it was a combination of the aorist and present tenses. Usually the focus is on the abiding results or the completion of an act (example: Eph. 2:5 & 8, "you have been and continue to be saved").
2. pluperfect tense. This was like the perfect except the abiding results have ceased. Example: John 18:16 "Peter was standing at the door outside."
3. present tense. This speaks of an incomplete or imperfect action. The focus is usually on the continuation of the event. Example: I John 3:6 & 9, "Everyone abiding in Him does not continue sinning." "Everyone having been begotten of God does not continue to commit sin."
4. imperfect tense. In this tense the relationship to the present tense is analogous to the relationship between the perfect and the pluperfect. The imperfect speaks of incomplete action that was occurring but has now ceased or the beginning of an action in the past. Example: Matt. 3:5, "then all Jerusalem were continuing to go out to him" or "then all Jerusalem began to go out to him."
5. future tense. This speaks of an action that was usually projected into a future time frame. It focused on the potential for an occurrence rather than an actual occurrence. It often speaks of the certainty of the event. Example: Matt. 5:4-9, "Blessed are . . . they will . . ."

## II. VOICE

- A. Voice describes the relationship between the action of the verb and its subject.
- B. Active voice was the normal, expected, unemphasized way to assert that the subject was performing the action of the verb.
- C. The passive voice means that the subject was receiving the action of the verb produced by an outside agent. The outside agent producing the action was indicated in the Greek NT by the following prepositions and cases:
  1. a personal direct agent by *hupo* with the ablative case (cf. Matt. 1:22; Acts 22:30).
  2. a personal intermediate agent by *dia* with the ablative case (cf. Matt. 1:22).
  3. an impersonal agent usually by *en* with the instrumental case.
  4. sometimes either a personal or impersonal agent by the instrumental case alone.
- D. The middle voice means that the subject produces the action of the verb and is also directly involved in the action of the verb. It is often called the voice of heightened personal interest. This construction emphasized the subject of the clause or sentence in some way. This construction is not found in English. It has a wide possibility of meanings and translations in Greek. Some examples of the form are:
  1. reflexive - the direct action of the subject on itself. Example: Matt. 27:5 "hanged himself."
  2. intensive - the subject produces the action for itself. Example: II Cor. 11:14 "Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light."
  3. reciprocal - the interplay of two subjects. Example: Matt. 26:4 "they counseled with one another."

## III. MOOD (or "MODE")

- A. There are four moods in Koine Greek. They indicate the relation of the verb to reality, at least within the author's own mind. The moods are divided into two broad categories: that which indicated reality (indicative) and that which indicated potentiality (subjunctive, imperative and optative).
- B. The indicative mood was the normal mood for expressing action that had occurred or was occurring, at least in the author's mind. It was the only Greek mood that expressed a definite time, and even here this aspect was secondary.
- C. The subjunctive mood expressed probable future action. Something had not yet happened, but the

chances were likely that it would. It had much in common with the future indicative. The difference was that the subjunctive expresses some degree of doubt. In English this is often expressed by the terms "could," "would," "may," or "might."

- D. The optative mood expressed a wish which was theoretically possible. It was considered one step further from reality than the subjunctive. The optative expressed possibility under certain conditions. The optative was rare in the New Testament. Its most frequent usage is Paul's famous phrase, "May it never be" (KJV, "God forbid"), used fifteen times (cf. Rom. 3:4, 6, 31; 6:2, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:14; 11:1, 11; I Cor. 6:15; Gal. 2:17; 3:21; 6:14). Other examples are found in Luke 1:38, 20:16, Acts 8:20, and I Thess. 3:11.
- E. The imperative mood emphasized a command which was possible, but the emphasis was on the intent of the speaker. It asserted only volitional possibility and was conditioned on the choices of another. There was a special use of the imperative in prayers and 3rd person requests. These commands were found only in the present and aorist tenses in the NT.
- F. Some grammars categorize participles as another type of mood. They are very common in the Greek NT, usually defined as verbal adjectives. They are translated in conjunction with the main verb to which they relate. A wide variety was possible in translating participles. It is best to consult several English translations. *The Bible in Twenty Six Translations* published by Baker is a great help here.
- G. The aorist active indicative was the normal or "unmarked" way to record an occurrence. Any other tense, voice or mood had some specific interpretive significance that the original author wanted to communicate.

IV. For the person not familiar with Greek the following study aids will provide the needed information:

- A. Friberg, Barbara and Timothy. *Analytical Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988.
- B. Marshall, Alfred. *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976.
- C. Mounce, William D. *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993.
- D. Summers, Ray. *Essentials of New Testament Greek*. Nashville: Broadman, 1950.
- E. Academically accredited Koine Greek correspondence courses are available through Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, IL.

## V. NOUNS

- A. Syntactically, nouns are classified by case. Case was that inflected form of a noun that showed its relationship to the verb and other parts of the sentence. In Koine Greek many of the case functions were indicated by prepositions. Since the case form was able to identify several different relationships, the prepositions developed to give clearer separation to these possible functions.
- B. Greek cases are categorized in the following eight ways:
  1. The nominative case was used for naming and it usually was the subject of the sentence or clause. It was also used for predicate nouns and adjectives with the linking verbs "to be" or "become."
  2. The genitive case was used for description and usually assigned an attribute or quality to the word to which it was related. It answered the question, "What kind?" It was often expressed by the use of the English preposition "of."
  3. The ablative case used the same inflected form as the genitive, but it was used to describe separation. It usually denoted separation from a point in time, space, source, origin or degree. It was often expressed by the use of the English preposition "from."
  4. The dative case was used to describe personal interest. This could denote a positive or negative aspect. Often this was the indirect object. It was often expressed by the English preposition "to."
  5. The locative case was the same inflected form as the dative, but it described position or location in space, time or logical limits. It was often expressed by the English prepositions "in, on, at, among, during, by, upon, and beside."

6. The instrumental case was the same inflected form as the dative and locative cases. It expressed means or association. It was often expressed by the English prepositions, "by" or "with."
7. The accusative case was used to describe the conclusion of an action. It expressed limitation. Its main use was the direct object. It answered the question, "How far?" or "To what extent?"
8. The vocative case was used for direct address.

## VI. CONJUNCTIONS AND CONNECTORS

A. Greek is a very precise language because it has so many connectives. They connect thoughts (clauses, sentences, and paragraphs). They are so common that their absence (asyndeton) is often exegetically significant. As a matter of fact, these conjunctions and connectors show the direction of the author's thought. They often are crucial in determining what exactly he is trying to communicate.

B. Here is a list of some of the conjunctions and connectors and their meanings (this information has been gleaned mostly from H. E. Dana and Julius K. Mantey's *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*).

### 1. Time connectors

- a. *epei, epeidē, hopote, hōs, hote, hotan* (subj.) - "when"
- b. *heōs* - "while"
- c. *hotan, epan* (subj.) - "whenever"
- d. *heōs, achri, mechri* (subj.) - "until"
- e. *priv* (infin.) - "before"
- f. *hōs* - "since," "when," "as"

### 2. Logical connectors

#### a. Purpose

- (1) *hina* (subj.), *hopōs* (subj.), *hōs* - "in order that," "that"
- (2) *hōste* (articular accusative infinitive) - "that"
- (3) *pros* (articular accusative infinitive) or *eis* (articular accusative infinitive) - "that"

#### b. Result (there is a close association between the grammatical forms of purpose and result)

- (1) *hōste* (infinitive, this is the most common) - "in order that," "thus"
- (2) *hiva* (subj.) - "so that"
- (3) *ara* - "so"

#### c. Causal or reason

- (1) *gar* (cause/effect or reason/conclusion) - "for," "because"
- (2) *dioti, hotiy* - "because"
- (3) *epei, epeidē, hōs* - "since"
- (4) *dia* (with accusative) and (with articular infin.) - "because"

#### d. Inferential

- (1) *ara, poinun, hōste* - "therefore"
- (2) *dio* (strongest inferential conjunction) - "on which account," "wherefore," "therefore"
- (3) *oun* - "therefore," "so," "then," "consequently"
- (4) *toinoun* - "accordingly"

#### e. Adversative or contrast

- (1) *alla* (strong adversative) - "but," "except"
- (2) *de* - "but," "however," "yet," "on the other hand"
- (3) *kai* - "but"
- (4) *mentoi, oun* - "however"
- (5) *plēn* - "never-the-less" (mostly in Luke)
- (6) *oun* - "however"

#### f. Comparison

- (1) *hōs, kathōs* (introduce comparative clauses)
- (2) *kata* (in compounds, *katho, kathoti, kathōsper, kathaper*)



- (3) *hosos* (in Hebrews)
- (4) *ē* - "than"
- g. Continuative or series
  - (1) *de* - "and," "now"
  - (2) *kai* - "and"
  - (3) *tei* - "and"
  - (4) *hina, oun* - "that"
  - (5) *oun* - "then" (in John)

### 3. Emphatic usages

- a. *alla* - "certainty," "yea," "in fact"
- b. *ara* - "indeed," "certainly," "really"
- c. *gar* - "but really," "certainly," "indeed"
- d. *de* - "indeed"
- e. *ean* - "even"
- f. *kai* - "even," "indeed," "really"
- g. *mentoi* - "indeed"
- h. *oun* - "really," "by all means"

## VII. CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

- A. A conditional sentence is one that contains one or more conditional clauses. This grammatical structure aids interpretation because it provides the conditions, reasons or causes why the action of the main verb does or does not occur. There were four types of conditional sentences. They move from that which was assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his purpose to that which was only a wish.
- B. The first class conditional sentence expressed action or being which was assumed to be true from the writer's perspective or for his purposes even though it was expressed with an "if." In several contexts it could be translated "since" (cf. Matt. 4:3; Rom. 8:31). However, this does not mean to imply that all first classes are true to reality. Often they were used to make a point in an argument or to highlight a fallacy (cf. Matt. 12:27).
- C. The second class conditional sentence is often called "contrary to fact." It states something that was untrue to reality to make a point. Examples:
  - 1. "If He were really a prophet which He is not, He would know who and of what character the woman is who is clinging to Him, but He does not" (Luke 7:39)
  - 2. "If you really believed Moses, which you do not, you would believe me, which you do not" (John 5:46)
  - 3. "If I were still trying to be pleasing to men, which I am not, I would not be a slave of Christ at all, which I am" (Gal. 1:10)
- D. The third class speaks of possible future action. It often assumes the probability of that action. It usually implies a contingency. The action of the main verb is contingent on the action in the "if" clause. Examples from I John: 1:6-10; 2:4,6,9,15,20,21,24,29; 3:21; 4:20; 5:14,16.
- E. The fourth class is the farthest removed from possibility. It is rare in the NT. As a matter of fact, there is no complete fourth class conditional sentence in which both parts of the condition fit the definition. An example of a partial fourth class is the opening clause in I Pet. 3:14. An example of a partial fourth class in the concluding clause is Acts 8:31.

## VIII. PROHIBITIONS

- A. The present imperative with *mē* particle often (but not exclusively) has the emphasis of stopping an act already in process. Some examples: "stop storing up your riches on earth. . ." (Matt. 6:19); "stop worrying about your life. . ." (Matt. 6:25); "stop offering to sin the parts of your bodies as instruments of wrongdoing. . ." (Rom. 6:13); "you must stop offending the Holy Spirit of God. . ." (Eph. 4:30); and "stop getting drunk on wine. . ." (5:18).

- B. The aorist subjunctive with *mē* particle has the emphasis of "do not even begin or start an act." Some examples: "Do not even begin to suppose that. . ." (Matt. 5:17); "never start to worry. . ." (Matt. 6:31); "you must never be ashamed. . ." (II Tim. 1:8).
- C. The double negative with the subjunctive mood is a very emphatic negation. "Never, no never" or "not under any circumstance." Some examples: "he will never, no never experience death" (John 8:51); "I will never, no, never. . ." (I Cor. 8:13).

## IX. THE ARTICLE

- A. In Koine Greek the definite article "the" had a use similar to English. Its basic function was that of "a pointer," a way to draw attention to a word, name or phrase. The use varies from author to author in the New Testament. The definite article could also function
  - 1. as a contrasting device like a demonstrative pronoun;
  - 2. as a sign to refer to a previously introduced subject or person;
  - 3. as a way to identify the subject in a sentence with a linking verb. Examples: "God is Spirit" (John 4:24); "God is light" (I John 1:5); "God is love" (4:8,16).
- B. Koine Greek did not have an indefinite article like the English "a" or "an." The absence of the definite article could mean
  - 1. a focus on the characteristics or quality of something
  - 2. a focus on the category of something
- C. The NT authors varied widely as to how the article was employed.

## X. WAYS OF SHOWING EMPHASIS IN THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

- A. The techniques for showing emphasis vary from author to author in the New Testament. The most consistent and formal writers were Luke and the author of Hebrews.
- B. We have stated earlier that the aorist active indicative was standard and unmarked for emphasis, but any other tense, voice, or mood had interpretive significance. This is not to imply that the aorist active indicative was not often used in a significant grammatical sense. (Example: Rom. 6:10 [twice]).
- C. Word order in Koine Greek
  - 1. Koine Greek was an inflected language which was not dependent, like English, on word order. Therefore, the author could vary the normal expected order to show
    - a. what the author wanted to emphasize to the reader
    - b. what the author thought would be surprising to the reader
    - c. what the author felt deeply about
  - 2. The normal word order in Greek is still an unsettled issue. However, the supposed normal order is:
    - a. for linking verbs
      - (1) verb
      - (2) subject
      - (3) complement
    - b. for transitive verbs
      - (1) verb
      - (2) subject
      - (3) object
      - (4) indirect object
      - (5) prepositional phrase
    - c. for noun phrases
      - (1) noun
      - (2) modifier
      - (3) prepositional phrase
  - 3. Word order can be an extremely important exegetical point. Examples:
    - a. "right hand they gave to me and Barnabas of fellowship." The phrase "right hand of

- fellowship" is split and fronted to show its significance (Gal. 2:9).
  - b. "with Christ" was placed first. His death was central (Gal. 2:20).
  - c. "It was bit by bit and in many different ways" (Heb. 1:1) was placed first. It was how God revealed Himself that was being contrasted, not the fact of revelation.
- D. Usually some degree of emphasis was shown by
1. The repetition of the pronoun which was already present in the verb's inflected form. Example: "I, myself, will surely be with you. . ." (Matt. 28:20).
  2. The absence of an expected conjunction, or other connecting device between words, phrases, clauses or sentences. This is called an asyndeton ("not bound"). The connecting device was expected, so its absence would draw attention. Examples:
    - a. The Beatitudes, Matt. 5:3ff (emphasized the list)
    - b. John 14:1 (new topic)
    - c. Romans 9:1 (new section)
    - d. II Cor. 12:20 (emphasize the list)
  3. The repetition of words or phrases present in a given context. Examples: "to the praise of His glory" (Eph. 1:6, 12 & 14). This phrase was used to show the work of each person of the Trinity.
  4. The use of an idiom or word (sound) play between terms
    - a. euphemisms - substitute words for taboo subjects, like "sleep" for death (John 11:11-14) or "feet" for male genitalia (Ruth 3:7-8; I Sam. 24:3).
    - b. circumlocutions - substitute words for God's name, like "Kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 3:2) or "a voice from heaven" (Matt. 3:17).
    - c. figures of speech
      - (1) impossible exaggerations (Matt. 3:9; 5:29-30; 19:24)
      - (2) mild over statements (Matt. 3:5; Acts 2:36)
      - (3) personifications (I Cor. 15:55)
      - (4) irony (Gal. 5:12)
      - (5) poetic passages (Phil. 2:6-11)
      - (6) sound plays between words
        - (a) "church"
          - (i) "church" (Eph. 3:21)
          - (ii) "calling" (Eph. 4:1,4)
          - (iii)"called" (Eph. 4:1,4)
        - (b) "free"
          - (i) "free woman" (Gal. 4:31)
          - (ii)"freedom" (Gal. 5:1)
          - (iii)"free" (Gal. 5:1)
    - d. idiomatic language - language which is usually cultural and language specific:
      - (1) figurative use of "food" (John 4:31-34)
      - (2) figurative use of "Temple" (John 2:19; Matt. 26:61)
      - (3) Hebrew idiom of compassion, "hate" (Gen. 29:31; Deut. 21:15; Luke 14:36; John 12:25; Rom. 9:13)
      - (4) "All" versus "many." Compare Isa. 53:6 ("all") with 53:11 & 12 ("many"). The terms are synonymous as Rom. 5:18 and 19 show.
  5. The use of a full linguistic phrase instead of a single word. Example: "The Lord Jesus Christ."
  6. The special use of *autos*
    - a. when with the article (attributive position) it was translated "same."
    - b. when without the article (predicate position) it was translated as an intensive reflexive pronoun-"himself," "herself," or "itself."
- E. The non-Greek reading Bible student can identify emphasis in several ways:
1. The use of an analytical lexicon and interlinear Greek/English text.
  2. The comparison of English translations, particularly from the differing theories of translations. Example: comparing a "word-for-word" translation (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, RSV, NRSV)

with a "dynamic equivalent" (Williams, NIV, NEB, REB, JB, NJB, TEV). A good help here would be *The Bible in Twenty-Six Translations* published by Baker.

3. The use of *The Emphasized Bible* by Joseph Bryant Rotherham (Kregel, 1994).

4. The use of a very literal translation

a. *The American Standard Version* of 1901

b. *Young's Literal Translation of the Bible* by Robert Young (Guardian Press, 1976).

The study of grammar is tedious but necessary for proper interpretation. These brief definitions, comments and examples are meant to encourage and equip non-Greek reading persons to use the grammatical notes provided in this volume. Surely these definitions are oversimplified. They should not be used in a dogmatic, inflexible manner, but as stepping stones toward a greater understanding of New Testament syntax. Hopefully these definitions will also enable readers to understand the comments of other study aids such as technical commentaries on the New Testament.

We must be able to verify our interpretation based on items of information found in the texts of the Bible. Grammar is one of the most helpful of these items; other items would include historical setting, literary context, contemporary word usage, and parallel passages.

# TEXTUAL CRITICISM

This subject will be dealt with in such a way as to explain the textual notes found in this commentary. The following outline will be utilized

- I. The textual sources of our English Bible
  - A. Old Testament
  - B. New Testament
- II. Brief explanation of the problems and theories of "lower criticism" also called "textual criticism."
- III. Suggested sources for further reading

## I. The textual sources of our English Bible

### A. Old Testament

1. Masoretic text (MT) - The Hebrew consonantal text was set by Rabbi Aquiba in a.d. 100. The vowel points, accents, marginal notes, punctuation and apparatus points started being added in the sixth century a.d. and were finished in the ninth century a.d. It was done by a family of Jewish scholars known as the Masoretes. The textual form they used was the same as the one in the Mishnah, Talmud, Targums, Peshitta, and Vulgate.
2. Septuagint (LXX) - Tradition says the Septuagint was produced by 70 Jewish scholars in 70 days for the Alexandria library under the sponsorship of King Ptolemy II (285-246 b.c.) The translation was supposedly requested by a Jewish leader living in Alexandria. This tradition comes from "Letter of Aristeas." The LXX frequently was based on a differing Hebrew textual tradition from the text of Rabbi Aquiba (MT).
3. Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) - The Dead Sea Scrolls were written in the Roman b.c. period (200 b.c. to a.d. 70) by a sect of Jewish separatists called the "Essenes." The Hebrew manuscripts, found in several sites around the Dead Sea, show a somewhat different Hebrew textual family behind both the MT and the LXX.
4. Some specific examples of how the comparison of these texts have helped interpreters understand the Old Testament
  - a. The LXX has helped translators and scholars understand the MT
    - (1) the LXX of Isa. 52:14, "As many shall be amazed at him."
    - (2) the MT of Isa. 52:14, "Just as many were astonished over you."
    - (3) in Isa. 52:15 the pronoun distinction of the LXX is confirmed
      - (a) LXX, "so will many nations marvel at him"
      - (b) MT, "so he sprinkles many nations"
  - b. The DSS have helped translators and scholars understand the MT
    - (1) the DSS of Isa. 21:8, "then the seer cried, Upon a watchtower I stand. . ."
    - (2) the MT of Isa. 21:8, "and I cried a lion! My Lord, I always stand on the watch tower by day. . ."
  - c. Both the LXX and DSS have helped clarify Isa. 53:11
    - (1) LXX & DSS, "after the travail of his soul he will see light, he will be satisfied"
    - (2) MT, "he shall see. . .of the travail of his soul, He shall be satisfied"

### B. New Testament

1. Over 5,300 manuscripts of all or parts of the Greek New Testament are extant. About 85 are written on papyri and 268 are manuscripts written in all capital letters (uncials). Later, about the ninth century a.d., a running script (minuscule) was developed. The Greek manuscripts in written form number about 2,700. We also have about 2,100 copies of lists of Scripture texts used in worship that we call lectionaries.
2. About 85 Greek manuscripts containing parts of the New Testament written on papyrus are

housed in museums. Some are dated from the second century a.d., but most are from the third and fourth centuries a.d. None of these MSS contain the whole New Testament. Just because these are the oldest copies of the New Testament does not automatically mean they have fewer variants. Many of these were copied rapidly for a local use. Care was not exercised in the process. Therefore, they contain many variants.

3. Codex Sinaiticus, known by the Hebrew letter  $\aleph$  (*aleph*) or (01), found at St. Catherine's monastery on Mt. Sinai by Tischendorf. It dates from the fourth century a.d. and contains both the LXX of the OT and the Greek NT. It is of "the Alexandrian Text" type.
4. Codex Alexandrinus, known as "A" or (02), a fifth century Greek manuscript which was found in Alexandria, Egypt.
5. Codex Vaticanus, known as "B" or (03), found in the Vatican's library in Rome and dates from the middle of the fourth century a.d. It contains both LXX of the Old Testament and Greek New Testament. It is of "the Alexandrian Text" type.
6. Codex Ephraemi, known as "C" or (04), a fifth century Greek manuscript which was partially destroyed.
7. Codex Bezae, known as "D" or (05), a fifth or sixth century Greek manuscript. It is the chief representative of what is called "The Western Text." It contains many additions and was the main Greek witness for the King James translation.
8. The NT MSS can be grouped into three, possibly four, families that share certain characteristics.
  - a. Alexandrian text from Egypt
    - (1) P<sup>75</sup>, P<sup>66</sup> (about a.d. 200), which record the Gospels
    - (2) P<sup>46</sup> (about a.d. 225), which records Paul's letters
    - (3) P<sup>72</sup> (about a.d. 225-250), which records Peter and Jude
    - (4) Codex B, called Vaticanus (about a.d. 325), which includes the whole OT and NT
    - (5) Origen quotes from this text type
    - (6) other MSS which show this text type are  $\aleph$ , C, L, W, 33
  - b. Western text from North Africa
    - (1) quotes from North African church fathers, Tertullian, Cyprian, and the Old Latin translation
    - (2) quotes from Irenaeus
    - (3) quotes from Tatian and Old Syriac translation
    - (4) Codex D "Bezae" follow this text type
  - c. Eastern Byzantine text from Constantinople
    - (1) this text type is reflected in over 80% of the 5,300 MSS
    - (2) quoted by Antioch of Syria's church fathers, Cappadoceans, Chrysostom, and Therodoret
    - (3) Codex A, in the Gospels only
    - (4) Codex E (eighth century) for full NT
  - d. the fourth possible type is "Caesarean" from Palestine
    - (1) it is primarily seen only in Mark
    - (2) some witnesses to it are P<sup>45</sup> and W

## II. The problems and theories of "lower criticism" or "textual criticism."

### A. How the variants occurred

1. inadvertent or accidental (vast majority of occurrences)
  - a. slip of the eye in hand copying which reads the second instance of two similar words and thereby omits all of the words in between (homoioteleuton)
    - (1) slip of the eye in omitting a double letter word or phrase (haplography)
    - (2) slip of the mind in repeating a phrase or line of a Greek text (dittography)
  - b. slip of the ear in copying by oral dictation where a misspelling occurs (itacism). Often the

misspelling implies or spells a similar-sounding Greek word.

- c. the earliest Greek texts had no chapter or verse divisions, little or no punctuation and no division between words. It is possible to divide the letters in different places forming different words.

## 2. intentional

- a. changes were made to improve the grammatical form of the text copied
- b. changes were made to bring the text into conformity with other biblical texts (harmonization of parallels)
- c. changes were made by combining two or more variant readings into one long combined text (conflation)
- d. changes were made to correct a perceived problem in the text (cf. I Cor. 11:27 and I John 5:7-8)
- e. some additional information as to the historical setting or proper interpretation of the text was placed in the margin by one scribe but placed into the text by a second scribe (cf. John 5:4)

## B. The basic tenets of textual criticism (logical guidelines for determining the original reading of a text when variants exist)

1. the most awkward or grammatically unusual text is probably the original
2. the shortest text is probably the original
3. the older text is given more weight because of its historical proximity to the original, everything else being equal
4. MSS that are geographically diverse usually have the original reading
5. doctrinally weaker texts, especially those relating to major theological discussions of the period of manuscript changes, like the Trinity in I John 5:7-8, are to be preferred.
6. the text that can best explain the origin of the other variants
7. two quotes that help show the balance in these troubling variants

- a. J. Harold Greenlee's book, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, p. 68:

"No Christian doctrine hangs upon a debatable text; and the student of the NT must beware of wanting his text to be more orthodox or doctrinally stronger than is the inspired original."

- b. W. A. Criswell told Greg Garrison of *The Birmingham News* that he (Criswell) doesn't believe every word in the Bible is inspired, "at least not every word that has been given to the modern public by centuries of translators." Criswell said: "I very much am a believer in the textual criticism. As such, I think, the last half of the 16th chapter of Mark is heresy: it's not inspired, it's just concocted. . .When you compare those manuscripts way back yonder, there was no such thing as that conclusion of the Book of Mark. Somebody added it..."

The patriarch of the SBC inerrantists also claimed that "interpolation" is also evident in John 5, the account of Jesus at the pool of Bethesda. And he discusses the two different accounts of the suicide of Judas (cf. Matt. 27 and Acts 1): "It's just a different view of the suicide," Criswell said. "If it is in the Bible, there is an explanation for it. And the two accounts of the suicide of Judas are in the Bible." Criswell added, "Textual criticism is a wonderful science in itself. It is not ephemeral, it's not impertinent. It's dynamic and central..."

## III. Manuscript problems (textual criticism)

### A. Suggested sources for further reading

1. *Biblical Criticism: Historical, Literary and Textual*, by R.H. Harrison
2. *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration* by Bruce M. Metzger
3. *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, by J. H Greenlee

# OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVE

## I. OPENING STATEMENTS

- A. The relationship between the OT and other ways of the chronicling of events
  - 1. Other ancient Near Eastern literature is mythological
    - a. polytheistic (usually humanistic gods reflecting the powers of nature but using interpersonal conflict motifs)
    - b. Based on the cycles of nature (dying and rising gods)
  - 2. Greco-Roman is for entertainment and encouragement rather than the recording of historical events per se (Homer in many ways reflects Mesopotamian motifs)
- B. Possibly the use of three German terms illustrates the difference in types or definitions of history
  - 1. "Historie," the recording of events (bare facts)
  - 2. "Geschichte," the interpretation of events showing their significance to mankind
  - 3. "Heilsgeschichte" refers uniquely to God's redemptive plan and activity within the historical process
- C. The OT and NT narratives are "Geschichte" which leads to an understanding of Heilgeschichte; they are selected theologically oriented historical events
  - 1. selected events only
  - 2. chronology not as significant as theology
  - 3. events shared to reveal truth
- D. Narrative is the most common genre in the OT. It has been estimated that 40% of the OT is narrative. Therefore, this genre is useful to the Spirit in communicating God's message and character to fallen mankind. But, it is done, not propositionally (like the NT Epistles), but by implication, summation, or selected dialog/monolog. One must continue to ask why this is recorded. What is it trying to emphasize? What is its theological purpose?  
This in no way is meant to depreciate the history. But, it is history as the servant and channel of revelation.

## II. Biblical Narratives

- A. God is active in His world. Inspired Bible authors chose certain events to reveal God. God is the major character of the OT.
- B. Every narrative functions in several ways:
  - 1. who is God and what is He doing in His world
  - 2. mankind is revealed through God's dealing with individuals and national entities
  - 3. as an example specifically notice Joshua's military victory linked to covenant performance (cf. 1:7-8; 8:30-35)
- C. Often narratives are strung together to make a larger literary unit which reveals a single theological truth.

## III. Interpretive principles of OT narratives

- A. The best discussion I have seen about interpreting OT narratives is by Douglas Stuart in How to



Read the Bible For All Its Worth, pp. 83-84

1. An OT narrative usually does not directly teach a doctrine.
2. An OT narrative usually illustrates a doctrine or doctrines taught propositionally elsewhere.
3. Narratives record what happened—not necessarily what should have happened or what ought to happen every time. Therefore, not every narrative has an individual identifiable moral of the story.
4. What people do in narratives is not necessarily a good example for us. Frequently, it is just the opposite.
5. Most of the characters in OT narratives are far from perfect, and their actions also.
6. We are not always told at the end of a narrative whether what happened was good or bad. We are expected to be able to judge that on the basis of what God has taught us directly and categorically elsewhere in the Scripture.
7. All narratives are selective and incomplete. Not all the relevant details are always given (cf. John 21:25). What does appear in the narrative is everything that the inspired author thought important for us to know.
8. Narratives are not written to answer all our theological questions. They have particular, specific, limited purposes and deal with certain issues, leaving others to be dealt with elsewhere, in other ways.
9. Narratives may teach either explicitly (by clearly stating something) or implicitly (by clearly implying something without actually stating it).
10. In the final analysis, God is the hero of all biblical narratives.

B. Another good discussion on interpreting narratives is in Walter Kaiser's *Toward Exegetical Theology*.

“The unique aspect of the narrative portions of Scripture is that the writer usually allows the words and actions of the people in his narrative to convey the main thrust of his message. Thus, instead of addressing us through direct statements, such as are found in doctrinal or teaching portions of Scripture, the writer tends to remain instead somewhat in the background as far as direct teaching or evaluative statements are concerned. Consequently, it becomes critically important to recognize the larger context in which the narrative fits and to ask why the writer used the specific selection of events in the precise sequence in which he placed them. The twin clues to meaning now will be arrangement of episodes and selection of detail from a welter of possible speeches, persons, or episodes. Furthermore, the divine reaction to and estimate of these people and events must often be determined from the way the author allows one person or a group of people to respond at the climax of the selected sequence of events; that is, if he has not interrupted the narration to give his own (in this instance, God's) estimate of what has taken place” (p. 205).

C. In narratives the truth is found in the whole literary unit and not the details. Beware of proof-texting or using OT narratives as a precedent for your life.

#### IV. Two levels of interpretation

A. YHWH's redemptive, revelatory acts for Abraham's seed

B. YHWH's will for every believer's life (in every age)

C. The first focuses on “knowing God (salvation); the second on serving Him (the Christian life of faith, cf. Rom. 15:4; I Cor. 10:6,11)

# GLOSSARY

**Adoptionism.** This was one of the early views of Jesus' relation to deity. It basically asserted that Jesus was a normal human in every way and was adopted in a special sense by God at his baptism (cf. Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11) or at His resurrection (cf. Rom. 1:4). Jesus lived such an exemplary life that God, at some point, (baptism, resurrection) adopted Him as His "son" (cf. Rom. 1:4; Phi. 2:9). This was an early church and eighth century minority view. Instead of God becoming a man (the Incarnation) it reverses this and now man becomes God!

It is difficult to verbalize how Jesus, God the Son, pre-existent deity, was rewarded or extolled for an exemplary life. If He was already God, how could He be rewarded? If He had pre-existent divine glory how could He be honored more? Although it is hard for us to comprehend, the Father somehow honored Jesus in a special sense for His perfect fulfillment of the Father's will.

**Alexandrian School.** This method of biblical interpretation was developed in Alexandria, Egypt in the second century a.d. It uses the basic interpretive principles of Philo, who was a follower of Plato. It is often called the allegorical method. It held sway in the church until the time of the Reformation. Its most able proponents were Origen and Augustine. See Moises Silva, *Has The Church Misread The Bible?* (Academic, 1987)

**Alexandrinus.** This fifth-century Greek manuscript from Alexandria, Egypt includes the Old Testament, Apocrypha, and most of the New Testament. It is one of our major witnesses to the entire Greek New Testament (except parts of Matthew, John, and II Corinthians). When this manuscript, which is designated "A," and the manuscript designated "B" (Vaticanus) agree on a reading, it is considered to be original by most scholars in most instances.

**Allegory.** This is a type of Biblical interpretation which originally developed within Alexandrian Judaism. It was popularized by Philo of Alexandria. Its basic thrust is the desire to make the Scripture relevant to one's culture or philosophical system by ignoring the Bible's historical setting and/or literary context. It seeks a hidden or spiritual meaning behind every text of Scripture. It must be admitted that Jesus, in Matthew 13, and Paul, in Galatians 4, used allegory to communicate truth. This, however, was in the form of typology, not strictly allegory.

**Analytical lexicon.** This is a type of research tool which allows one to identify every Greek form in the New Testament. It is a compilation, in Greek alphabetical order, of forms and basic definitions. In combination with an interlinear translation, it allows non-Greek reading believers to analyze New Testament Greek grammatical and syntactic forms.

**Analogy of Scripture.** This is the phrase used to describe the view that all of the Bible is inspired by God and is, therefore, not contradictory but complementary. This presuppositional affirmation is the basis for the use of parallel passages in interpreting a biblical text.

**Ambiguity.** This refers to the uncertainty that results in a written document when there are two or more possible meanings or when two or more things are being referred to at the same time. It is possible that John uses purposeful ambiguity (double entendres).

**Anthropomorphic.** Meaning "having characteristics associated with human beings," this term is used to describe our religious language about God. It comes from the Greek term for mankind. It means that we speak about God as if He were a man. God is described in physical, sociological, and psychological terms which relate to human beings (cf. Gen. 3:8; I Kgs. 22:19-23). This, of course, is only an analogy. However, there are no categories or terms other than human ones for us to use.

Therefore, our knowledge of God, though true, is limited.

**Antiochian School.** This method of biblical interpretation was developed in Antioch, Syria in the third century a.d. as a reaction to the allegorical method of Alexandria, Egypt. Its basic thrust was to focus on the historical meaning of the Bible. It interpreted the Bible as normal, human literature. This school became involved in the controversy over whether Christ had two natures (Nestorianism) or one nature (fully God and fully man). It was labeled heretical by the Roman Catholic Church and relocated to Persia but the school had little significance. Its basic hermeneutical principles later became interpretive principles of the Classical Protestant Reformers (Luther and Calvin).

**Antithetical.** This is one of three descriptive terms used to denote the relationship between lines of Hebrew poetry. It relates to lines of poetry which are opposite in meaning (cf. Pro. 10:1, 15:1).

**Apocalyptic literature.** This was predominantly, possibly even uniquely, a Jewish genre. It was a cryptic type of writing used in times of invasion and occupation of the Jews by foreign world powers. It assumes that a personal, redemptive God created and controls world events, and that Israel is of special interest and care to Him. This literature promises ultimate victory through God's special effort.

It is highly symbolic and fanciful with many cryptic terms. It often expressed truth in colors, numbers, visions, dreams, angelic mediation, secret code words and often a sharp dualism between good and evil.

Some examples of this genre are (1) in the OT, Ezekiel (chapters 36-48), Daniel (chapters 7-12), Zechariah; and (2) in the NT, Matthew 24; Mark 13; II Thessalonians 2 and Revelation.

**Apologist (Apologetics).** This is from the Greek root for "legal defense." This is a specific discipline within theology which seeks to give evidence and rational arguments for the Christian faith.

**A priori.** This is basically synonymous with the term "presupposition." It involves reasoning from previously accepted definitions, principles or positions which are assumed to be true. It is that which is accepted without examination or analysis.

**Arianism.** Arius was a presbyter in the church at Alexandria Egypt in the third and early fourth century. He affirmed that Jesus was pre-existent but not divine (not of the same essence as the Father), possibly following Proverbs 8:22-31. He was challenged by the bishop of Alexandria, who started (a.d. 318) a controversy which lasted many years. Arianism became the official creed of the Eastern Church. The Council of Nicaea in a.d. 325 condemned Arius and asserted the full equality and deity of the Son.

**Aristotle.** He was one of the philosophers of ancient Greece, a pupil of Plato and teacher of Alexander the Great. His influence, even today, reaches into many areas of modern studies. This is because he emphasized knowledge through observation and classification. This is one of the tenets of the scientific method.

**Autographs.** This is the name given to the original writings of the Bible. These original, handwritten manuscripts have all been lost. Only copies of copies remain. This is the source of many of the textual variants in the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts and ancient versions.

**Bezae.** This is a Greek and Latin manuscript of the sixth century a.d. It is designated by "D." It contains the Gospels and Acts and some of the General Epistles. It is characterized by numerous scribal additions. It forms the basis for the "Textus Receptus," the major Greek manuscript tradition behind the King James Version.

**Bias.** This is the term used to describe a strong predisposition toward an object or point of view. It is the mindset in which impartiality is impossible regarding a particular object or point of view. It is a prejudiced position.

**Biblical Authority.** This term is used in a very specialized sense. It is defined as understanding what the original author said to his day and applying this truth to our day. Biblical authority is usually defined as viewing the Bible itself as our only authoritative guide. However, in light of current, improper interpretations, I have limited the concept to the Bible as interpreted by the tenets of the historical-grammatical method.

**Canon.** This is a term used to describe writings which are believed to be uniquely inspired. It is used regarding both the Old and New Testament Scriptures.

**Christocentric.** This is a term used to describe the centrality of Jesus. I use it in connection with the concept that Jesus is Lord of all the Bible. The Old Testament points toward Him and He is its fulfillment and goal (cf. Matt. 5:17-48).

**Commentary.** This is a specialized type of research book. It gives the general background of a Biblical book. It then tries to explain the meaning of each section of the book. Some focus on application, while others deal with the text in a more technical way. These books are helpful, but should be used after one has done his own preliminary study. The commentator's interpretations should never be accepted uncritically. Comparing several commentaries from different theological perspectives is usually helpful.

**Concordance.** This is a type of research tool for Bible study. It lists every occurrence of every word in the Old and New Testaments. It helps in several ways: (1) determining the Hebrew or Greek word which lies behind any particular English word; (2) comparing passages where the same Hebrew or Greek word was used; (3) showing where two different Hebrew or Greek terms are translated by the same English word; (4) showing the frequency of the use of certain words in certain books or authors; (5) helping one find a passage in the Bible (cf. Walter Clark's *Howto Use New Testament Greek Study Aids*, pp. 54-55).

**Dead Sea Scrolls.** This refers to a series of ancient texts written in Hebrew and Aramaic which were found near the Dead Sea in 1947. They were the religious libraries of sectarian Judaism of the first century. The pressure of Roman occupation and the zealot wars of the 60's caused them to conceal the scrolls in hermetically sealed pottery jars in caves or holes. They have helped us understand the historical setting of first century Palestine and have confirmed the Masoretic Text as being very accurate, at least as far back as the early b.c. era. They are designated by the abbreviation "DSS."

**Deductive.** This method of logic or reasoning moves from general principles to specific applications by means of reason. It is opposite from inductive reasoning, which reflects the scientific method by moving from observed specifics to general conclusions (theories).

**Dialectical.** This is the method of reasoning whereby that which seems contradictory or paradoxical is held together in a tension, seeking a unified answer which includes both sides of the paradox. Many biblical doctrines have dialectical pairs, predestination-free will; security-perseverance; faith-works; decision-discipleship; Christian freedom-Christian responsibility.

**Diaspora.** This is the technical Greek term used by Palestinian Jews to describe other Jews who live outside the geographical boundaries of the Promised Land.

**Dynamic equivalent.** This is a theory of Bible translation. Bible translation can be viewed as a continuum from "word to word" correspondence, where an English word must be supplied for every Hebrew or Greek word, to a "paraphrase" where only the thought is translated with less regard to the original wording or phrasing. In between these two theories is "the dynamic equivalent" which attempts to take the original text seriously, but translates it in modern grammatical forms and idioms. A really good discussion of these various theories of translations is found in Fee and Stuart's *Howto Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, p. 35 and in Robert Bratcher's Introduction to the TEV.

**Eclectic.** This term is used in connection with textual criticism. It refers to the practice of choosing readings from different Greek manuscripts in order to arrive at a text which is supposed to be close to the original autographs. It rejects the view that any one family of Greek manuscripts captures the originals.

**Eisegesis.** This is the opposite of exegesis. If exegesis is a "leading out" of the original author's intent, this term implies a "leading in" of a foreign idea or opinion.

**Etymology.** This is an aspect of word study that tries to ascertain the original meaning of a word. From this root meaning, specialized usages are more easily identified. In interpretation, etymology is not the main focus, rather the contemporary meaning and usage of a word.

**Exegesis.** This is the technical term for the practice of interpreting a specific passage. It means "to lead out" (of the text) implying that our purpose is to understand the original author's intent in light of historical setting, literary context, syntax and contemporary word meaning.

**Genre.** This is a French term that denotes different types of literature. The thrust of the term is the division of literary forms into categories which share common characteristics: historical narrative, poetry, proverb, apocalyptic and legislation.

**Gnosticism.** Most of our knowledge of this heresy comes from the Gnostic writings of the second century. However, the incipient ideas were present in the first century (and before).

Some stated tenets of Valentian and Cerinthian Gnosticism of the second century are: (1) matter and spirit were co-eternal (an ontological dualism). Matter is evil, spirit is good. God, who is spirit, cannot be directly involved with molding evil matter; (2) there are emanations (*eons* or angelic levels) between God and matter. The last or lowest one was YHWH of the OT, who formed the universe (*kosmos*); (3) Jesus was an emanation like YHWH but higher on the scale, closer to the true God. Some put Him as the highest but still less than God and certainly not incarnate Deity (cf. John 1:14). Since matter is evil, Jesus could not have a human body and still be Divine. He was a spiritual phantom (cf. I John 1:1-3; 4:1-6); and (4) salvation was obtained through faith in Jesus plus special knowledge, which is only known by special persons. Knowledge (passwords) was needed to pass through heavenly spheres. Jewish legalism was also required to reach God.

The Gnostic false teachers advocated two opposite ethical systems: (1) for some, lifestyle was totally unrelated to salvation. For them, salvation and spirituality were encapsulated into secret knowledge (passwords) through the angelic spheres (*eons*); or (2) for others, lifestyle was crucial to salvation. They emphasized an ascetic lifestyle as evidence of true spirituality.

**Hermeneutics.** This is the technical term for the principles which guide exegesis. It is both a set of specific guidelines and an art/gift. Biblical, or sacred, hermeneutics is usually divided into two categories: general principles and special principles. These relate to the different types of literature found in the Bible. Each different type (genre) has its own unique guidelines but also shares some common assumptions and procedures of interpretation.

**Higher Criticism.** This is the procedure of biblical interpretation which focuses on the historical setting and literary structure of a particular biblical book.

**Idiom.** This word is used for the phrases found in different cultures which have specialized meaning not connected to the usual meaning of the individual terms. Some modern examples are: "that was awfully good," or "you just kill me." The Bible also contains these types of phrases.

**Illumination.** This is the name given to the concept that God has spoken to mankind. The full concept is usually expressed by three terms: (1) revelation-God has acted in human history; (2) inspiration-He has given the proper interpretation of His acts and their meaning to certain chosen men to record for

mankind; and (3) illumination-He has given His Spirit to help mankind understand His self-disclosure.

**Inductive.** This is a method of logic or reasoning which moves from the particulars to the whole. It is the empirical method of modern science. This is basically the approach of Aristotle.

**Interlinear.** This is a type of research tool which allows those who do not read a biblical language to be able to analyze its meaning and structure. It places the English translation on a word for word level immediately under the original biblical language. This tool, combined with an "analytical lexicon," will give the forms and basic definitions of Hebrew and Greek.

**Inspiration.** This is the concept that God has spoken to mankind by guiding the biblical authors to accurately and clearly record His revelation. The full concept is usually expressed by three terms: (1) revelation-God has acted in human history; (2) inspiration-He has given the proper interpretation of His acts and their meaning to certain chosen men to record for mankind; and (3) illumination-He has given His Spirit to help mankind understand His self-disclosure

**Language of description.** This is used in connection with the idioms in which the Old Testament is written. It speaks of our world in terms of the way things appear to the five senses. It is not a scientific description, nor was it meant to be.

**Legalism.** This attitude is characterized by an over-emphasis on rules or ritual. It tends to rely on the human performance of regulations as a means of acceptance by God. It tends to depreciate relationship and elevates performance, both of which are important aspects of the covenantal relationship between a holy God and sinful humanity.

**Literal.** This is another name for the textually-focused and historical method of hermeneutics from Antioch. It means that interpretation involves the normal and obvious meaning of human language, although it still recognizes the presence of figurative language.

**Literary genre.** This refers to the distinct forms that human communication can take, such as poetry or historical narrative. Each type of literature has its own special hermeneutical procedures in addition to the general principles for all written literature.

**Literary unit.** This refers to the major thought divisions of a biblical book. It can be made up of a few verses, paragraphs or chapters. It is a self-contained unit with a central subject.

**Lower criticism.** See "textual criticism."

**Manuscript.** This term relates to the different copies of the Greek New Testament. Usually they are divided into the different types by (1) material on which they are written (papyrus, leather), or (2) the form of the writing itself (all capitals or running script). It is abbreviated by "MS" (singular) or "MSS" (plural).

**Masoretic Text.** This refers to the ninth century a.d. Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament produced by generations of Jewish scholars which contain vowel points and other textual notes. It forms the basic text for our English Old Testament. Its text has been historically confirmed by the Hebrew MSS, especially Isaiah, known from the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is abbreviated by "MT."

**Metonymy.** This is a figure of speech in which the name of one thing is used to represent something else associated with it. As an example, "the kettle is boiling" actually means "the water within the kettle is boiling."

**Muratorian Fragments.** This is a list of the canonical books of the New Testament. It was written in Rome before a.d. 200. It gives the same twenty-seven books as the Protestant NT. This clearly shows the local churches in different parts of the Roman Empire had "practically" set the canon before the major

church councils of the fourth century.

**Natural revelation.** This is one category of God's self-disclosure to man. It involves the natural order (Rom. 1:19-20) and the moral consciousness (Rom. 2:14-15). It is spoken of in Ps. 19:1-6 and Rom. 1-2. It is distinct from special revelation, which is God's specific self-disclosure in the Bible and supremely in Jesus of Nazareth.

This theological category is being re-emphasized by the "old earth" movement among Christian scientists (e.g. the writings of Hugh Ross). They use this category to assert that all truth is God's truth. Nature is an open door to knowledge about God; it is different from special revelation (the Bible). It allows modern science the freedom to research the natural order. In my opinion it is a wonderful new opportunity to witness to the modern scientific western world.

**Nestorianism.** Nestorius was the patriarch of Constantinople in the fifth century. He was trained in Antioch of Syria and affirmed that Jesus had two natures, one fully human and one fully divine. This view deviated from the orthodox one nature view of Alexandria. Nestorius' main concern was the title "mother of God," given to Mary. Nestorius was opposed by Cyril of Alexandria and, by implication, his own Antiochian training. Antioch was the headquarters of the historical-grammatical-textual approach to biblical interpretation, while Alexandria was the headquarters of the four-fold (allegorical) school of interpretation. Nestorius was ultimately removed from office and exiled.

**Original author.** This refers to the actual authors/writers of Scripture.

**Papyri.** This is a type of writing material from Egypt. It is made from river reeds. It is the material upon which our oldest copies of the Greek New Testament are written.

**Parallel passages.** They are part of the concept that all of the Bible is God-given and, therefore, is its own best interpreter and balancer of paradoxical truths. This is also helpful when one is attempting to interpret an unclear or ambiguous passage. They also help one find the clearest passage on a given subject as well as all other Scriptural aspects of a given subject.

**Paraphrase.** This is the name of a theory of Bible translation. Bible translation can be viewed as a continuum from "word to word" correspondence, where an English word must be supplied for every Hebrew or Greek word to a "paraphrase" where only the thought is translated with less regard to the original wording or phrasing. In between these two theories is "the dynamic equivalent" which attempts to take serious the original text, but translates it in modern grammatical forms and idioms. A really good discussion of these various theories of translations is found in Fee and Stuart's *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, p. 35.

**Paragraph.** This is the basic interpretive literary unit in prose. It contains one central thought and its development. If we stay with its major thrust we will not major on minors or miss the original author's intent.

**Parochialism.** This relates to biases which are locked into a local theological/cultural setting. It does not recognize the transcultural nature of biblical truth or its application.

**Paradox.** This refers to those truths which seem to be contradictory, yet both are true, although in tension with each other. They frame truth by presenting it from opposite sides. Much biblical truth is presented in paradoxical (or dialectical) pairs. Biblical truths are not isolated stars, but are constellations made up of the pattern of stars.

**Plato.** He was one of the philosophers of ancient Greece. His philosophy greatly influenced the early church through the scholars of Alexandria, Egypt, and later, Augustine. He posited that everything on earth was illusionary and a mere copy of a spiritual archetype. Theologians later equated Plato's "forms/ideas" with the spiritual realm.

**Presupposition.** This refers to our preconceived understanding of a matter. Often we form opinions or judgments about issues before we approach the Scriptures themselves. This predisposition is also known as a bias, an *a priori* position, an assumption or a preunderstanding.

**Proof-texting.** This is the practice of interpreting Scripture by quoting a verse without regard for its immediate context or larger context in its literary unit. This removes the verses from the original author's intent and usually involves the attempt to prove a personal opinion while asserting biblical authority.

**Rabbinical Judaism.** This stage of the life of the Jewish people began in Babylonian Exile (586-538 b.c.). As the influence of the Priests and the Temple was removed, local synagogues became the focus of Jewish life. These local centers of Jewish culture, fellowship, worship and Bible study became the focus of the national religious life. In Jesus' day this "religion of the scribes" was parallel to that of the priests. At the fall of Jerusalem in a.d. 70, the scribal form, dominated by the Pharisees, controlled the direction of Jewish religious life. It is characterized by a practical, legalistic interpretation of the Torah as explained in the oral tradition (Talmud).

**Revelation.** This is the name given to the concept that God has spoken to mankind. The full concept is usually expressed by three terms: (1) revelation-God has acted in human history; (2) inspiration-He has given the proper interpretation of His acts and their meaning to certain chosen men to record for mankind; and (3) illumination-He has given His Spirit to help mankind understand His self-disclosure.

**Semantic field.** This refers to the total range of meanings associated with a word. It is basically the different connotations a word has in different contexts.

**Septuagint.** This is the name given to the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. Tradition says that it was written in seventy days by seventy Jewish scholars for the library of Alexandria, Egypt. The traditional date is around 250 **b.c.** (in reality it possibly took over one hundred years to complete). This translation is significant because (1) it gives us an ancient text to compare with the Masoretic Hebrew text; (2) it shows us the state of Jewish interpretation in the third and second century b.c.; (3) it gives us the Jewish Messianic understanding before the rejection of Jesus. Its abbreviation is "LXX."

**Sinaiticus.** This is a Greek manuscript of the fourth century a.d. It was found by the German scholar, Tischendorf, at St. Catherine's monastery on Jebel Musa, the traditional site of Mt. Sinai. This manuscript is designated by the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet called "*aleph*" [א]. It contains both the Old and the entire New Testaments. It is one of our most ancient uncial MSS.

**Spiritualizing.** This term is synonymous with allegorizing in the sense that it removes the historical and literary context of a passage and interprets it on the basis of other criteria.

**Synonymous.** This refers to terms with exact or very similar meanings (although in reality no two words have a complete semantic overlap). They are so closely related that they can replace each other in a sentence without loss of meaning. It is also used to designate one of the three forms of Hebrew poetic parallelism. In this sense it refers to two lines of poetry that express the same truth (cf. Ps. 103:3).

**Syntax.** This is a Greek term which refers to the structure of a sentence. It relates to the ways parts of a sentence are put together to make a complete thought.

**Synthetical.** This is one of the three terms that relates to types of Hebrew poetry. This term speaks of lines of poetry which build on one another in a cumulative sense, sometimes called "climatic" (cf. Ps. 19:7-9).

**Systematic theology.** This is a stage of interpretation which tries to relate the truths of the Bible in a unified and rational manner. It is a logical, rather than mere historical, presentation of Christian



theology by categories (God, man, sin, salvation, etc.).

**Talmud.** This is the title for the codification of the Jewish Oral Tradition. The Jews believe it was given orally by God to Moses on Mt. Sinai. In reality it appears to be the collective wisdom of the Jewish teachers through the years. There are two different written versions of the Talmud: the Babylonian and the shorter, unfinished Palestinian.

**Textual criticism.** This is the study of the manuscripts of the Bible. Textual criticism is necessary because no originals exist and the copies differ from each other. It attempts to explain the variations and arrive (as close as possible) to the original wording of the autographs of the Old and New Testaments. It is often called "lower criticism."

**Textus Receptus.** This designation developed into Elzevir's edition of the Greek NT in 1633 a.d. Basically it is a form of the Greek NT that was produced from a few late Greek manuscripts and Latin versions of Erasmus (1510-1535), Stephanus (1546-1559) and Elzevir (1624-1678). In *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, p. 27, A. T. Robertson says "the Byzantine text is practically the Textus Receptus." The Byzantine text is the least valuable of the three families of early Greek manuscripts (Western, Alexandrian and Byzantine). It contains the accumulation errors of centuries of hand-copied texts. However, A.T. Robertson also says "the Textus Receptus has preserved for us a substantially accurate text" (p. 21). This Greek manuscript tradition (especially Erasmus' third edition of 1522) forms the basis of the King James Version of a.d. 1611.

**Torah.** This is the Hebrew term for "teaching." It came to be the official title for the writings of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy). It is, for the Jews, the most authoritative division of the Hebrew canon.

**Typological.** This is a specialized type of interpretation. Usually it involves New Testament truth found in Old Testament passages by means of an analogical symbol. This category of hermeneutics was a major element of the Alexandrian method. Because of the abuse of this type of interpretation, one should limit its use to specific examples recorded in the New Testament.

**Vaticanus.** This is the Greek manuscript of the fourth century a.d. It was found in the Vatican's library. It originally contained all the Old Testament, Apocrypha and New Testament. However, some parts were lost (Genesis, Psalms, Hebrews, the Pastorals, Philemon and Revelation). It is a very helpful manuscript in determining the original wording of the autographs. It is designated by a capital "B."

**Vulgate.** This is the name of Jerome's Latin translation of the Bible. It became the basic or "common" translation for the Roman Catholic Church. It was done in the a.d. 380's.

**Wisdom literature.** This was a genre of literature common in the ancient near east (and modern world). It basically was an attempt to instruct a new generation on guidelines for successful living through poetry, proverb, or essay. It was addressed more to the individual than to corporate society. It did not use allusions to history but was based on life experiences and observation. In the Bible, Job through Song of Songs assumed the presence and worship of YHWH, but this religious world view is not explicit in every human experience every time.

As a genre it stated general truths. However, this genre cannot be used in every specific situation. These are general statements that do not always apply to every individual situation.

These sages dared to ask the hard questions of life. Often they challenged traditional religious views (Job and Ecclesiastes). They form a balance and tension to the easy answers about life's tragedies.

**World picture and worldview.** These are companion terms. They are both philosophical concepts related to creation. The term "world picture" refers to "the how" of creation while "worldview" relates to "the Who." These terms are relevant to the interpretation that Genesis 1-2 deals primarily with the

Who, not the how, of creation.

**YHWH.** This is the Covenant name for God in the Old Testament. It is defined in Exod. 3:14. It is the causative form of the Hebrew term "to be." The Jews were afraid to pronounce the name, lest they take it in vain; therefore, they substituted the Hebrew term *Adonai*, "lord." This is how this covenant name is translated in English.

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# DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

I do not particularly care for statements of faith or creeds. I prefer to affirm the Bible itself. However, I realize that a statement of faith will provide those who are unfamiliar with me a way to evaluate my doctrinal perspective. In our day of so much theological error and deception, the following brief summary of my theology is offered.

1. The Bible, both the Old and New Testament, is the inspired, infallible, authoritative, eternal Word of God. It is the self-revelation of God recorded by men under supernatural leadership. It is our only source of clear truth about God and His purposes. It is also the only source of faith and practice for His church.
2. There is only one eternal, creator, redeemer God. He is the creator of all things, visible and invisible. He has revealed Himself as loving and caring although He is also fair and just. He has revealed Himself in three distinct persons: Father, Son and Spirit, truly separate and yet the same in essence.
3. God is actively in control of His world. There is both an eternal plan for His creation that is unalterable and an individually focused one that allows human free will. Nothing happens without God's knowledge and permission, yet He allows individual choices both among angels and humans. Jesus is the Father's Elect Man and all are potentially elect in Him. God's foreknowledge of events does not reduce humans to a determined pre-written script. All of us are responsible for our thoughts and deeds.
4. Mankind, though created in God's image and free from sin, chose to rebel against God. Although tempted by a supernatural agent, Adam and Eve were responsible for their willful self-centeredness. Their rebellion has affected humanity and creation. We are all in need of God's mercy and grace both for our corporate condition in Adam and our individual volitional rebellion.
5. God has provided a means of forgiveness and restoration for fallen humanity. Jesus Christ, God's unique son, became a man, lived a sinless life and by means of his substitutionary death, paid the penalty for mankind's sin. He is the only way to restoration and fellowship with God. There is no other means of salvation except through faith in His finished work.
6. Each of us must personally receive God's offer of forgiveness and restoration in Jesus. This is accomplished by means of volitional trust in God's promises through Jesus and a willful turning from known sin.
7. All of us are fully forgiven and restored based upon our trust in Christ and repentance from sin. However, the evidence for this new relationship is seen in a changed, and changing, life. The goal of God for humanity is not only heaven someday, but Christlikeness now. Those who are truly redeemed, though occasionally sinning, will continue in faith and repentance throughout their lives.
8. The Holy Spirit is "the other Jesus." He is present in the world to lead the lost to Christ and develop Christlikeness in the saved. The gifts of the Spirit are given at salvation. They are the life and ministry of Jesus divided among His body, the Church. The gifts which are basically the attitudes and motives of Jesus need to be motivated by the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit is active in our day as He was in the biblical times.
9. The Father has made the resurrected Jesus Christ the Judge of all things. He will return to earth to judge all mankind. Those who have trusted Jesus and whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will receive their eternal glorified bodies at His return. They will be with Him forever. However, those who have refused to respond to God's truth will be separated eternally from the joys of fellowship with the Triune God. They will be condemned along with the Devil and his angels.

This is surely not complete or thorough but I hope it will give you the theological flavor of my heart. I like the statement:

"In essentials—unity, In peripherals—freedom, In all things—love.