

The  
**ACTS**  
of the  
**APOSTLES**

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The  
**ACTS**  
of the  
**APOSTLES**  
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A STUDY OF THEIR WORK IN THE  
MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION



## THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

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In 1966 I was asked by the Bible Class Committee of the Durban Ecclesia to conduct a Special Study Class dealing with "THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES". They planned to hold classes on alternate Friday evenings with the late H.J. ("Mick") Walsh leading a similar study on "EXODUS". After carefully considering what was required by such a study, bro. "Mick" and I decided to try to ascertain what each writer actually said and the meanings they wished to convey. This required a close word for word study of such texts as were available to us. Since neither of us were scholars in either Hebrew or Greek, we planned to study each word as far as we could from the lexicons and other works of reference which were available. The doctrinal portion of our exegesis would come from the Bible itself. It was when my part of the studies was well under way that bro. H.J. ("Perce") Mansfield visited South Africa and extended to me an invitation to make a lecture tour of Australia and Tasmania in 1968 and in particular, give a series of addresses on "Acts" at the Bible School to be held at Rathmines, N.S.W. in August of that year.

I am not sure that my method of approach was the correct one because it leads to over-simplification which can be tedious at times. The least that can be said for it is that the study should appeal to those who are making a serious study of the Bible for the first time. To such people it is appropriate that their study should commence with "ACTS" because it brings together the Old and New Testaments in such a powerful manner.

It is not generally realised that the Book we know as "the Acts" deals mainly with the acts of Peter and Paul. Here and there other early evangelists appear but their exploits are subsidiary to the two main divisions, the Acts of Peter and the Acts of Paul. It is also not generally understood that there is a character applicable to the two divisions. Peter the fisherman, worked as a fisher of men. Paul, the tent-maker, travelled the world, building his "tents" (ecclesias) wherever he could. Peter made many a speech proving the resurrection of Christ. It is appropriate therefore, that Part 1 should end with a story concerning his release from prison by an angel, this being analogous of the resurrection and the final call to the Judgment Seat. The end of Part 2 gives us the story of Paul's boat journey, this being analogous of the difficult journey of the household of faith throughout the ages.

The value of "The Acts" lies in the preaching methods of the early evangelists. The doctrines they taught and how they set about teaching them is of immense value to every brother who hopes to take his turn on the platform. It is of value to every sister too, when she speaks about her faith to her children or to her friends. I have called this work of mine "The Acts of the Apostles" but it would be more correct to have called it "An Introduction to a study of The Acts of the Apostles", for that is all it is. I hope many will find it of help to them in their studies.

P.O. Box 6056,  
Durban North,  
SOUTH AFRICA.

Ian Leask

September, 1969.





# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

## INTRODUCTION

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At the end of the sixth day, we read that "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." From these few words we learn that at that time, everything was in harmony with God and, in the ultimate effect, God reigned supreme. God was the Creator and Sustainer of all that He had made, and the giving of dominion over all things to man did not destroy this principle. Even man's subsequent rebellion did not take away the sovereignty from God but it set the pattern for the growth of the kingdom of men. The development and extension of man's disobedience enabled the kingdom of men to prevail over the kingdom of God upon earth and even to-day, the kingdom of men has conquered the whole habitable earth. The kingdom of God went into a decline when the appurtenances of worship were taken to Babylon in the first days of the captivity, and men were then subject to the kingdom of men.

The domination of the kingdom of God upon earth over the kingdom of men, followed by the domination of the kingdom of men over the kingdom of God and the final outcome of the destruction of the kingdom of men and the establishment of the kingdom of God upon earth is the great theme of Scripture. The modern way of describing the present situation is to state that the political power of nations is supreme upon earth and the ecclesiastical way of life plays a very minor role. The time is coming however, when in the Plan and Purpose of God, the ecclesiastical way of life will be combined with the political organisation in such a way that the Returned Christ will be a Priest and King. All other organisations of men, whether ecclesiastical or political, will be destroyed.

After the return from the Babylonian captivity, Nehemiah rebuilt the city of Jerusalem to take care of the political aspect, thus fore-shadowing a similar work on the part of the Returned Christ. A little later, Ezra returned and repaired the temple, fore-shadowing the work of the returned Christ in this connection. Thus it was that for a short while, the ecclesiastical - political state of Israel was restored but after a while, the kingdom of men absorbed the restored organisation and established once again, the kingdom of men character of the Jewish people. It was with sorrow that the Lord Jesus sighed when speaking to his enemies, he said, "Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition." (Matt. 15. 6.) Speaking of the Scribes and Pharisees, Jesus said, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (Matt. 15. 9.) Jesus received opposition from certain classes of people amongst whom were the Scribes, the Pharisees, the priesthood, and to a lesser extent, the Sadducees. This opposition arose as a result of his preaching the KINGDOM OF GOD because his opponents represented the kingdom of men in its various levels of society. Those who were apparently ecclesiastically minded, were largely politicians under the cloak of righteousness. The priesthood practiced their religion for political ends and the presence of the ruling Romans in Judea was sufficient to build up a desire in Jewish hearts for their own political power. When Jesus came preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, he was not the sort of person to appeal to politically minded people so he and his teaching were rejected.

The situation was not changed after the ascension of Jesus into heaven when the ministry of the apostles had begun. The apostles still had to cope with the political powers of the day and these included the erstwhile enemies of Jesus, namely, the Pharisees, the priests, the scribes, and the Sadducees. A study of their methods will help all evangelists these days to overcome the prejudices which abound everywhere against the word of Truth. But first we must learn something of their opponents because such types exist to this day and it is the preaching of such people that we have to overcome. The apostles taught people who were under the domination of the Romans but who spoke Greek. Latin has always been a difficult language to learn so the Greek language became the language of the people, particularly the educated ones.

**THE LAW:** The Law of Moses was regarded as the most important of the Hebrew Writings. It covered the first five books of the Bible, namely, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. This group was known as

the Pentateuch. The Jews considered that every word of the Pentateuch was inspired by God. When Nehemiah caused the Book of the Law to be read distinctly in Hebrew and then made the priests give the sense of it, he must have set in motion a system of writing explanations of the Law which resulted in the Rabbinical rules of conduct for all problems. (Neh. 8. 8.) The men who did this work were the Scribes and these are discussed below.

The various captivities to which the Jews were subjected had many effects upon them not the least of which was the influence of language. Upon the return from the Babylonian captivity, many of the people spoke only Chaldee so that the Hebrew Scriptures had to be translated for them. The influence of the Medo-Persian captivity is not part of this discussion but the influence of the Macedonian invasion is. This resulted in the Greek language becoming the universal language of the civilised world and it set up two classes of persons, namely, those who spoke Greek and those who did not. Those who did not speak Greek spoke Hebrew or Aramaic, and in the N.T. they are referred to as HEBREWS. The Greek speaking Jews were known as GRECIANS (Gk. "Ellenistes") and the Hebrew speaking Jews were called "Hebrews" the Greek form being "'Ebraios". See Acts 6. 1. A person who was born a Greek was called a Greek and the Greek word is "'Ellenos". An example is found in Acts 16. 1. where the father of Timothy is mentioned. In the broad sense, this word is used to describe any person of any non-Jewish nation who speaks Greek as his home language. The N.T. usage is not so much a distinction of blood-line descent as it is a distinction between religions and forms of worship.

The main divisions of people in Apostolic times were:-

- |                       |      |               |
|-----------------------|------|---------------|
| A. Mainly Religious:- | (1)  | Pharisees     |
|                       | (2)  | Sadducees     |
|                       | (3)  | Essenes       |
| B. Mainly Political:- | (4)  | Herodians     |
|                       | (5)  | Zealots       |
|                       | (6)  | Galileans     |
|                       | (7)  | Assassins     |
| C. Social Classes:-   | (8)  | Sanhedrin     |
|                       | (9)  | Scribes       |
|                       | (10) | Lawyers       |
|                       | (11) | Publicans     |
|                       | (12) | Proselytes    |
|                       | (13) | Samaritans    |
| D. Meeting Places:    | (14) | The Temple    |
|                       | (15) | The Synagogue |

(1) The Pharisees: The name means "separatist" and is to be compared with Heb. "parash" meaning "to separate". The name was imposed upon them by their opponents and gradually superceded their own title of "Chasidim" meaning "the pious ones". The dominant principle of Pharisaism was "separation from all Gentile people". It was imposed upon themselves by their scrupulous adherence to the letter of traditional law and it was on this principle that the Lord Jesus exposed them. See the Eight Noes of Matt. 23. 13/33. According to Josephus there were about 6,000 Pharisees (Ant. XVII. 2. 4.) Hastings Dictionary lists the following as their main characteristics:-

- (a) Scrupulous observance of the Law.
- (b) They believed in the immortality of the soul and Josephus explained their peculiar belief in "Abraham's Bosom" which Jesus used against them in his parable of Luke 16. 19/31. (Ant. XVIII. i. 3f.)
- (c) They believed in the existence of angels and spirits.
- (d) They looked for the coming of the Messiah.
- (e) They believed that the doing of right or wrong is within man's power but the result is the outcome of fate.

- (f) They separated themselves completely from the people and particularly from the Gentiles.
- (g) They were extremely pious and were proud of their piety.
- (h) They observed great purity in regard to themselves, not wishing to defile themselves in any way.
- (i) They were prepared to tolerate the rulership of the Romans because they regarded this as a punishment sent by God for their sins, which indeed it was. They realised that when God decided to establish His Kingdom on earth, He would do so and destroy the ruling powers. In the face of this toleration, they regarded God alone as their King. Hence it was a dreadful about face to cry "We have no king but Caesar." (John 19. 15.)
- (j) Their separateness was shown in the name they chose for themselves, namely, "haberim" meaning "the associates". A "haber" is one who strictly observes the Law in respect of purity, food laws, tithes and religious duties such as keeping the sabbath. Hence their opposition to Jesus for his breaking of the sabbath law, his disciples eating with unwashed hands, and his associating with the publican Matthew, and other "sinners". This explains why they constantly questioned him on points of law, divorce, the greatest commandment and the way of inheriting eternal life.

The Pharisees were a religious people and although they were represented on the Sanhedrin, they were not politically minded. Jesus took them to task many times for their hypocritical self-righteousness but they were not all of that character. Some were sincere lovers of God's Word and were prepared to study it. Such were men like Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea and the apostle Paul. For the most part they were highly educated men so they could not understand how it was possible that Jesus, or the apostles should teach them.

(2) The Sadducees:- Authorities are divided on the question as to the derivation of the name "Sadducees". Some consider that the Sadducees, being a priestly class of person, took their name from the priest Zadok. Dr. Edersheim however, thinks the name was adopted as a derivation of the Hebrew word "tzaddig" meaning "righteous" as a retort to the meaning of "pious" in the word "Pharisee". Josephus states (Ant. XIII, X, 6. and XVIII, i, 4.) that the Sadducees were a small minority amongst the Jews and they were drawn from the rich and those of the highest social standing. They were a priestly aristocracy of which Caiaphas was a member. As a division of the Jewish people, they had certain beliefs and customs which are set out below:-

- (a) Whereas the Pharisees were intensely religious, the Sadducees were almost indifferent to religion and regarded it only as a custom and the power it gave them to regiment the people in ritual.
- (b) They opposed the Pharisees in their belief in the resurrection. They denied that there was to be such a thing.
- (c) They refused to acknowledge that there were angels who were the Divine messengers.
- (d) They did not believe in spirits in the Biblical sense of that which is "cast out" when a person is cured of an illness or mental affliction.
- (e) They did not accept the oral law as the Pharisees did but maintained that the written Law as the only valid one.
- (f) Having priestly influence, they were the judges and as such were unusually severe.
- (g) They denied the Pharasaical doctrine of "fate" and maintained that the doing of good or evil was left to man's free choice. On this basis Caiaphas made his statement reported in John 11. 50.

When Jesus warned his disciples against "the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees" (Matt. 16. 11.) he warned them against the hypocritical self-righteousness of the Pharisees and the worldliness of the Sadducees. When Jesus entered the temple and drove out the money-changers, he acted against the Sadducees who held the financial power. When Jesus adopted the title "Son of David" he was opposed by the Sadducees who modelled their rulership on David's powerful kingdom, not because he was a worshipper of God but because he was a

man of great power. The Sadducees sought a middle course with the Roman overlords because it suited their power aspirations to do so. They tried to use the local Roman rulers as a stepping stone to greater power for themselves. Their opposition to Jesus claiming to be the Messiah was not so much an objection to his claim for himself as it was a fear that a Messianic movement might bring the Romans against them and take away from them their power. When the disciples began to teach that Jesus had been raised from the dead, they went against their strongest tenet of belief. The creation of large numbers of followers cause great dismay to this politically ambitious group of Sadducees.

In the anti-types of to-day, the Pharisees would represent those people who are religious without a knowledge and understanding of God's word. Such would be the Roman Catholics and those Protestant churches whose tenets of faith are based largely upon Catholic doctrines. The Sadducees represent that part of humanity who are politically or financially ambitious and who disregard religion altogether in the pursuit of their desires.

(3) The Essenes: These people are not mentioned in Scripture at all but they are mentioned here because of the type they represent. A man named Philo of Alexandria wrote about them during the early lifetime of Jesus. He stated that they were about 4000 in number and were a saintly group of people who refused to sacrifice animals because they regarded a reverent mind as the only true sacrifice. They separated themselves from people who were not of their group and lived simple lives pursuing agriculture and other peaceful occupations. They had no warlike weapons and forbade the employment of slaves. If they studied philosophy at all, they studied works which taught that God watched over all things. They read the Scriptures at regular intervals and those who could not read, would sit down and listen. They lived in communal fashion as did the early Christians. (Acts 2. 44.) Josephus states that an Essene named Manahem foretold that Herod would become great and as a result of this, Herod befriended the group. (Ant. XV. x. 5.) The Essenes permitted only adults to join them and they never married. There were no children with them in their simple habitation.

They lived near the shores of the Dead Sea. The most famous of their villages is MASADA which is renowned as the place of the last stand of these people before they disappeared completely from the earth. After the great siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 the Romans besieged them but rather than yield, they died by their own hand to the last man.

Their beliefs were not always according to the word of God because they believed in the immortality of the soul and thought that they received their souls back again after death. They believed in a kind of continuing "hell" for the bad souls.

In the anti-type, they represent the True Christian Believers in their separation from an evil world, and their worship of One God and their devotion to a study of the Scriptures. Their refusal to have children in the sect is typified in the refusal of the True Christian Believers to "christen" infants. That they were largely unknown in their day and always remained very few in numbers is also typical of the True Christian Believers.

(4) The Herodians: When Herod the Great died in B.C. 4, his kingdom was divided amongst his sons, Archelaus (Matt. 2. 22.) being one of his sons, was given Idumea, Judea and Samaria. When he was deposed in A.D. 6 (or 7) he was succeeded by a Roman procurator. A series of procurators followed except when several of Herod's descendants ruled. Through Herod the Great's daughter Cleopatra, came Herod-Philip, Tetrarch of Trachonitis (Luke 3. 1.) His family did not continue after he died in A.D. 33.

Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilee (Matt. 14. 3.) was deposed in A.D. 40.

Through the line of Herod the Great's daughter, Mariamne, came her grandson Agrippa I (Acts 12. 1.) He died about A.D. 44.

Agrippa II was the son of Agrippa I and he is mentioned in Acts 25. and chapter 26 when he sat in judgment over Paul. He was the last of the Herods and died about A.D. 99.

The family of Herods tried very hard to establish a dynasty for themselves but failed. In trying, they gathered a following of adherents who were barbarous in character and licentious and unscrupulous in behaviour. They were politically ambitious and almost entirely irreligious yet they conformed outwardly to Jewish ritual probably to prevent serious opposition from the Jews.

Inasmuch as Herod was established in office by the Romans, the Herodians made a show of cooperating with the Romans by trying to keep the peace between Jew and Gentile. In this, they were opposed by the Pharisees who strongly supported everything that was Jewish and held themselves aloof from Romans.

In spite of the opposition the Herodians had for the Pharisees, they were prepared to work with them against Jesus. (Matt. 22. 16. and Mark 3. 6.) The attitude of Jesus towards them was fearless for he was not afraid to condemn their teaching. (Mark 8. 15.) The combination of the Pharisees and Herodians against Jesus to trap him upon the legality of paying tribute to Caesar gave Jesus one of his most dangerous moments. (Mark 12. 13/17.) If Jesus had said "Yes" he would have been discredited amongst the people and if he had said "No" he would have been accused of sedition against Caesar. How he handled the situation is shown in the reference from Mark quoted above and also in Matt. 22. 15/22. and Luke 20. 20/26.

In the anti-type of to-day, they typified the Ministers of religion who interest themselves in politics and move with the trend of world-wide political thinking. As the Herodians permitted pagan temples to be built, so the modern church Minister will permit evil to spread in a city but will ignore it and will turn to politics instead.

(5) The Zealots: They were also called "Canaanians". They were founded by Judas of Gamala who opposed the census of Quirinius. This man is mentioned as "Cyrenius" in Luke 2. 2. He it was who started the taxing. They were in opposition to the Romans and as a result of this, were opposed to the Herodians. Simon the apostle, was one of them as his nickname indicates. "Simon Zelotes" (Luke 6. 15.) and Acts 1. 13. In both these references, Luke gives him the title by which he would be known amongst the Gentiles. In Matt. 10. 4. he is known as "Simon the Canaanite" which would be the name used by Jews.

(6) The Galileans: As the name indicates, they came from Galilee. The name "Galilean" is one of reproach for an ignorant and uneducated people. Their poor accent betrayed them. (Mark 14. 70.) They were an excitable, energetic and industrious people. Such a character is to be found in the apostle Peter. Their friendliness is shown by their readiness to listen to Jesus. (John 4. 45.) Contrast this with the hostility of the people of Jerusalem. The apostles Peter and John were regarded with astonishment when they preached in Jerusalem because they were known to be Galileans and, therefore, ignorant and unlearned men. (Acts 4. 13.)

In the anti-type, they are the sort of people from whom the True Christian Believers come. Jesus thanked his Father that the truth had been revealed to "babes and sucklings" and had been withheld from the wise and prudent. (Matt. 11. 25; Luke 10. 21.)

(7) The Assassins: These were known to the Greeks as the "sicarioi" being derived from the Latin "sica" - a short sword or dagger. They were a secret society and concealed a dagger beneath their cloaks. They were murderous in character both to their own enemies and the enemies of the nation. Once they had used their dagger, they would rapidly mingle with the crowd so that their detection was very difficult. They were a branch of the extreme Zealots and did much to precipitate the siege of Jerusalem by the

Romans in A.D. 70. They are mentioned in Acts 21. 38. as "murderers" in the A.V. but as "assassins" in the R.V.

(8) The Sanhedrin: This name does not appear in Scripture but is translated as "the council". There is a tradition that they were formed because of the suggestion of Jethro to Moses that he should have men to help him. As a result, there came into being a council of 70 who, with Moses and Aaron, made up 72. See Exod. 18. 14; Num. 11. 16.) This body of men does not appear in the days of Joshua. The Persians gave the Jews power to govern themselves in purely Jewish matters (Ezra 7. 25/26; 10. 14.) Nehemiah refers to "rulers" so they must have been in existence in his day. See Neh. 2. 16; 4. 14; 4. 19; 5. 7; and 7. 5. Under Grecian rule, a body known as "gerousia" (Senate) was allowed and these were referred to by Josephus. (Ant. XII. 3. 3.) Josephus states that Julius Caesar extended the rule of the gerousia all over Judea. (Ant. XIV. 9. 3/5.) Under the procurators, the government of Judea was in the hands of the Sanhedrin, with the Romans exercising the supreme authority. The Greek word is "sunhedrion" from which we get the English "Sanhedrin".

The President of the Sanhedrin was the High Priest which accounts for Caiaphas taking a leading part in the trial of Jesus. The council met in the hall within the temple area but sometimes, meetings were held at the home of the High Priest. (Matt. 26. 3.) Membership appears to have been given to descendants of ancient families and some secular rulers. The Rulers who represented the Romans seemed to have had power to elect council members because Herod who was opposed to the Sadducees, appointed Pharisees to such an extent that they out-numbered the Sadducees. The constitution of the council in N.T. days was the high priest and ex high priest, exalted families from which high priests might be appointed, scribes and the elders of respected families. In this way, the council appears to have been limited to the priesthood, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the scribes and the lawyers. (Matt. 26. 3; Matt. 26. 57 and 59; Mark 14. 53; 15. 1; Luke 22. 66; Acts 4. 1 and 5; 5. 17, 21, 34; 22. 30 and 23. 6.)

(9) The Scribes: The Greek word is "grammateus" meaning a clerk, writer, secretary, recorder". In Hebrew, the word is "sopherim" with reference to one learned in the Mosaic Law and the commentaries; a teacher and interpreter. Another Greek word is "nomodidaskaloi" meaning "teacher of the law". The Greek original of the translated title of "townclerk" given in Acts 19. 35. is "grammateus". The office appears to have started with the return from the Babylonian captivity and was first combined with that of priest. (Neh. 8. 9.) It appears from 1 Chron. 2. 55. that the office of scribe was later confined to families. They are thought to have started the synagogue. Some were members of the Sanhedrin. (Matt. 16. 21; 26. 3;)

The duty of the scribes was to preserve the law. They also preserved the traditions and placed greater importance upon this than upon the written Law. (Mark 7. 5.) They were the teachers of the law and gathered pupils around them for instructions. See Luke 2. 46. where the word "didaskalon" (teacher) is translated as "doctors" in the A.V. The R.V. gives the alternative "teachers" in the margin. When Jesus sent out his disciples to teach, he told them not to take gold, silver or brass in their purses (Matt. 10. 9.) and this may have been said to draw a distinction between the teachers of TRUTH as opposed to the teachers of the traditions of men. This indicates that the office of a scribe was a paid one. See Paul's remarks in 1 Cor. 9. 3/18. Jesus condemned their "devouring of widows' houses" thus pointing to their mercenary ways. The "woes" mentioned by Jesus in Matt. 23. point towards the character of the scribes. Finally they had to administer the law in the sanhedrin. For this they received the condemnation of Jesus.

(10) The Lawyers: The difference between a scribe and a lawyer is very slight but a distinction must be drawn because the Greek word used to refer to them is "nomikos". They were scribes but had the duty of pleading in the courts on question of ecclesiastical law such as sabbath keeping, divorce,

and such problems. In Luke 5. 17. we read of "doctors of the law" who were waiting for Jesus to break the sabbath law. These men were the "nomodidaskaloi" which we met in these notes on the Scribes. They were men who, basically scribes, had been trained to appear in court. In this work, according to Jesus, they "lade men with burdens grievous to be borne" (Luke 11. 46.) and in doing so they earned a severe rebuke from the Lord.

(11) The Publicans: The Greek word is "telones" which means "a renter or farmer of taxes". Such men were hated by Jew and Greek because they would buy the right to collect taxes and then proceed to collect more than was lawful. The Jews hated them more because they were working for the Romans and collecting taxes from Jews to pay to Romans. Zacchaeus had the contract for the collection of taxes over a wide area. (Luke 19. 1.) In the case of Matthew, the disciple of Jesus, he collected customs duty and not taxes. He was employed at a port on lake Galilee (Mark 2. 13.) and would collect duty on goods imported from the other side of the lake. (Mark 2. 14.) His Jewish name was Levi and he was the son of Alphaeus. It has been said that a publican was a civil servant but this is not wholly true. If he were a servant, he would earn a salary or a wage but a publican of this type would earn his living from collecting too much. In this they earned a rebuke from John the Baptist. See Luke 3. 13. Zacchaeus must have received a commission on what he and his assistants collected because Luke says "he was rich" and Zacchaeus later states that "if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." (Luke 19. 8.) Such was the hatred incurred by the Publicans that they are often associated with "sinners". (see Matt. 9. 10.) Jesus was accused of being "a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners". (Matt. 11. 19.) In Mark 2. 15. we read of publicans and sinners sitting together at a meal. The Jews hated a heathen as much as they hated publicans and this hatred is referred to by Jesus in Matt. 18. 17. Jesus did not condone ~~nor~~ share this hatred but he used the national attitude towards them to illustrate points in his teaching. See Matt. 21. 31. where the Lord connects "publicans and harlots".

In the anti-type they represent those people of to-day who are sinful in their ways but when they hear the Truth of the Word of God, they forsake their wickedness and turn to a worship of the only True God.

(12) The Proselytes: Gk. "proselutos" meaning "a newcomer; a stranger, an alien. In the Jewish sense of the word, it meant a convert to Judaism from the Gentiles. (Matt. 23. 15; Acts 2. 10; 6. 5; 13. 43.) The proselytes were of two types, namely:-

- (a) proselytas of righteousness - those who accepted Judaism and received circumcision. They bound themselves to keep the whole of the Mosaic Law and complied with all the requirements of Judaism.
- (b) proselytes of the gate - this title was derived from Exod. 20. 10. Deut. 5. 14; 14. 21; 24. 14; All of these refer to "the stranger that is within thy gates". Such converts accepted the One God of Israel and they believed in the Promises to the Fathers, and looked for the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth and the coming of the Messiah for this purpose. They kept certain specified laws but they refused to be circumcised. This limited their worship to the Court of Women in the temple. Cornelius was such a proselyte. Acts chapter 10.

(13) The Samaritans: In the days of Ahaz, king of Judah, the kingdom of Israel invaded the land and took away 200,000 women sons and daughters. This was barely the beginning of terrible sins on the part of Israel and as a punishment, a similar thing was to happen to them when the king of Assyria invaded them and took many of their people captive with those of other nations and brought them to Samaria. (2 Kings 17. 24.) When the people of Judah returned from the Babylonian captivity, both Ezra and Nehemiah opposed the offer by the Samaritans to help them rebuild the walls and the temple. This was

because of the mixed blood of the Samaritans. The Samaritans had a religion which included a belief in the promises and they looked for the coming of the Messiah. (John 4. 25.) They believed in Moses and the Law and regarded Mt. Gerizim as the proper place to offer sacrifices, this being the mountain mentioned in Deut. 27. 12. as the mountain from which the blessings came. The Jews despised the Samaritans and it was because of this that Jesus used them as a type in his parable of the Good Samaritan. (Luke 10. 30/37.) Samaria listened to Jesus at first and welcomed him when he went back the second time. They also listened to the apostles Peter and John. See Acts 8. 25.

(14) The Temple: A description of the Temple at the time of Jesus and later during the apostolic era, is beyond the scope of these notes. It is sufficient for our purpose to know that two words are used in regard to the temple and one is "naos" meaning the sanctuary consisting of the Holy Place and the Holiest. In Bagster's Interlinear Greek-English New Testament it is translated as "shrine" but this does not convey the true meaning. The Holiest was a shrine, within the shrine which was the temple itself. Matthew 27. 5. which records Judas as going into the "naos" which only the priests could enter, and throwing the money on the floor there, is often quoted to complicate the matter. It is said that Judas would not have been allowed that far but it must be remembered that there may have been no one there at the time.

The other word translated as "temple" is "hieron" which refers to the whole building itself. In the use of the word "temple" as an analogy, it is possible to see an allusion to the body of believers in the use of "hieron" and a reference to the Faith which is taught, in the use of "naos". There are too many usages to be recorded here but the careful student will make a note of the two words by using a good concordance. Strong concordance lists "naos" under No. 2411 and "hieron" under 3485. The temple was the mecca or kaaba stone of all Jewry. The Jews came there from all over the world at the time of the Passover and at Pentecost.

(15) The synagogue: In Psa. 74. 8. the word appears for the first time in Scripture and the Hebrew word is "mo'ed". The Greek word is "sunagoge" meaning "a bringing together; gathering; an assembly of men for any purpose." In the Jewish usage it means a place where men gather to pray or to listen to a reading or an exposition of the Scriptures. Luke 12. 11; Acts 9. 2; suggest that the synagogue was a place of trial or examination of individuals for religious wrong-doing. In Acts 13. 43. the Greek word is translated as "congregation".

The room (which it was mostly, rather than a building on its own) was used for mutual instruction and debate upon the Scriptures or other questions, and on the sabbath it was used for prayers and hymns of praise. It was not equipped for sacrifice so this form of worship was never followed there. In view of the general nature of its use, we can see why, it was possible for Paul, a converted Christian, to enter a synagogue and start teaching. Acts 18. 4. See also Acts 13. 5. Paul could never have done this in the temple because teaching there was the office of the priests only. The synagogue, being a meeting place and not a place of worship, could be used for the purpose of teaching.

**SUMMARY:** Now that we have read a brief survey of the people and the conditions which Jesus and the early Christians had to meet, we can compare them with the difficulties which confront us as the latter-day evangelists. When we have regard to the types and the anti-types, we find little difference in our days except that we do not have the same spirit of dedication to the Lord's Service which was so characteristic of Jesus and his followers of the first century. Perhaps then, now that we know something about the people and the circumstances, we can approach our study of the Acts of the Apostles with a view to learning how the pioneers overcame their difficulties, so that if we apply them to ourselves, we may be better equipped to preach the kingdom of God and teach those things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no man forbidding us. (Acts 28. 31.)



## THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.

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Each Book of the Bible should be studied in the context of the history of the days in which its story unfolds. Thus Isaiah becomes more intelligible to us if we know something about the days in which Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah were kings of Judah. (Isa. 1. 1.) Likewise, the Book of Jeremiah becomes much more informative if we know something of the reigns of Josiah and Jehoiakim up to the reign of the last king of Judah, Zedekiah. (Jer. 1. 2/3.) It is also a help to us when studying Matthew, Mark, Luke and John if we know something of the times in which Jesus lived. The same principle applies to the Book we know as The Acts of the Apostles. The apostles lived and preached during a very dynamic period of Jewish history during which a rapid change was coming about in the political life of the Jews. The scholars amongst them knew from the prophecy of Daniel that their Messiah could be expected about this time and they were becoming increasingly impatient with the domination of Rome to which they were subjected. This developing antagonism was to culminate in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

When David set up his throne at Jerusalem, he paved the way for the glorious reign of Solomon. It was anti-typically proper that David should abdicate and be alive while his son Solomon ascended the throne to become king of the most illustrious empire the world had seen up to that time. David, the beloved of God, was a king and a man of war. The Returned Christ will also be a king and a man of war and just as David handed over to his son Solomon whose name means "Peacable", so the warlike character of Christ will change to the King of Peace. Had the Israelites held to the Faith, there is no doubt that the Throne at Zion would have been more illustrious than it became. But the evil influences all around it were too much even for Solomon and the revolt of the Ten Tribes was the result. In the centuries which followed, the people of both houses of Israel went into a steady decline so that Israel was to lose its identity and Judah in the south was to go into captivity in Babylon. The Jews bewail the departed glories of Israel even to this day. In the days of the apostles, the Jews were as politically ambitious as ever to have the kingdom of Israel restored to them and the apostles themselves were as guilty of this as anyone of Israel. See Acts 1. 6.

When Yahweh called His people out of Egypt, He led them through a wilderness journey to show them that there was a God in heaven and that there was none like Him. (Deut. 4. 34/35.) The journey through the wilderness showed the people that they were a separate and peculiar people to the LORD and it developed a character of aloofness in them which they were never to lose. This form of isolationism made it difficult for the Jew to accept the Gentiles into the Covenant of Promise. When Paul preached to Gentiles, he found that the more militant Jews would follow him around, trying to establish the tenets of Judaism and getting converts to keep the Law of Moses.

Although the Jews looked forward to the coming of their Messiah, they did not look forward to his coming as an event which <sup>would</sup> bring them salvation. Their political ambitions caused them to look forward to his arrival to drive out the hated Roman oppressors. That Jesus did not lift a finger to oppose the Roman overlords went a long way to causing his rejection by the people. In the days of the apostles, the people were interested enough in the miracles of healing but the promise of salvation in the Kingdom of God could not compete against the more attractive prospect of driving out the Romans.

The effect of the fore-going factors which contributed to the national character of Israel was that the apostles had an extremely difficult task in preaching the Word of God. Basic to all the causes of apathy from the people was the fact that they were irreligious so that it was very difficult to persuade the people that spiritual things were of paramount importance.

**JERUSALEM:** It will be seen that the ancient city of David was of importance as the centre for the head-quarters of the early ecclesias. Although Syrian Antioch became the organising centre for preaching, Jerusalem

remained the centre to which all pressing and difficult questions were sent for consideration. From the point of view of the Jews, Jerusalem was the magnet for all Jews throughout the habitable world at that time. Every Jew would try at least once in his lifetime to make one journey to Jerusalem on a national and religious feast day. The chief glory of the city was the Temple which Herod the Great had built and Jews from all over the world would go there to offer sacrifices and to worship. The Jews also would send contributions to Jerusalem to sustain the Temple and to pay for its administration. Thus it was that the Temple became a Clearing House for Foreign Exchange. The Jews were not a nation in the true sense of the word but they were a RACE of people who were bound together by a common belief in the Promises of Yahweh and they were held together by their veneration for the Temple and by a common worship under the Law of Moses. Thus it was that the Temple and the Law played such an important part in their lives and it was on the basis of a violation of these two principles that Jesus and Stephen were falsely accused before being put to death.

The Jewish communities in other parts of the Roman Empire were regarded by the Romans as self-governing bodies with certain limitations such as "it is not lawful for us to put any man to death". (John 18. 31.) They had their own administrators of the Law and this system worked very well indeed. The worship in the synagogues was conducted as we have seen, when there was no Temple near by.

ROME: Inasmuch as the Roman Empire ruled the habitable world at that time, Rome was to its citizens and people what London was to the British Commonwealth. If Roman citizens were in trouble in any part of the Empire, Rome would send its legions to help them. Rome provided a "brain drain" in those days so that philosophers, financiers, artists, teachers and artisans in a multiplicity of skills went there to seek fame and fortune. It was the military and administrative hub on which the wheel of Empire turned. From Rome went governors with appointments to all provinces. The Emperor held a position of absolute rule sitting as it were, in the place of God. Thus the Emperor and the men who represented him tended to become deified. This happened in the case of Herod who gave not glory to God when the people hailed him as a god. (Acts 12. 20/23.) This tendency to worship the Emperor led to the deification of the pope when Rome gained control over both church and State. The Emperor's power was absolute in that he was not answerable to a Senate or to some other authority. If he misbehaved himself, he could be removed from office by assassination. The Empire was divided into Provinces each of which was presided over by a Governor who was appointed either by the Senate or the Emperor. The Governor appointed by the Senate was called a Proconsul and he who was appointed by the Emperor was called a Prefect or, if appointed to a minor province, a Procurator. Whatever rank they held, all such men were under the control of the Emperor and were answerable to him. (Acts 25. 25.) In Acts we find Proconsuls in Sergius Paulus, (Acts 13. 7.) and Gallio. (Acts 18, 12.) Both these men are called "deputies" in the translation. The procurators are Felix (Acts 23. 24.) and Festus, (Acts 24. 27.) The A.V. translates the rank as "governor".

A well run Empire has good lines of communication and in this respect, Rome was well served. This enabled Paul to travel as he did. The provinces of the Roman Empire were Macedonia with its subdivisions of Illyricum in the north and Thessaly in the south; Achaia which was the main portion of Greece included the city of Athens as well as the southern portion now known as Pelopponesia. This includes Corinth. Between Macedonia and the Black Sea was Thrace and to the east abutting the Black Sea were Bithynia and Pontus. South of Pontus was Cappadocia and further south still, Antiochus and next to it, Syria. South of Thrace across the Aegean Sea we get Asia with its many well-known places such as Galatia, Phrygia, Pamphylia and Lycia.

This brief summary of the conditions in which the early apostles set out to preach helps us to understand the great difficulties which beset them. If we add to this the wide spread superstition that held the nations in its grip we are surprised that they made the progress which they did. We must regard ourselves as experiencing similar difficulties in this world of sin and apostasy. Let us then be like the early stalwarts who set forth into a hostile world, with Trust in Yahweh and a determination to work and not to yield.

## WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF THE "ACTS OF THE APOSTLES?"

There is nothing in the New Testament to tell us who the author was. There is no positive evidence in Scripture which can identify the author for us beyond all reasonable doubt. Tradition is strongly in favour of LUKE. All we can be sure about is that whoever wrote the Acts must also have written Luke's Gospel because the writer refers to "the former treatise". The reasons connecting the author of one with the author of the other are:-

- (1) In Acts 1. 1. the writer addresses his work to "Theophilus" and we see from Luke 1. 3. that the same person is addressed.
- (2) As noted above, the writer of Acts refers to Luke's Gospel as "the former treatise". This does not prove that the writer was Luke but merely shows that the same author wrote both works.
- (3) Luke 24. 51. records the Ascension, as does Acts 1. 9. thus showing that the story told by "the former treatise" and Acts is a continuous whole, the one being the continuation of the other. The Ascension is the connecting link between the two.
- (4) The introduction to both Books is similar in style indicating that both came from the same pen.
- (5) Both Books mention Gentile people more than any other Book of the New Testament. There is the characteristic of love for people in both Books.
- (6) Both Books mention women more than any other Books of the Bible thus showing a love and respect for women in both.

Whoever he was the writer must have been with Paul. The intimate attention to detail indicates the presence of a fellow traveller and companion. The author is self-effacing in both his works but mentions many of those who travelled with Paul's company of which the author was obviously a member. He betrays his presence in Acts 16. 10. with the use of the pronoun "we" making this the first of the "we" verses. "we" occurs in the next verse and in verses 15 and 17 the word "us" appears. "Us" also occurs in Acts 20. 5. and "we" occurs many times from 20. 6. onwards.

The best method of investigation is to examine all the names whom Paul mentions in his epistles and study each to ascertain whether the person could have been the author of "The Acts". Consider the following:-

From Acts we get Barnabas and Mark. Both cannot be considered for the test of authorship of Acts because Barnabas took Mark with him after he and Paul had quarreled over Mark. (Acts 15. 39.) From 2 Tim. 4. 11. we learn that Mark was not at Rome with Paul.

It is important to note that in the conclusion of Acts, the writer mentions that "...Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house,..." and explains that Paul preached during that period. Therefore the writer must have known about it and to know about it, must have been there.

Timothy is mentioned in Acts 16. 1; 17. 14/15; 18. 5; etc., The fact that Timothy received the 2nd. Epistle which was written from Rome is proof enough that he was not at Rome and must be eliminated from the test of authorship.

Tychicus, Trophimus, Aristarchus, Sopater, Secundus and Gaius all accompanied Paul. Tychicus was sent to Ephesus (2 Tim. 4. 12.) and Trophimus was left at Miletum sick. (2 Tim. 4. 20.) Of the others, the writer says, "These going before tarried for us at Troas". (Acts 20. 5.) This shows that they were not constant companions of Paul.

Prisca, Aquila, Onesiphorus, Erastus, Eubulus, Pudens, Linus and Claudia seem to have been recent friends of Paul and were not with him from the first "we" verse. (2 Tim. 4. 19/21.)

Demas can be eliminated because he deserted Paul, "having loved this present world." (2 Tim. 4. 10.)

Epaphroditus and Epaphras are not mentioned in Acts so we can assume that they were friends and not travelling companions. Neither were in a position to be the author of Acts.

Jesus Justus and Crispus (Acts 18, 7/8.) are mentioned as converts with the suggestion that they were attached to a place and did not travel about as Paul did. For further information on Justus see Col. 4, 11.

Many of the names mentioned in Rom. 16, make a one time appearance in Scripture and do not qualify for consideration as possible authors of Acts. It will be found that all names can be eliminated from the list until we are left with Titus and Luke. Some commentators think that Titus and Luke may be one and the same person and that the full name was TITUS LUKAS. This theory cannot be entertained for a moment as both names are mentioned in the same epistle.

It is suggested that Titus and Luke were brothers. Both names are Roman and both men were Gentiles. It is thought that "the brethren" mentioned in 2 Cor. 8, 18, and 2 Cor. 12, 18, referred to Titus and Luke. Titus is mentioned in 2 Cor. 8, 16/17, as being a visitor to Corinth and in verse 18, Paul says that with him we have sent the brother. Again in 2 Cor. 12, 18, Paul again refers to sending Titus and with him "a brother". These verses come no where near proving that Luke was "the brother" but it is natural for Paul to think of the brother when he mentions Titus. Thus we find in 2 Tim. 4, 10, that "Titus (is departed) unto Dalmatia..." and, in the next verse, "Only Luke is with me".

In Col. 4, 14, Luke is mentioned. This epistle was written from Rome and from 2 Tim. 4, 11, we know that Luke was with Paul. It is possible that Luke wrote both treatises during those two years at Rome.

Arising out of the evidence before us, it is apparant that Titus was not with Paul at the end of his life whereas Luke was. This leads to the almost certain conclusion that Luke is the only reliable candidate for consideration as the author of Luke and The Acts. All other possible candidates could not have been Paul's companions for long enough to write such a full and detailed stody. Furthermore, only Aristarchus and Luke were with Paul on his boat journey. The point is not proved but we think the weight of evidence is in favour of Luke having been the author. This conclusion also has the support of tradition.

For the purpose of these notes, we shall take it that Luke was the author of both the Gospel known as LUKE and THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

Verse 1 :

"The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,"

"The former ..." Greek "PROTOS" meaning first in time. Some commentators suggest that Luke used the superlative "first" instead of the comparative "former" because he meant to write three treatises, but died before the third could be written. In the English idiom it is customary to use the expression "the first of two" instead of the more pedantic "the former of two" and Walker observes that the Greek idiom has the same usage. If Luke planned to write a third treatise, nothing is known of it. We are justified in regarding Luke's Gospel as the first in time and it is referred to as such in this verse.

"treatise ..." referring to the book we known as "The Gospel according to Luke". The original Greek word is "LOGOS". The English derivative is "logic" and the suffix "-logy" in such words as Geology, Archaeology, etc.. Where the suffix is used, the meaning is "a concept" as "Geo-" (the earth) "-logy" (a concept) making Geology - the concept of the earth. Liddell & Scott list many shades of meaning and state that "Logos never means a "word" in a grammatical sense as the mere name of a thing or act ... but rather a word as the thing referred to, the material not the formal part. On the other hand, it is opposite to ... a thing merely uttered and not made good ... not merely talking for the sake of talking". Dr. Thomas defines "logos" as "the outward form by which the inward thought is expressed and made known; also, the inward thought or reason itself. So that the word comprehends both the idea of reason and speech". (EUREKA. Vol. 1. page 90) Having regard to John's use of the word, (John 1.1.) we see that the Divine Concept or Plan and Purpose was in the beginning with God and, in terms of Prov. 8.1. the concept would have to be uttered before it became effective. Such an utterance in the beginning would be "Let there be light". (Gen. 1.3.) The effect "and there was light" would come into being as a result of the utterance which was an outward manifestation of an inward thought. The inner significance of this "inward thought" is shown by 2 Cor.4.6. which relates the Divine Command to the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ".

Applying the foregoing definition to Luke's "The former treatise", we suggest that Luke referred to "The first account of the Divine Plan and Purpose which I wrote to you about, ..." Luke's "Gospel" was indeed, a very comprehensive account of "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ", and now his second work was to be another comprehensive account of the same Plan and Purpose as taught by the Apostles in the early days of Christianity.

Bruce (Text) dismisses the word "logos" with the observation that "LOGOS" is used for a division of a work which covered more than one papyrus roll. Acts is thus the second division of the work LUCAS AD THEOPHILUM (Luke to Theophilus). Luke and Acts covered one papyrus roll each, ..." (Page 65). While this observation is undoubtedly true, we suggest that Luke, writing under Divine Inspiration, chose his words with care as to their teaching value. This being the case, we feel that the Biblical significance of the use of "LOGOS" is of prime importance and should not be set aside lightly. Luke did write about the "outward manifestation of the inward thought" and in the sense of the word LOGOS as described, its use by him is appropriate.

"have I made" The verb here is "poieo" from which we get our English word "poem" signifying something which is put together. "the things that are made" of Rom. 1.20. is one usage and "workmanship" of Ephes. 2.10. is another. The latter reference is particularly apt. It reads, "For we are his (God's) workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them". The idea of "creating" something according to the Divine Plan and Purpose is evident and goes well with our definition of the word "treatise". Other references for study are Luke 14. 16. "A certain man made a great supper ..." Luke's record of this parable fore-shadows the future "Marriage Supper of the Lamb" which is part of the LOGOS. John 7. 23. "... I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day." The miracle of making a man every whit whole on the sabbath day was a sign pointing to the Kingdom of God on earth when sinful man will be made EVERY WHIT whole (cured of his sinful nature, his mortality) during the sabbatical period of 1,000 years.

Writing of the potter who "hath power over the clay to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour", Paul asks, "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou MADE me thus?" (Rom. 9. 20/21.)

Describing Jesus, Paul wrote, "For he (God) hath made him (Jesus) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5.21.) Note the Divine Plan and Purpose mentioned in this verse.

Note the use of "made" in Ephes. 2.14. and its relation to the Divine Plan and Purpose. See also Heb. 8.9.

"O Theophilus ..." The name is Greek in origin and Roman in spelling. It means "beloved by God" or "friend of God" or "dear to God". It has been suggested that the name does not apply to any particular person but refers to "the general reader". Commentators however, agree that a Roman person of high standing is addressed because of the epithet "most excellent" which is found in Luke 1.3. Theophilus is thought to have been a Gentile convert residing in some place other than Judea. The title conferred upon him of "most excellent" in Luke 1. 3. is a courtesy title and a similar courtesy is found in Acts 23. 26. where Claudius Lysias is addressed as "the most excellent governor". In Acts 24. 3. we find "most noble Felix" and in Acts 26. 25. we have "most noble Festus". Tradition states that Theophilus was a priest mentioned by the historian Josephus but this is drawn from a coincidence of names.

Before we make up our minds on this point, we should consider what sort of a man Theophilus was if Luke would go to the trouble of writing for his benefit the two longest books in the New Testament. Paul wrote two letters which we know of to Timothy and one to Titus. Both these men held a position of some importance amongst the early Christians yet apart from the two places in which Luke mentions him, nothing is heard of Theophilus. The two treatises did not inspire him to help the early Christians nor does he figure as a friend of Paul. How was it that both Timothy and Titus turned out to be hard working servants of the Lord, yet Theophilus could not raise any enthusiasm at all as a preacher or helper? We suggest that the name "Theophilus" did, in fact, refer to the True Christian Believers of all ages. Addressing them as "most excellent" is appropriate to the "elect of God". Any "lover of God" is surely an "excellent" person! If the courtesy title is used when addressing people of high rank, then its use to the "general reader" amongst the True Christian Believers is not out of place.

It is to the True Christian Believers that Luke wrote his two Books so that they "mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein they have been instructed". If Theophilus was a particular person, he falls lower in our estimation because before he received both treatises, he had already been instructed in those things which are most surely believed among us. If, on the other hand, Luke wrote to make sure that the True Christian Believers were built up in the Faith which they had been taught, then his act of addressing both books to the lover of God makes sense. The point is not proved but we think the weight of evidence lies in favour of the Books being addressed to the General Readers amongst the True Christian Believers. Luke did not write to those who had gone astray from the Truth. We have no proof of this but we know that Luke was a follower of Paul, who, in his turn, followed his Master, Jesus. The Lord spoke in parables so that only those who had ears to hear might hear. He had no time for those whose heart had waxed gross and whose ears were dull of hearing. (Matt. 13. 15/16.)

One thing we can be quite sure of is that the "Theophilus" of Luke's Gospel is the same person/s addressed in the Acts and the use of the name helps to identify the writer of both Books.

"of all that Jesus began ..." The use of the word "began" by Luke - 22 times in the Gospel and 9 times in Acts - is a characteristic of his style of composition. The word "all" refers to the work which Jesus did and taught, such things being necessary to his purpose. He never did anything which was superfluous. This work was BEGUN by Jesus in two ways, (1) he was the FIRST to do it. No one ever did his work for him before he did it for the first time. (2) Luke is referring to "The former treatise" which he had made and this concerned the work which Jesus BEGAN. The second treatise was to deal with the work of Jesus which was carried on in obedience

to the commandment "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature". (Mark 16. 15.) What Jesus had begun, the Apostles and Believers were to continue.

"to do and teach," Luke is careful of the order in which he sets out the work of Jesus. The Lord's work was to DO first and then TEACH afterwards. Jesus was very severe on those who spoke but did not according as they spoke. Speaking of the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus said, "All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works : for they say, and do not". (Matt. 23. 3.)

When Jesus did not reveal his identity to his companions on the road to Emaus, and seemed to be unaware of what had happened during those days, he asked them "What things"? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and in word before God and all the people". (Luke 24.19.) Mighty in DEED AND IN WORD is the key phrase. Notice that his DEEDS came first and after that, his WORDS. From this we learn that Jesus was a man who taught first by example and then by word. He was not as the scribes and Pharisees who "say and do not".

### Verse 2 :

"Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Spirit had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen :"

"Until the day in which he was taken up ..." Verse 1 which we have just studied tells us that Acts is the sequel or continuation of another (the former treatise). Now verse 2 shows us the point at which the first treatise closed and the next begun. This connecting point takes us to Luke 24.51. which records the ascension of Jesus into heaven. The day on which he was taken up marks the close of his work on earth. Matthew and John do not record the ascension. Mark states that "he was received up into heaven" (Mark 16.19.) "received" in Mark's gospel is from the same Greek word translated as "taken" in Acts 1. 2. and in verse 11. In all the verses mentioned here, the Afrikaans Bybel translates as "opgeneem". From Bullinger we get "cause to rise up". (Lex. page 758).

"after that he ... had given commandments" These six words are translated from one Greek word "enteilamenos" which is a participle in the singular form meaning "having charged or commanded". The singular presents an interesting study because it cannot embrace all the commandments Jesus gave his disciples during the 40 days (mentioned in the next verse) he was with them. Many commandments given over that period of time would have to be given in the plural form - "commandments". The Amplified New Testament and the Zulu Bible solve the problem by using the verb "instructed and commanded" without supplying the answer we want. The Knox Translation gives "He then laid a charge ..." The R.S.V. and R.V. use "given/give commandment". All other versions consulted give the plural "commandments". We have the choice of all the commandments given by Jesus between his resurrection and ascension, and the commandment given during his last few moments with the disciples. We prefer to regard the latter as it is closely associated with the day on which he was taken up.

"through the Holy Spirit" These words come between "he" and "had" in the A.V. A quick reading would indicate that the commandment had been given "through the Holy Spirit". If this is the meaning of the passage then it is rather extraordinary that Luke should record the Holy Spirit working in Jesus at this moment and not in others. Why did not Luke record that the Holy Spirit moved Jesus to speak when he gave commandment on other occasions? The construction raises two questions - Did Jesus give commandment through the Holy Spirit? or did he give commandment TO THE APOSTLES as distinct from others, through the Holy Spirit? Verse 3 mentions the apostles so we think there is a connection between them and what is written in verse 2. If this is so, then we suggest verse 2 could have been translated as follows : - "Until the day in which he was taken up, after having given commandment unto the apostles whom he had chosen through the Holy Spirit." Then we continue with verse 3, the opening words of which seem to fit in with this meaning. If the Afrikaans text dropped the comma, it would have this

translation - "tot op die dag dat Hy opgeneem is, nadat Hy aan die apostels wat Hy uitverkies het (,) deur die Heilige Gees bevele gegee het". (Until the day he was taken up, after he had given commandments to the apostles whom he had chosen (,) through the Holy Spirit".) The word order in Afrikaans indicates that he gave commandments through the Holy Spirit. Removing the comma, changes the sense.

"whom he had chosen" "chosen" in the Middle Voice means "selected for one's-self". This makes the choice a very personal one for Jesus and he made the choice from a larger circle of disciples. Many such disciples followed him of their own accord but those who he chose were chosen through the Power of the Holy Spirit operating in him.  
See Luke 6.13; John 6.70; 13.18; 15.16.19; Acts 1.24; 6.5; 15.7.22.25; 1 Cor. 1.27/28. Note the care with which Jesus chose. See his night of prayer before choosing - Luke 6.12/13.

Verse 3 : "To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God :"

"to whom also he shewed himself alive ..." The words "To whom" indicate the exclusiveness of the shewing. It was to certain disciples chosen for himself. Bear this in mind when Saul is chosen as a servant of God.

The words "shewed himself alive" mean "presented himself alive". But for the pronoun, the expression is the same as 9.41. when Peter raised Dorcas from the dead. "Presented" is used in the sense of PROVING something.

Luke is now going into detail concerning the Lord's resurrection and we shall find similar proofs in many places. Luke is not only combating the story that the disciples stole the body (Matt. 28.15.) and the theory that the resurrection is past already. He is also showing his readers the tremendous importance of the resurrection of Jesus. Without that resurrection, there is no firstfruits and no reward for his victory. If such is the case, then there is no hope for anyone.

The word "also" has a particular meaning here. In the context, he had chosen, he had commanded and now, also, he shewed himself alive. The identity of Jesus with all of these shows beyond doubt, the identity of the one raised.

"after his passion" this phrase is to be read in conjunction with the word "alive" which precedes it. "After his passion" means "after his suffering". The use of the verb "to suffer" followed by dying is common to the New Testament. See Luke 22.15; Acts 3.18; 17.3; Heb. 9.26; 13.12; 1 Peter 2.21; 3.18; 4.1. Also compare Rom. 11.15. with Rev. 1.18. The proofs which Jesus gave were not only "many", they were also "infallible".

"by many infallible proofs ..." All versions consulted omit "infallible" but the meaning is incorporated in the noun "proofs". Strong defines the word "tekmerion" as "criterion of certainty". It is also a token or sign defining a fact. In this connection, read Luke 24.39; 24.43; 1 John 1.1.

"being seen of them ..." The R.V. "appearing unto them" or the R.S.V. "appearing to them" are to be preferred because they indicate an appearance of Jesus unto them from time to time and not, as formerly, all the time they were with him. He was not seen of them constantly but only when he revealed himself to them now and again. Paul lists these appearances in 1. Cor. 15. 5/8.

"forty days ..." The R.V. translates - "appearing unto them by the space of forty days" and the R.S.V. gives us "appearing to them during forty days". By using "by the space of" and "during" both these versions translate the preposition "dia" in front of "forty days" which the A.V. omits. Die Bybel has "gedurende" meaning "during". The meaning is that the various appearances were made during an interval or period of forty days. It does not infer that Jesus appeared all the time to a number of people at various times over the whole period of forty days. Luke makes his point that a number of



appearances were made, all of them miraculous, and such appearances were made during a period which lasted for forty days.

This is the only passage in the N.T. which indicates to us the duration of time between the resurrection and the Ascension. It would not be true to say that without this passage we should not know how long the period was. We have the Type in Lev. 23.15/21. which describes the Wave Offering of which the Lord's sacrifice was the anti-type.

From the day of the wave offering, seven sabbaths plus a day were to be counted, making 50 in all. On the 50th Day (Pentecost) they were to make a new meat (meal) offering. If we count 40 days from the resurrection of the Lord and add the ten days of waiting from the time of his ascension to the day when the Holy Spirit was received by the apostles, we get 50 days to complete the anti-type.

"speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God ..." At the beginning of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, we read of Jesus having spoken to the apostles concerning the Kingdom of God. At the end of the same Book, we read of Paul, an apostle, preaching "the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, no man forbidding him". (Acts 28. 31.) Some of us may remark that if Jesus began to preach in A.D. 30, then on a year for a day basis, 40 days would represent 40 years and bring us to A.D.70 which was the last year in which Christianity was preached in Jerusalem. The 40 years represented a Biblical generation and would give a long enough period for the Holy Spirit to be given to "you and your children" only as stated by Peter in Acts 2. 39. That is to say, the Holy Spirit would be given to the generation to whom Peter spoke and to their children. This would come between this particular day of Pentecost and forty years afterwards in the year of destruction in A.D.70.

It should be noted that Jesus did not limit his speaking to "the kingdom of God". He covered all things pertaining to the kingdom of God. This must have taken into account all things concerning himself, his death and resurrection and his Second Coming, plus the resurrection of those in Christ. Three verses in Luke tell us of his teaching : -

- Luke 24. 25. "Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken :
26. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?
27. And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself".

We are all fools and slow of heart to believe. If we could appreciate the high calling unto which we have been called, we should give the more earnest heed to the scriptures. Suffering and dying are part of redemption. They were in the case of Jesus as we have seen, and they are in our case too. Suffering by resisting the three cardinal sins (lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life). Dying by baptism or by becoming a new man. To pay proper attention to the things concerning Jesus, we must read all scripture as Jesus did. Even more telling in this connection are the verses 44 to 47 of Luke 24. John 21. 15/17. are also worthy of study. Better known references are Matt. 28. 19. and Mark 16. 16.

Verse 4 :

"And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me."

"Being assembled together with them ..." The A.V., R.V. and the R.S.V. have a marginal alternative "or eating with them". The point is not important. The fact is that they were assembled together by appointment.

"commanded them ..." The word here is not the same as that of verse 2. This is the same as a military order which had to be obeyed.

"that they should not depart from Jerusalem ..." This repeats the report given by Luke of the Lord's

commandment in Luke 24. 49. Alexander points out that the Greek verb "chorizesthai" in the Middle Voice indicates that they should not depart either

physically or morally one from the other or from Jerusalem. The same word is translated as "separate" in Rom. 8. 35 and 39. Other references are Heb. 7.26. 1 Cor. 7.10/11. and 15. Philem. 15. It is not merely a commandment to stay at Jerusalem but to stay there at all costs and to stay with one another as a group separated from an evil world. This commandment could well apply to our modern Ecclesias.

"but wait for the promise of the Father, .." Peter was to refer to this promise on the day it became effective by the giving of the Holy Spirit. The promise was given in Old Testament times - see Joel 2. 28. Jesus also promised to send the disciples Another Comforter (John 14. 16. and 26.)

"which, saith he, ye have heard of me ..." The disciples had heard this "of" or "from" Jesus. References are Luke 11.13; 24.49; John 7. 38/39; 15. 26. Jesus must have had some particular promise in mind. There could be no better occasion than that recorded by John in the long discourse covered by chapters 13. to 17. "Let not your heart be troubled ...".

The words "saith he" are not in the original Greek but indicate a change from direct to indirect speech.

#### Verse 5 :

"For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence."

"For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit,"...

These words were called to mind and quoted by Peter - see Acts 11.16. in connection with Cornelius. John the Baptist said, "I indeed baptise you with water unto repentance : but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear : he shall baptise you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire:" (Matt. 3. 11.) See also Mark 1.8; Luke 3.16; John 1. 26/27.

Jesus was baptised both with water and with the Holy Spirit at the same time. In view of the prejudices he had to break down and the enormous apostacy in which he started preaching, it was necessary for Jesus to be endowed with special power from God. Similarly, in the early days of Christianity, the world was full of apostacy. Amongst the gods worshipped were Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto (to take the planets in their order from the Sun). The Greeks had Zeus, Aphrodite, Apollo, Minerva, Pan, Artemis, Bacchus, Juno to name a few. Insofar as the Jews were concerned, it was impossible for them to accept a crucified Christ as their Messiah. They had their synagogues and the pagans had their temples. Both Jew and Gentile had their priests and the Jews showed an alarming tendency to forsake the God of Israel as we see from Paul's experience recorded in Acts 14. 11/18. The pagans had the great Temple of Diana, a few miles north of Ephesus. This was of astounding beauty and was one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Further to the north at Pergamos, there was the great "healing" centre which was the chief seat of worship of Asclepius, the Grecian "Saviour". The place was noted for its "seven fountains" which supplied the supposed "healing waters". In modern times, the former Pergamos is known as Bergama.

Without the gift of the Holy Spirit, Christianity would have made slow, if any, progress. Also, the apostles, being slow of heart to believe, were given a full understanding of those things which they were sent to teach.

The phrase "be baptised with the Holy Spirit" has given a problem to trinitarians who find it hard to understand how the Third Person can be used as a baptising medium or be "poured out" upon recipients. If baptism is one of immersion, then how was the baptism of the Holy Spirit accomplished? The first answer to the problem is surely to give up the belief of a Third Person. This does not supply the answer as to how a person is BAPTISED with the Holy Spirit. The answer obviously, lies in the metaphorical nature of the baptism. A baptism in water brings about a change in a person (or should do so) in the same way as "baptising" a piece of cloth in a dyer's liquor brings about a change in the colour of the cloth. Note that baptism is a dyer's term for complete immersion in the liquor. No dyer would seek to change the colour of a cloth by sprinkling it with water which has been coloured with dye. The

relative state is that in the one instance they were baptised with water and in the other, they were changed by the Holy Spirit. Dyeing just changes the colour of a cloth and does not improve its qualities. It will still soil, tear, shrink and do undesirable things. Likewise, a person who had been baptised with the Holy Spirit would still be liable to sin.

"Baptism of the Holy Spirit" has a deeper meaning than is usually given to it. The Holy Spirit moved the writers of Scripture to write as they did and to give the students the LOGOS. When one comes to an understanding of such things as were written and baptism follows, the Holy Spirit has surely done its work in bringing another to a knowledge of the Divine Plan and Purpose, and to the Household of Faith. This is the initial "baptism of the Holy Spirit" which then becomes a gradual influence working in us only insofar as we study the Scriptures and apply the knowledge gained. Paul expresses this idea with : -

Rom. 8. 14. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God".

The man, constantly renewed in knowledge must be moulded into a constantly changing creature, becoming more and more a Son of God. Perfection will never be reached but an improvement upon the same rough uncut stone that was first baptised in water will emerge. In the finality of the process, the son of God will be cleansed from all sin at the Judgment Seat and given immortality.

"not many days hence ..." Greek "not after many these days". (Diag.)

Schonfield translates as "very shortly" and Die

Bybel has "na hierdie dae" (after these days). R.V. "not many days hence" and R.S.V. "before many days". Historically it was after ten days.

Verse 6 :

"When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?"

"When they therefore were come together ..." The word "therefore" introduces a difficulty. If it was a result of their coming together in verse 4, was the coming together of verse 6 the same meeting? If "therefore" means "because of this", does it refer to the coming together or to the question which followed? Moffat has brackets from the beginning of verse 3 to the end of verse 5 indicating that the substance of verses 3 to 5 was an interpolation. We must regard the "coming together" of verse 6 as a different occasion from that mentioned in verse 4. It could relate to the occasion mentioned in Luke in Luke 24. 50, where Jesus led them out as far as to Bethany and then stopped while he blessed them. He was then taken up into heaven. It is possible that Luke is now supplying further details of that occasion to clarify a point for his readers. Jesus had just promised them the Holy Spirit in a few days time. The Jews believed in the Messianic Kingdom and the prophecies of Daniel were still in their minds. They appear to have forgotten the parable of the "pounds" which Jesus gave to discount the idea that the kingdom was soon to appear. (Luke 19.11.) Paul had the same difficulty with the Thessalonians for, after writing his First Epistle telling them about the Second Coming of Christ and giving them a detailed warning in chapter 5, he wrote his Second Epistle to show them that the Return of Christ was not yet but a great apostacy had to arise first. This particular "coming together" was at the time when they stopped on the Bethany road and Jesus was about to bless them.

"they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?"

The apostles had received the promise of the Holy Spirit. This would mean to them that the kingdom was about to be restored. Being uncertain, they asked him. The word "restore" is used in the N.T. in Matt. 12. 13. and Mark 8. 25. both of which record a healing and restoring of a limb and sight. Perhaps the Apostles had in mind the prophecy of the Lord concerning the work of Elijah in the days to come. See Matt. 17.11. and Mark 9.12. Prophecies concerning the restoration are multitudinous in the O.T. but the following are of interest : - Isa. 1.26; 9.6/7; Jer. 23. 5/6; 33. 14/15. Ezek. 37. 24; Dan. 7. 13/14; Hos. 3. 4/5; Amos. 9. 11; Micah 4. 1/2.

Verse 7 :

"And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power."

"It is not for you to know ..." It was not their province or privilege. To whom it belonged was explained a moment later.

"(the) times or (the) seasons ..." The R.V. and R.S.V. omit both "the's" as they have been bracketed here. Times and seasons are not synonymous terms. "Times" refers to the critical moments of history. "Seasons" refers to the epochs in which the "times" occur and cover a period during which "times" happen. The Lord's meaning should be now more clear. It is not for us to know the course of history nor the major events which constitute that history.

"which the Father hath put in His own power ..." The Father has told us of certain time periods and these should give us a good indication as to "when shall these things be". Paul makes this quite clear in 1 Thess. 5. 1/10. God has given us sufficient information for our needs but the "day" and the "hour" is not ours to know. Neither has it been revealed to the angels nor the Son. (Mark 13.32; Matt. 24. 36.) The time of "not many days hence" of verse 5 referred to a DAY. Whereas we may work out the probable YEAR, the day has been hidden from us, and, during his mortal life on earth, denied to the Son.

The phrase "put in his own power" means that God has predetermined the times and the seasons in the exercise of His own power or authority. The power and authority belongs to God and man has no physical nor moral right to be told of the day. The answer which Jesus gave seems to give us a lesson that we should not occupy ourselves in investigating such matters which lie in the future. The present is here now and there is work to be done. We should be much better occupied by preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

Verse 8 :

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you : and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

"But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you ..."

In the state they were in at that time, knowing little of the Divine Plan and Purpose, it was very essential for them to have the Holy Spirit. This would give them power which was contained in nine spiritual gifts. These are detailed by Paul in 1 Cor. 12. 8/10. The Power which such gifts would give them would be very great indeed. They would be able to use this power at will but it appears that Peter was very conscious of his imperfection and often sought the Divine Blessing in prayer before using the Power.

"and ye shall be witnesses unto me ..." Acts 1. 22. gives a most important qualification of an Apostle. He had to be a witness of the physical resurrection of Jesus. If they had had first hand evidence of his resurrection as a person who could be seen and touched, then they would be able to show that this was indeed the Son of God. The qualification is also given in John 15. 27. If they had been witnesses from the very beginning, then they would have witnessed his doctrines, miracles, life, death, resurrection and ascension. See Acts 2. 32; 10. 39; 10. 41; 22. 15; and 26. 16.

"in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the earth ..."

Note the order which indicates an expansion in the preaching of the Gospel. They were to start in Jerusalem, and then extend to Judaea of which Jerusalem was the capital. Having covered this portion of the Holy Land, they were to extend to Samaria which country had been forbidden to them in the days of Jesus. See Matt. 10. 5. Thereafter their preaching was to extend to all the habitable earth at that time.

Verse 9 :

"And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight."

"And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up ..."

The past participle is carefully chosen here and should read "Having spoken ...". This would indicate that his being taken up was something which occurred after he had spoken and was not something which interrupted his speaking.

"while they beheld, ..." another participle - "they beholding", i.e. not while they were not looking.

"he was taken up ..." The Greek word means "lifted up" (off the ground) and this is the translation given in the R.S.V. This was the first of two stages. He was raised off the ground and then the next stage took place. We interpolate here that Luke records the ascension in these words: "... while he blessed them, he was parted from them ..." (Luke 24. 51.) Note the tense. He was not taken up WHILE HE WAS IN THE ACT OF BLESSING THEM but was taken up WHILE HE BLESSED THEM. This indicates that immediately he had blessed them, he was taken up.

"and a cloud received him out of their sight ..." This was the second stage. Having been raised off the ground, the cloud enveloped him and took him out of their sight. They did not watch the cloud go into heaven. The movement was heavenwards. Jesus was taken up bodily and disappeared when he was enveloped in a cloud. No doubt when the cloud dissolved away, nothing could be seen. It is prophesied that the Lord will come again in clouds. (Matt. 24. 30. and 26. 64.) This does not mean that the Returned Christ will be seen riding upon a fast moving cloud but that he will appear in the same way as he disappeared.

The word "clouds" comes from the Greek "nephele" from the root "nepheos". The same word is used in Rev. 1. 7. "Behold, he cometh with clouds ..." which corroborates the angel's words, "Thissame Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go ..." The same word is used in 1 Cor. 10. 2. referring to the pillar of cloud which led the children of Israel through their wilderness journey. Another use is found in 1 Thess. 4. 17. where "... we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, ...". In this passage, "Them in the clouds" refers to those who will be raised from the dead. In Luke 9. 34. a "cloud" is mentioned out of which came the voice of God. A careful comparison of these records shows that there is a strong leaning towards the idea of the "cherubim" or "company of angels". It appears to be logical that the Lord Jesus was accompanied into heaven by angels and will return in the same manner. (2 Thess. 1. 7.)

Verse 10 :

"And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;"

"And while they looked stedfastly ..." The Greek word means "gazing fixedly". The word occurs twice in 2. Cor. 3. 7. and 13. but apart from these two occurrences, the usage is peculiar to Luke. The occurrences are Luke 4. 20; 22. 56; Acts 3. 4; 11. 6.; 7. 55; 10. 4; 13. 9; 14. 9; 23. 1. All these passages denote the fixing of the eyes on something with an intent gaze. Applied to the ascension, such a word does not permit of any imagination acting within the watching apostles. They saw and saw intently, leaving no room for doubt.

"toward heaven ..." represents direction which was upwards. Cannot refer to God's dwelling place.

"as he went up ..." does not refer to direction (R.S.V. "as he went") but to his act of moving away. (Die Bybel "weggaan" went away). R.V. also omits "up".

"Behold ..." to introduce something unusual or surprising.

"two men stood by in white apparel. ..." These were angels clothed in the robe of righteousness. Probably fine linen. See Rev. 19. 8.

It has been suggested that these two men were Moses and Elijah who stood by at the transfiguration. Their presence on the former occasion was to indicate that the Law and the Prophets had pointed to "his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem". Luke 9. 31. The Law and the prophets were more concerned about his Second Coming than his temporary abode in heaven therefore we cannot accept this suggestion. If they were Moses and Elijah then the theory would suggest that both these men were in an immortal state. We do not believe that any man has received immortality BEFORE Jesus nor do we believe that anyone has received it since.

Verse 11 :

"Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

"Ye men of Galilee ..." Thus accenting their humble origin. There is no derogatory statement here but is a means of bringing home to them the mercy of God in having called them to His Plan and Purpose. See 1 Cor. 1. 26/29.

"why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" As we shall see in a moment, the "gazing" was continued AFTER Jesus had gone into heaven. Just as the women were called from the precincts of the tomb, (Luke 24. 4/5.) so the disciples are called from their gazing which would now reveal nothing to them.

"this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven ..." THIS SAME JESUS in bodily form. He is the Messiah. There is no need to look for another.

"is taken up" is translated in R.V. as "was received up", R.S.V. "was taken up", Die Bybel "opgeneem is", all indicating past tense. Jesus had disappeared by the time the two angels spoke to them.

"shall so come in like manner ..." Jesus had spoken to them about this during his ministry. See Luke 21.27. The "like manner" means that he will come again "with clouds", "in clouds", or "in the clouds" (Matt. 24.30; 26.64; Mark 13.26; 14.62.) The manner of the Return is actual, when clouds will envelop him and, when they disappear, then shall be revealed the Son of man from heaven, together with his mighty angels. This appearance may be similar to that granted to the servant of Elisha. (2 Kings 6.17.) For prophecies of the dramatic appearances of the Lord, see 1 Thess. 4. 14/17. and 2 Thess. 1. 7/10.)

Verse 12 :

"Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey."

"Then returned they unto Jerusalem ..." This repeats the information given in Luke 24. 25.

"Olivet ..." It is suggested that Luke used this name for the benefit of Theophilus who was a stranger to Jerusalem. He may well have used the name for the benefit of readers throughout all ages who were strangers to Jerusalem.

"a sabbath day's journey ..." Traditionally 2,000 cubits distance which the Israelite was permitted to go from the tabernacle on the sabbath day. It appears to have been taken from the distance between the people and the ark at the crossing of the Jordan. (Josh. 3.4.) 2,000 cubits was also the limit around a city of refuge beyond which an accidental murderer may not pass until the death of the High Priest. Symbolically, killing a person brings about the same result as the sin in the Garden of Eden

which is death. Wilful murder is wilful sin and accidental murder is accidental sin. That the slayer had to remain within bounds showed God's mercy to him and the death of the High Priest was the Type of which the death of Jesus is the anti-type. (Num. 35. 2/34.) The distance in our measurement is 5 - 6 furlongs which is the distance between the summit of the Mount of Olives and Jerusalem. The ascension appears to have taken place near Bethany but they are reported to have returned from the Mount of Olives. There is no difficulty in this. Having witnessed the ascension from near Bethany, they returned via the Mount of Olives.

Verse 13 :

"And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James."

"they went up into an upper room ..." Not the same "upper room" of Luke 22.12. where the Last Supper was held. The nouns are different. The room belonged to a private house and not to one which would usually be hired as was the room of Luke 22. 12. Same as the "upper room" of Acts 9. 39; and 20. 8.

Luke now changes his discourse to one of describing the Ecclesial life of the apostles. The eleven remaining disciples are named as living in the room together with Mary, the mother of Jesus and the women. Thus it must have been a big room. The disciples had recovered from the panic which caused them to disperse. (Matt. 26.56. and Mark 14. 50.) They had met several times since that sad occasion. (Matt. 28.16; Mark 16.14; Luke 24.36; and John 20, 19 and 26; John 21. 14.)

The list of apostles given here is the fourth to appear in the N.T. the others being Matt. 10. 2/4; Mark 3. 16/19; Luke 6. 14/16. In these lists, Peter is always mentioned first, Philip fifth and James the son of Alphaeus is always ninth while Judas Iscariot is always last. Matthew and Luke give the names two and two together while Mark gives the names singly.

The women who were present included Mary as mentioned above and "the women" who are likely to be those mentioned in Luke 23. 49 and 55 who, no doubt, are Mary's sister, Mary the wife of Cleopas and Mary Magdalene who are mentioned in John 19. 25. Since the room may well have been the same as that of Acts 12. 12, we can expect Mary, the mother of Mark to have been there plus Rhoda.

Verse 14 :

"These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren."

"These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication ..."

"THESE ALL" shows that all took part in daily devotions, without exception. They were "with one accord", meaning with one heart and mind. Luke is fond of using this expression for it is found in Acts 2. 1 and 46; 4.24; 5.12; 7.57; 8.6; 12.20; 15.25; 18.12; 19.29. Paul uses it once in Rom. 15. 6. The unanimity is emphasized by the use of the word "continued".

The R.V. and R.S.V. both omit "supplication" as does the Diaglott, Knox Amplified Version, Schonfield and Moffatt. Prayer here might have followed the Israelite pattern of morning, noon and evening prayer. See Dan. 6. 10.

Note that in this verse, Mary the mother of Jesus disappears from the Biblical narrative. Her exalted position now assigned to her by Rome is not supported by Scripture.

Verse 15.

"And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,)"

"And in those days ..." This is a favourite expression of Luke's to indicate the lapse of time between one event and another or a

change of subject. See Luke 1. 24; 1.39; 2. 1; 4. 2; 6. 12; Acts 6. 1; 11. 27; 21. 15. Similar expressions are "It came to pass ..." and "Now ...". Here Luke is changing his story from the establishment of a small body of believers centred around the apostles, to an introduction to the replacement of Judas Iscariot. In the continuity, it is necessary to show that Judas had died, to show that he died according to the Scripture, and then to show how his place was filled and that this filling was also according to the Scriptures.

"Peter stood up in the midst ..." Peter takes the initiative. This is due to the priority given him by the Lord and to the dynamic nature of his character and energy. Matt. 16.18; Luke 22. 31/32; John 21. 15/17.

"in the midst" suggests "surrounded by disciples of Jesus" and does not mean that Peter was in the middle and the others all round him.

"of the disciples ..." The R.V. and R.S.V. both give "brethren" which shows a closer relationship than "disciples".

"(the number of names ...)" After the words "and said", there follows a statement in brackets which is an interpolation by way of clarification. The words "number of names" indicate an undetermined number of people which is assessed later in the verse at "about 120". The word "names" shows that the people had some special character about them which entitled them to be there. It is wrong to assume that the number 120 represented all the believers in existence at that time because of 1 Cor. 15. 6. "Names" and "persons" are not synonymous terms, nor do they draw a distinction between males and females, (it having been Jewish custom or O.T. usage, to register males only.) Furthermore names such as "Galileans", "Samaritans", "Scribes", etc., would not apply. We submit that the "names" refers to those who had been baptised during the ministry of Jesus. (John 4. 1/2.)

"were about one hundred and twenty." Those who are interested in the significance of numbers will find something here because God must have had a purpose in causing Luke to record this figure. Nothing in Scripture is given haphazardly. Turning to the creation story of Gen. 1. we find that the dry land appeared out of the seas and seed and fruit appeared. All these are symbols of "resurrection" to a new life. Three is the number of Divine perfection as are the three sides of a triangle which cannot be pushed out of shape. It also represents the full stage of existence having three dimensions, length, breadth and height.  $3 \times 40 = 120$  and forty is the number of years of a generation. Adding all these symbols together, we get the thought that all generations of mankind will have a share in the resurrection which is to come when the new creature will be immovable. In the meantime, there have been people from all generations who have looked and waited for the coming of the Lord and the day of Resurrection. This "waiting" was symbolised in the "names" (those whose names are written in the Book of Life) who were waiting for the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

#### Verse 16 :

"Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus."

"Men and brethren ..." omit "and" - should be "Men, brethren!" Normal salutation when opening an address to a meeting. See Acts 2. 29 and 37; 7. 2; 13. 15; 13. 26; 13. 38; 15. 7; 15. 13; 22. 1; 23. 1; 23. 6; 28. 17. "Men" used as a term of respect; "brethren" used to signify a more intimate association.

"this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled ..." It was necessary for it to have been fulfilled.

Peter's subsequent remarks give acknowledgement to the fact that the Scripture concerning this matter was Divinely inspired ("which the Holy Spirit .. spake") and that David was the channel through whom the communication was made. ("by the mouth of David") "Spake before ..." indicates O.T. days. "who was guide to them ..." referring to the act of treachery by Judas. Peter is mild in referring to the DENIAL by Judas, referring to it as Judas "becoming guide". Luke's great accuracy in this small detail shows that Peter's own denial was



still fresh in his mind. In a word we are shown a characteristic of Peter, namely, his great capacity for humility.

"concerning Judas" The prophecy did not refer specifically to Judas but to his betrayal.  
The Scripture referred to comes from Psa. 41. 9.

Verse 17 :

"For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry."

"For he was numbered with us, ..." The context shows that Peter felt it necessary to explain why Judas had betrayed his master. He was numbered with us, refers to his special place as one of a number of men, twelve, who had been chosen by the Lord.

"and had obtained part of this ministry ..." He had received his portion of apostleship.

The disciples must have been shocked to learn that one of their number had betrayed his Lord after having been chosen by him and been given his part as an apostle. How was such a thing possible? The Scriptures must be fulfilled. It was part of the suffering of Jesus that his familiar friend should turn against him and that Judas must suffer the fate of a traitor. This was the Divine Plan.

Verse 18 :

"Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out."

"Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity ..." The R.V; R.S.V. and the Diag. put verses 18 and 19 in brackets to indicate that Peter was making reference to historical facts. To regard the verses as an interpolation is to interrupt the continuity of the story. Peter is at this time an orator and not an historian so it would appear to be better to regard all verses as being part of a continuous story. R.V. has "obtained" instead of "purchased" and this appears to be more correct. This does away with any criticism on account of Matthew's story that the chief priests purchased the field (Matt. 27.7.)

"field" lit. "place" applied to landed property. Instead of his place amongst the apostles, Judas got "earth" in which he was buried and lost his chance of salvation. The sentence of Gen. 3. 19. "dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return", seems appropriate here.

"the reward of iniquity ..." His reward was death and a return to the earth. There is an undesigned coincidence here and shows Luke's accuracy and attention to detail. Peter used the expression during his speech which Luke now records. Years later we find Peter using it again. See 2 Pet. 2. 13. for "reward of unrighteousness" and verse 15 of that chapter for "wages of unrighteousness".

"and falling headlong ..." Greek word means "prone", i.e. head-first. He hanged himself by diving head-first with his head in a noose. Matthew says "hanged himself" (Matt. 27.5.) thus giving rise to the criticism that the two accounts are at variance. Actually both are correct. Matthew tells us that he hanged himself but does not say how he did it. Peter, recorded by Luke in this verse, does not state that he hanged himself but tells us that he dived headlong. In other words, he tells us how he did it.

"he burst asunder in the midst ...2 The rope broke, or his head came out of the noose, or when he got to the end of the rope, his fall was arrested and he spun violently to the ground and, being a fat man according to tradition, burst asunder. Bursting signifies a bursting noise.

"all his bowels gushed out" An ignominious and ghastly end for a traitor. The gushing out would happen as a result of the bursting asunder.

Verse 19 :

"And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem;  
insomuch as that field is called in their proper  
tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood."

"It was known to all ... at Jerusalem ..." Peter admits that the death of Judas is not something his hearers did not know. The retribution of Judas' death has a deeper significance than the deserved death of a traitor. This man had sinned against the God of Israel. The rapid punishment could not have failed to impress everyone, even unbelievers.

"insomuch ..." because, i.e., as a result of the fore-going, the field was given a certain name.

"that field is called in their proper tongue ..." The "proper tongue" would be the language spoken at the time, which was an Aramaic corruption of Hebrew.

"Aceldama" Translated as "Field of Blood" because of the blood of Jesus and not because of the blood of Judas. It was the price of the blood of Jesus. Having been touched by Judas' blood it would be polluted. Note Luke's care for Gentile readers by explaining that the name has a meaning. The field is described in Matt. 27.7, as a "potter's field". The three appearances of the word "field" in Acts 1. 18/19. are the only places in which the word occurs. It means a plot of ground but is different from the word used for a field (of corn) or for ploughing where something will grow. It lay above the spot where the valleys of Gehenna (Hinnom) and Kidron join. The soil there is of clay, hence Matthew's description of a "potter's field". This place was to be the burial ground of a vessel fashioned unto dishonour and a place where nothing will grow.

Verse 20 :

"For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation  
be desolate, and let no man dwell therein : and his  
bishopricks let another take."

Having built up his argument, Peter now returns to his main theme, and shows that just as the betrayal was the subject of prophecy contained in the Psalms from which he now quotes.

"Let his habitation be desolate ..." from Psa. 69. 25. This verse should be read in the context of verses 22 to 28. In Hebrew the word "habitation" means an enclosure or encampment. In Greek it means a shelter for the night with reference to shepherds and their flocks. It was this abode of a man who could have been a shepherd of men, which was to be given to another. The other quotation from Psalms comes from Psa. 109. 8. Both these Psalms are Messianic. Both are dedicated to "the Chief Musician" which indicates that when the Song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb is sung, the Chief Musician who will conduct the hymn of praise, is Jesus. Psalm 69 adds "upon Shoshannim". This word means Lilies, or the Spring Festival or the Passover. Paul's quotation of Psa. 69. 22/23 appears in Rom. 11. 9/10.

Reference to Psalms 69 and 109 will show that they are written with a prophetic application to Jesus, Israel his accusers and Judas, the Satan of Psa. 109. 6. Peter quotes these Psalms in the singular as applying to Judas in whom the opposition of Israel seems to be embodied. This leads to a further application of the betrayal to all those who turn against Jesus. The True Believer can also turn against the Lord by wilful sin and so "crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame". (Heb. 6. 6.) This possibility should cause us some anxiety and induce us to resist sin at all costs. The personal application is shown by the anxiety of the eleven, each of whom asked, "Is it I?" (Matt. 26. 22; Mark 14. 19; Luke 22. 23.)

"Let no man dwell therein". Fro. Psa. 109. 8.

"his bishopricks let another take". The description of Judas' vacated office as a bishopricks is correct in a modern sense. In those days, the word meant "charge" as translated in Schonfield, Moffatt, or

"office" as in R.S.V., Diag, Moulton, Knox. Weymouth has "work", the Amplified Version gives the alternates "position" or "overseership". Die Bybel has "opsienersamp" (Supervisor's office.) It carries a meaning of appointment to a position of authority.

Verse 21 :

"Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,"

Having shown his hearers the pattern of Scripture, Peter now leads up to the appointment of a person to fill the high office. Because of the prophecies, Peter would regard this duty as the result of a Divine Command. This is shown by the introduction of verse 21 by the word "Wherefore ...".

"of these men which have companied with us ..." in sequence, the next words to follow could be "must one be ordained to be ..." of verse 22. The teaching is that Apostles could come from only those who can fulfil certain conditions which Peter now states. The use of the word "men" signifies males as opposed to females. "Companied" signifies the joint act of "coming" and "going", i.e. going in all directions. The rule requires not only belief in the Lord's teaching but also experience as one of a body of men who went with him everywhere during his ministry. This is confirmed by the next words -

"all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us". To go in and out denotes continual movement. This required a knowledge of all that he said and did. "Among us" has the sense of "over us" meaning as a "head" or "leader". The time when this qualifying period would start has engaged much attention but it would appear to be indicated by Mark 1. 14, when John was put in prison and Jesus started to preach the Gospel and chose his disciples. The qualifying period could not have started when John baptised Jesus because Jesus did not start to preach immediately after he was baptised. His ministry started in Galilee. See Matt. 4. 12. and 17.

Verse 22 :

"Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection."

"beginning from the baptism of John ..." Regarding John as a fore-runner but not making it necessary for an apostle to have followed John as well. The idea suggests the ENTIRE MINISTRY OF JESUS from the beginning.

"unto that same day that he was taken up ..." Means right up to the very last moment of Jesus being on earth.

"taken up" followed by "from us" suggests (1) their own loss, and (2) they were witnesses of his ascension. This would require that they were also witnesses to his resurrection which is one of the great teachings of Christianity.

"must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection". The addition of the words "with us" gives a chance to others to be numbered amongst the Apostles but not amongst the twelve.

The word for "witness" comes from the Greek "martus" from which comes "martyr" meaning to have information which can be substantiated. The modern meaning of having to see for one's-self does not apply here. It means to have incontrovertible proof. If we can acquire such proof from studies of the Scriptures, then we are also ordained to preach. Having been given the knowledge, we are then "sent". Carrying this idea further, we find in Romans 10. 13/15. a strong indication that we are under an obligation to preach the gospel of peace. How then, can we preach unless we are "sent"? We are sent in this way and, being sent, become latter day apostles. The word "apostle" means "one sent".

Verse 23 :

"And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias."

"And they appointed ..." In view of what follows, they did not appoint any-one at that stage. They just nominated them for office and left the choice to God. Why the nominations were limited to two men is not stated but it can be inferred that in view of the searching qualification for one of the Twelve, only two could be found.

The nominated men were Joseph which is the same as Joshua or Jehoshua meaning Saviour or Jahweh Saves. This man was called "Barsabas". The prefix "Bar" always means "son of" as in Barnabas, Bartimaeus and Bar-Jona. Barsabas appears in Acts 4. 36. and 15. 22. but in each case is a different person. It is generally thought that Barsabas means "son of swearing" or "son of the oath" but this is doubtful because the etymology is uncertain. Bruce (Text) suggests it might have been Barshabba meaning son of the sabbath from having been born on the sabbath. His third name was Justus being a Latin name, it being customary in those days to adopt a Latin name. (Note that Saul changed his name to its Latin form of Paulus.) Justus means "Upright" which signified faithful observance of the Law. The "Judas surnamed Barsabas" of Acts 15.22. may have been his brother.

The other nominee was Matthias which means "Gift of Jah" and is a contracted form of "Mattithiah". "Matthew" is another variant of the name. The Greek equivalent is "Theodore".

Verse 24 :

"And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen,"

"And they prayed ..." This is the first recorded prayer of the newly formed Ecclesia. In the Greek it appears as a participle, namely, "praying said". It has been suggested that, because the title "Lord" appears in the prayer, that the disciples addressed the prayer to Jesus to whom they had always appealed in their problems. There is no proof of this because the word Kurios (Lord) is used in connection with God and with Jesus in the N.T. A further argument is that the disciples would leave the choice of a disciple to him who had chosen the other disciples. This is a poor argument because we saw in our examination of verse 2 that Jesus had chosen the disciples through the Power of God acting through him. Ultimately it was God who made the choice. We should not entertain speculations so we shall accept that the disciples prayed to God. Surely when they had prayed in the past, or when they heard Jesus pray, all such prayers would have been addressed to God.

Those who look for undesigned Scriptural coincidences will see Peter's use of the expression "knoweth the hearts" in Acts 15. 8. and its use in this verse. From this slender evidence, they may deduce that Peter led the company in prayer. By the same process of analysis, we may deduce that John led them in prayer as he interpolated a similar idea in John 2. 24/25. Searching the heart is mentioned in Jer. 11.20; Jer. 17.10; Jer. 20. 12. and Rev. 2.23. Whoever it was who offered the prayer on behalf of the assembly mentioned the "searching of the heart" for a very good reason. It appears to be obvious what the choice of the assembly was. Barsabas is mentioned first as a first choice, and careful attention is given to his identity by mentioning his name, surname and assumed name. But only God sees into the heart and His choice is not always man's choice.

"show" the Greek original here is used to indicate the public announcement of the result of an election.

"chosen" same as the word discussed in verse 2.

Verse 25 :

"That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place."

"That he may take part ..." R.V. To take the place in this ministry ..." They state for what end they desire the Divine choice.

"ministry and apostleship" service (ministry) and management with responsibility (apostleship).

"from which Judas by transgression fell ..." from which Judas apostacised.

"that he might go to his own place." Judas left his place as a minister and disciple and went to the place where he died. This would make the phrase refer to a return for the purpose of retribution. This is in the same sense as Num. 24. 25.

The decision is now left to God. The disciples have indicated why they have asked God for guidance but do not attempt to influence the Divine decision. See Prov. 16. 33.

Verse 26 :

"And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles."

"And they gave forth their lots ..." There is no record of lots being cast after this incident in the N.T. The method of this ballot is unknown. Casting of lots was permitted under the Law. On this, the only occasion in N.T. Days on which it was used, the disciples were in a spiritually orphaned condition. Lots or lotteries have no part in N.T. teaching so no support for modern lotteries or raffles can be adduced from this incident. The O.T. references are Lev. 16. 8; Num. 26. 55. and Prov. 16. 33. From the use of "lots" and "lot" it has been deduced that the people cast forth their lots, i.e. they cast into a helmet (to follow ancient custom) or some suitable container their own "lots" which would indicate the name of their choice. Afterwards one LOT would be withdrawn to indicate the official choice. In this way, the number of lots cast for Joshua Barsabas would make no difference to the final choice if God willed the result otherwise. As it happened, God reversed the order given and chose Matthias, thus showing that man's choice is not always God's choice.

In Esther 3. 7. we read of "Pur" which is the singular Hebrew word for "Lot", the plural form being "Purim". This refers to the "Feast of Purim" or the "Feast of the Lots". The Feast commemorates Divine deliverance and that in spite of the sin of the Jews, God had not forgotten them in their exile. (Prov. 16. 33.) The deliverance of His People by God in the days of Esther, shows the Divine Plan and Purpose to deliver His people when the Kingdom of God is established. God's purpose will overcome the schemes of men and righteousness will overcome wickedness. (Isa. 54. 17.)

The validity of the procedure has been called into question because no express command was given; Peter was rash as usual; the Holy Spirit had not been given to qualify them for such a choice; we never hear of Matthias again and Paul was excluded from the twelve. Against these objections, it can be answered that a commandment can be inferred and it is better to take some action than to take none. If Peter was rash, the whole body was rash to continue with the idea. Whether the Holy Spirit was given or not, the choice was still God's. Insofar as we never hear of Matthias again, the Scripture is equally silent about most of the apostles. Paul could be regarded as a successor to James who was beheaded. (Acts 12. 2.) Paul need not be regarded as a successor but as an additional apostle for he was chosen for the Gentiles whereas the other apostles taught to the circumcision. After the choice of Matthias, the body were referred to as "the twelve". (Acts 6. 2.) See also Acts 2. 14. Once again the calling into question of the Scriptures breaks down. It is always best under such circumstances, to try to prove that the Scriptures are correct. Better results are always obtained that way.



Verse 1 :

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place."

"... the day of Pentecost ..." To see the "day of Pentecost" in its true perspective, we must go back to the Law of Moses and examine the Law of Offerings with a view to finding the anti-typical meanings. For this purpose a careful reading and study of Leviticus chapter 23 is essential. We shall briefly review the ordinances here.

Lev. 23. 5.) "In the fourteenth day of the first month at  
Num. 28. 16.) even is the Lord's passover."

The Passover : The purpose of the feast of the Passover was to remind the people of Israel of that dreadful night when the destroying angels of the Lord slew the first-born of Egypt but passed over the house of Israel. It was also given so that they could remember their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. A proper remembrance of these things would make the children of Israel realise the moral demands made upon them. Above all other considerations, the Passover made the people remember the Lord God of Israel who had called them out of Egypt to be His special people. When coming out, they were "baptised unto Moses and in the sea". (1 Cor. 10. 2.) Since Jesus was the "prophet like unto Moses", (Deut. 18. 15 and 18.) it should be obvious to us that we are called out of the Gentiles to be part of a people for His Name (Acts 15. 14.) only through our belief and baptism into the name of the Lord Jesus. See also 1 Cor. 5. 7.

The Feast of the Firstfruits : The record is not clear as to when this ceremony was to begin but we shall take it as being the 15th of the first month Abib. The point to note is that it closely followed the slaying of the Passover Lamb. The Passover Lamb had to be killed before sundown on one day and the Feast of the Firstfruits had to begin two days later. We now begin to see a connection between the Passover followed by the Firstfruits and the death of Jesus followed by his resurrection when he became the "firstfruits of them that slept". (1 Cor. 15. 20.)

Relating the two rituals to Jesus, we see that the Passover represents his death ("For Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" - 1 Cor. 5. 7.) and the Feast of the First Fruits represents his Resurrection.

Pentecost : The Feast of the Firstfruits required amongst other things, the offering of a sheaf of Barley as this cereal was the first to be produced in the new season. Thereafter, the wheat crop would ripen. This would take place about 7 weeks later thus providing the time period for the offering of TWO SHEAVES.

Lev. 23. 15. "And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete :  
16. Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat (meal) offering unto the LORD."

This period was a Jubilee period and coming after a period of about seven weeks, was called THE FEAST OF WEEKS. In the course of time, it became known as the feast of the FIFTIETH. The Greek word for "fiftieth" being PENTECOST, it dropped the name by which it was known under the Law and was called "Pentecost".

The "firstfruits" are closely connected with the "firstborn" and both are dedicated to God. The significance of the Feast of Weeks is that whereas Jesus was the firstfruits of them that slept, the time will come when, in that year of Jubilee, Christ will set up the kingdom of God on earth and take unto himself for God, the firstfruits of many nations, kindreds and tongues.

The Feast of Tabernacles : This is not part of our present study but it would be a pity to let this feast go by unnoticed when such an opportunity occurs to mention it. The appropriate reference is Lev. 23. 34. and the time of offering was the fifteenth day of the

seventh month, thus bringing to a completion the ceremonial sabbaths of the Israelite Ceremonial Year. The significance is the time of the end of the Millennium when the Harvest Ingathering will take place and Jesus will give up his throne to God, that God may be all in all. (1 Cor. 15. 28.)

It is worth noting as a matter of interest only, that the Talmud regarded Pentecost as being a commemoration of the day that the Law was first given at Sinai. It is incorrect, however, to connect the giving of the Law with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

Under the rules of the Christian church as we know it today, the modern equivalent of Pentecost is WHITSUNDAY. The method of calculation, however, is different as the original Feast of weeks was calculated from a certain day, irrespective of what day in the week that starting day might be. To this particular day, 50 more days had to be added. In calculating Whitsunday, 50 days are added to the sabbath day of the Easter period which differs from year to year according to the phases of the moon, and the Sunday arrived at is Whitsunday. This day is of no spiritual significance whatsoever.

Further Biblical references are Exod. 23. 16; 34. 22; Num. 28. 26; Deut. 16. 9/10.

"was fully come ..." lit. "was being fulfilled". The day was still in progress so had not yet completely come - it had not yet ended. A meaning of "the time was approaching" is given in Luke 9.51. where the same Greek phrase is used. In Zulu this would be the "Progressive tense" where the action is going on but is not completed. In Acts 2. 1. the Zulu Bible does not draw this distinction but simply says "sekufikile usuku" (Now the day had come). In the Luke reference, the distinction is carefully drawn with "Kwathi sezizakuphelela izinsuku ...". An accurate English equivalent can be felt in the mind easier than it can be expressed in words. However, here is an attempt - "It happened that NOW they the days are going to keep on finishing ..." ("The days" in this sentence is the subject and not the object.)

"they were all ..." The problem is to determine who are included in this number. Two gatherings are referred to in chapter 1, namely, the 11 in verses 2/4 and the 120 of verse 15. The context would lead us to believe that the "all" referred to are the 120 of 1. 15. This would mean that the Holy Spirit was to descend upon all of them, both men and women. This was surely more than Jesus had promised in John 14.26. The gathering which was instructed by Jesus not to leave Jerusalem but which was to wait until the Holy Spirit was given, consisted of the 11. All commentators we have consulted do not agree with this but maintain that the vast number of 1. 15. received the Holy Spirit.

If we disregard the chapter division, we shall see more clearly who Luke is writing about. The latter portion of chapter 1 deals with the Apostles and verse 1 of chapter 2 states "... they were all ... in one place." Verse 5 tells of the devout Jews who were in Jerusalem at the time and it can be inferred that the 120 were amongst these. When "they" began to speak in other tongues, it is recorded in verse 7 that the question was asked "Are these not all Galileans?" Must we infer from this that the 120 were all Galileans? Verse 14 records that Peter stood up amongst the eleven. Why did Luke not say "Peter, standing up with the 120, ...?" As slender as these reasons are, we prefer to regard the word "all" as referring to the Apostles only and not to the 120 as well.

"with one accord in one place" This is in obedience to the commandment from the Lord. See Acts 1. 4/5. The promise given on that occasion and the one quoted above from John 14. 26. was about to be fulfilled.

#### Verse 2 :

"And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting."

"And suddenly ..." Luke may have used this word to indicate that it was of Divine origin and that there was no natural external cause



to which it could have been attributed. The same Greek word is used in Acts 16, 26; and 28. 6. A similar Greek word is used in Acts 9. 3; and 22. 6. The same is also used in Luke 2. 13; and 9. 39. The word also has a meaning of "unawares" or "unexpectedly".

"there came a sound from heaven..." Note that the SOUND came from heaven.

The wind did not come from heaven, and, in fact, there was no wind at all, but just a sound resembling a mighty wind. Luke's comparison with "a rushing mighty wind..." is the nearest he could get to a suitable description but it does not give us the true picture. The translation is inadequate. The comparative "as" indicates that it was not like a wind but a "rushing mighty wind" was the nearest to describing it. The word "rushing" is a passive participle meaning "borne" or "carried" and describes an involuntary motion by a higher power. Used actively, the participle suggests that the wind is not the operative agent which it is not. The word "mighty" expresses not only the quality of being "mighty" but also the effect of being violent and destructive. The noun translated as "wind" is a stronger term meaning "blast". To summarise, the effect upon those who experienced it was that a sound suddenly struck their ears. It appeared to come from the direction of heaven as would thunder from above. It was "as unto" a rushing mighty blast of air which carries everything before it. There was a SOUND only and no wind.

"it filled all the house..." "it" refers to the noise and not the wind.

There was no wind at all - just a noise. "The house" may be that mentioned in 1. 13. but we cannot be sure of this.

WIND is a sign of Divine action of some sort. In Ezek. 37. 9/10. we have the breath upon the dead bones which were now covered but there was no life in them. In the vision, they then stood up on their feet and exceeding great army. Also, in John 3. 8. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit".

Those references indicate the Divine Power bringing about a state of affairs in the Divine Plan and Purpose. It was necessary for the people of Israel to revive as a nation. Hence the vision given to Ezekiel. In the words spoken to Nicodemus, Jesus told him how the Holy Spirit operates. It is within the power of God to choose whomsoever He will. Nicodemus had heard the voice of him who spoke by the Power of God and he did not know whence it cometh. Those who are called by God to His Covenants of Promise are called by the Spirit Word and it is the same spirit that was to take Jesus to heaven on this occasion. Thus there is a connection between the sound of the "wind" which the disciples heard and the voice of him whom Nicodemus heard. Both were the manifestation of the Power of God.

"...where they were sitting." This phrase suggests that they were at the time, sitting in their private dwelling. It could also mean that whereas the day was a feast day, they would be at the temple or the synagogue from an early hour and would be sitting down. The actual place where they were is of no importance so Luke does not make it clear. Nevertheless, we find it hard to resist the view that, in terms of Luke 24. 53. "they were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God." This would agree with the view that they were in the temple when they preached later.

Verse 3 :

"And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them."

"And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, ..." "Cloven tongues" would describe all flames which are not steady flames like the flame of a candle. When anything burns, flames issue which take up the shape of tongues cloven from the tip to the base. There may, however, be a lesson here which we should not miss. When Jesus was baptised, the Holy Spirit descended upon him "like a dove". (Matt. 3. 16.) Relating this description - "like a dove" - to that which followed, we find that Jesus preached a gospel of peace. The dove is a symbol of peace. In the chapter before us, we find "TONGUES" mentioned and the Apostles began to speak in tongues.

"like as of fire" - we must not think that the fire here was actual flame, which would have caused a piece of paper to burn if it had been held to it. The phrase does not refer to actual flames but to the appearance as of fire. Such a phenomenon is consistent with other appearances of the Divine Power. See the "burning bush" of Exod. 3. 2. where the bush was not consumed. We acknowledge the teaching value of the bush not being consumed (God will not destroy Israel) but we notice that the appearance of this manifestation of God did not consume as a fire consumes. Contrasted with this, we also note the appearance of fire in the days of Elijah (1 Kings 18. 38.) as an historical prophecy of the last days when Christ comes in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God. (2 Thess. 1. 7/8.) On the first of these, God did destroy and on the second, He will destroy again. In the passage before us, we find a manifestation of the Divine Presence for good and not for evil.

"... it sat upon each of them." The verse begins with the phrase "Appeared unto them ..." A better translation would be "were seen upon them". The word "cloven" carries the meaning "distributing themselves". The Afrikaans Bybel has this meaning and the R.V. has "parting asunder". The R.S.V. has "distributed". The flames of fire descended and spread out, settling on each of the apostles. The difficulty which we see in this passage is that SEVERAL tongues appeared and descended, yet IT sat upon each of them. The explanation is given by Paul in his letter to the Corinthians in 1. Cor. 12. 4/11. It is "ONE SPIRIT" (Ephes. 4. 4.) although manifested by many tongues. Paul shows that the same Spirit is manifested by nine gifts. The use of a singular verb with a plural subject is given in Gen. 1. 26. "And God said, Let US make man in our image, ..." The word "us" is plural but the verb "make" is in the first person singular. This leads many to seize upon this verse as a "proof" of the trinity. It is argued that whereas "God" (Heb. Elohim) is plural, indicating three gods, the verb is singular, indicating three in one. Disregarding this distortion of truth, we find that Elohim refers to angels (Psa. 8. 5. and Heb. 2. 7.) which created man in their image in the beginning, but it was the Creator who gave the Divine Power and everything was made according to His Will. Luke's statement in the verse we are studying, acknowledges the Divine origin of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 4 :

"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit ..." In Num. 11. 21/25. we read of the "spirit" which rested upon the seventy elders appointed by Moses. Two men named Eldad and Medad also had the spirit resting upon them. The effect of these visitations by the spirit was that the people prophesied which means "taught".

"and began to speak with other tongues, ..." The word "began" indicates that the speaking with other tongues was happening for the first time. It also carries the sense that this was only a beginning for the ability to speak with other tongues, continued for

some years. "other tongues" means tongues other than their own. It also implies that the tongues spoken were not normally heard in Jerusalem. Jews from other parts would speak Hebrew, Greek or Aramaic, all of which would be understood in Jerusalem. The languages now heard would be something so different as to be noticeable and worthy of comment. The Lord's promise recorded in Mark 16. 17. where he promised that they would speak in NEW TONGUES, bears out this view.

The Holy Spirit would "give them utterance" by choosing the language which each one spoke, suiting to the nationality of the people who heard them. The ability of the Apostles thus moved by the Holy Spirit, to make it possible for all the hearers to understand what was spoken must be contrasted with a previous Divine intervention when utter confusion was the result. This was the confusion of tongues at Babel. (Gen. 11. 1/9.) (Speaking in tongues is known as "glossolalia".)

The significance of the comparison just made is that whereas in the days of Babel, God brought confusion to the nation at Babel, and divided the people into language groups, now God showed that through his Word, which needed the gift of tongues to teach, all nations would come to a unity of Faith and would contribute to the building of an holy temple unto the Lord. (Ephes. 2. 21.) In this we see why allusion is made in the Bible to NATIONS as TONGUES. (Isa. 66. 18; Dan. 3. 4 and 7; Rev. 5. 9; 7. 9; 10. 11; 11. 9; 13. 7; 14. 6; 17. 15.)

The Holy Spirit would also "give them utterance" by choosing what they spoke. Luke does not tell us what the Apostles spoke about. It could have been words of praise of God for His mighty acts in this instance. Alternatively, it could have been words of exhortation or, it could have been doctrinal issues. At this early stage in the Apostles' career, it would most likely be words of praise.

The gift of tongues was a gift for the occasion and for a special purpose. The Apostle Paul claimed to speak with tongues more than anyone (1 Cor. 14. 18.) yet he was unable to converse with the Gentiles at Lystra. (Acts 14. 11/14.) His ignorance of the language is indicated by the fact that he appears from the narrative not to have known at first what the intentions of the people were. No doubt the gift of tongues must have been much desired by the early Christians for we find an abuse developing which Paul countered very severely in 1 Cor. 14. People would show off their Spirit-given ability to speak in other tongues and require another to interpret for them, bringing honour to both speaker and interpreter rather than bringing honour unto God and His Word.

The modern claim to be able to speak in tongues would, if it were true, be quite different from the gift of tongues of the early Christian era. Those who claim to have the gift, cannot go anywhere and preach in other tongues. The "gift" is not manifested unless an emotional state is built up first. If early Christians could see what happens now, they would not recognise it for the gift of tongues.

#### Verse 5 :

"And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven."

"And there were dwelling ..." The word "dwell" carries a meaning of "beginning to reside". See Matt. 2. 23; 4. 13; 12. 45; Luke 11. 26; Acts 7. 2; Ephes. 3. 17.

"at Jerusalem ..." The Feast of the Firstfruits was held at the tabernacle when the Law was first given through Moses. When a tabernacle of stone was built in the days of Solomon, the worshippers gathered at the City of David to worship.

"devout men, ..." Bullinger's Critical Lexicon defines "devout" in these words : "Avoidance through godly fear of doing anything contrary to right; the fulfilling of all the duties of piety and humanity".

Luke is the only writer in the Bible to use this word. It appears in Luke 2. 25; Acts 2. 5; 8. 2; Greek: "eulobes". Also Acts 10. 2; 10. 7; and 22. 12; from the Greek "eusebes". Acts 13. 50; 17. 4; 17. 17; from Greek "sebomai".

"out of every nation under heaven". The motive behind the gathering at Jerusalem was to worship but the motive behind the building of the tower of Babel was stated by the people to be "... lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth". (Gen. 11. 4.) The true motive is that which has characterised the human race throughout their history, namely, the search for POWER and WEALTH. The LORD prevented the building and scattered the people. (vs. 8) The distribution of nations as shown by Gen. 10 gives 70 nations. The total of 70 bullocks to be offered from the 15th day of the 7th month offering one less each day starting with 13 and ending with 7 on the 7th day, was 70.  $(13 + 12 + 11 + 10 + 9 + 8 + 7 = 70)$ , thus showing that when Jesus, in the anti-type comes to his "harvest ingathering" he will bring peace to all nations. To show that the gospel would be preached unto all nations, Jesus appointed 70 disciples. God had scattered the people over the earth and led His people of Israel to every nation. James addressed his epistle to "the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad". (Jas. 1. 1.) Now the people were gathered together to worship.

It is possible that a large number of people would be at Jerusalem because of the great air of expectancy in regard to the fulfilment of Daniel's prophecy concerning the coming of the Messiah. Ancient historians refer to this but it cannot be said with certainty that it was so.

#### Verse 6 :

"Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language."

"Now when this was noised abroad, ..." The R.V. translates "And when this sound was heard ..." The R.S.V. has "And at this sound ..." The original Greek is a participle - "This sound having happened ..." The word "sound" used here is different from that in verse 2. A similar thing must have happened in the days of Moses and recorded in Exod. 20.18. when the people heard the voice of God. Verse 18. says that "All the people ... saw the noise of the trumpet ..." One cannot SEE the noise of a trumpet nor of anything else. The word "see" is used to indicate "perceive".

"the multitude came together ..." The multitude mentioned here is the same as that of the previous verse, and means those out of every nation under heaven. The multitude came together by closing in upon the disciples whose speaking in other tongues was such a phenomenon.

"and were confounded ..." The verb here is peculiar to Luke and is found only twice - here and in Acts 9. 22. The same word is translated as "confused" or "confusion" in Acts 9.22; 19.32. The word is translated as "uproar" in Acts 21. 31. Basically the word means "poured out together" showing utter confusion. Some A.V.'s have a marginal "troubled in mind". The R.S.V. has "bewildered".

"every man heard them speak in his own language". This statement is all the more extraordinary when we realise that the Greek word translated as "language" here, is normally "dialect". This means that each man not only heard his own language spoken but heard it in his own dialect as well.

#### Verse 7 :

"And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans?"

"And they were all amazed ..." The Greek word is indicative of being out of one's normal condition - to be beside one's self with any strong emotion. They were distraught.

"and marvelled ..." Their marvelling was precipitated by their amazement. It would be shown by ejaculations or by eyes popping with wonder at what they heard. Their first statement one to another, was "Behold!" thus showing their utter astonishment.

"are not all these which speak Galileans?" There are several ways of looking at this statement. The people who were gathered there, obviously knew of the disciples for they must have seen them with Jesus during his ministry. That is one reason why they were devout. They had seen Jesus and heard his teaching without understanding his doctrine. With one exception - Judas Iscariot - all the disciples came from Galilee and must have been known as Galileans from their accent as Peter was on a previous occasion. (Mark 14. 70.) We must remark that this incident appears to be an undesigned Scriptural coincidence because foreigners would not have been able to distinguish one accent from another. The fact that the people were able to make this distinction proves that the visitors were Jews as verse 5 says they were. Galilee was over the mountains to the north of Jerusalem. Travel from one place to the other would have been difficult in those days. Galilee was not a centre of learning so the Galileans would have been men of poor education. How then, thought the Jews who were assembled there, can these men of little education be able to speak in other tongues, and speak them so well that they were accurate according to dialect?

Travellers would have known the Galileans as they would pass through the country on their way east. Isa. 9. 1. speaks of "Galilee of the Gentiles" and this is quoted in Matt. 4. 15. Such travellers would also know that if they went through Galilee, they would find few people who could speak foreign languages. Some commentators try to find a sect of believers in the term Galilean but this is not indicated by the text. Jesus had a Judean ministry as well as that of Galilee so must have had many followers from Judah as well.

#### Verse 8 :

"And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?"

The astonishment is that men of Galilee should speak other tongues. The statement goes further by adding "wherein we were born" meaning "our mother tongue" or, "as we learnt it at our mother's knee, word for word in our own dialect". Luke chose these statements for his record to emphasise the wonderful achievement of speaking in other dialects. He repeats that which was said in verse 6.

#### Verse 9 :

"Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pentus and Asia,"

This verse is a continuation of verse 8, the sense being "We, the Parthians, and Medes etc.," The word "dwellers" added to the names given suggests that there were no names given to the people of those countries, i.e. "Mesopotamians, Judeans" and so on. Therefore it was necessary to add that the "dwellers" from those countries were present.

There is a design about the roll call of people mentioned here. Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia" lived to the east of Judea. The Jews coming from those parts would speak Aramaic and were the descendants of the dispersion of Israelites from the northern kingdom which had been overthrown by the Assyrians. (2 Kings 17. 6.) Thus it can be seen that they did not lose their identity as some believe. Later some Jews from Judea may have been added to them when the Babylonians attacked Judea. When the Persians made decrees permitting the people of Israel to return to Jerusalem, such people preferred to stay where they were. The Parthians inhabited a land which was bounded in the north by the Caspian Sea. The Medes also had a land which reached to the Caspian Sea and it lay to the west of Parthia. The Elamites inhabited a land which was bounded by the Tigris on the west, Media in the north, and Persia in the south and east. Elam is often used as a word

for Persia. Mesopotamia means "between the rivers" and refers to that land which lies between the rivers Euphrates and Tigris. The first mention of it in the Bible is in Gen. 24.10. where it is identified with Nahor.

The inclusion of "Judea" causes some confusion as it would appear to be unnecessary to mention that people from Judea were at Jerusalem, the capital of Judea. Suggestions for altering the text have been made but that is trying to tell Luke what he should have written. It is better to find out why he stated "Judea" as he did. Regarding "Judea" in its widest sense possible, we take in the land controlled by David and Solomon when they ruled from Judea. This would include all the land from the Euphrates to the border of Egypt. This would explain why Luke does not mention Syria.

With the mention of Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Luke's geographical survey now takes in countries to the north and east of Judea. Cappadocia lies to the east of Galatia. Pontus is to the north of it as far as the Black Sea. ASIA requires further study as we shall now see.

ASIA : Homer who lived and wrote about 900 years before Christ, describes a swampy land in the country lying to the east of the Aegean Sea which was noted for its wild fowl, particularly wild duck. It was an unhealthy land and was to be avoided for this reason. It was fever ridden. This swamp was known to him as "ASIA", and it continued with this name for many centuries. Through changes brought about by many earthquakes which visit that part of the world with unpleasant frequency, the land was raised and although the swamp was drained in this manner, it still remained as a depression. Near the end of it where it enters the Aegean Sea, the city of Ephesus grew. Although it is not part of this study, we mention the fact that the name gradually extended to take in country to the north, east and south of Ephesus, and later still, to the whole of the Middle East. As time went on, it extended into India and from there it embraced the whole continent. Thus a name which describes a continent stretching from the Mediterranean to the Pacific, taking in India, Malaya, China and Japan, had its small beginning in a swamp land near Ephesus. In the days when Luke wrote his treatises, Asia described land abutting the Aegean Sea.

Verse 10 :

"Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,"

Luke now turns southward to the African continent after mentioning the two places in Asia Minor, namely, Phrygia (south west of Galatia) and Pamphylia (between Phrygia and the Mediterranean Sea to the south). Phrygia and Galatia are often mentioned together giving a reason why Luke omits Galatia altogether. See Acts 16. 6. and 18. 23.

Egypt had been visited by Israelites from the beginning of their history. Abraham was a visitor to Egypt, in a time of famine. (Gen. 12.10.) Jews went down to Egypt when the Babylonians began to attack their country and carry away captives. The "parts of Libya about Cyrene" encompasses the land of Northern Africa known to ancient geographers as "Lybia Pentapolis" or "Lybia Pentapolitana" meaning "The five cities of Lybia". One of these was a Greek Colony and sea port named Cyrene from which the whole region about was called Libyia Cyreniaca.

The list now turns north across the Mediterranean Sea to Rome. The description "strangers of Rome" does not mean strangers AT Rome but strangers FROM Rome. The word "strangers" comes from the Greek "epidemeo" meaning "sojourner". The form used is a participle meaning "sojourning". The meaning is one who comes from afar and stays for a short while. Note the word "epidemeo" from which we get "epidemic" meaning a disease which comes from a source away from home as opposed to "endemic" being the same which starts at home. There was a considerable number of Jews at Rome at that time, some having descended from those taken there by Pompey in B.C. 62 to celebrate his triumph. No doubt many such Jews having been converted on the day of Pentecost, would return to Rome and start the first ecclesia there. The Jews mentioned here were Jews after the fleshly descent from Abraham. Luke distinguishes them from "proselytes" from the same city. The Jews of Rome were well known as proselyters and must have brought many of their converts with







them. The reason why Luke mentions them separately is to indicate that such proselytes would have been born into Gentile homes and would therefore speak a language other than Aramaic. Such people added to the number of languages spoken.

A proselyte was a Gentile who embraced the Jewish faith by undertaking to keep the Jewish law and was admitted into full fellowship by (1) circumcision for males; (2) baptism in the presence of witnesses - usually a self-baptism; and (3) the offering of a sacrifice. It was more common amongst women than men because of the discomfort of circumcision and because often the female wished to marry a Jew but could not do so unless she embraced Judaism. Many men were content with being a "God fearing" person and we find this descriptive of Cornelius. (Acts 10. 2.)

Verse 11 :

"Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God."

"Cretes and Arabians ..." This is one island in the Mediterranean which figures in Paul's shipwreck story of Acts chapter 27.

Arabia does not refer to modern Arabia. In Luke's day it lay east of Syria and Palestine and stretched from the Red Sea to the Euphrates. Its capital was Petra.

For what it is worth, we mention that if we regard Jews and proselytes from Rome as being two types of people, then the total of the people named gives 17 different people. The figure 17 is the seventh prime number, thus indicating completeness.

Luke mentions again that the Apostles spoke all languages. He adds that they spoke about "the wonderful works of God". The basic teaching must surely have been "Hear, O Israel : The LORD our God is one LORD". (Deut. 6. 4.)

Verse 12 :

"And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?"

"And they were all amazed ..." They were all distraught. See verse 7.

"and were in doubt ..." Luke is the only writer to use this word. His use of it in both treatises confirms him as the author of both. (See Luke 9. 7. and 24. 4. where it is translated as "perplexed")

"What meaneth this?" Indicating their perplexity.

Speaking in foreign tongues at this stage, caused consternation amongst the hearers. Although each man heard his own language and dialect spoken, the speeches were not addressed to him but to God. Coming so suddenly and for no apparent reason at all, the people could be excused for their attitude towards this first manifestation of what is known as "charismata" - Spirit Gifts. Paul considered the gift of tongues as the least of all the nine gifts and urged the Corinthian believers not to use it because :

1 Cor. 14. 23. "If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?"

"Wherefore", said Paul, "tongues are for a sign ... to them that believe not ..." (1 Cor. 14. 22.) and on this occasion, the speaking in other tongues served its purpose well which was to gather many people together to listen to what the Apostles had to say. When it came to teaching the people, the Apostles no longer spoke in tongues but ceased while Peter addressed the crowd. The people however were nonplussed and associated the speaking in tongues with the hysteria which was and still is, common to many religions of superstitions, particularly those of the Middle East where supplicants work themselves into a state of irrational and ecstatic utterance.

Verse 13 :

"Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine."

"Others mocking ..." The others referred to here are not the same as the many Jews and proselytes from many parts. Being "others" they were critical onlookers who had joined the throng. The "others" must be contrasted with the word "all" of verse 7 and verse 12. If all were amazed, some would withhold judgment while others would mock. The "all" were devout men (vs. 5) who would not readily as appears in this verse, make the accusation that the Apostles were full of sweet wine.

"... These men are full of new wine." The "new wine" from "gleukos" meaning "sweet" gives "sweet wine". (From this Greek word we get "glucose".) The Roman writer Cato in his treatise "On Agriculture" says, "If you wish to keep new wine sweet the whole year round, put new wine in a jar, cover the stopper with pitch, place the jar in a fish-pond, take it out after the thirtieth day; you will have sweet wine all the year round". Quoted by Bruce (Commentary page 65 footnote). It was a highly intoxicating form of wine. Compare this accusation with Paul's statement "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit". (Ephes. 5, 18.)

The accusation refutes the theory that the Holy Spirit worked upon the ears of the hearers. They all heard but only some mocked.

The accusation of drunkenness stung the impetuous Peter into immediate action. He was to learn in time that this mocking was only a beginning of a progressive persecution which was to happen to him. The pattern of unbelief and resentment because of that unbelief was as follows :

They mock - Acts 2. 13.

They question the Apostles' authority - Acts 4. 7.

They threaten - Acts 4. 17.

They forbid - Acts 4. 18.

They imprison - Acts 5. 18.

They ill-treat and forbid - Acts 5. 40.

They murder - Acts 7. 58.

Verse 14 :

"But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words :"

"But Peter, standing up with the eleven, ..." Peter lives up to the character we know so well - impetuous and energetic. The Holy Spirit has made a great difference to him. No longer is he afraid of a servant girl. (Luke 22. 56.) He had no fear now. Likewise the Apostles. It was not long since "they all forsook him and fled." (Mark 14. 50.) Now they were ready to stand with Peter. "... standing up with the eleven" indicates that Peter made up the twelfth. Luke uses this expression - "standing up" in Acts 5.20; 11.13; 17.22; 25.18; 27.21. See also Luke 18. 11 and 40. The teaching here indicates that in standing up, a positive action was taken. It implies that the eleven stood up with him. They were not content to leave it to Peter but stood firmly with him to refute the false allegation of drunkenness. They showed that they were one body united in the common weal. It is also indicated that Peter did not speak for himself but spoke for the twelve. The body as then constituted in them represented the "body of Christ". Finally, we observe a note of speaking forth boldly on the part of Peter. What he had to say was more than a refutation of a false statement. He had the Gospel message to impart concerning Jesus of Nazareth and here was his cue.

"lifted up his voice, and said to them ...". There were many people there and there was no public address system. Therefore Peter "lifted up his voice" which means that he raised his voice so that all could hear. The expression is used in Acts 14.11; and 22.22. It would need a loud voice to reach all those who were there to hear. Peter was the spokesman and he was determined to be heard.

"Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, ..." We may wonder why Peter would open his address in this manner when he must have known he was speaking to people from places far apart as indicated in verses 9. to 11. We have noted how Luke stresses the fact of many tongues being represented there so it may have occurred to him to explain that Peter did not speak in every language yet managed to get all listeners to understand. If they were Jews or proselytes, they would be able to speak Aramaic so the best way to indicate that Peter spoke in this lingua franca would be to say, "Ye men of Judea". We accept that Peter actually said this but Luke's record of it is valuable because it indicates that Aramaic was spoken. Men of Judea would certainly know that language.

"All ye that dwell at Jerusalem" was addressed to the rest of the company who were at that time, dwelling at Jerusalem. Nothing in the salutation indicates that the dwelling was of a permanent nature.

"... be this known unto you, and hearken to my words." The expression "be this known unto you" is used by Luke in Acts only. See 4.10; 13.38; 28.28. In all of these references, something of great importance is uttered therefore we understand that what Peter meant was "I have something to say to you and it is important that you should hear it".

"... hearken to my words." This is said by way of advice and appeal. In other words, "What I have to say is important to everyone of you and of interest too. So, please, listen to what I have got to say".

#### Verse 15 :

"For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day."

"For these are not drunken, as ye suppose ..." At the very beginning, Peter shows psychological skill in handling his critics who had accused him and the eleven of drunkenness. He may well have vigorously denied the charge by exclaiming "WE ARE NOT DRUNK.." and had everyone laughing at him. On the contrary, he does not accuse them of making a statement which was very rude, but suggests that they have erred in their supposition. Peter distinguishes between being "drunk" - the act of being intoxicated, and being "drunken" being the character of getting drunk, that is, being alcoholic. He takes the worst accusation and deals with that. In this way, he makes the first move towards getting them on his side.

"As ye suppose" refers to a groundless accusation or opinion which has no foundation in fact. They had made an assumption without looking for facts.

"Seeing it is but the third hour of the day." It appears that Peter's reference to the third hour of the day was made in humour. If so, then he is using jest to get the people in a good mood for the more serious words which are to come. If it is only the third hour of the day, then it is far too early for anyone to be drunk at this time. The inference is not that "we are not the type of person who gets drunk" but that we have not had time enough in which to get drunk.

The division of the "watches" of the day and night were twelve hours each for the day and for the night. The Jews divided each section - night and day - into twelve hours each. (John 11. 9.) and they had four watches, namely, even, midnight, cock-crow and the morning. They would be 6 p.m. 12 p.m. 6 a.m. and noon. When the Lord warned Peter that the cock shall not crow before Peter would deny him thrice, he referred to a particular "cock-crowing" and not to any of the thousands of roosters which crowed in Jerusalem in those days.

The Roman soldiers would sound the trumpet to mark the watch and one of these would be called "cock crow". (Mark 13. 35.) Other references to the watches are Matt. 14. 25; Luke 12. 38; and Mark 6. 48. The "third hour" would be between six a.m. and noon, being 9 a.m.

Another line of thought is that the Jews fasted and abstained from drinking on all festival days. Pentecost was such a festival day and the Jews would continue their abstinence until about 10 a.m. or the 4th hour of the day. If Peter debated on a serious note, then he must have referred to this tradition. We do not accept this serious note, for it would mean that Peter would lay claim to the virtue of abstinence without being able to prove it, thus risking the ridicule which might follow. We prefer to think he pointed to the early hour of the day and the short time in which they all had to get drunk. Being true followers of Jesus, they would not have held to the traditional fast.

Verse 16 :

"But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;"

Note the careful use of words. The "by" in this sentence comes from the Greek "dia" meaning "through the agency of". In other words it was God who prophesied through His prophet Joel. The prophet was just the inspired writer. (R.V. margin "through") It is highly unlikely that Joel knew the meaning of that which he wrote. Peter's other remarks in this connection are helpful to our study :

- 1 Pet. 1. 10. "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you :
11. Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.
12. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."

Neither the prophets nor the angels knew of the things which were to come to pass. This is understandable because such things were written for us and not for them.

Verse 17 :

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh : and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams :"

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, ..." Shall come to pass, signifying a future happening which will take place "in the last days" of the Mosaic era. This prophecy is not confined to the end of the Mosaic era but also applies in its double aspect, to the days yet to come which lie at the end of the present Gentile era. The verses here from 17 to 21 quote Joel 2. 28 up to the middle of verse 32. Joel does not say "In the last days" but "afterwards". Joel writes "afterwards" to indicate that what is prophesied will take place after the other things he writes about. Peter takes the interpretation of the first aspect as it applied in his day and said "In the last days" which is the same thing only less specific. The "afterwards" of Joel must follow the happening of the preceding verses. Of these, verse 23 is important :

- Joel 2. 23. "Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God : for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month."

We find that "the former rain" has a marginal reference of "a teacher of righteousness" and "moderately" has a marginal reference of "according to righteousness". Neither the R.V. nor the R.S.V. are very helpful in this connection but in Afrikaans, Die Bybel has "die leraar tot geregtigheid" which is much the same as "teacher of righteousness", except it is more emphatic with the epithet "die". This is a specific "teacher of righteousness". To identify the "teacher of righteousness", we turn to -

John 14. 26. "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

Afterwards, that is, after the "teacher of righteousness" has come, then "your sons and your daughters shall prophesy ...". They could not do this BEFORE the Holy Spirit was given so must have done such things AFTERWARDS as Joel says.

One further point which we must make is that "the teacher of righteousness" is "the former rain". There is also a "latter rain" which will fall in the first month. (Joel 2. 23.) The former and latter rains must refer to the same thing because God would not use one metaphor in one way and the same metaphor to mean something else and use it in the same verse. Therefore, inasmuch as the former rain represents the Holy Spirit which was poured out on the day of Pentecost, the latter rain will be the same Holy Spirit poured out when Christ comes. The "first month" is significant here because it refers to the first month of the Millennial period. The Song of Moses was sung in the first month. See Exod. 12.2. and Exod. 15. This was a type of which the singing of the Song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb of Rev. 15. 3. We see, therefore, that the "former rain" period is the apostolic era and the "latter rain" period is the resurrectional era when Christ comes. Between the two periods is a period of spiritual drought when there is no rain. The Holy Spirit has been withdrawn and this took place after the last person died who had received it. It is unimportant as to when this was but we suggest that it was when the Lord spued the Laodicean ecclesia out of His mouth.

We can further our studies of this by giving attention to Jer. 3. 1/3. "If a man put away his wife and she become another man's ..." (verse 1) which we paraphrase as "If the Jews put away the Israelite Faith so that it was taught to the Gentiles ..." shall he return unto her again? would God consider again his people? Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers -- God's people have absorbed many false doctrines. "Yet return again to me" saith the LORD. Verse 3 adds, "Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; ..." Having rejected Jesus in the secondary aspect of this prophecy, the Jews have been scattered and the latter rain is not yet. Its outpouring still lies in the future according to the prophecy of the LORD through His prophet Joel.

"I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh : ..." The unusual form "pour out of my Spirit" suggests that only a portion of the Spirit is to be given during the former rain. The phrase "all flesh" is a Hebrew expression which can mean all creatures, man and beast, as in Gen. 6.17. or, more often, mankind only as in Gen. 6.12. The application in this verse is to MEN and WOMEN of all races. It would not be limited to Jews only. Then Gentiles would receive it as well. The collective application is male and female of the human race as this applies to all nations.

"and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy ..." To prophesy does not only mean to foretell the future. Its main meaning is to teach. But the simple act of teaching is not wholly prophesying. To prophesy is to declare those things which cannot be known by natural means. The Apostles were about to preach those things which a short while before they did not understand. It can apply to the past, present or future. A problem is raised at this stage by the fact that the "daughters" are to prophesy when it was soon to be Paul's teaching that they were not permitted to speak in churches. (1 Cor. 14. 34/35. and 1 Tim. 2. 11/12.) Paul's

teaching however, has reference to teaching or speaking in churches but does not prohibit prophesying outside of such gatherings (ecclesias). In Acts 21. 9. we read of "four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy". Paul accepted the hospitality of their home but it is not recorded that he objected to their teaching.

"your young men shall see visions, ..." This is contrasted with the old men who shall dream dreams. In Joel's prophecy, the old men are mentioned first and the young men second. This is a point of interest only and does not have any significance as far as we have been able to find. The first teaching in this prophecy is that the gift of the Spirit is to fall upon young and old alike. The word "visions" comes from a Greek word which means "sense of sight" (no.asis). See the word "looked" in Rev. 4. 1. also "to look upon" in Rev. 4. 3. See the word "sight" - as if a vision - of Acts 7. 31. To "dream dreams" - this is used in the passive voice in the verse we are studying. It should read, "shall be given up to dream by dreams". Jude writes of dreamers which defile the flesh and must be those who think evil thoughts. In Acts 2. 17. the thoughts, or dreams, are spiritual ones, suiting to an old man who is religious and who likes to turn his thoughts unto God. The young men, being more vigorous and dynamic, would "look upon" visions and take action thereafter, as Paul did.

Before we leave this verse, we must remark that Joel 2. 28. in the Hebrew does not have "in the last days". The R.V.; R.S.V. and the Afrikaans Bybel all give "afterward". The afterward refers to a time following the giving of the Holy Spirit and tells what people will do when they receive it. They react AFTER they receive it.

#### Verse 18 :

"And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy :"

"And on my servants and on my handmaidens ..." This is taken to be tautology (unnecessary repetition) of the "sons and daughters" of verse 17. With some, it is taken to show that social status however low it may be, will not be a bar to receiving the Holy Spirit. The Greek words are "doulos" and "doula" being the male and female forms of a word which means a bond slave. Under the law of Moses, bond slaves were often Gentiles who served the Israelites. Having regard to this distinction, we see that "sons and daughters" refers to Jewish people and "servants and handmaidens" refers to those Gentiles who would come into the Divine Covenants of Promise by their belief and baptism.

"I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; ..." Once again this interesting form of expression indicating that the Spirit will be given sparingly. See above, verse 17.

"and they shall prophesy :" The gift of tongues would not come under this particular Spirit Gift. Prophecy was one of the nine Spirit Gifts. This foreshadows a preaching campaign which was to last until the end of the Apostolic era. The gift of tongues would have a limited use but the power to prophesy would bring many to a knowledge of the Truth.

#### Verse 19 :

"And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke :"

"And I will shew wonders in heaven above, ..." This should be coupled with the "signs in the earth beneath"; which is also foretold. The solution to the problem of what God meant by this prophecy is to identify the "heaven" and the "earth". To do this, we must turn to Isaiah chapter 1. and compare verses 2. and 10. The "heavens" and "earth" of verse 1 are given in figurative language. They appear again in verse 10. in plain language but this time as "rulers" instead of heaven and "people" instead

of earth. Thus we find a parallel :

Heavens - rulers

earth - people

The word "shew" should be "give". We are now able to reconstruct the sentence in the following manner :

"I will give wonders (miracles) amongst the rulers and signs to the people." Wonders, signs and miracles are all different words for the same thing. They all carry the suggestion of a "meaning". Therefore when God caused a miracle to be performed, this miracle had a meaning - it was a sign of some teaching. E.g. calming the stormy seas was a miraculous thing but it carried a sign that Jesus will calm the storms of human conflict when he comes again. How these signs were accomplished appears in the narrative of the story called The Acts of the Apostles.

"blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke :" All the commentators avoid these words. We should like to avoid them too! There is a double aspect to this prophecy which must apply in the days which lie ahead of us now. Nevertheless, Peter must have used them for a purpose, knowing of their latter-day aspect which he graphically described many years later in 2 Peter 3. 10. We must find an application to fit the times in which Peter, the other Apostles or his hearers would experience, if they lived long enough. No doubt some of the older would die before the final fulfilment but many would not. The words are similar to those used by the Lord in his famous Olivet prophecy of Matt. 24. 24. and Luke 21. 11. These refer to the stirring days which lead up to the disastrous A.D.70 when Jerusalem fell. The "blood" suggests death; "fire" suggests destruction, and "vapour of smoke" suggests the aftermath of such a desolation when all is in ruins. One can visualise a destroyed city, burning in smoke as the first flames die away and there is little left to burn. A pall of death hangs over the city.

Verse 20 :

"The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and notable day of the Lord come :"

"The sun shall be turned into darkness, ..." Since the prophecy comes from Joel's writings, it must refer to Israel and not to the outside world of unbelievers. The sun represents the rulers of Jewry. They shall not be able to throw any light upon the happenings of the days which are to come. This will happen in regard to the rulers of Jerusalem of those days and, in the anti-type, will be characteristic of the rulers of the world when Christ comes again.

"and the moon into blood, ..." The moon shines by reflected light. The church would be nothing without the word of God. Those churches which have gone astray from the Truth, do not shine figuratively. They are of spiritual darkness. They cannot be full of darkness as darkness is not a quality of being something. Darkness is the result of the absence of light, therefore it shows a lack of light and not a presence of something which is not light. If the moon is blood, then the church it represents is at war. It has no light and the war which has come upon it is the result of that darkness.

The faith of Judaism in A.D.70. was metaphorically full of blood.

"the great and notable day of the Lord ..." We must remember that we are now studying a prophecy from Joel and not a speech of Peter's on the day of Pentecost. Peter is quoting Joel and must be doing so with something in mind. He has reviewed the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon Jew and Gentile. He shows the scope of the gift - to whom it would be given. He sees the days to come when destruction would come upon Israel and now adds Joel's prophecy that this would all happen BEFORE that great and notable day of the Lord come. The reason why Peter should quote this far from Joel is obvious if we know that at that time when Peter spoke, the Jews were fully expecting the Lord to come within a very short time. We have seen how they thought he would return when they were to receive the gift of Another Comforter and that Jesus had to tell them that it was not for them

to know the times and the seasons. Nevertheless, the people to whom Peter was now speaking, would be amongst those who knew from the prophecies of Daniel that the Messiah could be expected about this time. Peter quoted at length from Joel to show that many things had to happen in regard to the giving of the Holy Spirit, the punishment of nations, the fall of Judaism and the destruction of the Holy city BEFORE the great and notable day of the Lord come.

Verse 21 :

"And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

"... whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Calling upon the name of the Lord is a Hebrew expression which was in use when Moses wrote the early chapters of Genesis. In Gen. 4. 26, we read that "men began to call upon the name of the LORD." The prophetic name of God is used here although it had not been revealed at that time. Moses, however, was entitled to use it because by the time he wrote Genesis, he had received the Divine Prophetic name at the Burning Bush. (Exod. 3.14.) (Note : In the O.T., where the name "LORD" is given all in capital letters, it is YAHWEH in the original Hebrew. Yahweh is the form of YHWH which is "I WILL BE WHO I WILL BE".) or "I AM THAT I AM".

Before one can call upon the name of the Lord, one must know something of him. John tells us that "... the Word was God". (John 1.1.) which means that the Divine Plan and Purpose cannot be separated from God so that if we know the one, we must know the other. Jesus stated in his prayer, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent". (John 17. 3.) If we know God, we know His Plan and Purpose, and this gives us life for the age - aeonian life - and assures us of our resurrection. With this in mind, we can understand Joel's statement that "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." In the N.T., the form of Yahweh is not used but Joel does use it in his prophecy. This can be seen from the use of the all capital LORD. Salvation then, is limited only to those who know and believe the Divine Plan and Purpose. Paul's writings on this subject are very enlightening, although often misquoted by being taken out of context. (See Rom. 10. 11/17.) Note that one cannot "call" unless one believes; one cannot believe unless one hears; one cannot hear unless they have a preacher and so on. Follow the logical development of the argument all through. Finally, the preacher must be SENT. This is the key word.

Peter quoted from Joel to this verse for a very good reason. How shall they understand unless they have a preacher" A preacher was absolutely necessary. If they did not have a teacher, then here were 12 willing and capable men who had received the gift of the Holy Spirit and would be pleased to teach them. Thus Peter introduces the next step in his lesson for the day. Peter was not able to quote from Paul's epistle to the Romans as this had not yet been written but the teaching must have been there. If a Teacher had to be SENT, then the Apostles were there, and the word "Apostle" means ONE SENT. Luke's record of Peter's speech is a precis of what was said. No doubt Peter spoke for at least an hour, so it is quite possible that he led up to the teaching of Joel 2. 32.

We note the lengthy quotation from Joel which Peter gave without rehearsal. It is hard to believe that Peter would have known this prophecy word for word as he quoted it. We prefer to think that the Holy Spirit caused him to call to remembrance having read it.

Verse 22 :

"Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know :"

"Ye men of Israel, hear these words; ..." The salutation is now for a wider scope than the former "Ye men of



Judea" of verse 14. The use of "Israel" embraced all the twelve tribes wherever they may be. Every Jew present would belong to one tribe and each proselyte would be attached to one particular tribe. Therefore the use of "Israel" embraced everyone without the former necessity of showing that all languages were spoken. There is also the sense that Peter shows he is now addressing those in the Covenants of Promise. His hearers were not merely men of Judea and men from all parts of the world; they were the holy people of Deut. 7.6. They were representative of the chosen people. Note the excellent psychology of Peter's style. He is friendly at the beginning and dispenses with dignity with the allegation of drunkenness. Now, having gained their confidence, he flatters them by telling them that they are the chosen people by the use of the word "Israel". They were not now the chosen people because they had rejected their Messiah, but Peter would come to that in due course. For the present, he consolidates his position.

The request "hear these words" has a different word in Greek from that translated as "hearken" in verse 14. In the R.V. and R.S.V. verses 14 and 22 have "give ear unto" and "hear these words", respectively. The Afrikaans Bybel also distinguishes between them with 14 - "luister na my woorde" and 22 - "luister na hierdie woorde", respectively. ("Listen to my words" and "listen to THESE words".) It would appear that Peter is now becoming more forthright as he comes to his main theme. In the first place when refuting the charge of drunkenness, he shows that what they had ascribed to wine was really the work of the Spirit which had been prophesied centuries ago by Joel the prophet. He then quoted the said prophecy. To introduce this, he said, in effect, "Listen to me while I tell you all about it" and then proceeded to do so. Having done so, he now says no longer "listen to me" but "listen to these words". Could it be that he tacitly acknowledged that he was no longer speaking his own thoughts but uttered thoughts under the guidance of the Holy Spirit?

"Jesus of Nazareth, ..." Here he boldly introduces the Messiah (Hebrew) or Christ (Greek). Jesus had been known by this title - just as Saul was "Saul of Tarsus". (Acts 9. 11.) Luke uses this form in Acts 3. 6; 4.10; 6.14; 22.8; and 26.9. In Acts 22.8. Jesus uses it of himself. The title suggests the humble origin of him who was known to have grown up in that city from the despised country to the north. (One goes a long way downhill from Nazareth to reach Galilee where Jesus first preached. All Galilleans were despised.) The use by an Apostle of the reproachful form is in order and seems to say, "I am going to tell you of Jesus whom, in the recent past, you have all despised and scoffed at. He is the true Saviour." When Jesus used it of himself to Saul on the road to Damascus, (Acts 22.8.) he used it in the sense, "I, Saul, am Jesus whom you have despised often enough in the past and now you are persecuting me".

Another point to remember is that this title had been inscribed on the "Cross". (John 19.19.) Perhaps those who saw that would be brought to realise his present exalted state.

"a man approved of God among you ..." The R.S.V. has "attested" in place of "approved of". The word "approved" is an English word which had a meaning in 1611 (when the A.V. was published) which it does not have now. In those days it meant to demonstrate, show, exhibit, put forth. The Afrikaans Bybel seems to have the right idea with "deur God ... aange wys..." - shown forth by God. It does not mean approbation or approval.

Before passing to the next portion of the verse, let us stop for a moment while we note that Jesus was a MAN. No commentator draws attention to this fact. If a MAN then not a God incarnate.

"by miracles, and wonders, and signs, ..." Jesus was attested by miracles etc., but it was "from God". The words "from God" show the Divine origin of the Power which commissioned and authorised Jesus to preach. Jesus was brought to men's attention by "miracles and signs and wonders", God being the effectual Cause and Jesus being the Agent which God did by him. The idea of agency is also found in verse 16 "by the prophet Joel". The word "by" has this meaning, - "by means of". The miracles, sign and wonders were well known yet Jesus never at any time, claimed these works to be his own. He always ascribed them to his Father.

(John 5.36; 9.4; 10.25; 10. 37/38; 14.10; also John 14. 11.)

The miracles of Jesus were, with the signs and wonders, the mighty works of God. Those who saw his mighty acts, acknowledged that God operated in them. (Luke 7.16.) When the magicians in the days of Moses and the "plagues" found that they could not produce lice, they acknowledged that it was God who had produced them through Moses. They said, "This is the finger of God : ..." (Excd. 8.19.) When Jesus was accused of casting out devils by the prince of devils - Beelzebul - (Beelzebub) - he cleverly and tacitly reminded the people that Beelzebul was also the devil of lice, and that God had power over the lice which Beelzebul did not have. He also reminded them that the magicians had acknowledged the Power of God when they said "This is the finger of God". Likewise Jesus said, "If I by the FINGER OF GOD cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you". Thus Jesus linked his miracles, the miracles of the plagues of Moses' days, Beelzebul, the lice and the power of God, to show that God had worked in both and that, if the pagan magicians had acknowledged God, surely the people could do the same. The working of the power of Almighty God was surely the Gospel of the Kingdom which had come to them in the person of Jesus Christ.

Verse 23 :

"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain :"

"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ..."

"Him", is used to resume the line of thought after a long interpolation after the opening "Jesus of Nazareth". Omitting all the interpolation, we get "Jesus of Nazareth, ye have taken ... crucified and slain".

"delivered" - in this place we find its only appearance in the Bible in this particular sense. It means "surrendered" (Afrikaans - "oorgelewer" - "handed over"). Particularly to evil forces or forces of evil. "Determinate counsel" has no reference to determination in the sense of resolute. It means appointed, decreed or fixed after deliberation. We find it in modern usage as "Directors' Fees were determined in the sum of R2,000". A Minute of that nature would indicate that after due deliberation, it was decided to pay the Directors a Fee of R2,000 for their services over the year under review. The word "counsel" must be taken with "foreknowledge" for the one arises out of the other. As John wrote, "In the beginning was the LOGOS, and the LOGOS was with God, ...". (John 1.1.) In the beginning was the Divine Plan and Purpose and it was with God. Therefore God had a foreknowledge of what He was going to do. Arising out of the need for a Saviour, "God gave His only begotten Son ...". (John 3.16.) This was His determinate counsel and it was known to Him long before it took place.

"ye have taken, ..." "Ye" is used as a collective personal pronoun meaning not only those who were now standing before Peter and the Apostles, but also those of their nation who clamoured for his death. (John 18.35)

"and by wicked hands have crucified and slain :"

The "wicked hands" were not their own. The Jews had no power to put any of their people to death. Under Roman law this right was denied to them. (John 18. 31.) The "wicked hands" were those of Pontius Pilate and the Roman soldiers who responded to the demand, "Crucify him". (John 19.6.)

There is another line of thought arising out of a consideration of the use of the word "wicked" to describe the hands which did the actual killing of Jesus. This is not the place to embark upon this study but it can be examined wherever the words wicked, wickedness, sins, sinful or sinfulness appear during our Daily Readings. It will be found that more often than not, God is a forgiver of sins but never a forgiver of wickedness. There must be a distinction between sinfulness and wickedness. Sinfulness is what is in all of us. It is part of our nature to be sinful. God will forgive sins. When we examine "wickedness" we find that God will not forgive the wicked. Consider

Prov. 11. 31. "Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth : much more the wicked and the sinner".

Here a distinction is made between a wicked person and a sinner. A wicked person then, is one who does not worship God in truth. He is either an apostate or he is a Godless person as is an atheist. Anyone who turns another away from the Truth is a wicked one. See 1 John 5.18. Ephes. 6.16. Matt. 13. 19 and 38. The word "wicked" in the verse we are studying is the same as that in 2 Thess. 2. 8. which undoubtedly refers to the wicked apostate. Returning again to Acts 2. 23. we find the Afrikaans Bybel has "die hande van goddelose manne ..." (the hands of godless men) The R.V. has "lawless men", being men who are not attending God's Laws. The R.S.V. is the same as the R.V. Peter is now showing the people that in demanding the crucifixion of Jesus, they were aligning themselves with those who had strayed from the Truth of God's Word. They were aligned with the apostacy.

"have crucified" means to "impale" on a stake which is set upright in the ground. It has no sense in Peter's use of the term, of stretching out in the form of a cross. The meaning of the word is not as important to our study as is Peter's use of it. He is pointing out that they crucified their Messiah, thus giving him an ignominious death. They could not have humiliated him more than in the manner of his death. They gave him the death of a murderer and asked for a murderer to be delivered to them. In other words, they killed him who brings life and set free a man who took life away. Jesus died for the crime of which Barabbas was convicted. Barabbas means "Son of a prominent father" from Bar meaning Son and Abba which is Father. It has a Chaldean root which means Pride, Majesty, which when considered with the apostacy, is a figure of that "wicked one" of 2 Thess. 2. 8. The apostacy which was built up by the unnamed "wicked one" killed many Believers in the centuries which followed. Barabbas was NOT the "wicked" of 2 Thess. 2. 8. but he represents such in type.

"and slain". This word, translated sometimes as "slew" is a favourite with Luke, appearing 20 times in his two treatises and only twice in the rest of the N.T. Peter's accusation now becomes very powerful. "You not only impaled him on a stake set upright in the ground, which is the most humiliating thing you could have done, but you also killed him."

Note the analogy between Jesus and Joseph, the type of Christ. Joseph's brethren of the house of Israel thought to do him evil but out of it all, God brought good. (Gen. 50.20.) Likewise, the Jews who clamoured for the death of Jesus thought only to do him evil. But out of it all, God brought a Saviour and, in the words of Gen. 50.20. "to save much people alive."

#### Verse 24 :

"Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death : because it was not possible that he should be holden of it."

"Whom God hath raised up, ..." Peter immediately contrasts their treatment of Jesus with the treatment given to him by God. Whereas they had sought to dispose of him by killing him, God pre-determined that he should die but raised him from the dead. The grave did not triumph. This antithesis was a favourite with Peter for we find it in Acts 3. 14/15; 4.10; 5. 30/31; 10. 39/40. Note that coming out of the grave, or bringing back again to life, is always UP and never DOWN. Jesus was RAISED UP, and not BROUGHT DOWN.

"having loosed the pains of death ..." We are concerned here with the words "loosed" and "pains". Taking the second first, we find that it has a double meaning in Greek, namely, "cord" and "sorrow". We find this in a comparison of Psa. 18. 5. with Isa. 13. 8. Taken with the word "loosed" which means "unbind", we get the sense of Jesus being released from something which was binding him, but in that release, came great sorrow and pain, with reference to his sufferings. John had an interesting quotation of the Lord's words in this connection. Referring to his approaching death, the Lord encouraged his disciples by saying that he would see them again. The manner of his return must have sounded astonishing to his disciples at the time. He said :

John 16. 21. "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come : but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world."

In this speech by Jesus, we see the analogy of travail, sorrow and delivery (parturition) representing resurrection. An astonishing word used is "man" in connection with what is born of a woman in travail. No woman ever gives birth to a man. A man-child, but that is not indicated here. Jesus spoke of a MAN and not of a child. The point is that the "birth" referred to by Jesus, was his own resurrection when he would be the first born of every creature. Peter must have remembered the Lord's words because he speaks about God loosing the pains of death and aligning this with the resurrection of Jesus exactly as his master had done a few weeks before.

"because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." If Jesus' death was in accordance with the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, surely his resurrection would have been too. The "not possible" is the outcome of a consideration of what the Lord achieved by his sacrifice. This is clearly stated in Rom. 1.4; 4. 25; 1 Cor. 15. 12/23; Heb. 2. 14/15.

#### Verse 25 :

"For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved :"

Having stated that God raised up Jesus, Peter now adopts his preaching style by quoting the Scriptures to prove it. He takes the reference from Psa. 16. 8/11. Luke later quotes a speech from Paul where he also quotes a portion of this Psalm. See Acts 13. 35. The 16th Psalm is ascribed by Peter to David but this should not be in doubt as the Psalm bears an inscription showing that it was a Psalm of David.

"I foresaw the LORD always before my face, ..." The R.V. has "I beheld the Lord always before my face." The R.S.V. has "I saw the Lord always before me". The meaning is that "I always looked at the Lord in front of me before my face". The Psalmist, writing as the Lord Jesus, shows that Jesus had constant fellowship with the Father all during his days on earth. He never allowed his gaze to be diverted. "for he is on my right hand, ..." is not only a position of honour but also one of protection. See Psa. 109. 31; 110. 5; 121. 5; Isa. 41. 13; 45. 1.

"that I should not be moved :" Bullinger defines the word "Move" as "to make to shake; rock; to put in a state of waving; rocking, to agitate". It means to stand unmoveable from a state of steadfastness in the worship of the Lord. Not to waver nor weaken.

#### Verse 26 :

"Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope :"

"Therefore did my heart rejoice, ..." In all his troubles, Jesus rejoiced in His Father. He advised his disciples to do the same. See Matt. 5.12. One cannot rejoice in persecution and asking us to do that would be asking us to do something which is contrary to nature. Whether Peter remembered the Lord's words from the sermon on the mount and whether he recalled the 16th Psalm when he wrote his 1st Epistle is of no importance. He nevertheless gave the same lesson in verses 6 and 7 of chapter 1. Here we are advised to rejoice in the Faith to which we have been called whenever we are in heavy temptations. The "man of sorrows" always had joy in His Father and therein lay his strength.

"and my tongue was glad; ..." The Psalm has "... my glory rejoiceth ...". In this connection, see Psa. 108. 1. In Hebrew, the phrase "My tongue" corresponds with "My glory ...". Scholars regard the

Hebrew word for "glory" as "soul" but neither Young nor Strong give this meaning. The tongue was regarded from antiquity as the glory of man.

"moreover ..." This is an emphatic addition. It lends emphasis to what is being said.

"also my flesh shall rest in hope :" His "flesh" refers to his body. This shall "rest" which means "tabernacle" or "pitch" or "sojourn for a while" without a fixed or permanent abode. Thus the Lord knows that when he goes to his grave, he will tabernacle his body there but it will not be permanent because he will be raised from the dead. The hope in which he lay in his grave is stated in the next verse.

Verse 27 :

"Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."

"Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, ..." "Because" expresses the reason - it shows that a valid reason is about to be expressed for the hope just mentioned. The word "soul" comes from the Hebrew "nephesh" which is translated as creature in Gen. 1. 20/21. and by "body" in Lev. 21.11; Num. 6.6; 9. 6/7; 19.11; 19. 13 and 16; Hag. 2.13. All these references concern a "dead body" and there can be no doubt that what went into the rich man's grave was a dead body. The word "leave" means "abandon". The word "hell" is akin to the Anglo-Saxon words "hull", "hollow" and is the grave. The Scriptural word from which hell is translated is "sheol" in the O.T. and "hades" in the N.T. Both relate to "the state of the dead" rather than to the literal grave, the Hebrew of which is "qeburah" which means a burying place such as Jacob prepared for Rachel. Gen. 35.20. "Sheol" is described in the O.T. as a common grave for all flesh, whether man or beast. The significance is that in O.T. days there was no Saviour. Jesus still had to die to turn "sheol" metaphorically from the death state to a grave from which there is to be a resurrection. In N.T. teaching, there is to be a resurrection from "hades" but not from Gehenna (the vale of the son of Hinnom outside of Jerusalem in which the rubbish of the city was burnt and was used as a figure of eternal destruction. Mark 9. 43/46.) The Afrikaans Bybel, reliable as usual, has "doderyk" (the realm of the dead) for sheol consistently, and for hades in the N.T. With regard to passages in the N.T. referring to gehenna, Die Bybel consistently translates "hel" (hell).

"neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." "Suffer" means grant, or permit.

"thine Holy One" - the Hebrew original is a rare word in the O.T. and denotes something of Divine Favour, and corresponding character. "To see corruption" means what it says. The body of our Lord was not allowed to stay in the grave long enough for the natural process of corruption to start. The point is well made because although the body was not to be left in the grave, it could well have been permitted to stay there long enough for corruption to have started. The statement shows clearly that God would not permit His Son's body to lie in the grave - He would not yield it to death for any length of time, but also that period of time which would elapse before he was raised would be short enough for his resurrection to forestall the process of corruption.

Verse 28 :

"Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance."

"Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; ..." The verb here should be future in tense - "thou shalt make me know". The second verb in the English is not in the Hebrew and in its place is "fulness", thus making the passage "Thou shalt make me know the ways of life, fulness of joy with thy countenance". This refers to the resurrection which the Lord could look forward to. "With thy countenance" signifies that God would not turn away his face from His Son. This is similar to Psalm 17. 15. which reads, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness : I shall be satisfied when I awake, with thy likeness."

Having made his point that Psalm 16 applied to Jesus and not to David, Peter, at this stage, felt that further proof should be given. His next remarks show this.

Verse 29 :

"Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day."

"Men and brethren, ..." The word "Men" should be omitted from this address. Peter now addresses his hearers with intimate friendliness - "Brethren".

"Let me freely speak unto you ..." "Freely" means "with boldness". The Jews held the patriarchs such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David in very high esteem. In view of what Peter was to say about David, he felt that it was necessary to seek his hearers' agreement that he should speak his mind at the risk of offending their prejudices. Luke is fond of using "boldness" when applied to preaching. His use of the word is found in Acts 9.27; 9.29; 13.46; 14.3; 18.26; 19.8; 26.26. We cannot resist the lesson that in our preaching, we should do it BOLDLY. Holding back our punch lines for the sake of not hurting the other person's feelings would not have been an acceptable method of preaching in Peter's day.

"of the patriarch David, ..." The word "patriarch" is found in the N.T. only twice apart from this verse. Acts 7. 8/9. and Heb. 7.4. The word means "old father" or "Father of old". David was a "father of old" because he had founded a royal dynasty.

To appreciate the full impact of Peter's teaching in this and the verses which follow, we must realise that Peter spoke at a time of a well-known festival when many people (Jews) would come from near and far to Jerusalem to worship at that time. Those who came from far and who would make few visits to Jerusalem would be as curious about the city as is the modern tourist. He would go from one sight to another and one sight no Jew would ever miss was the tomb of David (which is a "must" even today). Therefore, Peter took a glorious opportunity of preaching the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. He would show that David was dead and buried and his sepulchre - no doubt indicating the well-known position with the hand - is with us to this day. Over there (and Luke does not mention this but it is obvious) is the tomb where the Lord did lay. That tomb is empty. The Psalm stated that God would not permit his body to lie in the grave neither would He permit it to see corruption. Yet David's body is still there but the body of Jesus is not. David has not ascended into heaven but Jesus has. We can watch Peter develop his argument on these lines. We should do well to copy Peter if at any time, we should seek in a lecture, to prove that Jesus was raised from the dead physically.

"he is both dead and buried, ..." A better translation is "he died and was buried". The R.V. R.S.V. and the Afrikaans Version all use this meaning. Peter's statement of the fact of David's death and burial would be accepted by all who heard him. The boldness with which he wished to speak concerned the fact that the Psalm he has just quoted and which was generally applied to David, could not have applied to him at all. The prophecy of the Psalm was fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus. Paul used this argument later in Acts 13. 35/37.

"his sepulchre is with us unto this day." David was buried in a part of Jerusalem known as "the city of David". (1 Kings 2.10) (2 Sam. 5.7.) (Neh. 3.16).

Verse 30 :

"Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;"

"Therefore being a prophet, ..." David acknowledged that God spoke by him. (2 Sam. 23.2.) This meant that God would

inspire him to speak of those things which would happen in the future. If David did not speak of himself, then who did he speak of? This question would cause the assembled people much distress. What if Jesus was really the Messiah after all?

"knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;"

This statement would refer the listeners to the well-known promise to David which is contained in 2 Sam. 12/16. The promise in verse 14 that God would be his father - the father of the fruit of David's loins - meant that whoever this seed of David was, he was to be called the "Son of God". ("I will be his father ...") (See also 1 Chron. 17. 11/14.)

Psalms 132 is one of the 15 "Song of degrees", this group of Psalms appearing from 120 to 134 inclusive. The reason for 15 such Psalms is that 15 years was added to Hezekiah's life. (2 Kings 20. 6.) God also promised to deliver the city from the king of Assyria and when Hezekiah asked Isaiah the prophet who was his friend, for a sign that the Lord would heal him of his disease, the prophet gave him the option of choosing whether the sun should go forward or backward ten degrees on the sundial. Hezekiah chose for the sun to return. In praise of the LORD for adding 15 years to his life, Hezekiah chose 15 Psalms and called them "Shir Ramma'aloth" or the Song of the degrees. He chose them because they applied so closely to himself. When he was dying from his sickness (thought to be leprosy) he had no son. In this he was a type of Christ because Jesus died without issue, and instead of a sickness, he had the sins of us all laid upon him. In regard to his choice of Psalms, see Isa. 38.20. and read this with verses 5/12. In the anti-type of Hezekiah's added 15 years, Jesus was raised from the dead. We shall now understand better the application of Psalm 132. 11. as it applies to Jesus. Hezekiah regarded himself as a son of David who was dying without issue. How could this be since the LORD had promised David that he would set his greater son upon David's throne? The verse quotes 2 Sam. 12. and Peter was now quoting the same and with reference to Jesus.

Many of the Jews in those days knew their Scriptures very well without understanding them. Therefore when Peter quoted these passages to them, they would connect it with the Divine Promise to David and, possibly, the 132nd Psalm.

"he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;" has an important lesson.

Jesus was raised yet the verse says "Christ" was raised. The Greek is Christos and the Hebrew is Messiah. Both mean the same, namely, The Anointed One, the man anointed to be king. This was the promise of God to Abraham given in Gen. 22.17. where Abraham was told that his seed, which Paul identifies as Jesus (Gal. 3.16) would "possess the gate of his enemies". The use of the singular pronoun here shows that ONE MAN would be the king and would have the honoured position at the gate. For proof that the king possessed the gate, see Esther 2.19; 2.21; 3. 2/3; 4. 2. 6; 5. 9. 13; 6. 10. 12. In each of these verses we read of "the king's gate". Therefore the promise to Abraham gave the Jews the promise of the Messiah. Turning Peter's title of Christ back to Hebrew, what he said was "he would raise up the Messiah to sit on his throne". This links the Messiah with the Son of God and centres the two Promises in Jesus. This was Peter's famous declaration of Matt. 16.16. "Thou art the Christ, the son of the Living God". Peter declared the same on another occasion, John 6. 69 and Martha also made the same declaration of faith. John 11. 27. Matthew opens his gospel message with a similar statement. Matt. 1. 1.

"God hath sworn with an oath ..." see Psalm 132. 11. which Peter now quotes.

Peter has now shown that David was a prophet which they all would affirm; David had received an explicit promise from God regarding his greater Son, which they knew about but did not connect with Jesus; this was sanctioned and confirmed by a Divine oath; David would have perpetual succession; this perpetual succession was now broken if restricted to his mortal descendants of which Jesus was the last; but the succession would be confirmed with the wonderful happenings in Jerusalem, the city of David, when Jesus was raised, thus God's promise cannot fail.

Verse 31 :

"He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption."

"He seeing this before ..." as one would expect of a prophet. David saw it in prophetic vision not as himself but as his greater son. He referred not to his own resurrection but to the resurrection of another which lay in the future as he wrote. This was fulfilled in the recent past. Also this was confirmed by the fact that in accordance with the prophecy, Jesus was not left in the grave and he was not allowed to be in the death state long enough to start to corrupt.

Verse 32 :

"This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses."

This statement by Peter seems to be added to what he has already said with great force of argument. There is a purpose behind it and it is to connect Jesus with the risen one. Peter had shown that the prophecy could not relate to David; and he showed that it could relate to one long after him; he also showed that it related to Messiah; but how could he identify Messiah and the Son of God with Jesus? His argument develops by showing that David wrote of the Messiah's resurrection. The Messiah was none other than Jesus because the prophecy concerning him was fulfilled in Jesus. Where is the proof that Jesus was raised? There was the empty tomb for all to see. The apostles were witnesses of his resurrection, this being the essential qualification of an apostle. (Acts 1. 22.) Could man have done this? Of course not! Then it must be that God raised him as he said he would.

Before we pass on to the next verse, it would be as well for us to study again the development of Peter's argument so that we may use it with profit when we give public lectures. There are two factors or pieces of evidence to be brought together, namely, that someone had to die but should not see corruption and that someone had to be raised from the dead. Considering these points of argument, Psalm 16.10. cannot apply to David because he is still dead and has long since turned back to dust. Psalm 16.11. must be fulfilled in someone. All Jews at that time acknowledged that the Messiah was the greater son of David. The Psalm therefore, must refer to the Messiah. Now, bringing the two together, since only Jesus has been raised and he is in the lineage of David, then Jesus is the expected Messiah. The argument is logical and convincing.

Verse 33.:

"Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."

".. by the right hand of God exalted, ..." The phrase "right hand" is used in a different sense here from the usage of the next verse. In verse 34 it is a state of honour. In verse 33 it is connected with some mighty act, such an act being part of the Divine Plan and Purpose. It is appropriate at this stage to make a short study of this Hebrew idiom so that we understand it.

By the **FINGER** of God : When miracles are performed, it is by the **FINGER** of God. See Exod. 8.19; Matt. 12.28; Luke 11.20 to which we referred under verse 22 above. The literal use of the finger is found in Mark 7. 33.

By the **HAND** of God : The works of God are represented by His **ARM**. Jesus did the works of God when preaching, calming the storm, feeding the multitudes, raising the dead, speaking in parables and so on. Collectively these were the **ARM** of God for each of them was a **SIGN** of the Plan and Purpose of God. This Plan and Purpose has not been revealed to everyone. See Exod. 3.20; 7. 4/5; Deut. 6. 21. (This verse refers to the act of bringing His people out of Egypt. Their selection was a greater wonder as we shall see in the next paragraph.) Naomi's lament of Ruth 1. 13. - "the hand of the **LORD** is gone out against me." - is indicative of the trials brought upon the Covenant people which she represented in Type. The trials



to which she refers should be read in conjunction with Heb. 12. 5/11. In the N.T. see Luke 1. 66 and 9. 62. The first of these refers to the works of Jesus which were the works of God. The second refers to man and his works.

By the ARM of God : This is used in connection with the selection of His people. When God took a nation (Israel) from another nation (Egypt) He selected His people and brought them out of a rejected world. Deut. 4.34. Isaiah foretold of the preaching of Jesus and the apostles. See Isa. 52.7. quoted by Paul in Rom. 10.15. This preaching (or REPORT) would not be believed by everyone as Isaiah also foretold in the famous Messianic chapter 53. See Isa. 53.1. The "report" mentioned in this verse must be linked with Isa. 52.7. For N.T. confirmation of this, see John 12. 37/38. For N.T. confirmation of the Divine Selection of Israel from Egypt, see Acts 13. 17.

Returning to the verse we are considering, the "right hand of God" signifies the ascension of Jesus into heaven. Here was an act of God which manifested His Plan and Purpose. The use of the "right" hand signifies the GLORY of God. See Exod. 15. 6.

The use of the word "exalted" signifies the elevation from one plane to a higher one. This idea is given in Acts 13.17. which shows that God chose the children of Israel when they were slaves in Egypt and EXALTED them from a position of slavery to be His children on their journey to Zion. Jesus has been exalted from the bondage of mortal flesh to the sublime state of immortality and fellowship with His Father.

"and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, ..."

Jesus as a MAN had RECEIVED the gift of the Holy Spirit. We pause for a moment to observe that if the Holy Spirit were a god, then this verse has no meaning in reference to "him". If we regard the Holy Spirit as a POWER, then the verse makes sense.

"he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." His "shedding" was manifested in the POWER which was now in evidence in the Apostles who spoke with other tongues, as Joel had foretold they would. The "shedding" was also in accordance with Jesus' promise given on the occasions mentioned in John 14.16. and 26. and Acts 1. 4.

"Which ye now see and hear" was obvious to all of them. They saw the cloven tongues as of fire, and they heard the speaking in other tongues. "This" was the gift which had now been given to them and could not be explained except on the basis of an exalted Saviour of whom the prophets had testified to his coming, his teaching, his death, his resurrection and now his exaltation.

Verse 34 :

"For David is not ascended into the heavens : but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,"

"For David is not ascended into the heavens : ..." For all that David was a great man, beloved of God, he had not ascended into heaven. He was still in his grave. We should note that no mention is made of a soul in the popular concept of the word. According to the "immortal soul" theory, the soul goes to heaven whereas the body turns back to dust. If this were so, why should Peter point to an obvious fact which everyone should know? Would it not have been better for him to say that David's soul had not gone to heaven? If he had, he would surely have been asked to state where it was and where it was to be found during the 1000 years approximately since his death. The doctrine of the immortal soul breaks down on this verse.

"but he saith himself, ..." Having proved that Jesus had been resurrected, Peter now starts on his proof that Jesus had been exalted to the right hand of God in heaven.

"The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand," Peter goes to the same source for

his O.T. proof as he used for the former proof, namely, the Psalms. He quotes Psa. 110. 1. (Critics say that this Psalm was not written by David. If this is so, then Jesus must have been wrong when he uttered his statement recorded in Mark 12.36.) Whereas the N.T. draws a distinction between the first word "LORD" and the second Lord, the distinction is not very clear. Both the O.T. and N.T. give all capitals for LORD and Lower Case for Lord. It would have been clearer if given as "Yahweh said unto my adon ..." Adon is the root of Adonai which is today used in Israel for the word "Sir" out of respect to a position. David, speaking in the Spirit of prophecy, acknowledges some person other than himself as one to be exalted to the right hand of God. The use of the prophetic name YAHWEH shows that the exaltation is part of the Divine Plan and Purpose. Jesus identified the Lord of this verse as the Messiah. Matt. 22. 41/45; Mark 12. 35/37; Luke 20. 41/44. Confronting his hearers were two facts. One was that the Messiah mentioned in Psalm 110 would ascend into heaven. The other was that Jesus had been seen to ascend into heaven. Peter had previously proved that Jesus was the Messiah. Now he adds further proof.

Verse 35 :

"Until I make thy foes thy footstool."

In early Hebrew times, the planting of the foot upon the neck of a prostrate foe was a symbol of complete victory. See Josh. 10. 24; 1 Sam. 17.51. (David "stood upon" the vanquished Goliath). R.V. "Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet." R.S.V. "till I make thy enemies a stool for thy feet". Afrikaans "totdat Ek u vyande gemaak het 'n voetbank van u voete". Thus the Afrikaans agrees with the R.V. "of thy feet".

Paul has a reference to this in 1 Cor. 15. 25.

Verse 36 :

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

"... let all the house of Israel know assuredly, ..." Note that "the house of Israel" is mentioned to the exclusion of all others. This means that it is only the house of Israel who may regard the crucified Christ as their Messiah, their Lord, their saviour and Master. The certainty of this is expressed in "assuredly". The Greek word for "assuredly" is translated as "safely" in Mark 14.44. and Acts 16. 23. This means "safely and without any fear of contradiction".

Jesus whom the people or their representatives, had crucified, had been made Lord (as promised to David - the Son of God) and Christ (the Messiah promised unto Abraham.) Here the two promises are once again brought together in Christ Jesus. The use of the name Jesus in this verse indicates the Saviour character. See Luke 2. 11. for the expression "Christ the Lord".

"Whom ye have crucified, ..." This is the final thrust. The wonderful argument which Peter gave - and Luke's record here must be only a summary - must have bitten deep into their conscience. The gradual realisation of what had been done to the Prince of this life must have come upon them as Peter progressed and the last thing they wanted to hear was "whom ye have crucified".

Verse 37 :

"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, ..." Peter uses an unusual word in "pricked". The R.V. retains the word but the R.S.V. has "they were cut to the heart". It is used in a sense of being struck violently with emotion. The Afrikaans version has "is hulle diep in die hart getref ..." also carrying a note of tragedy in the manner of being struck. After considering

what Peter had proved to them, if what he had said was true, and who can counter his teaching, then they had (1) rejected the Word of God; (2) they had crucified the Messiah; they were guilty of murder, and to their crime must be added blasphemy, and treason against their King. As devout Jews, their position now appeared to be beyond redemption. Well could they feel perplexed in a sense of great tragedy for themselves.

"in their hearts" means in their minds. In those days, through Grecian influence, the brain was regarded as a kind of thermostat for keeping the body temperature constant. Thus, if a person had a temperature, their heart felt hot. On the contrary, if they were under temperature, this could be felt in their brow. The thoughts were supposed to be centred in the heart. If anyone was excited in mind, their hearts would increase in beats per minute. For this usage of thoughts being in the heart, see Matt. 5. 8. and 28; 12.34; 13.15; 15.18; 24.48; Mark 7. 19 and 21; Luke 2. 19 and 51; 9. 47; 24.32; John 12.40; 13.2; 14. 1; 14. 27. etc.

"said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, ..." The crowd turned to Peter and the ELEVEN for help. Note that they did not turn to the 120. This should indicate to us that the Holy Spirit fell upon the 12 only and not upon the 120 as well.

"Men and brethren, what shall we do?" The "men and brethren" were not those who were with them. They were Peter and the eleven to whom the question was collectively addressed. They did not ask each other but asked those who appeared before them as recipients of the Holy Spirit. How different an attitude from those who, shortly before, had mocked the twelve as being filled with new wine. The A.V. includes "Men" in the address with no connecting "and", this being supplied in italics. The R.V., R.S.V. and Afrikaans Bybel gives simply "Brothers" or "Brethren". With Jesus Christ as their only mediator between God and men, they were now without any access to God and, the Law having been fulfilled in Jesus, they had no altar. They could well ask in despair, "What shall we do?" The question was not only one of despair but also one of faint hope. Perhaps there was still a way.

#### Verse 38 :

"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

"Then Peter said unto them, ..." Although the question was directed to the twelve, Peter still speaks for them all.

"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, ..."

The Greek word translated as "Repent" means to change one's thinking afterwards. The change of mind involves a change to moral good especially in one's own character and conduct. Regret and sorrow for what is done is only a beginning to the more important one of becoming a new man in one's thinking and behaviour. In its fullest sense, it involves a complete change to a life dedicated to doing God's Will. The Afrikaans use of "Bekeer" carries a sense of conversion and this appears to be the theme of repentance in Acts 3. 19. The act of repentance is often found in the Acts. See also 5. 31; 8.22; 11.18; 13.24; 17.30; 19.4.; 20.21; 26.20. The verb used here in Acts 2.38. gives a sense of repenting immediately, without delay, and repent completely. Their rejection of Christ had to stop immediately. Under the circumstances, it could not be continued with.

The question "What shall we do?" and the answer "Repent, and be baptized" remind one of a similar question asked of John the Baptist, "Master, what shall we do?" After giving advice as to their conduct, he baptised them. John's baptism was a baptism unto repentance Mark 1. 4. but that which Peter now spoke of, was a baptism into a NAME, - the NAME of Jesus Christ.

When the Lord sent his disciples to preach, he told them to baptise their converts in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit". (Matt. 28. 19.) When Peter spoke, he was speaking to a different

people from those envisaged by the Lord when he gave his instructions. The Jews and proselytes knew the Promises. They accepted the One God of Israel and they accepted the Holy Spirit by which power the Old Testament had been written. Therefore, the triune baptismal declaration was not necessary for them so Peter required baptism into the NAME. The "name" was that given to Moses at the Burning Bush - YHWH --which transliterated means "I will be manifested in a multitude of saints". The immortalised saints when the Kingdom is established, will manifest to the mortal people of the world, the Glory of God. It is on being part of this NAME, that every true Christian Believer bases his hopes. In Acts 15.14, we find James quoting Simeon who said, that God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His NAME. At the very first, God did visit the land of the Chaldees and took out Abraham to be a people for his NAME - the chosen ones - the elected ones. This was the Divine Plan and Purpose that a special people should be chosen (elected) and set apart as the people of God. This gave rise to the prophetic NAME of God, namely, YHWH or YAHWEH. The Old Testament bore witness to this Purpose because the O.T. was written according to the inspiration of God through His Power, the Holy Spirit. This supplies us with the NAME of the Father, manifested in the Old Testament by the name of the Holy Spirit. As Peter had shown, this Plan and Purpose was centred in and around the name of Jesus, thus supplying the third and explaining for us the "name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." As explained above, the Jews and proselytes accepted the first two, so by being baptised into the name of Jesus Christ, they would then accept the threefold manifestation of the Plan and Purpose of God.

This in no way proves the existence of a trinity of gods. Such a concept is quite foreign to the teaching of the Bible. God's Plan and Purpose ultimately, is that His Glory shall be manifested. For this purpose, He created His Son so that those saints who are the spiritual body of Christ, will be the saints who will manifest the Divine Glory in their immortality. To elect the saints of the "body of Christ", there must be a name of the Son, and the only way to acquaint men with this Plan and Purpose, is to commit it to writing by means of the Power of God which is called the Holy Spirit. Thus it is the NAME of God, manifested by Jesus, his Son, through the Power of the Holy Spirit.

"for the remission of your sins, ..." At the moment of baptism, all former sins are washed away. Rom.6.7. Col.2.13.

"and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." The extent to which the gift was to be given is not stated. There is no doubt however, that in view of the other influences all around them which made the growth of the Word of God difficult, a gift was given to new converts to bring them sufficient understanding of God's Word to enable them to return to their homes and preach unto others.

#### Verse 39 :

"For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

"For the promise is unto you, and to your children, ..." For those who claim to be endowed with the Holy Spirit, this must be a very difficult verse because Peter explains that the promise of Another Comforter is for two generations, the one he was speaking to and their children. This would take them up to the end of the Apostolic era which came to an end with the death of John, the last of all the Apostles to die. (Jesus had foretold that John would outlive them all and would be alive when Jesus "came again" as he did when he appeared unto John at Patmos and gave him the Book of Revelation. See John 21, 20/24.) We shall see when we study Acts 8. 18, that only the Apostles could pass on the Holy Spirit to others. Therefore when the last of them died, the Holy Spirit could no longer be passed on to another. That would take up to the generation which was present on the day of Pentecost, and to their children.

"and to all that are afar off, ..." Some commentators tend to the opinion that this refers to succeeding

generations but the phrase in Greek does not mean this. It does not relate to time. Other suggestions are that it refers to Jews dispersed in other countries, but this would be quite unnecessary as Jews from every country were represented there. The indication of Scripture is that it refers to the Gentiles. Some object to this as Peter would not understand at that time that the Gentiles had to come into the covenants of Promise. This point is not well made as Peter was under the impression that Gentiles had to become Jews first and then be converted to Christianity. In writing to the believers at Ephesus, Paul refers to the fact that at one time, they were "afar off" which is another way of saying that they were Gentiles after the flesh who were unbelievers at one time. (Ephes. 2. 13. and 17.) A prophecy of salvation coming to the Gentiles is given in Isaiah 57. 19. Peter's Quotation of Joel stopped at 2. 31. half way through the verse. If we continue with verse 32, we find reference to "the remnant whom the LORD shall call." Thus the two prophecies seem to be in agreement that the Gentiles will come to a knowledge of the Truth.

"as many as the Lord our God shall call." "No man can come to me," said Jesus, (John 6. 44.) "except the Father which hath sent me draw him : ..." "God hath visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his Name". (Acts 15. 14.) It is God who calls.

#### Verse 40 :

"And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation."

Luke has taken out of Peter's speeches that day sufficient for the teaching he wishes to bring to his readers' attention. As we have stated, the speeches recorded in the Bible are precis and not verbatim records of everything that was said. Luke refers to similar statements without giving the details of what was said. See Acts 8.25; 10.42; for speeches, and Acts 3.15; 4.33; 5. 31/32; 10. 39/41; 13.31. for witnesses. In summarising the various speeches here referred to without giving details, Peter is quoted as saying, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation".

The verb is passive in the middle voice which means that something must be done to them to their advantage. This is "be saved to your own advantage .." They had to be saved from "the untoward generation". The word "untoward" means morally crooked, perverse people belonging to a particular generation. (Vine, page 256). Carrying this description to its limit, we find the Jews living at that time who had rejected their Messiah and always would do so as long as they lived, irrespective of what teaching was brought to their attention. Other such people were the Gentiles with whom they lived in their cities who worshipped gods of wood and stone, fashioned by man's hands. Apart from their abominable form and ritual of worship, they were evil people in their morals. See Paul's advice in Phil. 2.15; Peter may have had in mind the Song of Moses, recorded in Deut. 32. 5. The history of the Jews from Moses' day was a lamentable one of their perverseness and crookedness. He did not want this generation to go the same way.

#### Verse 41 :

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized : and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized : ..." It does not say "They received his word ..." but that "they that received his word ..." The distinction is that in the text, only some of the hearers received his word and were baptised. It is not everyone that has ears to hear. One way of understanding this section is to consider that only those who asked the question given in verse 37 received his word and were baptised. Those who did not receive his word would not bother to ask the question. Note that they had to understand what Peter had said, and understand his words and believe them. After that, they were baptised. We shall find in many places in the Acts that belief always preceded baptism.

"added three thousand souls." This enormous number was never again repeated as far as we are told. In a like manner were converted on any one day, there is no record of it. Such a figure far exceeded anything the Lord had done in his three and a half years of ministry. Jesus foretold this in John 14. 12.

We note that 3,000 SOULS were added to them. Those who insist that every mention of a "soul" in Scripture is indeed a "soul" in the Platonic sense, should note this verse. After the people were baptised, only their souls were added to the number of believers! If only the souls are to be saved, then what happens to the bodies when they are raised? The immortal soul theory does away with Biblical teaching of resurrection. Many critics argue that with such a large number of people and so little water in Jerusalem, 3,000 could not have been baptised. We have no way of knowing since we were not there at the time. Verse 41 says they were baptised and for us, that is the end of the matter.

We may be astonished that so many could believe and be baptised in so short a time but we must remember that they were "devout Jews" (verse 5) and would know of the One God of Israel; they would know of the Promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; they would know of the Covenant with David; they would look to the coming of the Messiah; they would understand the need for separation from the world of apostasy which surrounded them; they would look for salvation in the Kingdom of God on earth and not in heaven; they would look for the coming of the kingdom and the re-establishment of David's throne. All that was required of them was a belief that Jesus was the Messiah and that he rose again and ascended into heaven. Also that he would come again.

#### Verse 42 :

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

".. they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship ..."

"Continued stedfastly" as in Acts 1. 14. means unwearied continuance. See Rom. 12. 12; Col. 4. 2.

"The apostles' doctrine ..." From the few verses we have studied in the Book up to this stage it is possible to draw up a statement of Faith for the apostles.

1. Belief in God the Father. Acts 1. 4.
2. Belief that Jesus is the Son of God of the seed of David, descended from Abraham. Acts 2. 36. Jesus was a man. Acts 2. 22.
3. Jesus died and rose again. Acts 1. 22. This implies that Jesus must have been mortal.
4. The Holy Spirit is the Power of God which enabled them to speak in other tongues. (The Holy Spirit is no where spoken of as a god.) Acts 1. 16/21.
5. The Promises made unto Abraham and the Covenant with David both centre in Jesus Christ. Acts 2. 36; 2. 30.
6. Jesus is now in heaven at the right hand of God. Acts 2. 33.
7. Christ will come again. Acts 1. 11.
8. The death and resurrection of Jesus was part of the Divine Plan and Purpose. Acts 2. 23/24.
9. Baptism after Belief must come first. Acts 2. 38. Repentance must accompany Belief and Baptism.
10. The Faith must be accompanied by Breaking of Bread and prayers. Acts 2.42.

"and fellowship, ..." The Greek word is "Koinonia" meaning "sharing in common", participation, communion, with a sense of making a contribution and sharing the contribution of others.

Fellowship with God means to be a partaker of the Promises. Ephes. 3.6. Such fellowship requires a knowledge of what God has "contributed" by His Promises and the gift of His Son, Jesus. Without knowledge, we cannot have fellowship with God. In any event, fellowship with God

comes only through Jesus. 1 John 1. 3. 6.

Fellowship with the Son is possible only through Belief and Baptism. The contribution by Jesus was his life as a ransom for many. Rev. 5. 9. 1 Peter 1. 19; Our contribution is to be buried with him in baptism after, of course, the proper belief and repentance. Col. 2. 12.

Fellowship of the Holy Spirit came in the first place from a knowledge of God's Word. The contribution by the Holy Spirit was the written word of God inspired by God's Power, the Holy Spirit. Thus the contribution from the Holy Spirit was the Scriptures which can make us wise unto salvation. The gift of the Holy Spirit is no longer with us. Heb. 6. 4/5. We now have the complete word of God and must live according to that Word. Phil. 2. 1.

"in breaking of bread, ..." Note that we read of "breaking" of bread. We do not read of "pouring out of wine". Why "breaking?" It does NOT refer to Jesus body being broken on the cross for we know that "not a bone of him was broken". (John 19. 36.) The word "breaking" means "dividing asunder", with one part on one side and the other part on the opposite side.

"Dividing asunder" was a Hebrew ritual of sealing a contract. It had covenant significance and was irrevocable once it was performed in all its details. In Gen. 15, when Abram asked God for a sign that he would know for sure that he would receive the land promised to him and his seed, God told him to "divide" a heifer, a she goat, a turtledove and a young pigeon. He took these and "divided" them but did not "divide" the birds. When the fowls came down upon the carcass, he drove them away. After this, Abram fell into a deep sleep and an horror of great darkness fell upon him. Gen. 15. 5/12. In verse 17, we read that when the sun went down, it was dark and a smoking furnace appeared, and a lamp of fire (margin) passed between the pieces.

It is sufficient for our present purpose to state that the animals were divided without going into detail, except to say that the pieces represented Christ. This was a symbol of his sacrifice in the years to come but it is probable that Abram did not see the Saviour character of the "division". All he knew was that this was a formality of a covenant which would be irrevocable. "The sun went down" signifies the death of Christ and "it was dark" - the darkness of the grave for Jesus. There was also the significance of the darkness of ignorance of Abram's seed after the flesh which would be scattered in A.D.70 when a "smoking furnace" - smoke only with the fire of destruction gone out - over the city of Jerusalem after its destruction. Yet this was an acceptable sacrifice to God as is indicated by the "lamp of fire" which passed between the pieces. The Bible has other references to an acceptable sacrifice which was consumed by fire to show God's acceptance of it. Judges 13. 20.

Thus was a covenant with Abram sealed and made irrevocable by means of a "broken" sacrifice. In regard to the BREAD, Jesus has shown us that he is the "bread of life" (John 6. 48.) When Jesus fed the 5,000 he broke the bread, (Matt. 14.19; Mark 6. 41; Luke 9. 16.) thus showing the Covenant significance of what he was doing. The "breaking of bread" then, is a Covenant assurance of the redemptive work of the sacrifice of Jesus and that it was acceptable to God. For further study, see 1 Cor. 10. 16/17. Luke 22. 17. Those who renew the Covenant in this way, should remember that just as a lamp of fire passed through the midst of the pieces, so Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them". Matt. 18.20.

"and in prayers". This would be united, and not individual prayers. The brethren had now lost their individuality in the spiritual Body of Christ.

#### Verse 43 :

"And fear came upon every soul : and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles."

"And fear came upon every soul ..." This expression is found in Acts 5.5; 5.11; 19.17. It was not a fear of bodily harm but rather one of awe. The verb "came" comes from the same word translated as "were done" in the latter half of this verse. It means "happened".

"many signs and wonders were done by the apostles." The fear of the earlier part of this sentence was caused through the signs and wonders which had been done. The signs and wonders done by the apostles maintained this fear. Great power was used in these signs and wonders. See Acts 4. 33. The signs and wonders which were done appear in the rest of the Book of the Acts.

Verse 44 :

"And all that believed were together, and had all things common;"

One of the great wonders was the voluntary division of property and the communal spirit among them. This life was similar to that led by Jesus and his disciples where no one of them had more than another. Jesus never laid down this law but it happened by the desire of the people. It came through brotherly love. (Acts 4. 32.) There must have been a few wealthy ones and, no doubt, many poor ones. Yet they were all prepared to sell what they had and put the proceeds in the common pool.

The selling of property was voluntary and not compulsory. We read of "the house of Mary the mother of Mark" (Acts 12.12.) John also appears to have had a home of his own. (John 19.27.) Simon had not given up his money on his baptism. (Acts 8. 20.) This communal attitude was possible only for a very small group of people. Once the Ecclesia grew to a considerable size, the communal tendency fell away. It was not a permanent institution for we do not find it in other ecclesias started by the apostles.

Verse 45 :

"And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all (men), as every man had need."

The verb here is in the imperfect tense, indicating "they kept selling their goods", from time to time as necessity arose. The word "possessions" means landed property - fixed assets - and is used three times in Scripture, namely, Matt. 19. 22. and Mark 10. 22. of the rich ruler who was unwilling to part with his possessions. The second is in the verse we are studying now. The third is in Acts 5. 1. concerning those who were prepared to sell but not to part with the whole price.

The word "men" which is in italics was used as an impersonal pronoun in English in the early 17th Century when the A.V. was published. In modern usage, the sentence would read, "and parted them to all, as every one had need."

Verse 46 :

"And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,"

"And they, continuing daily, with one accord ..." "They" referring to the Apostles.

"Continuing ..." used in the same sense as in 1. 14. and 2. 42. It speaks of persistent practice. "with one accord" is the same as in 1. 14.

"in the temple, ..." We shall find this in 3. 1. as well. It may seem strange why newly converted Christians should attend daily in one of the rooms at the temple, which Temple was given over to worship under the Law of Moses. It may have been done to show that there was no antagonism between what was later called the "Christian Faith" and the Great Hope of Israel with which, in later years, Paul claimed he was bound. (Acts 28. 20.) A similar thing happened in the days of John the Baptist who taught in the precincts of the Temple without destroying anything to do with the worship conducted there. The close association of the apostles with the temple led eventually to a dispute regarding circumcision which we shall note now but discuss later when we come to it.



"and breaking bread from house to house (margin "at home") did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,"

The place in the temple where they gathered was Solomon's Porch (Acts 3.11.) Being organised as we have seen, on communal lines, the great feature of their association was the communal meal. It could not conveniently be eaten in the temple precincts so they ate by households. A.V. says "from house to house". R.V. "at home" R.S.V. "in their homes". The A.V. rendering, which is also the rendering of the Afrikaans Version, gives the true sense.

"breaking bread" must be considered in conjunction with "taking their meat (food)". The indication is that they partook of their meals, spiritual and physical, from house to house. This was done in a continuing manner, the verb being in the imperfect tense. Their "gladness" was an exultation, such was their joy to be in the household of faith. "Singleness" comes from a word meaning "simplicity" and shows that there was no unbelief, selfishness, nor hypocrisy in what they were doing. The ecclesia gets off to a good start with childlike happiness and singleness of purpose, aim and motive.

#### Verse 47 :

"Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

"Praising God, and having favour with all the people." "Praising God" as expressed here, shows a little more than praise for the sake of praising. It was part of their worship and went further than that. Their manner of life was a form of praise of God. This desire to praise God when one is the subject of signs and wonders can be expected. We shall find it in chapter 3. at verses 7 and 8.

"having favour with all the people." The phrase "all the people" is often found and its use shows it to be limited to all the Jews - the chosen people. This favour did not last long once the Jewish Rulers determined to destroy the new Faith. See Acts 4. 1/2.

"And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." "the Lord" means God and not Jesus. John 6. 44. and Acts 15. 14. Also 1 Cor. 3. 7. The word "added" is in the imperfect tense meaning "kept adding".

"to the church" is not quite a true translation. The R.V. has "to them", the R.S.V. has "their number" and the Afrikaans Bybel has "die gemeente" - the community, congregation. The Emphatic Diaglott has "And the Lord daily added those being saved to the congregation."

"such as should be saved". The present participle of the verb shows that salvation is a continuous selection of individuals who enter the race for eternal life. It reads "Those that were being saved ..." A simple translation is "the Lord guided them to the way of salvation". This is what the Lord does for us. We are put on the way to everlasting life but do not attain it until Christ comes.



The scene of the action recorded in Acts chapter 3 is laid in the Temple and its precincts. It will help us in our studies if we know something of the Temple of those days.

The Temple mentioned in the Gospels and Acts was built by Herod the Great who had the building commenced in B.C. 20. He rebuilt the temple rather than built it. There was great enthusiasm about that time for rebuilding ancient temples and Herod followed fashion rather than acted because of some pious motive. Herod declared that his plan in rebuilding the temple was to restore religious worship but from the character of the man, he preferred to build a memorial to himself rather than to serve God. The Jews declared that the temple in their day had been 46 years in building and was not then finished. (John 2. 20.) The date of its completion is unknown but it is thought to have been finished in the days of the procurator Albinus. (A.D. 62/64.)

When we read of the Temple, we sometimes read of the entire structure and sometimes of the inner temple. If we can explain where some parts are to be found, we shall get a better idea of the layout. We must consider the Temple in two sections, namely, the whole walled-in area known as the "Mountain of the House". This was a large shape nearly rectangular with walls in the north, east, south and west. The eastern wall overlooked the valley of Kidron to the mount of Olives beyond. The south wall extends into a smaller valley which penetrates the city of Jerusalem, and is known as the "Tyropoeon Valley" and sometimes, the "Valley of Cheesemakers". The southwestern corner is connected to the city by a viaduct. On the inside of the north, east and west walls, there are rows of pillars forming a portico on each wall. These porticos are covered with a roof made of carved cedar wood. There are three rows of pillars to each wall. The southern wall has four rows of pillars and a carved cedarwood roof. It was 45 feet wide as against the 30 feet of width of the north, east and west walls. The east enclosed square enclosed by the walls was known as the "Court of the Gentiles" because Gentiles were permitted to go there. The Portico on the inside of the eastern wall was known as "Solomon's Porch" and this is mentioned in Acts 3. 11. Jesus taught there. (John 10. 23.)

In the northern half of the courtyard is the Temple. The main entrance faces east and outside of this were the money changers and those who sold cattle and birds for sacrifice. Thus they were not actually in the temple but outside it, yet they were within the Temple courtyard. The Temple was elevated above its immediate surroundings so that all access to it was by fourteen steps. The main entrance was known as the "Corinthian Gate" and more often by the name of "Beautiful" which we find in Acts 3. 2. All the way round were warning signs that Gentiles were not allowed to enter the Temple under pain of death. See Acts 21. 28/31. This was the only entrance on the eastern side. There were four entrances each on the north and south but none in the west.

Having entered by the eastern entrance, the visitor found himself in the "Court of the Women" which was not limited to women but was used by both sexes. This was as far as women may come to worship. There were special balconies for the women and this is preserved in modern synagogues which provide seats for the women in the galleries. (Note: The Revisionist Group do not observe this but permit their women to sit with the men.) The pillars supporting the balconies formed porticos and in these were placed chests for the collection of offerings. Here it was that the widow cast her mite. There were a series of rooms around the "Court of the Women" and in one of these, the Nazarites performed their ceremonies.

Ascending by 14 steps, we reach the gate of Nicanor which forms part of the Wall of Separation beyond which no one except the priests could pass. On the other side of this wall was the Holy Place in which was the altar on which the priests performed their daily sacrifices. (Heb. 10. 11.) Beyond this was the Holiest of All which was separated from the Holy Place by the Veil. Returning to the vast courtyard, a sheltered colonnade led from the north west corner of the Courtyard to a flight of steps which led into a building on high ground. This building was known as "Antonia". It is referred to in Scripture as the "Castle" and is mentioned in Acts 21. 34, 37; 22. 24; 23. 10, 16 and 32.



## THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

### Chapter 3

Two things were to contribute to the spreading of Christianity. They were:-

(1) The closely knit structure of the first ecclesia. This led to great strength of character when persecution came. Jesus had said a "house divided against itself cannot stand". (Matt. 12. 25.) The opposite of course, is also true, that if a house is firmly bound together by the common weal, it will stand steadfast against all opposition. This was the case with the first ecclesia at Jerusalem. In the words of Mark,

Mark 16. 20. "...they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them,..."

They tended to keep in the vicinity of Jerusalem and soon built up the largest ecclesia they ever had. There was no common place of gathering such as we have it these days like an ecclesial hall, so they met at each other's houses. Nevertheless the body of believers was united in the One Faith and were enthusiastic in their preaching.

(2) The growing persecution and opposition. This came from both Jew and Gentile. The result was a three cornered contest for survival with the evangelists trying to spread the Gospel, the Jew trying to preserve the Law of Moses and the temple ritual and the Roman trying to stamp out the growing concept of worship which was opposed to their gods. The Romans saw in the Christian movement a menace to their political security so when they turned upon the zealous Jews and destroyed them in A.D. 70, they followed up quickly by persecuting the Christians.

The manner in which these two factors contributed to the spreading of Christianity came about in this way. The early Christians were so enthusiastic about their ecclesia at Jerusalem that had nothing happened to oppose them, Christianity may not have reached beyond Judea for many decades. Something had to happen to cause the evangelists to go further afield. This was done by the persecution which grew from mild opposition to imprisonments, beatings and finally the murder of Stephen. The Christians were caused to flee for their lives and in doing so, took the New Faith with them and taught it far and wide.

Luke deals with this gradual development in the first six chapters and comes to the finality in recording Stephen's speech in chapter 7. During this period, JOSEPH CALPHAS was the high priest. He was a Sadducee with political ambitions and like all such men, was unwilling at any time to do anything which may offend the Romans. Thus it was that they were hampered to a certain extent by their fear of what the people might do. If they rioted, they might make the Romans think that they were starting a minor revolt. For this reason we read that "they feared the people". Matt. 21. 26; 26. 5; Mark 11. 32; 12. 12; 14. 2; Luke 20. 6; 20. 19; 22. 2; Acts 4. 21; etc., Calaphas played a major part in spreading the gospel by causing the Christians to be scattered.

In the days of Jesus, great opposition came from the Pharisees but in the days of the apostles, the greatest opposition came from the Sadducees. Their main point of opposition was that the apostles taught that Jesus had been raised from the dead, the resurrection being something they did not believe. The PHARISEES were divided into three types, namely,

- (1) The purely religious who were looking for the kingdom to come to Israel. Amongst these were Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea.
- (2) The wealthy Pharisees who felt it was best to keep on the right side of the Romans. Josephus the historian, was one of this type.
- (3) The religiously zealous type of whom Saul was one. They took out of religion the qualities of humility, kindness, understanding and the contrite spirit which is so essential. (Matt. 15. 1/14.) It was only those of type (1) who became Christians.

CHAPTER 3.

## Verse 1

"Now Peter and John went up together..." In the Gospels we often find "Peter, James and John" mentioned together. They seem to have formed an "inner cabinet" with Jesus. Now we find that James is no longer part of the group but that John is still the close companion of Peter. This pays tribute to the strong friendship which there was between them. A lot has happened since the Lord sent Peter and John to prepare the passover. (Luke 22. 8.) Peter denied his Master. John stood with him until the end. (See John 18. 15; and 19. 26.) From the Biblical narrative, it would appear that only John was a witness to the denial, yet we find them together at the sepulchre. (John 20.2;) and later when fishing together. (John 21. 7.) It would appear that Peter took his denial of the Lord very much to heart and that he isolated himself from the other disciples for a while. When Jesus was raised, he asked that the disciples be told and that Peter be told too. (Mark 16. 7.) It seems strange that Jesus should ask the women to tell the disciples and Peter if Peter was with the disciples at the time. That John should be with him all through shows a sterling character in John.

The verb "went up" is used because the Temple stood on elevated ground. This indicates that they not only went to the Temple courtyard but also went into the temple itself.

"into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour." That they went into the Temple is shown by the verb "went up" as explained above. They would go into the "Court of men" where laymen were permitted. The "Court of men" was also known as the "Court of Israel" because it was limited to the men of Israel. "the hour of prayer" is stated to be the "the ninth hour". This would be at 3 p.m. A more accurate translation would be "towards the hour" meaning just before the hour.

The Jews observed three hours of prayer and this was probably taken from Psa. 55. 17, and Dan. 6. 10. These were the THIRD HOUR (Acts 2. 15.); the SIXTH HOUR, (Acts 10. 9.) and the NINTH HOUR which we see here. There is an exhortation here for us as to the necessity for prayer. When we compare ourselves in this modern world of rush, with the early apostles, we do not get anywhere near their standard. There is a significance about the NINTH HOUR which is worthy of study. Consider the following:-

1. The hour when some of the later labourers were hired to work in the vineyard. Matt. 20. 5.
2. The hour when the Lord cried out in anguish on the cross.
3. The hour when the lame man was healed at the temple. (Acts 3.)
4. The hour when Cornelius saw his vision. (Acts 10. 3 and 30.)

In each of the above cases, the ninth hour was important to certain people. In each case, the time, whether of the day or the time of life of the person concerned, was well advanced. As we advance in life's journey, each day brings us nearer to the time when we shall stand before the Son of Man to give an account of ourselves.

## Verse 2

"And a certain man lame from his mother's womb...." Here we have a remark by Luke the Physician who would observe such a state. A doctor is concerned about the duration of a complaint and also about the invalid's age. The age is given in 4. 22. The fact that he was born lame meant that his muscles had never been used and had atrophied. This makes the miracle of his healing all the more miraculous.

The exhortation which we can derive from this is that we are all born spiritually lame from our mother's womb and must come to Jesus to be healed. If we appeal to the world around us for help, we shall not get the true help which can cure us of our ills.

"was carried..." The tense in which these words were written was the imperfect tense giving "was being carried". This signifies that he was carried there every day. It also means that he was being carried there at the precise time at which Peter and John arrived. In our lives too, God causes us to meet with someone who can lead us to the Truth of His Word.

"whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful..."

This is the eastern gate and the one most commonly used. Through this gate would pass all types of people, male and female, old and young, Jew and Proselyte. This gate would be chosen by the cripple as it would enable him to seek alms from the largest number of people. It also meant that he would be seen and remembered by the largest number too. This turned out to be important in view of the miracle of his healing. To get there he would be carried through the Court of the Gentiles and so would be seen by many of them.

There is a difference between "being carried" and "laid". The act of "being carried" is what happened to him daily, every day in the sight of many people. The "laid" part of the incident is what happened to the man at the precise arrival time of Peter and John. This would draw their attention to him more than at any other time.

"to ask alms of them that entered into the temple;" In many parts of Europe, mendicants are to be found in the porch of cathedrals where they hope to make their living by begging. Also many Catholic cathedrals and churches have collection boxes strategically placed so that anyone entering is confronted with a tacit request for the transference of money from his pocket to the church. In a sense, this is psychological robbery which is forbidden in some countries - South Africa is one - but which is permitted in others.

#### Verse 3

"Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms."

The phrase "about to go" has no equivalent in English. It has a sense of futurity about it as if they had deliberated and had made up their minds that after all, they would go in. They would then turn and prepare for the going in. They showed that it was their intention to go in. The Afrikaans version says "wou binnegaan" (would go in) seems to convey the correct meaning.

The verb "asked" has a peculiar meaning in Greek which is not conveyed in the English. It would have been better as "asked to receive". To just ask does not convey all of what was intended. It is obvious to us that he asked with the intention of receiving some money. There is no precision of meaning in the English "ask" but the Greek word is much more precise. He asked to be given.

Some have criticised the word "alms" and stated that the word "an" refers to the singular and "alms" to the plural. This criticism is wrong because "alms" is a singular word in plural form like the word "scissors". Its meaning is "the expression of sympathy and mercy in the form of charitable gifts."

#### Verse 4

"And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him, with John, said, Look on us."

Here again Peter takes the leading part. The expression "fastening his eyes upon him" is the same as "looking steadfastly" of chapter 1 verse 10. Refer to this for other passages using the same term.

The participle is singular referring to the act of one of them. John, however, is brought into it by the words "with John". Both looked and both spoke.

spoke or - and this seems more likely - both looked and Peter spoke for both.

"said, Look on us..." This command was given to prepare the cripple for what was to follow. By asking him to look upon them, the two apostles would be sure to have his attention. As a rule alms givers did not call upon beggars to look upon them as they gave him money, therefore the lame man would give very earnest heed to that which Peter was about to say or do.

#### Verse 5

"And he gave heed unto them,.." As we should expect in view of what has just been explained above. No doubt his "heed" which he gave unto them would be one of eager anticipation.

"expecting to receive something of them." Luke had no way of knowing what went through the man's mind but in stating this, Luke shows a deep insight into human character. This remark tells us something of the character of Luke. He was a great lover of people and was capable of giving a life-like character sketch.

#### Verse 6

"Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee."

The word "Then" which begins this sentence is the same as that which is translated "And" at the beginning of the next verse. (vs 7) It is merely a continuative participle to carry the action in logical order to the next stage. "Silver and gold" are used figuratively for "money" which would be the type of money the lame man would expect.

Note the unselfish and unworldly attitude of the Apostles who did not share the distribution of goods mentioned in Acts 2. 45. If the distribution was made "as every man had need", then the needs of the apostles was simple to an extreme and apparently, they had no need of money. 2 Cor. 6. 10. could be read with profit to ourselves at this stage.

"such as I have" would be more correct as "what I have". The Afrikaans Version and the R.V. with the R.S.V. all give this alternative way. "such as" indicates something less than money. What Peter was about to give was much more valuable than money.

"give I thee". The next sentence gives the source of power to give. Here Peter does not acknowledge the source but states it in the next breath. In all applications of the Holy Spirit for healing, the Apostles acknowledged Jesus. See Acts 9. 34; and 16. 18. It is implied in Acts 9. 40; 14. 9/10; 28. 8. The miracles of Jesus were performed by his own authority because all power was given to him, yet he acknowledged God's hand in all that he did. (John 10. 25.)

Bruce (Commentary) quotes a story which was told about Pope Innocent II who was visited by Thomas Aquinas as he, the Pope, was counting money. He said to Thomas, "See...the church can no longer say "Silver and gold have I none'". The witty Thomas fired back the answer, "and neither can she now say, "Arise and walk!"

"In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk". Peter uses a form different from that given in Acts 2. 38. The use of "Nazareth" is the same as that used in Acts 2. 22. Breaking this statement down into its components we get "Jesus"; "Christ" and "Nazareth". From the meaning of "Jesus" we get "Yahweh will save" and we know that He will save through Jesus; "Christ" means "the Anointed One" who is anointed by Yahweh to be King for he is the Messiah; and finally, "Nazareth" refers to the despised and rejected of men. Therefore, in paraphrase, what Peter said was "in the name of the despised Nazarene who was the Messiah and who is your Saviour, rise up and walk." Connect the following John 1. 46; Acts 2. 30/32. and Isa. 53. 3.



Some ancient manuscripts omit "Arise" thus giving a more impressive "Walk". The R.V. and R.S.V. both have this rendering. To be told to "Arise" is one thing but not to be told to do so but simply be told to walk and find that one can also rise, is much more impressive. Strong omits "rise" in the Comparative section of his Concordance.

## Verse 7

"And he took him by the right hand..." Not to give him assistance but to help him overcome his unbelief. Similar touching is recorded in other miracles of healing. Matt. 8. 15; 9. 25; 14. 31; 20. 34; Luke 7. 14.

"and lifted him up..." The word "lift" has an unusual meaning here. It is used in Matt. 12. 11. to "lift up" a sheep from a pit into which it had fallen. We find it again in Mark 1. 31. in connection with the curing of Peter's mother-in-law of a fever. Also in Mark 9. 27. in connection with the cure of a man who asked Jesus to help his unbelief. See verse 24. Apart from these places, the word does not appear again. It is used to lift a person (or sheep) out of a state where they cannot help themselves. The mother-in-law from a state where she was in a coma and could not think for herself. The sheep was in a pit through its own stupidity. The man wanted help in his unbelief. In the case we are studying, the man could not walk and needed help which he could not give himself. The lesson appears to be that we are all very helpless and cannot help ourselves but Jesus can help us if we will let him. In all cases the word means "lift out" and not "lift up".

"and immediately..." This word is peculiar to Luke with the exception of Matt. 21. 19/20. where it is translated "presently". Its appearances are Luke 1. 64; 4. 39; 5. 25; 6. 49; 8. 44, 47; 13. 13; 18. 43; 19. 11; 22. 60; Acts 3. 7; 12. 23; 13. 11; 16. 26; It means "immediately after something else has happened" Walker states that in Greek medical language, it refers to prompt healing after the use of medicines. This would show Luke's medical knowledge. Apart from this, the fact that miracles have the character of happening immediately must show that they are done by Divine means and not by natural causes.

"his feet and ankle bones received strength". The common word for "feet" is not used here. The word means "steps" The word for "ankle bones" is simply ankles and shows again Luke's medical knowledge. He knew that this type of lameness was due to weak ankles which would prevent the lame person from making a step. "Received strength" is a word used only in Acts in this verse and in 3. 16 and 16. 5. The last two places give the translations "strong" and "established" respectively.

## Verse 8

"And he leaping up stood, and walked..." "Leaping up" may indicate a spontaneous act of joy or it may show the progressive stages of the cure which was so rapid as to be described as "immediate". The word "leaping" appears twice in this verse, once from Gk. "exallomal" meaning "to get up out of a place" and "(h)allomal" meaning to leap.

"walked..." lit. "walking about" showing that in his joy he walked here and there. The imperfect tense shows that he kept on walking. If he had been lame from his mother's womb then he had never learnt to walk. This requires something greater than strength in one's ankles. It needs balance, and rhythm. The miracle extended to something greater than curing a physical weakness, weakness.

"entered with them into the temple..." Apparently while walking about in sheer joy of a new experience, Peter and John turned to enter the temple. He suddenly went with them.

"walking and leaping..." here is a sign of his giving way to joy at his cure. The picture that Luke paints here is not apparant by reading the translation. The man was so overcome with joy at being cured that he walked here and there, leaping for joy, even while he was following Peter and John into the temple.

"and praising God." In the midst of his rejoicing he found time to praise God. There is no suggestion that the man thanked Peter and John. He acknowledged the Power of Him from whom all blessings flow. The expression also appears in Acts 2. 47. Notice the progression from one state to another. Health - standing; vigour - walking; exuberance and joy - leaping; joy and gladness - praising God.

#### Verse 9

"And all the people saw him walking and praising God." This is not unnecessary repetition but is added for emphasis, and a further step in the development of the sequel. The points to note are, (1) "all the people" indicates that it being the time of prayer, many people would see what was happening; (2) that many people saw would ensure that sooner or later it would come to the ears of the High Priest; (3) that a large number of people saw the incident would impress upon the High Priest the fact that he had a problem on his hands to curb the growing popularity of the apostles. (4) The fact that the man gave praise to God for what was done would connect the acts of Peter and John with God and give their work an authority the High Priest would not like them to have.

We have been told about the cure. We know that the man was well known by having been on view for a long time. He must have seen and heard Jesus but had to wait a long time before an opportunity came to him. The manner in which he gave vent to his feelings of joy would publicise the act of healing. Since it affected a well-known character, the story of it would spread rapidly. Luke's narrative style is excellent as he builds up to his climax.

#### Verse 10

"And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple:.."

Luke adds this point of identification to make quite sure that there would be no misunderstanding as to who was involved in this cure. Had the miracle been performed on a stranger, the moral effect upon others would not have been as profound as it was when performed upon a man whom the people knew well. Luke points out that the people not only knew him but that he was the man who had occupied that position for many years. Luke leaves no room whatsoever for any subsequent argument that the well-known cripple was not the man who was cured.

The sight of a previously known cripple suddenly walking and leaping about would have excited feelings of great wonder. But when such excitement was accompanied by loud praising of God as if to indicate the Divine Presence in the Temple at that time, the feeling of wonder would have been accompanied by a feeling of great awe. The fact that Peter and John, known disciples of the slain Lord, were connected with the miracle, would give them fame which the High Priest did not want them to have. Luke is now building up the situation with dramatic thoroughness.

"and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened to him'.

The word "wonder" is peculiar to Luke and appears in Luke 4. 36; and 5. 9. The verbal root is used by Mark in 1. 27; 10. 24, 32. The use of this word is another of the proofs of Luke's authorship. The word incorporates the meanings of wonder and awe. This is astonishment and fear because of their astonishment.

The word "amazement" has the same root as the verb in Acts 2. 7. In both instances, the amazement arose as a result of a Divine Act. It carries a meaning of being so overcome with surprise as to be dumbfounded. This is the result of distraction of mind. It arises from terror and wonder. It occurs in Acts 10. 10; 11. 5; 22. 17. In each of these verses it is translated as "trance".

The clause "that which had happened unto him" draws the attention once again to the fact that this was not an ordinary happening such as one could expect now and again. It was unusual in the extreme and the cause of the utter astonishment of the people.

#### Verse 11

"And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John,.." Again Luke makes quite sure that the reader knows who is being spoken of. Luke is not allowing any loophole to appear through which this miracle could be discounted. The six words "the lame man which was healed" are represented by three Greek words which mean "the healed cripple".

There is a time lag here because the time of prayers must have come to an end. This is indicated by the fact that the people ran together to the lame man, Peter and John. Not only did the walking, leaping and praising God and holding onto Peter and John attract people's attention but it also drew them out of the Temple and into the Court of the Gentiles, to that portion known as "Solomon's Porch". This appears to have been part of the common ground for Jew and Gentile within the precincts of the temple. Jesus also preached there. (John 10. 23.)

The act of embracing or holding onto his two benefactors, was either a gesture of gratitude to them for being the servants of God in this matter, or because he did not want them to disappear from his sight before he could be persuaded that his cure was real and permanent. That the man grasped both Peter and John signifies that John also had something to do with the miracle and that the man knew of his part. Failing this, it is difficult to see why the man should have put a hand on both of them and not only on Peter who appears to have performed the miracle. John's part may have been obvious or he may have given his consent and stood by Peter in a manner of co-operation at the time the miracle was performed. Luke does not give any details concerning John's part as it is of no importance who performed the miracle so long as it was done. He does show however that John did have a share in the work.

"all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's.."

The next verse indicates that the people ran to Peter and John and not just to the healed lame man. The story we are reading is Luke's summary of what took place and he is leaving out a lot of detail which is of interest to us but which is not essential to the teaching plan of the story. We shall understand this better when we read the next verse. We should like to know how it was that the people singled out Peter and John and not the healed man. It is possible that the man told them who had cured him but on this point Luke is silent.

Luke mentions the porch of Solomon because it must have been of some importance. It appears in Luke's narrative in Acts 5. 12. after the account of the death of Ananias and Sapphira. It appears in John 10. 23. in connection with Jesus to show that it must have been a favourite preaching place.

"greatly wondering." This is the same word as in verse 10 translated as "wonder". It is cleverly placed at the end of a sentence to show the wonder already reported (vs 10) had not yet abated but was in full force. It was now at its height and it is at this point of climax that Peter makes his speech. The way Luke achieves this dramatic turn in so few words is astonishing. The wonder is not just "wonder" but is accompanied by another word "greatly" to emphasise the high state of excitement at that moment.

It is convenient at this stage to draw attention to the similar story in regard to Paul when he also cured a lame man and the lame man leapt. See Acts 14. 8/18. We shall deal with this incident when we come to it but we mention it now as a point of interest and one which could be read with profit before we proceed with the present story.

Verse 12

"And when Peter saw (it), he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel,..."

What Peter saw was the concourse of people and their astonishment. He seized upon this opportunity to speak to the people. "He answered unto them" has no reference to Peter answering any of their questions. His answer was given to their querulous looks in their utter astonishment, as they were undoubtedly looking for an explanation of what had happened so miraculously. The word "answered" is used in a similar sense in Acts 5.8; 8. 34; and 10.46.

"Ye men of Israel" is the title by which Peter addresses the people. This was very wide in its meaning. He was speaking to the relatively few men of Israel who were gathered there at the time, but by his salutation "Ye men of Israel" his remarks were to be addressed to the whole nation. This meant Jews everywhere. Those people who were gathered together before Peter represented to Peter the entire nation of Israel who had some guilt in regard to the Messiah.

The speech which Peter was to make at that time, differed from his former sermon by the development of the gospel message and the restitution of the kingdom of God. It was to the "men of Israel" that the promises were given - "In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed". This was the message of the prophets of Israel. The same prophets had shown that the Messiah should suffer and this had been fulfilled. Even the Gentile Pilate was willing to let Jesus go but they who are the children of the prophets, had desired a murderer to be granted to them. All that was left for them was repentance and conversion to the true faith.

Note how Peter introduces the various titles of Jesus - Son (vs 13) Holy one and the Just (vs 14) Prince (Author) of Life (vs 15) Christ i.e. Messiah (vs 18 and 20) prophet (vs 22) and the seed of Abraham (vs 25).

In the speech of chapter 2, Peter explained the absence of Jesus by the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit. Now he showed that the absence of Jesus in heaven would be terminated by the restitution of all things.

Peter retained these thoughts throughout his ministry. We find much of them in the epistles. The resurrection of the Lord is found in 1 Peter 1. 7; the preaching of the prophets of Israel in 1 Peter 1. 12; the atoning power of the sacrifice of Jesus in 1. Peter 1. 19, followed by a further reference to his resurrection in verse 21. "Ye are the children of the prophets" finds its reflection in 1 Peter 2. 9. which is a reference to Deut. 7. 6 and Deut. 14. 2. The return of the Lord is found in 1 Peter 5. 4.

John and Peter must have had many discussions together about the Lord and the things concerning him. In this way, Peter would adopt some of John's favourite expressions as Peter was not educated whereas John was. We have just seen how "Solomon's Porch" appears in Acts as well as in John and now we shall see that "lame from his mother's womb" has a similar expression in John 9. 1. The "wonder" "wondering" and "marvel" of verses 10, 11 and 12 are also found in John 5. 20 and 28; and 7. 21. The "glorified" of verse 13 is also found in John 2. 11; 7. 39; 12. 41; 13. 32; The "blotted out" of verse 19 is found in Rev. 3. 5; If Peter and John had not gathered something from each other, it would be surprising. However, we cannot regard every similarity as being due to the influence of one upon the other. If we do this, then how are we to account for the 5,000 of Acts 4.4. which we also find in John 6. 10?

"why marvel ye at this?" "Why marvel ye at this (man) or this thing which has happened to him" - both would be correct. The point of their marvelling was that they were marvelling at the change which had come over the man very suddenly without seeking to find the cause. If they had given the cause any thought at all, it was surely "How did these men, Peter and John, perform this miracle?" The rest of the verse seems to indicate this.

"or why do ye look earnestly on us,.. " - why do ye FASTEN YOUR EYES..." See 1. 10. and 3. 4; where the verb has been explained. "on us" - with the sense "as if we had anything to do with it!"

"as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk".

The R.V. says "power or godliness"; The R.S.V. the Afrikaans and Moffat have "power or piety". "we had made" - lit. "we, having made..."

### Verse 13

"The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers,.."

The sentence is a quotation of the angel's words at the burning bush. (Exod. 3. 6.) Speaking as the mouthpiece of God, the angel said to Moses that His Name was Yahweh, the memorial name of God which every Jew was afraid to utter for fear of breaking the commandment of God expressed in Exod. 20. 7. and Deut. 5. 11. There was more than one lesson in this statement.

(1) Their rebellion was against the God of their Fathers, against the mighty YHWH of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Their sin was indeed serious if they had rebelled against YHWH.

(2) Peter was teaching them the rudiments of CHRISTIANITY and in doing so, showed that basically it was no different from the Faith of the Patriarchs. Therefore, in their rejection of Jesus, they had turned their backs on YHWH.

The inference was that they were too afraid of uttering the sound of the name of YHWH yet they rebelled against him in killing the Messiah.

"hath glorified his son, Jesus;.." an added inference that "you have rebelled against the God whose name you are afraid to utter yet this same God has glorified him who ye killed." Furthermore, this was His SON. The word translated here as "son" is a word which is used for both son and servant. See Matt. 8. 6, 8, 13; 14. 2; and Luke 12. 45. It is used in connection with Israel in Luke 1. 54. and of David in verse 69. Both of these were in a sense, sons of God. The title can be used for a position requiring filial devotion or in the exalted position of a son by right. The addition here of the words, "his son, Jesus" adds the powerful note "his son, through whom YHWH will save", thus inferring that because of what you have done, God will not now save you.

"whom ye have delivered up..." i.e. abandoned to his enemies. Compare this with the previous "his son, Jesus". God will save through Jesus but you did not save him. You abandoned him to his enemies. The meaning of "delivered up" is to put into the power of another whether by treachery or by force. If Jesus had been their adversary, it had been better that they agreed with their adversary while they were in the way with him, lest he deliver them to the judge and they be punished. Compare Matt. 5. 25.

"and denied him in the presence of Pilate,.. " Peter is now piling on the agony and giving them no chance to excuse themselves. They had turned against the God of Israel, the God of their fathers. Their reverence for his Name was hardly justified by their actions. They had killed the Messiah who had come to save them, yet they could not save him. But there was worse to follow.

Not content with what you have done, you delivered him over to a ROMAN OVERLORD - A GENTILE - A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE OPPRESSORS OF ISRAEL! And this is not all! This "dog" - this Roman - this Gentile - WANTED TO LET HIM GO but you refused to have him! How was it that an unbelieving Gentile had better judgment in this matter than you?

"when he was determined to let him go". The construction is "he determining to let him go." The phrase "let him go" is exactly the same as used by Luke in quoting Pilate's speech, "I will therefore chastise him, and release him". (Luke 23. 16.)

The verb "denied" refers to a rebuttal of his claims to be the Messiah promised unto Abraham and the Son of God promised unto David. (Matt. 16. 16 and verse 18.)

verse 14.

"But ye denied the Holy One and the Just..." Even a man with an unclean spirit - a demon, recognised him as the Holy One of God. (Luke 4. 34.) Even the pagan wife of Pilate recognised him to be a "just man". She recognised his "righteousness". (Matt. 27. 19.) See also the declaration of the centurion in Luke 23. 47. That he was "Holy" meant that he was separated from his mother's womb for the work which he did. This was his Father's work, thus putting him on a plane far above everything else. God had sent His Prophets. Now He had sent His greatest Prophet. He was "righteous" or "just" because of his impeccable character.

"and desired a murderer to be granted unto you." You not only refused to listen to his claims and his teaching but you desired a murderer to be granted to you. You rejected one who would bring LIFE and desired one who took life away! On the one hand, God sent a Holy One, a Just Man whom ye rejected. You desired a murderer!

The word "granted" means giving not as an act of justice, but as a favour. In other words, you rejected the great favour given you by God and asked for a favour from a Roman! Peter's choice of words is simply tremendous in its power.

The murderer of course, was Barabbas of Mark 15. 7. and Luke 23. 18/19. The name means "bar" - son of, "abba" a father; teacher or master. Some say "son of a prominent father". Some texts add the name "Jesus" to Barabbas to make Pilate ask, "Whom will ye that I release unto you? Jesus Barabbas or Jesus which is called Christ?" (Matt. 27. 17.) It is considered by some that a description of Jesus as being "Jesus the Son of the Master" would appear as Jesus Bar-abbas, thus accounting for the confusion. We mention this as something to know and from a point of view of interest but in view of the almost entire absence of proof, we must reject the suggestion that Barabbas also had the name of Jesus.

If taken from a Chaldean root, Barabbas means "Majesty, Pomp and Pride" which leads us to consider this from the aspect of latter-day Babylon. The church known as "daughter of Babylon" has rejected Jesus for what he was and what he now is, and has acquired for itself great majesty, pomp and pride. This church claims to be the only one in which salvation can be given. It does favours to men by forgiving sins (i.e. claiming to forgive them) and in doing so, grants unto men a religion of majesty, pomp and pride.

Before leaving this verse, we must remark that Psa. 2. 7. has reference to Jesus Christ. It is thought that the Pharisees used this Psa. and in particular, verse 9 in reference to what Christ will do when he comes. They warned all those who were "possessed of devils" about the tremendous destruction of the "wrath to come". This explains why the people who were "possessed with devils" always seemed to know Jesus for the man he was whereas the well educated and learned Pharisees did not know. See Matt. 8. 29; Mark 1. 24; Luke 4. 41. When John the Baptist taught, he opposed the Pharisees and Sadducees and asked them, "who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Matt. 3. 7. If they had been warning others who were afflicted by certain frailties of the flesh, of the wrath to come, then who had warned them of the same?

## Verse 15

"And killed the Prince of life,..". The preference they had shown was not only to a murderer instead of to their Messiah, but also in preference to the Prince of Life himself. The word "Prince" also appears in Acts 5. 31. but in Heb. 2. 10. it is rendered "captain" and in Heb. 12. 2. it appears as "author". All these meanings come from the same Greek word "ARCHEGOS. The word carries the meaning of "prime mover" or "first cause". Paul's words from his epistle to the Colossians are helpful here:-

- Col. 1. 16. "For by him (on his account) were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him (on his account) and for him.
17. And he is before all things, (he is preferred above all things) and by him (on his account) all things consist.
18. And he is the head of the body, the church (ecclesia): who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence."

God is the Creator of course but He created all things for Jesus, the Saviour. That this was in the Plan and Purpose of God is evident from a comparison of Gen. 1. 3. with 2 Cor. 4. 6. When God first created Light out of Darkness, there was a sign there of the Gospel which would appear in the face of Jesus Christ. There would be salvation in the Divine Plan and Purpose but such salvation would come through Jesus and in no other way. (Acts 4. 12.)

God is the ultimate Saviour but He will save through Jesus. That is the meaning of the name "Jesus" or "Jehoshua" or "Joshua" - God or YAHWEH will Save". Everlasting life will come from God but it will be given through Jesus and because of what Jesus achieved by his life, his sacrifice, his obedience, his victory over sin and his resurrection from the dead. See 2 Tim. 1. 9/10. and Heb. 2. 14.

In the O.T. Joshua was a Type of Christ when acting as a leader and a type of the body of Christ when acting as a man. Just before the battle against Jericho, an angel appeared unto him and said he had come as a captain of the Host of Yahweh. Josh. 5. 13/15. The marginal reference to "captain" is "prince". The prophetic symbol here is that Jesus will suddenly appear to the "body of Christ" and lead them into battle against the apostacy of latter-day Jericho. That the saints will be immortalised in that day is indicated by the commandment "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot" (vs 15.) In those days, shoes were worn to prevent defilement of the feet. Any defilement on the shoe had to be removed. Herein lies the reason for Jesus' instruction to his disciples, "...shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them." (Mark 6. 11.) The commandment to Joshua shows that there will be nothing that defiles when Jesus leads his saints into battle. Compare Rev. 21. 27.

"whom God hath raised from the dead,..". Here again Luke presses the important theme of the resurrection of Jesus. In the obvious application of this statement, Peter draws attention to the fact that **THEY KILLED THE AUTHOR OF LIFE** while God raised him from the dead. In other words their motive and God's were opposed the one to the other. Compare the two words of this verse - "you killed" and "God raised". To this we can add, "we witnessed" as a proof that what Peter is saying is true.

The significance of "God hath raised from the dead,..". goes much deeper than Peter wanted them to understand at this stage, although he leads them a long way to a proper understanding in the next verse. The point is that because God raised him from the dead, is God's assurance to all men that they will be raised too, provided certain conditions are observed. (Acts 17. 31.) See the marginal reference to "given assurance" which is "offered faith". Note the certainty of the resurrection mentioned by Paul in Rom. 6. 5. The development of a similar theme in 1 Cor. 15. 12/23 is worth careful study.

"whereof we are witnesses". Luke stresses his point again. See 1. 22. Peter spoke the words but in his summary of Peter's speech, Luke retained this valuable statement. Peter has had so much to say and has shown a remarkable knowledge of Scripture when saying it, that he must have impressed them. Therefore, they, having seen one miracle on this day, would not be above believing that another miracle, that of the resurrection of Jesus did occur.

## Verse 16

"And his name through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know:.."

The opening sentence here gives difficulty. "And his name through faith in his name,..". To leave a phrase like that without a verb is to add to the difficulty so we had better rearrange the words so as to make them more intelligible. "And his name...hath made this man strong.." Now we ask, "How did 'his name' make this man strong"? The answer is "by faith in his name". Who had the faith? Surely the man who was made strong. Looking at the re-arranged sentence, we find, "And his name hath made this man strong by faith in his name". The Afrikaans gives precisely that rendering - "En deur die geloof in sy Naam het sy Naam hierdie man.. sterk gemaak,..". When we have discovered the identity of the name, we have solved the difficulty. The first occurrence of the word "name" in Acts is in chapter 2 verse 21. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (This is a quotation from Joel 2. 32.) The next occurrence is in Acts 2. 38. where Peter tells the people "Be baptised everyone of you in the NAME of Jesus of Nazareth.." An important use occurs in Acts 4. 17 and 18 where the apostles are instructed not to teach in the NAME of Jesus and not to speak to men in this NAME. In Acts 9. 15 and 16, when in a vision, Ananias heard the Lord tell him that Saul as he then was, would have to bear "my NAME before the Gentiles.." and that he would have to suffer "for my NAME'S SAKE".

From Paul's subsequent history, we know that he carried the GOSPEL to all the world of his day and that he suffered for the sake of the ecclesia. The Faith, the Hope of Israel, the Promises made unto the fathers are all manifestations of the Name. The ecclesias are evidence that the NAME is spread far and wide. Every member of an ecclesia is part of that NAME. They did not become part because they sought for it and found it but because, as Jesus said, "no man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him:.." (John 6. 44.) and God "at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His NAME".

To speak in the NAME is to preach the Gospel. This was accompanied by the Lord's miracles and was the fulfilment of the prophecy by Isaiah 35. 5/6. This prophecy has a latter-day application but it also applied to the days of Jesus because Jesus quoted it to John the Baptist. See Matt. 11. 5. Once the Gospel is believed, one accepts it and through baptism, becomes a part of the Household of Faith or, as Peter called it, "the name". (vs 6.) This was the power of the Gospel as foretold by God through Isaiah as quoted above. If we can believe that miraculous cures were performed, then we can believe that Jesus rose from the dead. The Plan and Purpose of God was manifested in this man by making him strong because he had faith in that Divine Plan. 2 Tim. 1. 8/10. is of value to us in this study.

In this verse there is a suggestion that Peter referred to the parlous spiritual condition of his hearers. The lame man had been cured of his infirmities through the power of the "name" and, having shown how weak that had been in killing the Prince of Life, Peter now indirectly pointed to the fact that a spiritual cure of their infirmity could be effected by the same "name".

"whom ye see and know:.." You have seen for yourself that the man has been cured. You cannot deny this evidence. Furthermore, you have all known this man for a very long time. There has been no substitution in his case. You know him too well for that. Whatever way you look at it, you cannot deny his cure.

"the faith which is by him.." A better translation would be "the faith which is through him" The R.V. has this and the R. S.V. gives "the faith which is through Jesus.." The Afrikaans Version gives a capital letter to "Hom" thus indicating Jesus. ("die geloof wat deur Hom is...") This refers to the Faith as it is in Jesus. (1 Cor. 1. 23/24.)



"hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all."

The "perfect soundness" comes from one Greek word meaning "completeness" and entirety". The adjective is found in Jas. 1. 4. translated as "entire". His cure was complete. The completeness of his cure was shown by his ability to walk and leap. All this had been done in their presence.

#### Verse 17

"and now, brethren,.." Note the clever oratory used by Peter. Although we cannot hear the change of tone in Peter's voice, we can well imagine at as he changes from his forthright condemnation of their killing the Prince of Life, to a warm and friendly, "And now, brethren,.." They must by now have been in a very agitated frame of mind. Peter's friendly tone would be noticeable and would compel their attention as he turned to his climax.

"I wot,.." At the time the A.V. was published, this meant "I know" and was in common use. It is retained by the R.V. but in the R.S.V. it is "I know". The Afrikaans is up to date with "ek weet". See English "wist" and "to wit".

"that through ignorance ye did it,.." At a later date, Paul was to speak to the Athenians at Mars Hill in Athens, and tell them (the Gentiles) that God winked at their former ignorance. Again referring to the ignorance of the Gentiles, Paul wrote to the believers at Ephesus saying that the Gentiles had "the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts." (Ephes. 4. 8.) Peter wrote his first epistle to the "strangers which were scattered abroad" and exhorted them to gird up the loins of the mind "as obedient children not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance". (1 Pet. 1. 14.) In these references, ignorance is something of the past which must not be allowed to appear now. The people had been ignorant of the fact that Jesus whom they slew was the Christ. They were also ignorant of the fact that the man whom they slew had prayed to God asking Him to forgive them because they did it in ignorance. (Luke 23. 34.) This is important to our study because God will forgive in terms of His prophecy through Jeremiah. (Jer. 31. 31/34. quoted in Heb. 8. 8/12.) The days will come when the Jews will realise what their fathers did and they will mourn. (Zech. 12. 10/14.) Many years later, Paul was to write to Timothy saying that he had persecuted Jesus in the ignorance of unbelief and that God had been merciful to him. (1 Tim. 1. 13.)

"as did also your rulers." The rulers were the high priest and the Sanhedrin. The statement is a comparison and not a contrast. The introduction of the rulers is clever because it points to the fact that the rulers were also ignorant. The point is made without actively and openly condemning them. To whom then, would the hearers turn? To the rulers who were ignorant or to the apostles who could quote the Scriptures and perform miracles by the Power of God? For the moment, who were of greater importance to the people? Who could show them the way back into Divine favour? Peter develops this theme in the next two verses.

#### Verse 18

But those things, which before God had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled."

Having adopted a more friendly line in verse 17, Peter still retains it by showing that they had acted in ignorance of the Word of God. This word had required Jesus to suffer and, in his suffering, such prophecies were fulfilled. For the moment, this statement would bring some relief to their troubled minds.

"had shewed" appears in the R.V. as "foreshewed" This word is used only twice in the N.T. - here and in Acts 7. 52. where it appears as "shewed". It means "to announce beforehand". Peter is careful in his choice of words for he has just offered some consolation by indicating that their ignorance would be taken into account. Nevertheless ignorance does not render them blameless. They should have known because it was foretold in the Scriptures. The facts were widely publicised by "the mouth of ALL his holy prophets" so if they had given more attention to the Scriptures and less attention to what their priests and rulers had to say, they would have known.

"All his prophets" covers a wide field. There are many prophets whose words do not appear in the Bible. Furthermore, the prophets of the Bible did not have all their work published.

"he hath so fulfilled". What had happened to Jesus was in fulfilment of God's Plan. Every word of what had been foretold had come to pass. If God's Word would never fail, then the words which Peter had to say concerning the Divine Plan would also be fulfilled in God's own time. Peter may have had his own rebellion in mind (Matt. 16. 22.) in mind as he spoke these words.

Verse 19

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted,..". This is a repetition of the challenge of Acts 2. 38. given on the day of Pentecost. The word "therefore" has reference to what has gone before. Because of this teaching you are under an obligation to do something; ignorance is no longer an excuse. "Therefore" connects what they did in the past with what they should do now.

"Be converted" means "turn again". The R.V. and R.S.V. have this. Jesus used it to Peter in Luke 22. 32. Peter uses it in 1 Pet. 2. 25. where it is translated "returned". In both instances it refers to turning away from sin and returning to God. Other references are Acts 9. 35; 11.21; 14. 15; 15. 19; 26. 18, 20; 28. 27. This final reference quotes from Isa. 6. 9/10.

"that your sins may be blotted out,..". This refers to erasure so that nothing remains which can be read. Here ~~is~~ a promise of the complete forgiveness of sins which Peter's hearers needed above all other things. The Blotting out is connected with the turning again. Forgiveness and turning again unto the LORD are combined in the book of Ezekiel:-

- Ezek. 33. 14. "Again when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right;  
 15. If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.  
 16. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live."

Referring to His people, the Jews, God said through His prophet Isaiah, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." (Isa. 43. 25.) Jacob and Israel have been "given to the curse" (vs 28) because they had not called upon the LORD who was always prepared to blot out their sins if they turned to him. Turning and forgiveness go together in all God's dealings with men. They must turn again to Him.

Note the tense in the condition which is stated. "MAY BE blotted out" refers to the future. Subsequent to "repentance" the blotting out of sins will come at a time which is stated to be:-

"when the times of refreshing shall come..." The "times" here is the same as that mentioned in 1. 7. and refers to set and appointed times which lie in the future. The "times" are described as being related to "refreshing". The Greek word translated as "refreshing" is ANAPSUXIS and is related to ANAPSUCHO which appears in 2 Tim. 1. 16. The prefix "ana" means "back" like the prefix "re" in English "RE-freshed" and "psucho" means "cool". In the sense in which Paul used it to Timothy, the meaning is that Onesiphorus caused Paul to RELAX after his hard labours. He put an end to Paul's labours for a while. The word ANAPSUXIS also has the prefix "ana" meaning "again" or "back" (a return to) and Psuxis, meaning "drawing breath" or "breathing" in the sense of recovering from toil. Combining the meanings given, we find that refreshment gives the sense of "breathing again" after toil is over.

Returning to the conditions under which one's sins may be blotted out, we find that it will be at a time when we are breathing again when our labours have come to an end. The only Septuagint use of the word renders it "respite" in Exod. 8. 15. If we apply this meaning, we interpret Peter's words as referring

to the time which will come when we are given respite from the trials of this life. In either case, it refers to the time of RESURRECTION which lies in the future. If this interpretation is correct, then Peter's next words must have some reference to it. When would the "refreshing" or "rebreathing" or "breathing again" come? Peter's next words are:-

"from the presence of the Lord". The Lord must return for the breathing again to be possible. Only MORTAL people breathe so we see that the time referred to here is when we shall stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ as mortal people. The point to note, however, is that the resurrection will come only when the Lord appears. This is consistent with the teaching of the apostles. The time of the Lord's return is the time when sins are to be blotted out. For this to happen, his presence is necessary. The "presence" is God in Christ. This means the manifestation of God by Christ when he comes.

The "presence of the Lord" also suggests that the authority will be of Divine origin. The "Divine presence" also indicates that such a presence will require a ROYAL COURT. This means that when the presence of the Lord comes, a kingdom will come with it. The coming of a kingdom and rulership will require messengers to do the Lord's bidding. To Christianity as we know it to-day, such thoughts do not make sense because of the belief in salvation being given in heaven. But to the Jews who heard Peter's speech, it would tell them of the coming of the Messianic Kingdom for which they had longed all through their lives. As the Israelites had groaned under the yoke of Pharaoh, so the Jews of these days of Peter were groaning under the yoke of Rome. Through their rejection of their Messiah, they were to groan much more in the centuries to follow.

The Jews must have longed for another Exodus to get away from the rulers to whom they were subject and to whom they were in bondage in the Promised Land. There could be no exodus from the land in which they lived. What then, were they to do? There was only one exodus they could make and that was from the world in which they lived. Such an exodus could be made only by a spiritual separation from the world. This required a separation brought about by belief and utmost faith in the things which God had promised and which would be revealed in the last times. If one has sufficient faith in these things, then one can rejoice in the privileged state of being in the Covenants of Promise. This seems to have been in Peter's mind throughout his career. See the lesson in 1 Pet. 1. 3/9.

#### Verse 20

"And he shall send Jesus Christ,.." "He" of course, is God whose "presence" will be manifested in Christ and the Saints. The sending of Jesus Christ will take place at the time of the refreshing. This was the great Hope of Israel to which the devout of the house of Israel had looked forward for so many centuries. But the "sending" is to those who have repented and been converted in terms of verse 19. This means that if we are to be partakers of the glories to come, we must believe in these things and signify our belief by our baptism. We then permit that faith to bring about a change in our behaviour. Peter was not asking them to believe anything different from that which Israel had believed for centuries. They looked for the Messiah to come and he would come at the time of refreshing. This coming had been preached to Israel in the past and was being preached now.

"...which before was preached unto you." Peter stresses the fact that this was preached to them before. If they had had confidence in these things before, then they could continue with the same confidence. The error of Passover Eve could be reversed now by their acceptance of Jesus as their Messiah. Luke writes for all believers and not for Jews only. His constantly recurring theme is the growing rejection of Jesus by the Jews and the growing acceptance of him by the Gentiles. (Note: "preached" means "proclaimed".)

#### Verse 21

"whom the heavens must receive..." There is no "the" in the original and, in this case, it is supplied by the translators. In Scripture the word "the" is used to apply to the plural "heavens". The exaltation of Jesus was mentioned in Acts 2. 33. and followed by a comparison with David,

who "is not ascended into THE heavens". (verse 34) Whether Peter actually used "the" to describe the heaven to which Jesus went is of no importance. We know that Jesus is now in heaven in a position of highest honour, at God's right hand.

In regard to "must receive", Bullinger's Concordance defines the meaning as "It implies a subjective reception, showing that a decision of the will has taken place with respect to the object presented, and that the acceptance manifests it". Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament words says, "to receive by deliberate and ready reception of what is offered". In short, it means that Jesus is in heaven because of offering of the body of Jesus Christ was acceptable to God.

"until the times of restitution of all things..." The outcome of the Exodus from Egypt was the occupation of the Holy Land and, eventually, the glorious reign of Solomon when, in a way, Zion was the joy of the whole earth. This was the kingdom which the disciples wanted to see restored by Jesus. (Acts 1. 6.) But this is not the "restitution" referred to here. The word means a complete re-establishment of that which has gone before. It does not solely mean a restoration of a former glorious kingdom because as Peter said, it is a restitution of ALL THINGS. This would envisage a restoration of that perfect state of mankind before the fall in the garden of Eden. The important point to note is that this "restitution will come about during the same period of history as the coming of Jesus. Both will not take place on the same day but both will happen during the same period of history.

"which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."

The expression "God hath spoken" shows that God did the speaking in all prophetic writing. Here is an acknowledgement that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God.

"by the mouth of" - this is a common Biblical phrase which shows the nature of the agency used by God. Other expressions are "by the hand" or "by the out-stretched arm", these being used where some action is involved other than speaking.

"holy prophets" they were holy in the sense that they had been specially called by God to do His work. It did not refer to their character. In Psa. 106. 16, Aaron is described as "the saint (holy one) of the LORD". He was called this despite his weakness of character. The "holiness" of the prophets in this sense is shown by their use of the expression, "Thus saith the LORD" or "The word of the LORD came unto me saying,..."

"since the world began" was used by Luke in quoting the speech of Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist. (Luke 1. 70.) The expression in Greek is also found in Acts 15. 18. The Greek comes from "aeion" meaning an age. The particular age referred to is understood from the context. In the verse we are studying, the "age" could be the age in which Enoch lived. The prophets, whoever they may have been, must have foretold the coming of the Lord as Enoch did. (Jude vs 14.) We feel, however, Peter referred to the Mosaic age because Moses at that time was held in high esteem.

Verse 22

"For Moses truly said unto the fathers,..." The Jewish writings had exalted Moses to a position which God never intended him to have. He was held in such high esteem that to compare anyone else with him would be blasphemy in their ears. In the previous verse, mention having been made to an age which we submit was the Mosaic age, the name of Moses must have occurred to Peter's listeners. This being the case, Peter now brings Moses into the speech directly by referring to him by name. If these things were taught in his day, then surely they were worthy of attention now. Jesus also used the trust in Moses to good effect during his preaching. (John 5. 45/47.

"A prophet shall the LORD your God raise up unto you of your brethren..."

The quotation is from Deuteronomy 18. 15 and 18. At the outset we note that Deut. states "like unto thee" (singular) whereas Peter says "unto you" (plural) This does not destroy the sense because the promise was to Israel as a collective person - a body of people. Stephen in Acts 7. 37. also uses the

pronoun "you". The Messianic application is justified because it was not fulfilled in any intervening period from Moses to Jesus. Moses had failed to bring his people into the Holy Land. Jesus had not brought his people to the Kingdom because it was not the time for such to be established. If any person had arisen in Israel during the intervening period between Moses and Jesus, then the Jews would not have asked John the Baptist, "Art thou that prophet?" (John 1. 21.) Also those who witnessed the feeding of the 5000 would not have said, "This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world. (John 6. 14.) Jesus was like unto Moses in many ways and in some of these, he started at a time of great apostasy as Moses did. He was a great law-giver as Moses was. He gave his laws from the Mount in the famous sermon and Moses brought the Law from Sinai.

"of your brethren" The Arabs often quote these words to show that Muhamed was the prophet God spoke about. They maintain that it was through the relationship of Ishmael that the expression "of your brethren" was given. But the words were spoken to Israel and it was Israel's brethren who were intended. Ishmael was the half brother of Isaac.

"him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you."

Peter develops his theme. Having shown the people that they had slain the Son of God and that they had preferred a murderer to be granted to them, he leads them to their great hope, the Prophet like unto Moses who was going to deliver them from their oppressors. Moses was the great prophet of Israel and a great prophet like unto him had been promised to Israel. Moses said this in his writings. If they held Moses in such high esteem, they would believe what he had said. Now Peter puts them to the test. Would they believe all that Moses had spoken? Of course they would. Would they also believe all that the prophet like unto him had spoken? How then could they hold Moses in such high esteem and disregard the prophet like unto him?

Verse 23

"And it shall come to pass that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people."

This quotation from Deut. 18. 19. is not quite what Deuteronomy said. Peter altered the warning "I will require it of him" to "shall be destroyed from among the people". In making this alteration, Peter takes from Gen. 17. 14. the words "shall be cut off from among the people". Lev. 7. 20. and Num. 9. 13. use the same expression. A close examination of these references will reveal that Gen. 17. 14. warns against not being circumcised. God had commanded circumcision and anyone not circumcised would be cut off from the people. Exod. 31. 14. is important for study in this connection, because it stated that anyone breaking the sabbath law would be cut off from among the people. Lev. 7. 20. and Num. 9. 13. teach that anyone ceremonially unclean would be cut off from among the people. In all cases, disobedience to the Word of God would cause a person to be cut off from among the people.

Having regard to verse 22 where God said, "Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you", we see that Jesus spoke God's words just as Moses spoke God's words. If there was a severe penalty for disobeying the Law of Moses, so there would be a penalty for disobeying the Laws of Christ. The people had disobeyed God through their ignorance but now that this ignorance had been removed, there was no longer any excuse for them. In the development of his argument, Peter leaves no loophole whatsoever for an escape from their duty towards God.

Verse 24

"Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after,.."

Having dealt with the greatest of the Old Testament prophets, namely Moses, Peter now turns to the prophets from the days of Samuel onwards. From Moses to Samuel there was a period of judges during which time the first of the Prophets after Moses is mentioned. (Judg. 6. 8.) When Samuel was a child there was no prophet in Israel. (1 Sam. 3. 1.) When Samuel grew, it was known all over Israel from Dan to Beer Sheba that Samuel was to be a prophet of the LORD. (1 Sam. 3. 20.) In 1 Sam. 10. 2/9. we find Samuel making a prophetic utterance to Saul. It is evident that Samuel was the founder of the school of the prophets.

(1 Sam. 19. 20.) "Those that follow after" covers all the prophets whether or not their work appears in the Canon of Scripture. This includes David.

"as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days."

Here Peter states what he was to write in his 1st. Epistle many years later. The prophets of Israel uttered their message but did not altogether understand what they were writing. They "testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow." (1 Peter 1. 11.)

Moses was the great prophet of old but Samuel is mentioned with him in Psa. 99. 6. Those who heard Peter could not miss the point that if Moses and all the prophets from Samuel onwards had prophesied of the same thing, then there was no change to what Moses had taught and what the faithful men of his era had believed. In the doctrine of Christianity as now taught by Peter there was no room for the argument that "those were the days of the Old Testament but all things are changed from Jesus onwards". Peter has shown conclusively that what he and others were now teaching was the fulfilment of the prophecies of Israel's prophets. If they did not believe these things then they were separating themselves from the Faith that Moses taught.

In later years, the writer to the Hebrews gave a masterly summary of the position of Moses as compared with that of Christ. (Heb. 3. 1/6.) The writer then points out that many died because they hearkened not unto the voice of Moses. The lesson was that the Hebrews should not make the same mistake with the words of Jesus. In the 4th. chapter of Hebrews, Paul points out that the gospel was preached to the children of Israel in the wilderness. (vs 2.)

Verse 25

"Ye are the children of the prophets..." The R.V., R.S.V. and Moffat's Translation have "sons of the prophets".

The word "sons" comes from the Greek which means someone of either sex in relation to descent. By stating that they were "sons of the prophets", Peter showed them that they were of the same race as the prophets. This would be a necessary introduction to their unique state as they and all Jews knew that they were God's Chosen People in terms of Deut. 7. 6. and 14. 2. Peter was well aware of this attitude so in his letters, he told those to whom he wrote that the position of being a peculiar people now belonged to them. 1 Pet. 2. 9/10. In this opening statement therefore, Peter refers to their unique and enviable state in the eyes of God but with the obvious inference that through their attitude to the Saviour, that birth-right would be taken away from them.

"and of the covenant which God made with our fathers,.." They are also sons of the covenant with Abraham. This brings an even closer relationship because being sons, they are heirs of the promise made unto Abraham.

"saying unto Abraham, 'And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed."

The quotation of what was said to Abraham comes from several sections of Genesis. In Gen. 12. 3. we find the promise of the land. Gen. 18. 18. was given when Abraham and Sarai were promised a son. Gen. 22. 18. was the most important of the Promises because it was given to Abraham after he had shown that he was prepared to sacrifice his son. In each case it promises a blessing and in Gen. 22. 18. the blessing was to come because of obedience. There would be no point in Peter reminding the Jews then present of the Promises made unto Abraham as they knew of these well enough. It was the substance of the Hope of Israel. But the promise of a blessing in the singular seed which was promised unto Abraham "because thou hast obeyed my voice" carried a lesson the people could well receive at that time. They had not hearkened to the voice of the "seed of Abraham" and were in danger of not receiving the Blessing.

## Verse 26

"Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus,..". The promise was that all kindreds of the earth shall be blessed in the seed who was to come. Although this incorporated the Gentile believers, it meant that the Jew would receive his chance first. After him would come the Gentile. This was made clear by Paul many years later when writing to the Romans. (Rom. 1. 16; 2. 9/10.)

"having raised up his Son Jesus,..". The R.V. states "having raised up his servant" Jesus was both a Son to God and a servant through doing the will of his Father. The "raising up" was not the resurrection of Jesus but the raising up of a prophet like unto Moses. (We note the doctrinal point that if Jesus had to be raised up, then he was not "brought down" so he did not pre-exist in heaven before he was "raised up". The resurrection from the dead cannot apply here because Jesus was not sent to the Jews after he had been raised. He was sent to them after he had been raised up as the son of a virgin.)

Once he was sent, Jesus turned them away from their iniquities through his teaching. That they did not listen to him did not destroy the value of his redemptive work. He was still a BLESSING to everyone who would turn to him in belief and baptism. Thus we find Peter saying "turning away EVERYONE of you,..". That Jesus was able to do this now was due to his being a Mediator between God and man. The blessing of Jesus was shown very clearly by Paul in the years to come when he wrote:-

- Rom. 2. 8. "But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath" (will be rendered to them).
9. Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jews first, and also of the Gentile;
  10. But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:
  11. For there is no respect of persons with God."

The Law could not bring forgiveness of sins. This could come only through Jesus. If they remained within the provisions of the Law they were doomed. If they returned to Jesus, they would find him ready to forgive and ready to save. As Peter stated clearly, "in turning away every one of you from his iniquities". The word "iniquities" carries a sense of active "wickedness" such as we read of in Matt. 22. 18; Mark 7. 22; Luke 11. 39; Rom. 1. 29; 1 Cor. 5. 8; Ephes. 6. 12; As long as they resisted the truth, they were resisting God's Word revealed in His Son, Jesus.

Peter's words remind us of the words of Moses when he made his appeal to the people.

- Deut. 30. 19. "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:"

At this stage, Peter was suddenly interrupted and a big chain of events was to ensue.





## THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

### Chapter 4.

The previous chapter was written by Luke to introduce the attack made upon the first ecclesia by the priests, the ruler of the temple and the Sadducees. These men were an advance party which led the next day, to bringing Peter and John before the Sanhedrin. Although Peter and John were to come out of the encounter unscathed, this was the beginning of a great trouble which was yet to come. With excellent narrative skill, Luke traces the history of those days showing how the ecclesia was strengthened at that time for the hard trials which lay ahead, and records for our interest and learning, the several events which combined one with the other to produce a wave of persecution which was to have such tremendous results in spreading the Word of God. The events themselves may cloud the inner story for us but if we pay close attention to the teaching plan of the Acts, we shall follow with excitement, the stirring story as it unfolds.

#### Verse 1

"And as they spake to the people..." The Greek is "While they were speaking" which tells us that Peter had not said all he wanted to say when they were suddenly interrupted.

"...to the people..." The crowd which had gathered in Solomon's porch was such that the temple authorities who were near by were bound to have seen it. Apart from the freedom of speech concerning spiritual matters which was of such a character as to disturb the complacency of the temple authorities, there was also the danger of upsetting the Romans. Any concourse of this nature would be considered to be subversive and anti-Roman and would bring a severe rebuke and drastic preventive measures from the Roman garrison. See Peter's remarks in 3.17.

"the priests"... From 1 Chron. 24. 1/19. we learn that the priesthood was divided into 24 divisions, the divisions being known as "courses". (2 Chron. 23.8.) Each of the courses performed special duties for the week. This arrangement was in operation at the time of the birth of Jesus for we read about it in Luke 1. verses 5, 8 and 9. In verse 5 we read that Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was of the course of Abia. This course is found in 1 Chron. 24. 10. The priests were bound ex officio, to prevent or stop all disturbances in the precincts of the temple.

"and the captain of the temple..." Old Testament references to this office are found in 1 Chron. 9. 11. where the priest is called "the ruler of the house of God". 2 Chron, 31.13 mentions the same individual by the same title. In Neh. 11. 11. Azariah is mentioned by his other name, "Serajah" and, except for this difference and the added "was" in italics, the verse is identical to 1 Chron. 9. 11. The genealogy shows that he was a Levite.

New Testament references are Luke 22. 4 and 52 where the plural "captains" is used. In Acts 5. 24 and 26, the singular "captain" is mentioned. In Jer. 20. 1. Pashur the priest is mentioned who is also described as "chief" governor in the house of the LORD.

Returning to the verse before us, the title "captain of the temple" means the person who was the captain of the temple guard. He would have to be a Levite to be able to hold such office and would be in charge of a small body of men who would be the police of the temple. With a great crowd entering the temple at times, it would be necessary for a body of such men to be there to see that rules were obeyed and that no unauthorised person entered any part of the temple which was barred to him. This would be the case with Gentiles where the laws against entry were strictly enforced. Furthermore, the temple contained treasures which had to be guarded, especially at night.

The word translated as "captain" is a military title and is used in the New Testament references given above and in no other place in Scripture.

This does not make the office a military one for there was only one army in Judea at that time and that was the Roman army. The Jews would not have allowed a Gentile soldier to have charge of their temple. The captain was the person in charge and he was assisted by other men called "officers" on John 18. 3. and 12. and Acts 5. 22. but these did not hold the high office that such a title has in military circles to-day. Such officers were servants who were there to do the bidding of the captain. The captain would probably have been a high priest at one time, and must have belonged to one of the priestly families. In Hebrew he was called "ish har ha-bayith" meaning "the man of the mountain of the house". The guard which he controlled was probably indicated by Pilate when he spoke to the chief priests and Pharisees after the crucifixion of Jesus. See Matt. 27. 65.

"and the Sadducees,..." See introductory remarks. It is interesting to note that the Pharisees do not figure in this protest against the apostles. Only the Sadducees and priests are mentioned here. It is thought that different motives brought the three types to the scene, namely, the priests came to stop the assumption of the priests office of teaching by unauthorised persons, the captain came to put an end to the apparant disturbance and the Sadducees came to interfere with the doctrine of the resurrection which the apostles were now preaching and with which they disagreed. This view appears to be based upon the next verse.

"came upon them." The idea presented here is that the three types came upon them with violence to arrest them. A similar use is given in Acts 6. 12. and 23. 27.

#### Verse 2

"Being grieved that they taught the people..." The usage here and in Acts 16. 10. are the only two in the N.T. The meaning is "deeply pained" and the feeling must have been induced by exasperation through frequent repetition. An element of pride enters here because the priests, the captain and the Sadducees were "masters of Israel" (John 3. 10.) and the thought that their position was being usurped must have been very painful to them. Apart from this, the fact that the Resurrection was being taught must have angered the Sadducees as it was to do on later occasions in history.

"and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead". The Greek original goes further than merely "preaching". They did much more than this. They "proclaimed" which carries an idea of strongly putting forward the TRUTH. That this proclamation was done "through Jesus" indicates that they taught a general resurrection but in the speech of Peter, the general resurrection in "the times of refreshing" was subsidiary to the main teaching that the Saviour who had been slain, had been raised from the dead in terms of the prophecies. This would upset the priests and Sadducees because of the careful steps which had been taken to erase all evidence of the resurrection of Jesus. (Matt. 28. 11/5.) The Sanhedrin was confident that that unpleasant chapter in their history was permanently closed and would never be looked at again. It must have been very upsetting to find that not only was their work of erasure being uncovered but the resurrection was being preached to people who seemed disposed to believe it. The doctrine was more attractive in that the resurrection of Jesus was being held out as a pattern of what would happen to all those who believed in him.

In Luke's style, a Greek construction is used which limits the use of the word "resurrection". In Greek literature, the Greek word is used for rising in the presence of a superior: for rising from sleep or for raising a wall which has fallen down. Luke's phraseology employs a double article which is not shown in the translation but which adds to the sentence a meaning of "they taught the doctrine of a rising, not from sleep, not to show respect, but from the dead". The words "from the dead" means "from among the dead, or from the state which the dead were in". The point of "resurrection is being emphasised here to show why it is that whereas the Pharisees had actively opposed Jesus during his ministry, they are notably absent on this occasion.

The Sadducees who were not as much in opposition to Jesus now seem to be most active against the preaching of his apostles. The Sadducees did not mind how much the teaching of the Master confounded their enemies, the Pharisees, but once the doctrine of his resurrection crossed their belief that there was no resurrection, the situation before them took on a different character.

The doctrine of the Resurrection of Jesus is an important one to Luke as we have seen. It is an important doctrine in the teaching of the Gospel and all servants of the Lord who teach His word should be acquainted with the debating points of this doctrine. Note how Luke loses no opportunity to drive home the importance of a belief in the Resurrection of Jesus.

#### Verse 3

"And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide."

Nothing much could be done at that late hour of the day. Chapter 3 verse 1 tells us that the incident started about the ninth hour, which we saw, was about 3 o'clock in the afternoon. The incident of the healing would not take long but the speech which Peter gave after the people had assembled, must have taken much longer than Luke's precis takes to read. By the time the priests, the captain and the Sadducees could get together and go to Peter and John, it would be close to sundown so they did the best they could by putting Peter and John "in hold".

The Sanhedrin had power of arrest and a record of this power being put into effect is given in Mark 14. 43. when Jesus was arrested. The offence which gave rise to the arrest however, must be something which offended Jewish law. With one exception, they could not put anyone to death without the procurator's ratification. The extent to which Rome was prepared to go in deference to Jewish religious law is shown by the fact that the Temple authorities could put to death any Roman citizen who trespassed within the temple limits. Notices in Greek, and Latin were placed at all entrances to the Inner Court warning Gentiles of the death penalty for violation of the sanctity of the place. The killing of Stephen and James was illegal in terms of Roman Law.

"in hold" simply means a place of detention where they would be kept safely. See Acts 5. 18.

"until the next day: for it was now eventide." This explanation shows that Luke is writing for Gentile believers as well as Jewish ones for the Gentiles would not know the Jewish Law involved here whereas the Jews would. It was against Jewish law to hold trials at night after the sun had set. This makes the trial of Jesus a mockery for it was ultra vires the law and the verdict should have been disallowed by any lawyers present. "it was now eventide" shows that it was after the twelfth hour, which is to say that it was after 6 p.m. and it was now the "second evening". See Exod. 12. 6. margin. See also Jer. 21. 12. showing that judgment had to be given in the morning. The evening was a time at the going down of the sun until 6 p.m. thereafter it was the second evening during which nothing should be done. Here we find in the O.T. translations giving "in the evening" or "at even", it should be "between the two evenings". See Exod. 12. 6; 16. 12; 29. 39, 41; 30. 8; Lev. 23. 5; Num. 9. 3; 28. 4. (See margin to some of these references.)

#### Verse 4

"howbeit many of them which heard the word believed;..". The inference of Peter and John was that the crowd would have been dispersed. Luke now shows concern for them and tells us what the history of persecution has shown to be the case, that acts of violence to teachers does not undo their work. The healing of the lame man and the convincing arguments brought to bear by Peter and John had their effect upon the people who were gathered there. Not all believed for there are always those who are slow to understand just as there are those who will not believe. But many believed. Paul had something to

say about the effect of arrest and persecution when writing to Timothy. He said,

2 Tim. 2. 9. "Herein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound."

Luke also had the same thought but the translators of this verse did not quite bring out his meaning with their introductory "Howbeit..." The word should be "Notwithstanding..." as if to say, in spite of what was done as recorded in verse 3, and in spite of the arrest of the speakers and the dispersal of the people, many of the people believed."

"the word"... Here again we have the Greek LOGOS which appears in John 1. 1. and refers to the Plan and Purpose of God as shown by the gospel and as manifested in Jesus Christ. Some other occurrences of this "word" are Acts 4. 29. 31; 6. 2, 4. 7; 8. 4, 14, 25; 19. 36, 44; (not 10.37 where the Greek word "rhema" is used meaning "topic".)

It should be noted that the belief which followed the teaching of Peter is an essential step in the conversion of a Believer. Hearing the Word of God and Believing the Word of God are essential to the proper acceptance of the responsibilities attaching to baptism. All such passages should be noted carefully to be used in lectures, in debate or in teaching.

"and the number of the men was about five thousand." It is only the MEN who are numbered, this being accepted in Hebrew that only the men were counted. See Matt. 14. 21. John 6. 10. See also Matt. 15. 38. Some commentators argue that the omission of the qualifying "besides women and children" indicates that only men were converted at first but with this we disagree. When one comes to an understanding of the Truth, one loses no time in bringing the knowledge of it to others of the family. This would surely introduce the faith to females as well. In view of Acts 2. 42/47. it is unreasonable to suppose that males only, accepted the teaching of Christianity. Nevertheless, the Greek from which men is translated has a meaning of "of the man" as distinct from "human beings". The conclusion is that of the men, there were five thousand believers at that time and the number of women believers is not stated.

It must not be thought that there were five thousand men present on that occasion in the Porch. It means that the number "came to be about" 5,000. That is to say, the former number of three thousand (Acts 2. 41.) did not have 5,000 added to them but that they were increased to 5,000. This was the same as the number who were fed in the wilderness. The numbering mentioned here is the last time the people were numbered.

Verse 5

"And it came to pass on the morrow,..." The time would be "next morning". "Came to pass" is history as "shall come to pass" is prophecy. Verse 4 was an interpolation so the incomplete sentence which makes up this verse, is a continuation from verse 3. "On the morrow" refers to "towards the morning". Some would have it "the next day" but the reference is to the hour more than to the day. Therefore "next morning" would cover all we need to know.

"that their rulers, and elders, and scribes,..." The Sanhedrin is referred to here. The same is found in Mark 14. 53; 15. 1; Luke 9. 22; and 22. 66.

The "rulers" would be those of the Sanhedrin who were elected or appointed in some way to the control of the Council. In modern parlance, they would be the Committee comprising the elected from the Sadducees, Priests, Scribes and Pharisees.

Verse 6

"And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem!"

No doubt Luke felt that the family of the priesthood, led by the deposed Annas, was important enough to have special mention. Annas had been appointed High Priest by the legate Quirinius and had held office until he was deposed by the procurator Valerius Gratus in A.D. 15. He had five sons and a son in law, all of whom at one time or another, held office as high priest. The Romans exercised the power of appointing or deposing the High Priest so Annas was careful to choose the right kind of friends so that his "dynasty" as it were, would be preserved. The Jews however, regarded the law as being the sole authority for appointing the High Priest and once this official took office, he held it until he died. His son succeeded him as High Priest. This being the case, whatever the Romans did about appointments and dismissals, the Jews ignored them and looked upon the duly appointed High Priest as the High Priest until he died. The Romans did not interfere with the rule that only a genuine descendant of Aaron could hold office as High Priest but their interference in regard to deposing a High Priest and appointing another may have been designed to break down the priesthood. The Jews found it difficult to acknowledge one man as High Priest when his father was still alive and had held the office before him. There could not be two High Priests in office or in existence at the same time.

Luke mentions Annas first because he had been High Priest before Caiaphas. In his Gospel, Luke mentions both Annas and his son in law, Caiaphas, as both being High Priests. (Luke 3. 2.) John states that Jesus, at his trial, was led away to Annas first. (John 18. 13.) John also records in the same chapter, that Annas had sent Jesus bound to Caiaphas. (verse 24.) Apart from these references and the verse from Acts which we are dealing with, Annas is not mentioned again in the N.T. Caiaphas appears in Matt. 26. 3; and verse 57; Luke 3. 2; John 11. 49; 18. 13, 14, 24, 28; and Acts 4. 6. For the crucifixion of Jesus, Caiaphas had the greater responsibility. From this explanation we can see how it was possible that both Annas and Caiaphas could have been High Priests at one and the same time.

"John" is difficult to identify. After the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the Sanhedrin formed a new branch or body in Jabneh in western Palestine and a man named Yochanan ben Zakkai was its first president. It is thought by some that the name "Yochanan" could be shortened to "John" and that this was the "John" mentioned in the verse before us. There seems to be no end to the ingenuity of commentators. Yochanan is said to be "ben Zakkai" which means "son of Zakkai". There was no son of Annas named Zakkai and it is unlikely that a scholar such as Yochanan was, would come from the priestly family. There was a son of Annas named Jonathan who succeeded Caiaphas as High Priest in A.D. 33. and if we allow the possibility that Jonathan as a name could be contracted to John, then we must admit the slender possibility that this could have been the man we are looking for. All we can be sure of is that John was a member of the priestly family and he must have held some important position because Luke mentions him above other people who were there.

"Alexander" has brought forth the ingenious suggestion that "Alexander" is a Grecianised form of the name "Eleazar" son of Annas and must have been a member of the priestly family. We shall see in a moment that this is very unlikely. The name "Alexander" was often given to males in honour of Alexander of Macedonia because of his kindness to the people of Israel. This may have been true of many people amongst the Greeks. Simon the Cyrenian who carried the cross of Jesus was the father of Alexander and Rufus. (Mark 15. 21.) We meet a Jew named Alexander in Ephesus (Acts 19. 33) but this is unlikely to have been Alexander from Jerusalem. In 1 Tim. 1. 20 we read of Alexander who was fellow apostate with Hymeneus and in 2 Tim. 4. 14. we read of the man Paul did not like, namely, Alexander the coppersmith. None of these are the man we are looking for so we must admit that we know nothing of him. Inasmuch as he is mentioned here, he must have some importance to Luke. We suggest that Annas is mentioned because he was the proper and lawful High Priest. Then we have Caiaphas who was the acting High Priest. After that we have John who very likely was of the priestly order, and next in line for the High Priest's office. Having given us such an array of names, Luke might have noticed that he omitted to mention the prominent Sadducees so chose one of them who had followed Sadducee ways by giving himself a Roman name - Alexander! There is only one thing to support this theory and that is

that it is as ingenious as any of the suggestions made by commentators. We mention it for interest only and take a warning that if we do not know, it is better to admit it than attempt to tell Luke what he should have written.

"and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem".

This statement is added to show the importance of the priestly family of Annas. It could refer to the remainder of the priestly Courses but this is unlikely because of the use of the word "kindred".

"At Jerusalem" can be "in" Jerusalem; "to" Jerusalem or "into" Jerusalem. Whichever preposition is used, it indicates that not all the people then present were resident at Jerusalem but were visitors. This shows that the Sanhedrin was composed of men drawn from a wide area and not necessarily from the city of the head-quarters. Taking a long view of this, it seems that if the Sanhedrin drew its members from many places, then the responsibility for their decision in regard to Jesus must be spread over a wide section of Jewry.

#### Verse 7

"And when they had set them in the midst..." Traditionally the Sanhedrin sat in a semi-circle and it would appear that Peter and John were out in the centre point of the semi-circle. In Grecian and Roman theatres of that date, the centre spot was the best place from which to speak so as to ensure that all who sat around in the semi-circle could hear. The acoustics of the ancient theatres is remarkable if one stands on the centre spot. However attractive this may be, we must not read into a verse something that is not there. The idiom is the same as that used in 1. 15. where "Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples". What happened was probably, that the Sanhedrin set Peter and John before them for questioning. It would most likely be done inside where there would be no special construction as there was in a theatre which was an open air building.

No doubt Peter and John remembered the Master's words:-

- Luke 21. 14. "Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer:  
15. For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist."

"they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?"

In the past when Jesus was preaching the gospel and teaching in the temple, the chief priests and scribes came upon him with the elders and asked, "... by what authority doest thou these things? or who is he that gave thee this authority?" (Luke 20. 2.) It should be noted at this stage, that the lame man who was healed was with them at the time. See verses 10 and 14. He was to prove to be a very good witness of the Power of God.

"By what power..." carries a sense of the use of magical power which was believed in as widely then as it is now. How many millions in our times are not hood-winked by the modern "Faith Healer" or "Divine Healing"? Jesus was accused of casting out devils by Beelzebub (Beelzebul) the prince of devils. (Matt. 12. 24.) (Mark 3. 22.) and (Luke 11. 15.) As a side issue to the chapter we are studying, it is of interest to note the teaching value of the lesson Jesus gave his accusers. He referred to the days of Moses when the magicians could not bring forth lice. Exod. 8. 18. They acknowledged in verse 19 that this was "the finger of God". Jesus used the same metaphor when he replied "But if I with the finger of God cast out devils,..." The sons of the people were exorcists and cast out devils. Did they do this by the finger of God or by Beelzebub who was the Egyptians' god of lice? If Jesus cast out devils by Beelzebub, then by whom did their children cast them out? They could not answer this of course and so came the punch line - if I cast them out with the finger of God (and God did what Beelzebub and the magicians could not do in the days of Moses,) then the gospel of the kingdom must have come to you as it did to the people of Israel in those far off days.

We shall see when we come to it that Peter ascribed the miracle to the Power of God.

"or by what name?" The Sanhedrin could have asked "by what authority" but chose to ask leading questions. The preposition "by" should be "in". The question here seems to indicate magical powers again but the use of "name" also carries the sense of a leader. We see a similar thing when Paul wrote, asking,

1 Cor. 3. 4. "For while one saith, I am of Paul: and another, I am of Appollos; are ye not carnal?"

"have YE done this?" This is said with some measure of contempt. "YOU of all people - how could YOU do this unless some great power had helped you?"

Verse 8

"Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them,..." We are now introduced to Peter's fourth speech in the book of the Acts up to this point. See 1. 15; 2. 14; 3. 12. There is a suggestion here that the Holy Spirit was not a Power which the apostles could use at will. We shall see later that before they used it they prayed. Herein lies the major difference between the Power of the Holy Spirit as manifested in Jesus with that manifested in the prophets of Israel and others. The prophets could not use it as and when they wanted. They did not "have" the Holy Spirit. It merely MOVED them to write as they did. (2 Peter 1. 21.) Daniel saw many years go by before the Holy Spirit moved him to prophesy. He could not prophesy as and when he wanted to. He prayed to God first. In the story before us, we find a hint that this is what happened with the apostles. In this verse, they were filled with the Holy Spirit which seems to indicate that before that moment, they were not filled with the Holy Spirit. They had it to call upon but when they called upon it, and if it was God's Will that they should, the Power then came upon them. Jesus was quite different. He could use the Power of the Holy Spirit at any time, even to know what was in man. (John 2. 25.) It was given to him without measure. (John 3. 34.)

"Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel," There was a time, recorded by Luke, when Peter's courage failed him in the presence of a maid and he denied his Lord. (Luke 22. 53/57.) Now Luke gives us an insight into a new Peter who stands up in front of the Sanhedrin and accuses the priests and rulers of having crucified Jesus Christ, their Messiah and quotes Scripture to them.

"Ye rulers of the people" was addressed to the priests who ruled the spiritual life of the people and the Sadducees who ruled the municipal and political life of the nation. "...the elders of Israel" was addressed to the rest of the Sanhedrin who were there. The opening addresses shows courtesy on the part of Peter and shows how he paid respect to people who were important. In later years he was to record this humble duty before men which should mark the good Christian. (1 Pet. 2. 13/18.) Paul was also to have a word or two to say on this subject when writing to the believers at Rome. (Rom. 13. 7.) We can take an exhortation here and try to be humble and courteous in our dealings with men who have a higher station in life than we do. Our courtesy should be extended to all men irrespective of their station in life.

The two addresses could have applied to all groups then present and not to separate sections as outlined above. In all cases, the positions they held were hereditary. This gave them an official character and dignity.

Verse 9

"If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole;"

The sentence is unfinished and is completed in the next verse. Peter's gambit here is one of irony reminiscent of the attitude of Jesus when he asked,

John 10. 32. "... Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of these works do ye stone me?"

The word "examined" is common to Luke and Paul. See Luke 23. 14; Acts 12. 19; 17. 11; 24. 8; 28. 18; and Paul's usage in 1 Cor. 2. 14/15; 4. 3/4; 9. 3; 14. 24. It is used in the sense of a judicial investigation. The word "examine" is insufficiently severe in its meaning. The R.V. R.S.V. and Diag. all have "examine" but the Afrikaans Bybel uses the more searching "oondervra". It conjures up in our minds a series of questions calling upon them to give account, to explain and to justify their conduct. Peter attacks right away with an ironic - "if we are to be examined closely as to why we had performed a good deed upon a cripple, then here is our explanation." The sting is there but it is a well mannered sting. The words "good Deed" are incompatible with an examination of the type now being held. The words "good deed" occur again in Scripture only in 1 Tim 6. 2. where they are translated as "benefit" and refer to the great benefit of salvation. Derived words appear in Acts 10. 38. as "doing good" and in Luke 22. 25. as "benefactors".

The words "impotent man" describe a man who is "without strength", "weak" and "infirm". In Acts 5. 15/15. it appears as "sick". This describes the man's former condition. (Acts 3. 2.) Metaphorically those people who know not how to walk before God in a manner which pleases Him are spiritually sick, infirm, and without spiritual strength. The Power of God which is in His Word can heal them.

Peter develops his reply so that he is in a position to ask "Have we lived to see the day when men are asked what right have you to do good deeds?" The "good deeds" as we have shown, being a benefit and something richly to be desired.

The Afrikaans Bybel has "... n weldaad aan n siek man..." which is more correct than the A.V. This is shown in the R.V. and R.S.V. with "a good deed to an impotent man (cripple)". Note that the epithet "the" weakens the Authorised Version.

"made whole" means "saved" and this idea seems to be carried forward into the latter portion of Peter's speech recorded in verse 12. The phrase is used to indicate deliverance from bodily sufferings which are symbols of sin. See Matt. 9. 21/22; 27. 42; Mark 5. 23; 6. 53; 10. 52; Luke 8. 36; 8. 50; 17. 19; 18. 42; John 11. 12. In the foregoing references, it will be seen that translations have "made whole", "saved" and "do well".

#### Verse 10

"Be it known unto you all,..." Note the boldness of Peter. His preamble with its bite of sarcasm and irony is over. He now speaks directly to the leaders and to the people of Israel whom they represented. "Be it known" as an expression appears in Acts 13.38; 28. 28. and in the verse before us. In each case it is used with profound effect as if to show the incontestable nature of the reply. In this verse it would appear that what Peter is saying is, "You question us and reprove us for doing a good deed and bringing a saving benefit to an impotent man. Now you must listen to us. That being the case, listen to this!" Note that the statement is made "to you all" meaning the members of the Sanhedrin.

"and to all the people of Israel,..." Regarding this scope from the point of view of the priests and Sadducees of whom we so often read "they feared the people", we see that the remarkable healing which could not be denied with the healed lame man there as evidence, a frightening doubt must have entered their minds. "But if Peter is right? What if the people at our instigation called for the crucifixion? What then, if the people agree with Peter? We has now made an appeal to all Israel and all Israel will look to us as the prime movers in this matter." There is a shadow of the prophecy of Zech. 13. 4. here. No one likes to be thought a false teacher. Peter's next words are important for study:-

"that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead,..."



Note carefully the terms used to describe Jesus:-

"Jesus"	-	the Saviour
"Christ"	-	the Messiah
"of Nazareth"		the despised one but one honoured in prophecy.
"crucified"		by the hands of men but -
"raised"		raised by God.

Note also this facet of Peter's debating style. A comparison is drawn between man's actions and the actions of God. Man kills, God raises. Compare the argument here with that given in Acts 2. 23/24. and Acts 3. 14/15. In each case the magnitude of the crime is brought home to the listeners.

Note also the beginning of the answer to the question previously framed by the Sanhedrin, "...by what name have ye done this?" (vs 7.) Peter's answer is "by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.....etc.,"

Try to imagine the effect these debating points would have on the Sanhedrin who did not want to believe these things and would have flatly denied it all HAD NOT THE CURED MAN BEEN STANDING IN FRONT OF THEM AS EVIDENCE. (See verse 14.) Peter now points to this evidence in his next words.

"even by him doth this man stand here before you whole." There were men who were made lame by an accident and there were men who pretended to be lame to collect alms but this man was well known as having been lame from birth. Now he stands before you all healed by the same power which raised the Lord whom ye crucified. The man was there for all to see and he was "whole", that is, not lame any more but completely cured.

Turning back to the double question of verse 7, where it was asked "by what POWER, or by what NAME, have ye done this?" We have in Peter's reply a tacit reference to the prophecy of "that prophet like unto Moses" of Deut. 18. 18/22. If the Sanhedrin who were well versed in the Law, understood that Jesus was indeed "that prophet", then the warning of verse 19 must have caused them some uncomfortable moments. Did Jesus speak the words of God? That question must have occurred to them again and again.

Verse 11

"This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner".

Peter's statement that they had crucified Jesus proves him to be the stone. The Jews were familiar with the prophecies concerning the "stone". Peter quotes from Psa. 118.22. the slight variation in wording being taken from the Septuagint. They also knew the similar prophecy from Isa. 28. 16. which, many years later, Peter was to quote in his Epistle. See 1 Pet. 2. 6. Peter, in the same Epistle, quotes the Psalm reference. See 1 Peter 2. 7. Jesus made reference to the prophecy from Psa. 118. 22. in Matt. 21. 42. Jesus also quoted the verse following this Psalm reference and showed that it was God's Plan and Purpose. He then goes on to show that because of the rejection of him by the Jews, the gospel would be taught unto the Gentiles. (Matt. 21. 43.)

Peter quotes "set at nought" but in the Psalm it is "rejected" which means much the same thing, namely, nullify, disregard as worthless. Combining this with what a builder does regarding a stone, we get throwing it aside as being worthless for the building in hand.

The quotation of this Psalm has a powerful part to play in Peter's argument. Verses 25 and 26 of Psalm 118 had been quoted when Jesus made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The opening words of verse 25 are "save now" which are rendered in Greek by "Hosanna" in Mark 11. 9. and in Matt. 21. 9. This is followed by "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord:" which is taken from Psa. 118. 26. Peter shows that this Psalm is Messianic in character. The priests would know this Psalm well, pointing as it does to the coming of their Messiah. No doubt many of them would remember the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem when the people cried out in terms of this Psalm.

If any of them had heard Jesus tell the parable of the Lord of the vineyard and make reference to this Psalm after it, (Matt. 21. 42. Mark 12. 10. Luke 20. 17.) they would recall it when Peter quoted the Psalm on this occasion. The words in the Psalm "Save now" (Hosanna) would remind them that Jesus was the Saviour of Israel.

Paul uses the prophecy from Isa. 28. 16. in Rom. 9. 33; 10. 11. Peter uses it in his first epistle - 1 Pet. 2. 6.

The linkage of certain relevant passages should be noted. In Matt. 21. 42. and Luke 20. 17 onwards, the stone which the builders rejected is connected with the stone of stumbling on which many should fall. In this connection see Isaiah 8. 14. We have just drawn attention to 1 Pet. 2. 6. This is linked with the stone that the builders rejected in the next verse. Peter also connects the metaphor of "lively stones" to represent the body of believers with the building of a spiritual house (1 Pet. 2. 5.) as does Paul in Ephes. 2. 19. 22. Peter then completes the tie-up by quoting Isa. 8. 14. to which we have just referred. In the same chapter at verse 6 Peter quotes Isa. 28. 16. For Paul's reasoning, see Rom. 9. 33.

The use of stones in the O.T. to prefigure Christ come to mind. For example, the stone which Jacob anointed after his dream during which God repeated the Abrahamic promise to him. Gen. 28. 18. Thereafter Jacob called the place "Bethel" - meaning "The House of God". In Exod. 17. 6. we read of the "rock" of which we are told in 1 Cor. 10. 4. that "that Rock was Christ". Daniel refers to the Returned Christ in his prophecy of Dan. 2. 45. where he tells of a "stone cut out of the mountain without hands" which strikes the image in its feet and shatters it. Here the margin of many Bibles brings us to Isa. 28. 16.

In Exod. 20. 25. we are told that an altar of stone had to be taken from the mountain (cut out of the mountain without hands) and no tool was to come upon it. This altar stone was Christ, now high in the heaven, our High Priest and Mediator. Furthermore, the stones for the building of Solomon's Temple were to be fashioned far away from the building site. (1 Kings 6. 7.) The stones so fashioned were types of the True Christian Believers who are fashioned in all parts of the world in all ages of history and will be brought to Zion when "The holy city, new Jerusalem, comes down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband". (Rev. 21. 2.)

"set at naught"... This expression is a slight variation of the verb "rejected" from the Psalm which is quoted. An interesting usage is found in Luke 18. 9. where Jesus had finished a parable against certain who trusted themselves as being righteous people and who despised (rejected) others. Likewise, the members of the Sanhedrin had regarded themselves as being righteous and had despised the Prince of Life. Luke 23. 11. expresses the method of "rejection" and "despising" in greater detail.

"The head of the corner". The fact that the rejected stone "is become" the head of the corner is significant because man rejected the stone but God raised him from the dead. The Jews to whom this Psalm was quoted were not far from the Temple where the head stone of the corner would be conspicuous. They knew that the "temple" referred also to a body of Believers. They would be the builders of this "body" but they had rejected as useless, the chief corner stone. God had now lifted it up from the place of rejection (the grave) and made it the head of the corner. The corner is an important part of a building because it is here that the walls meet. Here the walls bind together to strengthen the building. If built for defence, it has a tower at the corner from whence the battle is directed. The corner is the part of strength and the corner stone is the stone that holds the strength together.

Christ now was the corner stone and the two walls, Jew and Gentile, met in him and are strengthened by him. He holds them together in one building. As the corner stone and tower of defence, he protects the household of faith.

Verse 12

Neither is there salvation in any other:..." The words "any other" refer to any other NAME and not any other STONE.

Peter is still answering the question "By what power, or by what name..?" The point about to be made is important, not only for those to whom it was made, but also to all who read these words in the ages which follow. Jesus was not merely the Son of God and therefore a man of great dignity and veneration. He was the Messiah but most important, he was a SAVIOUR. In Him alone is SALVATION. The system of religion of which he is the corner stone is the only one acceptable to God. This being the case, any other system, if persisted in, could be fatal to those who persist in it. This gives the complete answer to those who maintain that there is good in every religion. This is a nebulous statement in any case because "good" is a relative term. It is not a matter of what is "good" but what is "right" in the sight of God. The cripple had been healed by the saving name of Jesus. No other religion could do this. The healing of the lame man was a shadow pointing forward in time to the Kingdom of God when all physical infirmities would be healed and all spiritual infirmities would be dispersed in Christ.

"for there is none other name under heaven..." The "name" mentioned in this verse is connected with the "any other" of the preceding phrase. The "name" here means Jesus for all salvation, healing and raising from the dead will come because of him. "under heaven" shows the wide scope - the whole world may be searched but none other name will be found.

"given among men..." given of course, by God for God is the ultimate Saviour and he will save through Jesus Christ. See Isa. 43. 3; 45. 21.

"whereby" means "by which means"; in which; wherein; not only by the means but in the possession of it and by the application of it. This is still in answer to the questions given in verse 7 which the Sanhedrin by now must have wished they had not asked.

"we must be saved". This is often distorted to "we may be saved". In the paraphrase, the Emphatic Diaglott gives "can be saved" whereas in the word for word section, it shows "must be saved". It is not a matter of possibility of being saved. The first sin in the Garden of Eden was one of disobedience. Now Obedience will bring a person to Christ. Paul makes this clear many years later with God "now commandeth all men everywhere to repent". (Acts 17. 30.) As shown above, if their sin is persisted in, it will bring severe consequences.

#### Verse 13

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John..." Peter's speech has now come to an end. The effect of the speech on the Sanhedrin was one of astonishment and dismay. The word "now" is not an adverb of time but a continuative particle which could read "and" or "but". In Luke's narrative style, he does not allow any moment to slip by without effect. His skill as a descriptive writer is outstanding. The proud Sanhedrin kept their poise with great dignity and did not ask Peter what they must do as did the common people in Acts 2. 37. We should do well to stop for a moment and take an exhortation on the danger of pride. The Gospel is only effective amongst the humbler folk. Compare the haughtiness of the chief priests and Pharisees with the humbler officers in John 7. 45/49. It is not impossible for proud men to humble themselves. Even the proud chief rulers were prepared to humble themselves on hearing Jesus' words. (John 12. 42. compare with verse 37 where the common people would not believe.)

"when they saw" has a meaning which is not apparent in the translation. The word "saw" is not the same as the "seen" of Acts 1. 11. It means to studiously and attentively consider.

"the boldness of Peter and John..." The word "boldness" does not signify courage or bravery, but freedom and frankness. The structure of the sentence here is interesting. It could read "the boldness of Peter and of John" or "seeing Peter's boldness and John's".

"and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men,..". The word "perceived" is linked to "saw" above. The meaning therefore, is that after observing carefully the two men and considering the words which they spoke, the Sanhedrin came to the conclusion that, because they were unlearned and ignorant men... they marvelled. They would come to this conclusion largely from the appearance of the men and the clothes they wore. The Sanhedrin were going to pass judgment on the men but in passing judgment, they were first going to give careful consideration to them and the speech.

"unlearned and ignorant men" does not mean that they were illiterate and uneducated in so far as normal schooling was concerned. In Greek usage the words meant education in literature and higher learning such as philosophy, but to the Jews it had a particular meaning. In Greek the word "unlearned" comes from "agrammatos" meaning unlettered in higher learning. The word "ignorant" comes from the Greek "idiotes" from which we get our English word "idiots". Whereas nowadays in English the meaning is uncomplimentary to those to whom it is applied, in Bible days it meant those who had to be taught. It is applied to those who do not have professional knowledge. Such are the common people. In modern parlance it would be called "laity" or "layman" from the Greek word "laos" meaning people. The Jews applied the terms to those who had not been educated in a rabbinical school.

The graduates from Rabbinical schools and institutions of learning such as Paul went through (Acts 22. 3.) were proud of their learning and often tried to trap Jesus on Scriptural knowledge. His rejoinder to them on one occasion must have struck a sharp blow at their pride. They asked his disciples, "Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?" Jesus replied by quoting Hos. 6. 6. and added "But go ye and learn what that meaneth,..". (Matt. 9. 13.) They with their Rabbinical background were trying to teach him and he told them to "go and LEARN". His "have ye not read" of Matt. 22. 31. is another example of Jesus showing up their ignorance of the Scriptures. See John 7. 15.

Peter and John were not remembered as being men who had gone through rabbinical teaching. They did not wear the "old school tie" of the Scribes and Pharisees. Nevertheless, they showed such knowledge of the Scriptures that the Sanhedrin marvelled. The word "marvelled" means that they were astonished and unable to account for what they saw and heard. The tense is imperfect showing that they continued to marvel.

"and they took knowledge of them,..". The phrase means "recognised them" or having seen them again, recalled that they had seen them before.

"that they had been with Jesus." This is not surprising as the chief priests and rulers in the past had spoken to Jesus. See Matt. 21. 23; Luke 18. 18. The chief priests and rulers would not be happy about connecting Peter and John with Jesus as they had unhappy memories of their clashes with Jesus. See Matt. 7. 29; 22. 16/22; Mark 1. 22; 12. 14/17; Luke 20. 40; John 7. 15 and 46. By associating Peter and John with Jesus and remembering the great works which Jesus did and the words which he spoke, the members of the Sanhedrin would have an uncomfortable feeling that these men had a greater authority than they cared to admit. It is very probable that these thoughts were going through their minds because of the next verse.

Verse 14

"and beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it."

The eloquence of the apostles and their reasoning from the Scriptures, plus their miracle of healing the day before, come to a head in this verse. However much the learned men would have cared to deny the whole affair, they could not deny it secretly to themselves. Note that they beheld "the man which was healed" and he is described as "standing with them". Standing would be bad enough but to be standing with them where they could see him and not turn away from the scene was adding dismay to embarrassment.

"could say nothing against it." Here Luke shows the fulfilment of Jesus' words quoted in:-

Luke 21. 15. "For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist."

Their adversaries were unable to gainsay them. Returning to verse 13 for a moment, we now understand what thoughts must have gone through their minds when they realised that these men had been with Jesus and that they had learnt from him how to use the Scriptures in a way which they could not gainsay. Also, like Jesus, a miracle had come from them as many had come from him. All this could not be denied.

#### Verse 15

"But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves."

This verse is part of a statement and should be read as one verse with verse 16. "when they had commanded" is a participle reading "having commanded". "to go aside out of" refers to the practice in those days, as it is in many cases now, for the prisoner to withdraw while the judges conferred one with the other. The phrase "conferred among themselves" is in the imperfect tense showing that they went on conferring and that the conference must have lasted some time. The verb in Greek means "to throw or strike together" meaning to consult each other carefully by exchanging opinions.

There is no doubt that the conference must have lasted some time as the problem confronting them was of considerable magnitude. In view of the facts before them, there was little preventive action which they could take.

- (1) The disciples had not contravened any law in curing the lame man.
- (2) Their action in doing so was to make them immensely popular among the people.
- (3) Because of their unpopularity, the Sanhedrin could not inflict any bodily punishment upon them.
- (4) They could not let the apostles go free as they would continue to preach doctrines which were an embarrassment to the Sanhedrin.
- (5) They could not disprove the resurrection of the body of Jesus which the apostles preached. There was the empty tomb to explain.
- (6) The risen Lord had vanished and the apostles' claim that he was alive had received confirmation by the miracle of healing.
- (7) They were right back where they started when they had Jesus to cope with.

It is important to note that the Sanhedrin never, on any occasion, attempted to disprove the apostles' teaching that Jesus had been raised from the dead. If they could have disproved this in any way, they would most assuredly have done so. It was a perplexing problem to them yet we do not find any proof from them that Jesus was not raised physically from the dead. We could use this fact to advantage when preaching the physical resurrection of Jesus.

#### Verse 16

"saying What shall we do to these men?.." Some manuscripts have "what can we do with these men?" The question shows how perplexed they were and how desperately they were trying to find an answer to their immediate problem of silencing Peter and John and preventing knowledge of the miracle spreading throughout all Judea. If they adopted the same action with the people as they had with the man who was born blind, they would have had to implement the decision taken by the Jews and mentioned in John 9. 22. This would mean excommunicating a large number of people.

"for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it."

The word "notable" has a particular meaning which is not given by the English word. It means "known with unquestionable certainty". It had been seen by so many people that, not only is it famous or notable as the word may indicate, but it is absolutely certain that it did happen. The word "miracle" in the Greek means "sign", being a sign of what Jesus will do to ailing mankind when he sets up his kingdom. He will enable them to walk in paths of righteousness by his "cures". The meaning of "notable" is explained by the latter half of the verse which says that the miracle "is manifest to all them that dwell at Jerusalem." That is to say, the happening of the miracle was open to all who saw it. It was not done secretly but in the sight of many.

"we cannot deny it" again shows their perplexity. The word "it" is supplied (see italics) and refers to the miracle. They have acknowledged that it happened but now they acknowledge its miraculolous nature.

## Verse 17

"But that it spread no further among the people,..". They had given up trying to disprove the miracle so they adopted a negative action of suppressing the knowledge of it. It goes much further than this. They may very well have desired that news of the sign should not spread over Judea, Samaria and Galilee but if it was manifest to all them that dwell at Jerusalem as they acknowledged in the previous verse, how then could they stop news of such a remarkable event spreading further? Whereas in passing from mouth to mouth it might well become distorted in the telling or eventually become forgotten in the mass of other events, many people would write to friends or families about it, thus leaving a more permanent record. The greater complication was that the miracle was connected with men who preached a new doctrine. It was really the same doctrine but as far as they were concerned, it was something new which they wanted to suppress. For this reason, it is very probable that in using the word "it" Luke referred to the doctrine rather than news of the miracle.

"let us startily threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name".

Years later Peter was to remember the patience of his Lord in the face of many threatenings. (1 Pet. 2. 23.) The basis of the threat was that the apostles were no more to PREACH "in this name" which is "the name of Jesus of Nazareth". This is shown by the statement in the next verse.

## Verse 18

"And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus."

The conference was now over and the decision taken was about to be implemented. The Sanhedrin now ordered that Peter and John be called to their assembly so that they could be told of the decision. In Greek, the verse begins "Having called them, they commanded..." The second "them" is not given in the oldest manuscripts and is omitted by the major critics. The A.V., R.V, and R.S.V. all include the second "them".

The word "commanded" means "announced from one to another" indicating that the instruction was not limited to Peter and to John but was addressed to the whole body of Believers.

The words "at all" qualify both verbs "speak" and "teach". This enjoins complete silence in all ways. They were not to teach the word of God nor were they to talk about it. It is important to note that as the prohibition does not draw any distinction between public speaking and private teaching. It prohibits all forms of expression.

"in the name of Jesus". Their silence was limited to this important subject. This was in opposition to the commandments of Jesus given in Matt. 28. 19. and Mark 16. 15. We can imagine that Peter and John would react to this immediately and not wait until they got outside.

## Verse 19

"But Peter and John answered and said unto them,..". It is obvious from this phrase that Peter was not the only one who spoke. John had his say too.

"Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye."

This answer did not show determination nor courage on the part of Peter and John so much as it showed OBEEDIENCE to the word of God. This is shown by their words in the next verse.

"unto you more than unto God" does not suggest that they should give more attention to the Sanhedrin than to God but was said to introduce the emphatic statement of the next verse.

## Verse 20

"For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

This follows the words of the previous verse "judge ye" which carry the sense "We have made up our minds so you can make up yours". They are not asking the Council to judge for Peter and John but for the council itself. The thought may be extended to "whether God would approve of our listening to you in preference to Him, you can judge for yourselves. As for us...." then follows verse 20 which continues "we cannot but speak...etc.,"

It is interesting to speculate on the possibility that the Sanhedrin, or some of them, would connect Peter's words with those of Joshua when he spoke to the people as recorded in Josh. 24. 14/15. In answer to Joshua's appeal, the people chose to serve God.

Peter and John knew the commandments of the Lord to go forth and preach. Now that they had received the power of the Holy Spirit, they could not turn back. The same feeling of endeavour was with Paul as we see from 1 Cor. 9. 16/17. The words of the Lord recorded in Acts 1. 8. and Peter's words in Acts 1. 22. show how essential it was for them to preach regardless of any instructions to the contrary they may receive from the Sanhedrin. Peter acknowledged that they were witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus. (Acts 2. 32; 3. 15;) so if the witnesses were to keep silent, how could the Lord be obeyed? See 1 John 1. 2.

The words "the things" are not in the original but italics are omitted by the translators.

"we have seen and heard" would not refer to the miracle of healing but to those things which Jesus had taught them and the things he did while he was with them.

## Verse 21

"So when they had further threatened them,..". It would be more correct to translate as "having further threatened them,..". The word "further" comes from an interesting characteristic of the Greek language. By affixing the particle "pros" to the verb, the meaning of the verb is modified to an increased degree. In Luke 10. 35. we find Jesus saying "whatsoever thou spendest MORE..." The words "spendest MORE" correspond to one Greek verb. In Luke 19. 16. we get "thy pound hath GAINED..." The modification by the particle adds the idea of "addition to the capital". Applying this construction to the verse before us, we find that the threatening was INCREASED thus showing that the Rulers, priests and Sadducees had shut out their minds to any of the wonderful teaching which had been laid before them both by the miracle and the words of Peter.

"they let them go.." The English gives the idea that Peter and John were allowed to escape or slip out quietly. The Greek however, carries the idea that they were freed judicially.

"finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done."

The reason given here for the release of Peter and John is tragic and ridiculous.. Tragic because of the wilful blindness of the Sanhedrin in the face of such evidence. A right of access to the race for eternal life came to them in a wonderful manner but they turned their backs upon it. They would not have lost their position, nor their wealth if they had accepted yet they would not turn to Jesus. Would it have been because of what their colleagues might say? The people glorified God because of what was done. Why could the rulers and company not do the same,?

The Sanhedrin went from one grievous mistake to another! In the first place, they should not have arrested Peter and John for that brought them to the attention of the people much more than if they had been left alone. Then, they should not have brought them to trial because they could find nothing wrong with what they did and the trial showed that there was nothing to be feared in becoming a convert because the Sanhedrin let them go. Worst of all was to turn a blind eye to the evidence before them.

The phrase "because of the people" carries a lesson for many people. Those who learn the beliefs of the Household of Faith and are impressed thereby, may come to baptism or they may not. Those who delay, often delay because they do not wish to break a long association with a certain church and its minister. Or they may not want to offend a husband or wife, or family. These things do not matter and they are not a valid argument. The point is that "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent". (Acts 17. 30.) and it is all men's duty to obey God rather than man.

## Verse 22

"For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was showed".

This verse is supplementary to the statement in the preceding verse that the Sanhedrin could not punish Peter and John because of the people. The people were profoundly impressed by what was done because it was so obviously a genuine act. The man was a well-known cripple and had been lame for forty years. From the past comes a parallel where those people who left Egypt at the time of the Exodus, did not enter the Holy Land because of unbelief and disobedience. Only Joshua and Caleb were the exceptions. To enter the Holy Land after 40 years of wandering meant that they must have been "above 40 years" (older than 40) as was the cripple. The members of the Sanhedrin would have time to reflect upon this analogy and decide whether to join the cripple as another of the successful "over 40's" or perish as did Israel in the days of Moses, because of their unbelief.

"hath shewed" is an incorrect translation. The Greek is "on whom the sign of healing had come to pass". The R.V. is a little wide of the mark with "miracle (marg. "sign") was wrought". R.S.V. has "sign of healing was performed". The Afrikaans is accurate with "hierdie teken...plaasgevind het".

## Verse 23

"And being let go..." lit. "having been let go..."

"they went to their own company..." The story now takes up a different line. The healing is over, the trial has come to a conclusion; the threats have been made and Peter and John have been released. Luke enters a new phase of his story.

The word "company" has no original in Greek. The English might have been "to their own". The same usage is found in John 1. 11. "He came into his own, and his own received him not." Also in John 19. 27. "...that disciple took her unto his own" - here the translators have supplied "home" without justification for we do not find later that Mary lived in John's house. The meaning in all instances is "the assembly of people united in the Plan and Purpose of God".

"and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them."

"The elders" appear here again (see verses 5 and 8) but the Sadducees are omitted. The "elders" is a composite term to describe all men other than of the priesthood, and rulers. It is thought that they must be those who at one time held the office of High Priest, or who were of the priestly family.

## Verse 24

"and when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord..."

"lifted up their voice to God" means that they prayed aloud. They did not pray silently and individually but loudly so that all could hear. That one prayer was said in which all joined, is shown by the phrase "with one accord". There has been some criticism of this verse, stating that it was impossible for all to offer loudly the same prayer which is recorded here. The answer is that very likely one person led the others in prayer. Any attempt to identify the one who prayed would be speculation.

"and said, 'Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:'"

The opening words of the prayer are very similar to those of Hezekiah's prayer which he offered to God after Rabshakeh had brought the message from the king of Assyria. (2 Kings 19. 15.) The title "Lord" comes from a Greek word



"despotes" from which we get the English word "despot" with rather a harsh association. It means "one having a supreme authority". In Luke 2. 29. it is used in an address to God, as it is here and in Rev. 6. 10. In 2 Pet. 2. 1. it is used in connection with Jesus as it is in Jude 4. In 1 Tim. 6. 1/2; 2 Tim. 2. 21. Titus 2. 9; 1 Pet. 2. 18. it appears as "masters".

As with Hezekiah of old, the Apostles turn to God in their difficulty and ascribe to him all power, and acknowledge Him as the Creator of all things. They also acknowledge God as being their Master. Being His servants (verse 29) they must obey him. The opening address of the prayer is almost identical with Psa. 146. 6. There are also similar words in Exod., 20. 11. Years later Peter was again to acknowledge God as the Creator. (1 Pet. 4. 19.)

Verse 25

"Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?"

This is the first verse of Psalm 2. The prayer acknowledges David to have been a prophet for this prophetic Psalm. It is stated that God spake through the mouth of His servant David. Whoever led the prayer, knew the Psalm very well. If it was Peter, then it is consistent with his other references to David in Acts 2. 25 and 34. The word "servant" is used here of David and when used in reference to Jesus, is translated as "Son" in Acts 3. 13. and 26,

The Greek word translated as "rage" here has the meaning of a horse neighing and prancing. When used of men, it has the metaphorical meaning of being haughty and insolent. The application here is to the opposition Jesus received from the Romans. A reference to this is made in verse 27. The word "people" refers to the Jews. This is indicated by the distinction drawn in verse 26 between the kings of the earth and the rulers, and in verse 27 between Gentiles and the people of Israel.

To "imagine vain things" is to give anxious thought and care to something. See Mark 13. 11; 1 Tim. 4. 15. The "vain things" in this application of the prophecy was to destroy the Saviour. This explanation is given in the next verse.

Verse 26

"The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ".

The "kings of the earth" refer to Herod and Pontius Pilate who are mentioned in the next verse. The rulers are said to be gathered together with them and this was true when we considered how "Jews and Gentiles joined their power to crucify the Lord Jesus.

The Psalmist states that those who stood up against the Lord, who is God, also stood up against Christ. They were determined to put an end to the teaching of Jesus not knowing that in doing so, they were fulfilling the Divine Plan and Purpose, God allowing each of them to do as he wished. (Acts 2. 23; and 3. 18.) The Psalm refers to Jesus as we see by the several quotations of this Psalm in the N.T. in connection with the Lord. See Acts 13. 33; Heb. 1. 5. and 5. 5.

Verse 27

"For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together."

"of a truth" is used by both Mark and Luke to represent certainty. See Luke 4. 25; 20. 21; 22. 59; Mark 12. 32; 12. 14; and Acts 10. 34.

"holy child" shows the separateness to which Jesus was called and the special Divine mission he had to perform. The word "child" is translated as "son" in Acts 3. 13. and "servant" in Acts 4. 25.

"whom thou hast anointed" - being "anointed" makes Jesus the Messiah. See John 1. 42 and John 4. 25.

"both Herod and Pilate" showing that both acted in concert and not separately. "with the Gentiles" means "with the nations". "the" is not in the original.

A difficulty arises because of the plural form of the word for Gentiles which means "nations" and not just the many Roman people who were in Jerusalem at the time of the crucifixion of Jesus. The Romans had occupied many countries and would be representative of nations. They combined with the people of Israel against Jesus.

"Herod" was Herod Antipas, a younger son of Herod the Great who became tetrarch of Galilee and Perea on his father's death. (Matt. 2. 1; 14. 1/12; Mark 6. 14/29; Luke 1. 5; 3. 1/19; 9. 7/9; 13. 31; 23. 7/15.) He is often mentioned in the Gospels and was the one who put John the Baptist to death. His brother Archelaus was ruler of Judea (Matt. 2. 22.) and when he was removed from office, the ethnarchy was attached to the Roman province of Syria and governed by procurators (deputies of the Governors). Of these Pontius Pilate was the sixth and when he was recalled, it was attached to the kingdom of Herod Agrippa (Acts 12. 1.) and after his death, it came under procurators again, among whom were Felix (Acts 23. 24.) and Porcius Festus. (Acts 24. 27.)

Verse 28

"For to do whatsoever they hand and thy counsel determined before to be done."

God knows the end from the beginning. He has His Divine Plan and Purpose. It was His Will that His Son Jesus would be a living and willing sacrifice. In bringing all this about, God allowed men to do as they pleased without interference. He did not make men do as He wished but raised up men who would, of their own volition, do the Divine Will.

The Hand of God, Finger of God, Arm of God or of the Lord were Hebrew expressions which showed the power and might of God in performing that which He willed. It applied in the deliverance of His people and in other signs.

Verse 29

"And now, Lord, behold their threatenings:.." All that has been said up to this stage in the prayer, has been a historical preamble and an application of a prophetic utterance. Now the prayer becomes a plea for Divine interference in the problem of opposition which had arisen. The prayer has acknowledged the hand of God in human affairs and has acknowledged the Divine Plan and Purpose that God's Word shall be preached unto all nations. The opposition which they now received was powerful but it could not be too powerful for the God of Israel. The Apostles asked God to help them.

"behold" - should be "look upon". The only other occurrence is in Luke 1. 25. where it is used to indicate "looking upon with favour". The prayer is not to ask God to look with favour upon the threatenings but to look with favour upon the objects of the threatenings.

"and grant unto thy servants..." "grant" means "give". The use of the word "servants" follows apostolic usage for they liked to refer to themselves in this way, meaning "bond slaves" belonging to the Heavenly Master, His vassals and serfs. As His bond slaves they desire that His Will should be accomplished. See Rom. 1. 1. Jas. 1. 1, 2 Peter 1. 1. and Jude 1.

"that with all boldness they may speak thy word." The translation gives the subjunctive which is not as strong as the original Greek in the infinitive form of "with boldness to speak thy word." "All boldness" is relative and means such boldness as every occasion would require.

"they may speak thy word." That is, acting as the mouthpiece of God. The words are God's words and they are the speakers. Note that they did not ask directly for help with their preaching but that God's word might be proclaimed. This means regardless of who proclaimed it.

Verse 30

"By stretching forth thy hand to heal;.." Note the petition - stretch forth thy hand to heal. The apostles could well have asked for fire to come down from heaven to consume their enemies but they did not. God's purpose at this time is not to destroy but to build up. Even

the greatest apostate is a potential convert. The healing asked for could be physical healing such as had been performed the previous day or it could be the healing of their spiritual ills from which they were suffering when they refused to regard the truth of the miracle and the power of Peter's argument.

"and that signs and wonders may be done..." let there be healing, both spiritual and physical and, to help these along, let there be signs (miracles). The "wonders" are those acts which cause surprise, not because of something done in the past, but because of the application which such surprises have to something future. For example, an earthquake would be recognised as the Hand of God and would cause surprise, not because it happened, but because that which it portends in the future - the anger of God upon an evil generation. Wonders with an application to the past would tend to be forgotten. Warnings of the future would linger in the memory long enough to be used by the apostles in their preaching. A modern example of a wonder is the phenomenon of the return of the Jews to Israel. It is one of the greatest wonders of any age.

"by the name of thy holy child Jesus". Here again we have the "name" and it is connected with Jesus. He was the author and the finisher of our Faith and it is preached in his name.

Verse 31

"And when they had prayed,.." The prayer has now come to an end. The whole prayer was not given as there is no suitable ending to it. But Luke summarised it giving the essence of what was said. Sufficient is given to show the trend of the thoughts which were expressed to God.

1. Acknowledgment of God as the great creator of heaven and earth. If the Creator, then all blessings flow from Him.
2. Quotation from the 2nd. Psalm showing how they acknowledged God's Plan and Purpose working in Jesus, and how the Psalmist, speaking as the mouthpiece of God, foresaw the opposition which they would receive to their preaching.
3. The nations oppose God but cannot prevail.
4. Both Jew and Gentile combined against God and Jesus, but they will not prevail.
5. God's Will cannot be set aside.
6. Therefore O Yahweh, give unto thy servants boldness to preach. A boldness that comes from knowing that God is with them.
7. Give assurance of thy presence by permitting signs and wonders to be done.

"the place was shaken where they were assembled together:.."

A shaking of the earth in Scripture has been a sign of God's Presence and of His Power. See Exod. 19. 18. and the reference to this in Psa. 68. 8. The pre-figuration here is the mighty Power of God to be revealed in the latter days against those who disobey Him. Here, in the words of Jesus, God was "confirming the word with signs following". (Mark 16. 20.)

It was also a sign that when persecution comes to His people, God will intervene when they pray to Him. This is not a general rule of course, but has a particular application to the latter days when, we submit, the Household of Faith will come under severe trial.

"and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit,.." Here for the second time, God shewed His Presence by the Holy Spirit coming upon His servants. The effect the first time was that they all spoke boldly in different tongues and after that, they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine. (Acts 2. 42/47.) Now in the second time, a similar state of affairs came about. They spoke boldly and continued with all things common, thus building up a solid ecclesial edifice. In view of the trials which were to follow, this building up of solidity in the ecclesia was essential and gave strength to the members.

"and they spoke the word of God with boldness." This was the result of their being filled with the Holy Spirit. We see here that the Holy Spirit was not given in one fixed degree of intensity. At times it would barely manifest itself and at other times it would be, as now, very powerful. Thus they had no control over the Holy Spirit but used it as it pleased God to give them for the purpose at hand.

Verse 32

"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul:.."

In these early days in the history of the Christian church, two great events had taken place. (1) The day of Pentecost and (2) the healing of the lame man and the subsequent trial of the two apostles. Both these occasions were accompanied by the giving of the Holy Spirit and a great growth in the body of believers. Both occasions are followed by a period of quiet and consolidation. In this connection, we should take note of Acts 2. 42/47 and Acts 4. 32/37.

"the multitude" is mentioned without being numbered but must be regarded as being in excess of the 5,000 of Acts 4. 4.

"one heart and one soul" refers to knowledge and the emotional aspect respectively. Keeping something in one's heart Scripturally is to remember it, thus showing the "knowledge" aspect which is attached to "heart". (Luke 2. 19. and 51.) "heart" comes from the Greek "kardia" from which we get the English "cardiac" and "soul" comes from "psuche" from which we get the English derivative in the prefix to "psychology".

"neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common."

"neither said any" has a continuous meaning and does not refer to just one action.

"was his own" is "to be his own". The Greek word is "peculium" from which we get the English "peculiar", with reference to "exclusiveness". There is a difficult point to be understood here. It was not a matter of complete renunciation of property by the believers. There would be no point in mentioning such a thing in the detail given here. What is meant is that while the believers retained the property in their possession, they did not speak of it as being their own but regarded it as being the property of the ecclesia. Thus it all arose out of a spirit of self-sacrificing love of the body of believers as a whole. This is an important difference which will be brought out more when we study the next chapter.

"but they had all things common". They HAD them. That means they retained them as property but, the property being common to all, they denied ownership in favour of the ecclesia.

Verse 33

"and with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus:.."

This is a repetition of Luke's favourite theme which he picks on again and again. Luke has selected those incidents in the history of the early ecclesia which helps along this view. The teaching should not stop with Luke but should be taught by us these days in our expositions privately or in public.

The apostles "gave". This means "gave back" to men. The usage indicates "gave away to men" the truths which they had received through the gift of the Holy Spirit. That they gave this "with great power" shows the zeal with which they preached and that they were helped by the Holy Spirit.

"gave witness of the resurrection.." The meaning is "to bear witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." This embraces not only that the Lord Jesus rose again but also the great example and precedent which that resurrection prefigured. This is embraced in the word "witness".

"and great grace was upon them." The words "upon them" signify that Grace came from above upon them. In other words, God was caring for His servants. "upon them all" must include the other believers and not only the apostles.

## Verse 34

"Neither was there any among them that lacked:.." The R.V. starts the sentence with the word "for". This connects the sentence with the former sentence of verse 33. This would then read, "And great grace was upon them all for neither was there any among them that lacked." The believers had the faith as well as the works in terms of Jas. 2. 15/17. In this connection, see the result of the grace which God bestowed upon the ecclesias of Macedonia. (2 Cor. 8. 1/4 and 7.)

Another way of reading this verse is to regard verse 33 as a parenthesis and continue verse 34 after 32, thus, "but they had all things common, for neither was there any among them that lacked."

Whatever way we look at it, we find that the grace of God was with them and there was no hardship amongst them. They had sufficient for their needs.

"for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold."

The lesson of the verse is one of victory over selfishness. The verb "sold" is continuous and shows that they continued selling from time to time and, when they had sold, they brought the "worth" to the apostles. It does not mean that everything that was sold was sold at one time, but now and again.

"brought the price" fits the sense with "bringing (or continued bringing) the price (worth)."

## Verse 35

"and laid them down at the apostles' feet:.." The same occurs in verse 37. The apostles are regarded in this verse as being teachers. In Hebrew custom, teachers sat down. (Luke 10. 39.) and Acts 22. 3.) Gifts and offerings were brought to their feet and not to their hands. By being placed at their feet would indicate that the gifts were for the community and not for the apostles.

"and distributions was made unto every man according as he had need."

Luke adds this last precautionary note in case his readers should think that the apostles were the sole beneficiaries of the gifts. There is also the suggestion that the distribution was not equal amongst all members. It was not a principle of communism that was involved. Each person received only what he needed and no more.

## Verse 36

"And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation), a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus".

Chapter 5 should commence here.

The verse is incomplete and must be read as one verse with verse 37. Having told of the fine ecclesial spirit of the whole Ecclesia (which consisted of 5,000 plus the multitude), Luke now tells us of one person who did the same acts of generosity and self-effacement. He must have had a reason for this and the reason is shown in the next chapter in the story of Ananias and his wife Sapphira. Thus Luke with careful and meticulous narrative skill, prepares his readers for what follows.

"Joses" as a name comes from the Hebrew "Joseph". No one can say definitely, the meaning of the name Barnabas for it has not yet been satisfactorily explained. The prefix is certainly known. It means "Son of". The latter half of the name is thought to come from the Chaldean "nebiy" or Hebrew "Nabiy" both meaning "a prophet". This analysis, "Barnabas" means "son of prophecy" or "son of a prophet", or "son of inspiration". Inasmuch as the prophets gave many exhortations to Israel, the adapted meaning is given of "son of consolation" or "son of exhortation". He went to Tarsus to look for Paul (Acts 11. 25.) and persuaded the apostles at Jerusalem to accept Paul as one of their number.

Barnabas is described here as a Levite. Coming just before the news that he also sold land is surprising because under the Law of Moses, Levites were not

allowed to own land. (Num. 18. 20.) Note that because he was a Levite, the Law would have required the disciples to pay tithes to him. Instead he gave land to the ecclesia showing that the Law no longer operated. There is no indisputable ground for identifying him with the Barsabbas of Acts 1. 23.

"and of the country of Cyprus," This does not mean that Barnabas was a native of Cyprus but that he was of the people of Cyprus. The same thing is found in South Africa where there are South Africans of Huegenot descent, Dutch descent, German, Austrian, English and Scottish descent but they have not necessarily been born in the countries suggested by their names. Cyprus was a source of copper and, in fact, the name we now have of "copper" is an adaptation of the old name for Cyprus. It is the Chittim of the O.T.

#### Verse 37

"Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet".

This verse completes the sentence of verse 36 and forms the introduction to chapter 5. The chapter division here is unfortunate. Thus the word "But" which opens chapter 5 draws a contrast between Barnabas and the man and wife of chapter 5.

The Greek word translated as "land" is not the same as that in verse 34. It means "fields". The difference is that lands can be used for houses, grazing or planting crops but fields are used for the grass they contain, or they are ploughed and sown with a crop. The Law of Moses which forbade a Levite from having land (or a field) did not extend to Cyprus. The land which he sold may have been in Cyprus. Jeremiah was a priest. (Jer. 1. 1. but he bought a field. (Jer. 32. 9.) A relative of Barnabas is recorded in Acts as having a house. (Acts 12. 12.)

"brought the money" means "brought the worth"

"laid it at the apostles' feet". See notes to verse 35.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

Chapter 5.

Verse 1

"But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,"

It is essential that Acts 4. 36 and 37 be read as an introduction to Chapter 5. The opening word of this chapter "But" shows that a comparison is being made between someone and Ananias and his wife. That someone is Barnabas of Acts 4. 36/37. who is described there as a God fearing man whose name is given with the translation thereof, The son of consolation. The comparison to be drawn is one between a fine man and a man who was deceitful. Up to this stage, we have been given an account of the rapid growth of the ecclesia at Jerusalem and we have been given a glowing account of the enthusiasm and selflessness of the members. Now we are to be given the story of the first fall from the ideal. It is an introduction to the growth of the apostacy alongside the growth of the ecclesia.

The most obvious element in the story is one of deceit but that is not the major sin. Deceit in itself is something to be shunned but the state of mind which gave rise to that deceit is the bigger sin. Here was the first appearance of the tares as told by the Lord in his parable (Matt. 13. 25/40.) The state of mind exposed in this story is one of hypocrisy and as such, contains a lesson for all of us these days. Our lives are hypocritical in our behaviour towards others. We may be exemplary characters in front of others, yet we may work for another's discomfort. The story we are about to study bears out the teaching of Prov. 23. 7. "As a man thinketh, so is he."

The story of Ananias and Sapphira his wife is to the N.T. what the story of Achan was to the children of Israel when they first went into the Promised Land. (Joshua 7.) It is interesting to note that in the Septuagint Edition of the O.T. the same Greek word is used of Achan in Josh. 7. 1. in the words "committed a trespass" as is used in Acts 5. 2. with the words "kept back". The Greek word also occurs in Titus 2. 10. in the word "purloining".

"a certain man" is an English expression which means "someone" or "somebody" who is about to be named. The English expression refers to a "certain" man when there is often nothing certain about him at all.

"Ananias" is the Greek form of Hananiah in Hebrew which is found in Neh. 7. 2. and Jer. 28. 1. and means "The Lord is Gracious". Another disciple having the same name appears in Acts 9. 10. and 22. 12. There was also a high priest having this name and he appears in Acts 23. 2. and 24. 1.

"Sapphira" is the Hebrew and Greek word for Sapphire.

the word "with" shows the closest collaboration between man and wife in the deed which was done. Luke is being careful here to be accurate and to obviate anyone arguing that Sapphira may not have known what Ananias did, or vice versa.

Verse 2

"And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet."

This is a continuation of verse 1 and should be read that way if one has to read it from the platform on a Sunday morning.

"being privy to it" means "having a knowledge of it". It is also said to mean "having a guilt complex" but this does not seem to be indicated here.

Sapphira seem to be free of any complex at all and appeared quite confident when she lied about it.

"laid it at the apostles' feet". This is what Barnabas did. (Acts 4. 37.)  
It is also that which was done by the members of the first ecclesia. (Acts 4. 35.)

Verse 3

"But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land?"

The sin of Ananias was Covetousness which was the same sin that Judas gave way to. As we study the early history of the apostles, we shall find that greed for money or power was at the back of many of the sins and calamities recorded in the Acts. Two great sins of the O.T. present themselves to us as we think about covetousness. First there was Achan who sinned in the days of Joshua. Secondly there is the sin of Elisha's servant. (2 Kings 5. 20/27.) Combined with the sin of covetousness, there was also the sin of telling lies - of deception. Ananias let it be a thought that he had sold his land and given all the price to the ecclesia. This adds Pride as another sin for he desired the praise of the ecclesia for his benevolence. To summarise:-

- Ananias
- (1) showed his desire for money;
  - (2) deceived his brethren and sisters by not disclosing what he had done;
  - (3) received pleasure from the esteem in which he thought he was held because of his gift.

He was full of hypocrisy which the Lord used to condemn in the Pharisees, and he was double-minded in his ways by loving money and also loving the Lord's Service. See James 1. 8.

To the foregoing, we may add yet another sin which would not be regarded as a sin now. This is a sin against the Holy Spirit. Ananias must have known that the apostles had extra-ordinary powers through the Holy Spirit which had come upon them. Did he test the Holy Spirit hoping that he would get away with his deception? This seems to be indicated by Peter's question, "why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit....?"

"Satan" as mentioned here will be a favourite for those who believe in this mythical angel of evil. However, if we look at verse 9, we find Peter asking Sapphira, "How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?" If they had agreed together, the one was a satan unto the other. The wife was an adversary to her husband and he was an adversary to his wife. On the one hand, the heart had been filled by "Satan" and on the other hand, the temptation came from the husband/wife. Connecting the two, we find that the adversary is the husband or the wife as the case may be. Notice the marginal alternative to "to lie to the Holy Spirit".

Having regard to the above discussion, we find that the covetousness and the pride are two human failings and are not so serious that immediate death is proper. The great sin was lying to the Holy Spirit. The gravity of this sin is shown in the following verse.

Verse 4

"Whiles it remained, was it not thine own?...." Literally "remaining did it not remain to thee?" The Afrikaans Bybel has an interesting interpretation - "As dit nie verkoop was nie, het dit nie joue gebly nie?...." ("While this was not sold, did it not remain yours?") The suggestion is that Ananias was not obliged to sell it. The act of sale was spontaneous and of a freewill nature. There was no compulsion about it at all.

"and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?...." Even after it was sold, there was no compulsion to give away the money. He could have kept it all for himself and



no harm would have been done.

"Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart?...." Note that there was no temptation from an outside agency. The sin came from the heart. This agrees with James 1. 13/15. The sinner was Ananias - "why hast THOU conceived this thing....?" Not "why hast thou permitted Satan to tempt thee?" It may be argued by the apostasy that the mythical Satan destroys the personality. If this is so, then Ananias is blameless. No such destruction happened. It is said that Ananias agreed together with his wife, and that he lied. The initiative in all actions came from him.

The word "conceived" shows that a plan was laid. There was no sudden impulse. This was a deliberate act after a careful deliberation.

"thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God". This sentence is used to "prove" that the Holy Spirit is God. The "proof" is taken from verse 3 which says Ananias "lied unto the Holy Spirit" and this verse says he lied unto God, thereby showing that the Holy Spirit is God. (The Holy Spirit is referred to as the Holy Paraclete. John is the only writer to use this term. John 14. 16 and 26; 15. 26; 16. 7. and in 1 John 2. 1. it is applied to Jesus, the risen Lord, in the word "Advocate". The Greek word means "helper" or "comforter" and is ascribed to one who helps against an adversary, an accuser or judge, hence translated as "Advocate". Applying the meaning to the verses named, we find that he lied unto the apostles in spite of the great Power of God which was their helper as promised to them by Jesus and called the Comforter. In lying to them, he lied unto the Power which was given them. In the other case, he lied unto God who was the giver of the power. In no sense can the trinitarian doctrine be partly or wholly sustained in this statement).

Ananias had not lied unto his fellow men as he thought he was doing. He did not regard the Power which had been given to the apostles.

#### Verse 5

"And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the spirit:...."

The participle indicates that judgment was swift and same while he was in the act of hearing.

"gave up the ghost (spirit)" is not a Biblical idiom. It is purely an English idiom peculiar to the early 17th Century. The original Greek does not say this nor anything like it. The simple translation is "(he) expired". The Afrikaans Bybel says "En toe Ananias hierdie woorde hoor, het hy neergeval en gesterwe;...." (And when Ananias heard these words, he fell down and died;..") The word "expired" means to "breathe out". Before Adam was made "living", God breathed into his nostrils the breath of Life. Now the opposite happened to Ananias. Instead of God breathing in, God caused Ananias to breathe out and at that moment, the spirit returned to God who gave it. This spirit, mentioned in Eccles. 12. 7. is that spirit which is in a man's nostrils and gives him life. Job 27. 3. and Job 33. 4.

"and great fear came upon all them that heard these things." Probably great fear came upon Peter too for the incident does not show that Peter had anything to do with this terrible act of retribution. This was not a parallel with Elijah calling upon fire from heaven to bring death to the captains and their fifties. (2 Kings 1. 9/16) Nor was it a parallel with the striking of Gehazi with leprosy. 2 Kings 5. 20/27. During his ministry, Jesus did not act in this manner on any occasion.

It was not Peter who took the initiative in this incident. He was correct in saying that Ananias had lied against the Holy Spirit but it was while Ananias was listening to him that he suddenly died. It was a miraculous death and cannot be ascribed to natural means. If it was natural, then the death of Sapphira a little later was more miraculous. One calls to mind

- 1 Cor. 3. 16. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?  
 17. If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."

The passage just quoted does not indicate that God will destroy us immediately anything is done of this nature. The warning lies in the future when Christ comes. Were this not so, we should have many such miraculous deaths. The time of this death was different from all others. This was the beginning of the new era, the Christian era. God sent the Power of the Holy Spirit to teach and to help the apostles in their work. Knowing the weakness of the flesh, Peter would not be as severe as this incident is, so it is obvious that the power which took life away from Ananias and his wife was far greater than Peter could control. A severe lesson had to be driven home to the early Christians and this is how it was done. The effect of the sudden death was profound upon all who witnessed it and who heard about it later. The sudden entry into the Household of Faith of a glimmer of apostasy received a telling blow which could only strengthen the ecclesia for the hard times which lay ahead.

#### Verse 6

"And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him."

The young men mentioned here seem to be a class of organised young men who were fitted for certain tasks. When they were formed, they would not anticipate such work as this. They were other than the "elders" of the ecclesia and may well be referred to as the "youngers". This epithet "the" denotes a special class of people.

"Wound him up" - prepared him for burial.

"carried him out" - Cf Luke 7. 12 and John 11. 31. Outside the city.

"and buried him". - Not as difficult as one would suppose. There were no health laws as strict as ours then.

Permission for burial did not have to be sought. A grave did not have to be dug as burials were often made in vaults which received the bodies from the side.

#### Verse 7

"And it was about the space of three hours after,..." After the space of three hours suggests that the first time when Ananias came in, was a time of prayer. The second time when Sapphira came in, was also a time of prayer following as it did, three hours after the first one. See Acts 2. 15 and 3. 1. It suggests too, that the incident took place in a place set aside for prayer. We were told in 2. 46. that the early Christians continued in prayer.

The use of the word "And" at the beginning of a sentence is a common Hebrew usage and idiom. It connects the end of the first part - the death of Ananias - with the second part which now follows.

"when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in." Luke adds the information that Sapphira did not know that her husband had died. The inference is that if she had known about this, she would have acted differently when asked about the sale of the land. This information prepares us for the deception of which she was guilty.

The interval of three hours would give Peter time to think about what had happened and to enable him to understand that it was God's judgment which had come upon Ananias. Therefore he would not worry about examining Sapphira when he saw her.

## Verse 8

"And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much."

That Peter "answered" sets a problem for the record does not give any question that he would have to answer. The "answer" is given to her look of enquiry or astonishment or surprise that her husband was not there. The same idea is given in Acts 3. 12 where Peter "answered". What he "answered" is given in the previous verse which states that the people were "greatly wondering". On that occasion Peter "answered" their obvious surprise. In the verse before us, nothing is said about Sapphira's surprise but it can be inferred.

The word "sold" is in the Middle Voice which means "sold for your advantage".

"so much" does not mean that Peter had not counted the money nor that he had known the price but that Luke was careless about recording it. It must be read in the sense that Peter asked the question while pointing to the money which, according to verse 2, had been placed at the apostles' feet. In other words, pointing to the money at their feet, Peter asked her, Did you advantageously sell it for that amount of money? This suggests that through keeping back part of the purchase price, the amount looked small in relation to what was sold.

## Verse 9

"Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?"

That they had "agreed together" showed that premeditation of a wilful act was known to Peter. They collaborated. She was not an accessory but a collaborator.

"to tempt the Spirit of the Lord" is not a true translation. It would be more accurate to say, "to put the Spirit of the Lord to test". She and her husband, being anxious to receive the acclaim of men, but at the same time, retain money for themselves, decided to put the Holy Spirit under test to see if they could get away with it.

"Behold," - again an expression which is always followed by something unusual.

"the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out".

"the feet" is personification and represents the group of young men who carried out her husband. Peter could have indicated them by the use of "the hands" but the word "feet" indicates the carrying which was shortly to be done.

"at the door" indicates "nearby" and not necessarily standing at the door. The expression is figurative and is used by Jesus, as recorded in Matt. 24. 33 and Mark 13. 29.

The judgment was not given by Peter. He knew she had lied and knew that God is no respecter of persons but judgeth all alike. Sapphira would not receive any preferential treatment because she was a woman. Her guilt was equal to that of her husband and the punishment would be equal too.

"have buried" is a participle - "having buried".

## Verse 10

"Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the spirit:...."

"straightway" means "immediately" and is akin to "immediately" in 3. 7.

which showed that the cure was by Divine means and no other. It would appear to be Divine retribution coming upon her by her falling down dead the moment Peter had spoken to her. Apart from this, there would be no apparant reason why she should die so quickly.

"yielded up the ghost (spirit)" - she expired.

"found her dead". It is not stated what tests were applied or whether attempts were made to revive her. Peter's words appear to have been the authority for them knowing that she was dead. Peter would not know it himself that she would die but the Power of the Holy Spirit working in him, would tell him.

"carrying her forth" - the word is the same as "carried (him) out" of verse 6.

Verse 11

"And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard those things".

This is the same as the closing words of verse 5. The fear came upon "the ecclesia". Those of the ecclesia saw the happenings and feared.

"as many as heard" also feared. This would refer to those not baptised, who had an interest in the new faith of Christianity and heard about the deaths from others.

Commentators waste a large number of words in discussing why it was that burials were carried out with such speed, not waiting to ensure that death had taken place. The practice was against Jewish custom. The answer to this is that Luke is writing about the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and the things concerning Jesus of Nazareth. His work covers the LOGOS, or Divine Plan and Purpose. The Jewish or Roman method and rules of burial was not part of the LOGOS therefore Luke rightly omits any mention of it. We should find it sufficient to know that the deaths having been brought about by Divine Will, there could have been no doubt whatsoever that both man and wife were dead.

The effect upon the ecclesia and upon those who might join the ecclesia was profound. It could only strengthen them in their faith and make them realise that "The Lord knoweth them that are his, And, Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." (2 Tim 2. 19.) See also Nahum 1. 7.

The Faith which, for many centuries, had been confined to one nation, was now to be given to the whole world. Therefore a severe lesson like this could do good rather than harm.

The lesson of Ananias and Sapphira is now closed and is never mentioned again in Scripture. Luke turns to a theme of development in the next verse.

Barnabas was a type of Christ and the lesson is that we should follow Jesus wholly and not in part.

Verse 12

"And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people:...."

The great sign and wonder which had taken place in regard to Ananias and Sapphira was known amongst as many as heard these things. People who are unwilling to leave established worship may be impressed by something but the impression would wear off in time. How effectual it would have been, therefore, to continue doing signs and wonders when Preaching the Gospel.

This verse and verses 14/16 form the transitional stage between one event and another. A similar style is found in Acts 2. 43/47. and 4. 32/35. Luke is

a master at introducing his next subject - as we shall see in a moment.

"were....wrought" is continuous and is literally, "continued to take place". This indicates that the apostles were busy and preached daily, doing signs and wonders. Note that only the apostles wrought the signs and wonders.

"(and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch."

This note which continues to verse 14 is in parenthesis. Having been with one accord in their waiting for the Holy Spirit and with one accord in worship, they are now with one accord in their work. They all went to Solomon's porch without discussing where they should go. It seemed to all that that was the proper place to go. It must have been a common and popular meeting ground for people of all races and therefore the best place to go to preach. It is this statement however, that Luke uses to introduce the next phase in his work of teaching. If we think back upon what we have learnt, and consider how the Sanhedrin first stopped them from preaching to the people at Solomon's porch, and later, how the Sanhedrin warned the apostles not to continue with their preaching, we can imagine that we are soon to read of the displeasure of the Sanhedrin and the steps which they took to prevent the preaching of the Gospel. It is in this way that Luke is so thoughtful and constructive in telling his story of the struggles of early Christianity. He always adds introductory remarks which lead us to the appropriate event.

#### Verse 13

"And of the rest durst no man join himself to them:...." This is a difficult translation difficulties. "the rest" is a relative term and refers to the rest of those who believed and who followed the apostles where they went. They would not usurp any authority which would rightly attach to the apostles, probably through fear of what had happened to Ananias and Sapphira. The effect of this was to leave the apostles as a separate group working amongst themselves without hinderance from others who wished to join them. The subsequent history of the apostles shows them to have been a separate group of men.

"but the people magnified them." The people who feared what had been done to Ananias and Sapphira were the more impressed by the signs and wonders which followed. This information is supplied by Luke to prepare us for the information given in the next verse.

#### Verse 14

"And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both men and women."

"believers" is another participle meaning "(those) believing".

"the more" - there is a difference between "more" and "the more". The expression "the more" means that the adding of those believing was done in much larger numbers than formerly. In Luke's story, this must have a reason and it is within the character of Luke's style to introduce this. Therefore, looking back at the previous verse, we see the reason. Because "the people magnified them (the apostles), those believing were added in much greater numbers than when the people heard the apostles for the first time and did not then hold them in the same degree of popularity as now."

"added to the Lord," This must be contrasted with Acts 2. 47. where it was the Lord who added to the ecclesia. Now we find that people are added to the Lord. The point is a difficult one but we can overcome it by pointing out that in Acts 2 they were preaching the Lord Jesus to the people and using the Power of the Holy Spirit which Jesus had sent them, to do so. Therefore it is logical to assume that the Lord gave the increase. Either it was the effect of what Jesus had achieved that brought the converts or God gave the increase. In the verse before us, the same conditions obtain and the increase was again given to the ecclesia which is the body of Christ. If the ecclesia is the body of Christ, or - to make it easier - the body of the Lord, then in that sense the believers were added to the Lord.

"multitudes both of men and women." Comparing this statement with a similar one in Acts 4. 4. we find both sexes mentioned here and only men in Acts 4. 4. We submit, that 4. 4. states "men" and means "men" apart from women in accordance with Jewish custom in numbering only males. In this verse however, Luke has another duty to perform. The crime of Sapphira and her death may have left a wrong impression with the reader. Women still flocked to the Faith but in keeping with his literary style, Luke must prepare us for that which is to follow in his writings. Acts 6. 1. shows that there was a problem with widows. In enumerating the converts, Luke has always mentioned men. The reader may ask How did the women get into the Faith if only men were numbered? The answer is given here so as to remove all doubt. This substantiates our view that where men are mentioned, women are also amongst the converts but the numbering is done in accordance with Jewish custom.

This closes the statement in parenthesis. The next verse must be read as a continuation from verse 12 up to the words "...wrought among the people."

#### Verse 15

"Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them."

All commentators consulted ignore the parenthesis except Alexander who declares that brackets should not be used. This is a grammatical matter rather than an exegetical problem.

"they brought forth...." - they brought out into the streets.

"the streets" - literally "broad ways" as opposed to the narrow streets. The broad ways would be more public and as the apostles sought the more public places for their preaching, they would be more likely to go through the broad ways. The margin says "in every street" which is true enough but it is in every broad ways.

"into" - the Greek is "along" indicating that they laid the sick along the side of the broad ways.

"beds and couches" shows two different types of beds. The beds are those which were used for sleep. The couches were those used for carrying people who could not walk. Luke is the only writer to use these words. Other lexicons - and the recognised ones such as Bullinger and Fine state that the bed is a small bed such as is used by the rich and the couch is that which is used by the poor. This shows that both poor and rich brought their sick to be healed.

"the shadow of Peter...." This seems to suggest superstition among the people because the shadow of a person passing by could not cure any ill, no matter how slight it may be. Curing of infirmities of the flesh is possible only if God wills it so. Although Luke does not say that people were cured in this way, he says at the end of the next verse, that every one who came to the apostles were cured. This may have included those over whom the shadow passed.

The Roman Catholics seize upon this verse to find support for their theory that the Pope has a similar power these days. This argument is without foundation of any sort as there is no proof that the Pope is in Apostolic succession and the very pomp and ceremony of the Pope's movements would condemn him in the eyes of God, of Jesus and of Peter. If we must accept this view, then what are we to accept in regard to the handkerchiefs or aprons that came from Paul after touching his body and cured people? This was an even greater miracle than the healing from the shadow of Peter. (Acts 19. 12.) What line of apostolic succession started with Paul? The facts before us show that the apostles were thronged by an enormous number of people with whom he could not cope in the course of a day's work nor many day's work. In order to help the people and enable a rapid build-up in the ecclesia to take place in view of

the serious events which were to happen before long, God permitted cures to be effective in this way.

It is essential that we should understand what happened in this instance. It was not through any power which Peter had given to him that brought about the cures. Peter would have been the first to deny this. (Acts 3. 12 and 16.) It was not the passing shadow of Peter which effected the cures. It must have been the FAITH of the people which God accepted and allowed the cures. Those who did not have the proper FAITH would not be cured. Nevertheless we must always be mindful of the fact that Peter does not state definitely that such people who relied upon the shadow were cured. This would be a poor defence in a debate on the subject therefore we must be prepared to attack from other angles. The word "overshadow" - see Matt. 17. 5; Mark 9. 7; Luke 1. 35 and 9. 34; shows that the Power of the Highest was present.

Verse 16

"There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem,..."

"came...." - should be "came together" and indicates that the coming was continuous.

"the cities round about...." This is the first indication that the Gospel in apostolic days had reached further than the boundaries of Jerusalem.

The reference to the "cities round about Jerusalem" has a further significance in that the Sanhedrin would soon be approached by their representatives in the other cities as to what action could be taken to stop this new movement from spreading. Luke is building up the situation with great narrative skill.

"bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one."

"folks" - this word does not appear in the original Greek. There is only one word and it meant "sick ones".

"vexed with unclean spirits...." The Greek word for "vexed" is used only twice in the N.T. - here and in Luke 6. 18. The usage in Luke is not the same in all texts so must remain doubtful. Luke draws a distinction between "sick ones" and those who were troubled with unclean spirits. This shows the keen observance of a medical practitioner. What the unclean spirits signified, we are not told. Unclean spirits often signified mental ills as in the case of Legion. (Matt. 8. 28/34. Mark 5. 1/20. Luke 8. 26/36.) In the accounts by Mark and Luke, it appears that Legion was cured of madness. It was something which affected his brain. Matt. 4. 24. mentions "lunatics" as does Matt. 17. 15 where the sufferer seems to be an epileptic. In both cases the affliction is one of the mind. The prevalence of malaria at that time in Judea is known and if many suffered in this way, they would be delirious. This would affect the mind.

Having reached this stage, Luke is now ready to relate the next part of his story. He has introduced many links which fit the events which are to follow.

- (1) They made frequent use of Solomon's porch, at which place they had been interrupted by the Sanhedrin on a former occasion.
- (2) They did many signs and wonders, which had drawn the attention of the Sanhedrin in the first place.
- (3) The people showed great interest in the apostles and their work.
- (4) The Ecclesia grew very rapidly, thus showing the spread of the new doctrine throughout those parts of Judea.
- (5) The sick were laid out in the wider streets for Peter to see as he passed by but the members of the Sanhedrin would also see.
- (6) Multitudes from cities round about Jerusalem came to see the apostles.
- (7) Multitudinous cures were effected thus spreading a knowledge of the apostles and their work.

It is now obvious to us that the Sanhedrin must take immediate and vigorous action against the apostles.

Verse 17

"Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and put them in the common prison."

The action by the Sanhedrin was exactly the same as that on a former occasion. (Acts 4. 1/3.) They arrested the apostles and locked them up for the night.

"Then" is a continuative particle denoting that there was an intimate relationship between what has gone before and what is now to follow.

"The high priest" brings a much more important movement to bear upon the apostles. In the former case, the priests, the captain of the temple and the Sadducees were involved. Now the high priest is added to the number who protest thus bringing a more national and public character against the Faith.

"the sect" is used to describe the Sadducees and may give the impression that they were a splinter group having broken off from the Jews. The difference was largely one of policy within the Sanhedrin and could be called a Party. The Pharisees and Sadducees were two opposing factions within the Sanhedrin.

The arrest was made some time after the former release of the apostles. The Sadducean party seemed to anticipate a threat to their own political position, thus causing them to take action.

"and were filled with indignation." They were filled with envy, malignant jealousy, or party zeal.

Verse 18

"And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison."

"laid their hands on" - arrested them forcibly. It may have been necessary just to lead them away and not lay hands upon them. Thus suggests that there were more apostles there than just Peter and John.

"common prison" - suggests a type of prison where all types meet. This would be an insult to the apostles who were not of the common criminal type. This, however, is assumption. From the facts before us, it appears that they were put in a prison belonging to the public and not to any powerful private individual.

Verse 19

"But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said,"

We see now why Luke stressed the presence of Sadducees in the arrest party. The Sadducees denied the existence of angels. So one of the beings whose existence they denied set the apostles free.

"by night" indicates that the release was made during a time of darkness to increase the terror and surprise of the miraculous release.

"the angel of the Lord" - several leading commentators have distorted this short description of the angel to mean "the Holy Ghost" in person. We must be on our guard against such distortions and debating points. The word angel means "servant" and Luke is drawing a clear cut distinction between the servant of men who could have liberated the prisoners during the night e.g. by collusion with one of the jailers. That argument is permanently put aside by showing that there was no man-made agency, for the liberator was the servant or messenger of the LORD.



"opened the prison doors" - see Acts where the iron gate opened of its own accord. The doors were found shut the next morning. The angel who opened them must have closed them afterwards. Luke adds this detail but, in writing as the Holy Spirit moved him, he wrote with a purpose. This piece of information would have a profound effect on the Sadducees. For fear of awakening the guards, human sympathisers would have left the doors open.

Verse 20

"Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life".

This short speech by the angel shows that the liberation of the apostles was not for their own benefit or comfort but for the purpose of preaching the Gospel.

"stand and speak" - do not move from place to place for people to bring out the sick and lay them in the broadways for you to pass so that they may be healed. This is much more important work. PREACH THE GOSPEL - the words of Life - the words of salvation. Stand in one place so that people may hear and learn.

"in the temple" - not in the streets but preach to those who make the effort to get there. That is to say, preach to those who have a desire to worship God.

"to the people" - not to the rulers nor to the Sadducees. The people are more likely to listen.

"all the words of this life". All - not "part" of the gospel.

Summarising the angels words, we find:-

- (1) Do not merely talk but preach;
- (2) Do not preach privately but publically;
- (3) Not in the streets, but in the temple;
- (4) Not to the rulers but to the people;
- (5) Not a part of the truth necessary to salvation but all the Truth.

The words of this life refer to eternal life in the age to come. John 6. 68; 12. 50; 17. 3; Ephes 2. 12; etc.

Verse 21

"And when they had heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning and taught.

"When they heard...." - literally, "they, having heard...."

"temple" - not the Holiest of all" but the sacred place where offerings were made. A distinction must be drawn between this part of the temple and others such as a Court Yard and the Holier parts of the sanctuary.

"early in the morning" - about daybreak.

"taught" preached publically as directed by the angel.

"But the high priest came and they that were with him,...." Compare with verse 17 and note that the word "all" is omitted from the verse we are studying. Verse 17 states that all that were with him were filled with indignation. In this verse, it merely states that those who were with him (the high priest) called the council...."

"came" - entered the hall.

"But the high priest came and they that were with him, and called the council

together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought."

"the council" - the word translated as "council" here is Sanhedrin". Other references in Acts are 4. 15; 5. 27, 34, 41; 6. 12, 15; 22. 30; 23. 1, 6, 15, 20, 28; 24. 20.

"senate" - Greek "gerousia". It was a body of old and experienced men who were called in as assessors in important matters.

"prison" - not the same as the prison of verse 18 which is a "guard house". This is a place of bondage.

"to have them brought". To bring them to the council chamber.

#### Verse 22

"But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told, "

"the officers" - used as a term to describe military officers attending a general. Hence, members of the temple guard.

"prison" - Luke now exhausts the Greek words for prison, by using a different word from those used in verses 18 and 21. The meaning is much the same as either.

"returned, and told." - reported back to their superiors.

#### Verse 23

"Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within."

"prison" - as in verse 21.

"shut" comes from a word with a meaning more than just shut. The door was bolted fast as is next described.

"with all safety" - with all security.

"standing without" - in addition to secure bolting, the keepers were standing on guard. The word "without" is omitted from some manuscripts. Nevertheless it is obvious that they were standing without (outside) otherwise they would long since have reported that the prisoners had gone.

#### Verse 24

"Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow."

"high priest" - in Greek it is simply "The priest". Having "The" shows a priest of station and authority.

"captain" - he is mentioned here again, having been mentioned in verse 1 of chapter 4.

"doubted" is a poor translation of a very strong word meaning utterly perplexed.

"whereunto this would grow" - what this would become. To them it now assumed extremely serious proportions. What would the people think? This thought connecting the event with the people is carried into the next verse which mentions the people.

## Verse 25

"Then came one and told them saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people."

"Then" translated as "now" in the previous verse.

"Behold" - again a word introducing something unusual.

"standing...." - Greek original has it "standing and teaching in the temple". This is better as it combines the two actions together - standing and teaching. This makes their action more dynamic.

## Verse 26

"Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned."

"The captain" - the captain of the temple guard.

"the officers" - same as in verse 22.

"without violence" - shows how the miracle of the previous night had affected them. They had used force in verse 18 but now, the deliverance of the apostles had increased the zeal of the people.

"feared the people" - their own particular public image was always their first concern. See Matt. 21. 46; Mark 12. 12; Luke 20. 19; 22. 2.

"lest they should be stoned". This was a one way fear which did not deter them from stoning others. John 10. 31/33; Acts 7. 58.

## Verse 27

"And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them,"

"And" - this word is translated as follows in the verses named:- But, verse 22; now, verse 24 and then, in verse 25.

"the high priest" - he took charge of the trial for he had this power ex officio.

"the council" is the Sanhedrin.

## Verse 28

"Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name?"

The high priest refers to the previous commandment given in 4. 17/18.

"straitly command" literally "with a charge we charged you". This is a Hebrewism giving intensity to what was said. See Luke 22.15; Acts 23. 14.

"in this name". Note that the Sanhedrin (High Priest as spokesman) does not name the "name". He does not say "the name of Jesus of Nazareth". This is not reverence as is usually the case in Hebrew usage but a desire not to refer to the Lord, either out of hatred for him or a fear that they might be taking the name of God in vain, not that they thought Jesus might be God, but that God's Works had been manifested by and through him.

"and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us."

"behold" - once again to introduce something unusual. To them it was surprising that the teaching should have made the progress it had.

"ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine". This is what they had been forbidden to do. "Filled Jerusalem" is not a Hebrewism but is a natural hyperbole which is characteristic of many languages. See the gross exaggeration in 2 Kings 21. 16.

"intend to bring this man's blood upon us." This was not a fear of Divine retribution. They were far too self-righteous to think that they had done wrong. They feared the people and a large number of people had come into the faith after seeing how their leaders had deceived them. The Sanhedrin feared what the people might do to them as a result of the doctrine which was now being taught. "To bring blood upon the head" is an idiom peculiar to Hebrew. See Ezek. 33. 4; Matt. 23. 35; 27. 25.

Luke has now completed his introductory paragraph to Peter's next speech. Reference to the Sanhedrin's fear concerning the people and the blood of Jesus being upon their heads, leads us to believe that whatever Peter says, he will make reference to the death and resurrection of Jesus and that this was God's Plan.

#### Verse 29

"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men".

In the Greek, the word for "answered" is in the singular, and the word for "said" is in the plural. The word "answered" agrees with Peter and the word "said" agrees with "Apostles", thus showing that Peter must have answered but in answering as he did, he must have had the full support of the apostles.

"We ought...." in the Greek is "we must" which shows not an obligation but a necessity. This agrees with the word "obey" which follows.

"obey" is a word peculiar to Luke and Paul. It appears in Acts 5. 32; 27. 21; Titus 3. 1. (The reference in Acts 27. 21 is to the word "hearken" in that verse.) It means "obey one in authority" and "to be obedient to a ruling power". Peter thus compares the power of Man and the power of God, with obvious preference for the Divine Power.

#### Verse 30

"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree"

"The God of our Fathers" has reference to the God who made a covenant with our fathers. The Divine Promise had been sought eagerly for centuries. Now Peter was connecting the birth of Jesus with those Promises. To make the application more direct, Peter uses the word "our" to show that he was no foreigner to Israel but was born under the same Covenant of Promise as they were.

"raised up" means "raised from the dead" and has no reference to the raising up of a prophet like unto Moses. (Deut. 18. 18.) This is a direct reference to the resurrection of Jesus.

"Slew" is used only twice in Scripture, here and in Acts 26. 21. It means "despatch"; "get rid of once and for all." It is also more direct in its application for it carries the sense of "murder with one's own hands". Thus Peter emphasises the guilt of the Jewish authorities.

"hanged" - the Greek "kremannumi" means to suspend as articles are suspended from a nail. (It makes one shudder to imagine the effect of this meaning.)

"on a tree" - The reference is to Deut. 21. 22/23. Verse 22 states that if a man is worthy of death, he must be hanged from a tree. Here Peter quotes the exact words from Deutereonomy and stresses the charge laid against Jesus by the Jewish authorities that he was worthy of death. (John 19. 7.) The effect is "Now let the Jewish authorities consider the verdict again. Was he really worthy of death"?

"tree" - the Greek word here is not used as translated "tree". It means a stake upright in the ground, or "wood" as opposed to any other material. That means it is not "wood" as in English, used to indicate a place where trees grow. It is wood as a material, or anything fashioned from wood such as a stake. It does not in any sense indicate two pieces of wood set at an angle to each other.

The sentence of Deut. quoted above, was hanging by the neck. Crucifixion in its accepted sense was not known to Hebrews in any period in their history.

It should be noted that without exception, all references in the Scriptures to the "Cross" refer to a stake set upright in the ground. This is true for Greek words such as "crucis" from which the word "cross" is taken. The word "crucify" in Greek meant "suspend" or "hang" and in no instance whatsoever, meant to crucify as in the modern sense. The idea of impaling on a cross started in the days of Constantine when the shields of his soldiers bore the letter "X" which is the Greek for "Ch" being the first letters of the name of Christ. The Pagan's had shields with the sign "T" after their god "Tammuz". Constantine decided to marry the two concepts by dropping the crossbar of the "T" and straightening up the "X" so as to get what is now known as a Cross. The idea that a cross represents a man with his arms outstretched is ingenious but untrue.

There is no point in studiously disregarding the use of the word "Cross" and using "stake" instead. Being pedantic in this manner causes distress amongst one's hearers who may not know the truth about the Cross. One can carry such things too far and cause confusion or bring ridicule upon oneself. It is sufficient to know what the "cross" really means. Regard it as the sacrifice of Jesus. This brings us to a consideration of the Atonement which is what the cross stands for.

#### Verse 31

"Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins".

"Him" - empathic use of the pronoun. Means "This same Jesus...."

"hath God exalted" - lifted up. In other words, "You killed him but the God whom you worship, the God of the Covenant, has raised him up."

"with his right hand...." Literally "to his right hand". Purely figurative. If God is everywhere, it is impossible for anyone, even Jesus, to sit at His right hand. It is a position of honour, power and dignity.

"a Prince" - see notes under 3. 15. The idea of being the prime mover must be remembered. Jesus was the prime mover in regard to repentance and forgiveness.

"and a Saviour" - through the repentance and forgiveness which follows.

"Repentance" and "forgiveness" - Note the teaching here - (1) Repentance, (2) forgiveness (which follows but never precedes repentance.) Jesus was the prime mover in this and is the Saviour. Hence, following repentance and forgiveness, we get salvation through him. Acts 10. 43; 13. 38; 26. 18.

"to Iseael" - a repetition of the reminder of their exalted status as given in 3. 25. These are important words and are effective now as they were then. Apart from "spiritual Israel" there is no salvation. Repentance and forgiveness must be connected with the Promises. The only means of connection is baptism.

No doubt these few words are Luke's summary of what was said. Compare carefully the teaching sequence of Peter's former speeches and see how closely he follows the same pattern.

## Verse 32

"And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him,"

"his witnesses...." - in keeping with Acts 1. 8. Some texts omit "his" without altering the sense.

"of these things" - these sayings concerning his mission, his death, his resurrection, his exaltation to the right hand of God, his future return and how this fits in with the teaching of salvation, repentance and forgiveness.

They were not only teachers of these things but were also witnesses of them having been with him from the beginning.

"so also the Holy Spirit...." they were not alone in their witness. The teaching they gave came from God who spoke through them by means of the power of His Holy Spirit. This agrees with John 15. 26.

"whom God hath given to them that obey him". If God GAVE the Holy Spirit then surely it is beyond all limits of logic to argue that the Holy (Ghost) Spirit was (is) a second or third person in a trinity of Gods. If God GAVE the Holy Spirit then the Holy Spirit must have been something which could be given to a person. God gave the Holy Spirit not as a free gift but as a method of control over His witnesses who spoke His words.

"that obey him" - the first sin in the garden of Eden was one of disobedience. Now in the broad sense, the only way in which to please God is to obey Him. This is done by close attention to His Word as spoken by His Son who manifested Him. The same words were now spoken by Peter who enjoined them to repent, and then forgiveness would follow. The word "obey" means "submissive obedience" to an appointed authority. The tense used here shows that the meaning intended is "those who are continually obeying him." One act of obedience is not enough. It must be continuous.

## Verse 33

"When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them."

"When they heard...." literally "having heard that".

"they were cut to the heart...." - they were sawn through. The expression is also used in Acts 7. 54. in connection with the reaction to the speech of Stephen. It does not occur elsewhere.

The effect was one of conscious guilt and extreme anger at the wilful disobedience to their previous commandments. We must not lose sight of the fact that the apostles had been set free from jail by Divine means. This coupled with Peter's logic and knowledge of the Scriptures, plus the carefully chosen words which he used, all put them in a position where there was no apparent way out. The rulers and spiritual leaders were beaten at every turn. Deep down in their hearts was the gnawing fear that maybe Peter was right. The best thing to do therefore, was to destroy the evidence by putting the apostles to death.

Luke must have had a reason for writing as he did and we submit that this was his way of leading up to the assassination of Stephen. The rising frustration of the Sanhedrin reaches a point where something had to be done.

The speech which follows at this stage is that of Gamaliel. It must not be thought that he excused the Sanhedrin and calmed their sorely tried nerves. What he achieved was to supply for them a way of escape from a dilemma which threatened to engulf them. They saw an easy way out and took it. The incident is a lesson in the vanity of human beings who will not yield a point even when they know they are wrong. Even when they were shewn that they were wrong before God, they did not yield.

## Verse 34

"Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space;"

The council had as members, certain Pharisees but these were in the minority. Nevertheless, they commanded more respect than the other members of the Sanhedrin so that the sadducees who always "feared the people", preferred to tone down their opposition to them. On this occasion, it was more imperative that the Sadducees should withhold the severe censure they would like to give because of the popularity of the Apostles amongst the people. Another point to remember is that Gamaliel would not take the part of the Sadducees against Peter and the other apostles because Peter had taught the resurrection which was something the Sadducees rejected. For all that he was an outstanding character in many ways, Gamaliel on this occasion was a politician and spoke as one. He was dealing with a religious matter and spoke about it in a religious way but however much we should like to feel charitable towards him, his main idea was to protect the Pharisees against the Sadducees. He was smart enough to see in the rapidly growing interest in the new religious body, the possibility of an ally at some later date. By all means he would prevent the murder which he felt the Sadducees were contemplating. How he did it was one of the most delightful incidents in the whole Book of the Acts.

Gamaliel as a name, means "the reward of God". The name first appears in Num. 1. 10 and 2. 20. where a man by this name is mentioned in connection with the tribe of Manasseh. (See also Num. 7. 54, 59; 10. 23.) He is accepted as being the grandson of Hillel who founded the more liberal school of the Pharisees. He was known to be a man of high character and learning and was one of seven Jewish "doctors" who were given the title of "Rabban" meaning "our Master". One of the principles he fought to establish was one where the poor heathen people should be allowed to glean along with the poor Jews. Another was that the Jews on meeting them, should extend to them the customary greeting "Shalom" meaning "peace be with you". This was to be done even on festival days when the heathen would be worshipping idols. Such toleration of the apostasy is to be admired in liberal circles but it did nothing to strengthen the Jewish faith. On the contrary, it would weaken it. We should never be liberal in our religious attitude towards the apostasy.

Gamaliel was the teacher of Paul. (Acts 22. 3.) His appearance in Luke's story at this stage, gives him much popularity amongst Christian readers and this popularity has led to much speculating as to whether he accepted Christianity later on in his life. The theory that he was secretly baptised can be rejected because he was of such a fearless character that he would not have deceived his fellow Pharisees by failing to disclose his conversion. If Paul could risk death in this way, surely Gamaliel would have done the same. Nothing is known of his immediate family but his grandson, Gamaliel 2 earned some fame as a scholar. When he died, it was written of him that "with the death of Gamaliel the reverence for the law ceased, and purity and abstinence died away."

Some of the narrower Bible critics disregard this story of Gamaliel's speech as they find it difficult to reconcile his liberalism with the vicious character of his pupil Saul (who was afterwards Paul). This view is almost childish and assumes that pupils and teachers are identical in character for the rest of their lives. It is thought by some that Gamaliel was a son of Simeon of Luke 2. 25 who was also noted for his wisdom.

"a doctor of the law" - "teacher of the law". Apart from this passage, other appearances of this compound Greek word are Luke 5. 17 and 1 Tim. 1. 7. The title denotes one who is not only a teacher but is also an accepted authority on his subject.

"had in reputation".... was highly honoured among the people.

"commanded...." - proposed or moved that they be set apart for a while. He preferred to address the Sanhedrin in

private thereby tacitly confessing that they had a poor case which the apostles should not hear.

#### Verse 35

"And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves, what ye intend to do as touching these men."

"Ye men of Israel,...." A carefully chosen address to cover all tribes.

"take heed to yourselves...." - Apply your minds to - be on your guard - take care of your own position. The warning here is to take care of their own safety. Gamaliel is not appealing for the safety of the apostles.

"as touching these men." This phrase is connected with the verb "to do" and makes the sentence read, "be careful what you are about to do to these men." or, "take heed for your own safety in connection with these men, what you are about to do."

#### Verse 36

"For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought."

Josephus records the history of a man named Theudas who led a number of people across the river Jordan, having promised them that he would divide the river as Joshua and Elijah had done before him. Cuspius Fadus was procurator at that time and led his soldiers against him and, having killed many of the followers, took Theudas prisoner and beheaded him. This took place in A.D. 44 which was about 10 years after Gamaliel had spoken about it. The conclusion we come to is that Josephus must have been wrong in his dates because Luke is very accurate in historical events in other parts of his work, and is not likely to err on this occasion. In any case, Luke was writing as he was moved by the Holy Spirit so could not go wrong. The name Theudas is not limited to one historical character. There were others having variants of the name, such as Thaddeus, Thaddaeus; the Greek Theodores, or the Hebrew equivalents having the same meaning, Matthias; Mattithias and Mattaniah.

#### Verse 37

"After this man rose up Judas of Galilee, in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished, and all, as many as obeyed him, were dispersed."

Josephus also mentions this man and states that he was of Galilee.

"the days of the taxing". The days of the enrollment, registration of property; registration of men liable for military service or a census of the population. In Luke 2. 2. it is used to mean a census for the purpose of imposing taxes, under Cyrenius, Proconsul of Syria. Josephus records that this same Cyrenius defeated and destroyed a Galilean rebel named Judas. The taxing gave Judas an opportunity of arousing defiance of the Romans. Josephus also describes Judas as having been a leader of a party which survived him. He states that they were dispersed and the Greek word used here means to scatter by sudden violence.

"drew away" - incited to apostasy.

We should note that historically, Gamaliel was not quite accurate. The revolt by Judas was crushed but it lived on in the Zealots, thus being more successful than Gamaliel said it was.

#### Verse 38

"And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught."



"Refrain from these men...." "Stand aloof from these men" This advice was contrary to that which the Sanhedrin wished. See verse 33. We see in this statement a proof of the outstanding character of Gamaliel for he was able to influence such powerful men to do that which they had no desire to do.

Up to a point, the advice is sound. Certain movements will tend to break down if left alone. But this is not always the case as we see from the great number of churches all calling themselves "Christian" and yet all differing one from the other in some way or another. Nevertheless, apostasy must be resisted. In the case of the rapidly growing "Christianity", the best thing the Sanhedrin could do was to disprove their views from the Scriptures. This, of course, they could not do. This being the case, Gamaliel's advice to the Sanhedrin was sound because it let them out of their difficulty and did not destroy completely their position amongst the people. The point is worth noting for Gamaliel's advice would not be good advice to the true Christians. If it were it would oppose the policy mentioned by Peter in Acts 4. 20. and in his prayer recorded in Acts 4. 29. Our duty is to preach boldly in the name of the Lord. We cannot set aside our obligations in the light of Gamaliel's advice to the Sanhedrin. Apostasy is there to be resisted and liberalism in regard to our handling of the Word of God must be expunged completely from our teaching program. The time to take a firm stand on this matter was never so urgent as it is now.

"let them alone" - permit them to go on doing as they are doing.

"Counsel or this work...." - The "counsel" refers to the plan which, either they had in mind, or they had it written down and to be followed. "Work" refers to the carrying out of that plan.

"be of men".... - originating from men without regard to God or in defiance of Him. This thought must have entered the minds of some of them. There were nagging doubts and now Gamaliel is helping them in their desire to put such worries behind them. "If it is of men, as we hope it is, then it will fail. If it is what we fear it might be, then let us wait and see what happens. If it turns out to be God's Work, then we can change". Thus a way of escape is given to the Sanhedrin for the present. It also saves the lives of innocent men.

We should take careful note that a wait and see policy is no advice to give to any member of the Household of Faith. There is no time to wait and see. Hebrews 11. 13/14 could well be read again and again in this connection.

Peter may have remembered this day when, years later, he wrote his Epistle. Note carefully his words in 1 Peter 4. 11/19.

"it will come to nought". It will certainly do this but, in the case of Roman Catholicism, it will come to nought long after it is much too late for any of us to do anything about our salvation. Jesus will have come by then. The time to resist is now.

Verse 39

"But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."

"of God" - corresponds to "of men" in verse 38. Originating from God. If it be the LOGOS (Plan and Purpose of God)

"cannot overthrow" - future tense, "will not be able to"

"haply ye be found" - unexpectedly you will be God-fighters. The verb in English is an adjective in the original Greek. Saul (Paul) learnt this when he found that by persecuting the ecclesias, he was persecuting Jesus. Acts 9. 5. See Matt. 12. 30. We should all remember that none of us can be neutral in the Holy War. There is no middle path. John 1. 1. says "God was the word" which means that God and His Plan and Purpose cannot be separated. Therefore to fight against the Plan is to fight against God.

## Verse 40

"And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go."

"to him they agreed" - they agreed effectually not to kill the apostles.

"when they had called the apostles" - called them to be brought back to the council chamber from whence they had been sent.

"and beaten them" - See Acts 16. 37; 22. 19. To change from a desire to kill them to setting them free unharmed was too much for the revengeful Sanhedrin. The words "they agreed" must be regarded in this connection. By the character of him, Gamaliel would never have agreed to this so there must have been some compromise amongst the various parties in the Sanhedrin. The punishment meted out could have been that prescribed by the Law in Deut. 25. 1/3. This permitted 40 stripes but in the event of the number of stripes accidentally being exceeded, the number usually given was "forty stripes save one". This is the first recorded instance of the followers of the Lord receiving stripes. See further comment under next verse.

"commanded" - see Acts 4. 18. gave instructions to each one individually.

## Verse 41

"And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name."

In the order of events recorded in this and the preceding verse, the Sanhedrin (1) called the apostles to their presence, (2) they beat them - or had them beaten, (3) warned them not to preach, and (4) let them go. The apostles therefore, left the presence of the Sanhedrin unassisted. The brutality of the Sanhedrin is shown by the fact that the apostles were beaten in their presence.

"rejoicing...." They would not rejoice in the punishment itself. One does not rejoice under such circumstances. The emotion goes much deeper than that. If one rejoiced in punishment, then such a person would be encouraged to look for further punishment, thinking that such punishment would bring them greater favour in the sight of God. The Christian Convert, Ignatius, at the beginning of the second century A.D. surrendered himself to martyrdom when he had every opportunity of avoiding it, thus being "sounding brass and a tinkling symbol" as Paul would have described him. (1 Cor. 13. 1/3)

The act of "rejoicing" is set out by Peter in 1 Pet. 1. 6. which shows that the emotion is closely connected with the gospel. Whatever pain or indignity they would suffer would be nullified by the knowledge that they were in the Covenants of Promise by their belief and baptism and that they were suffering because of this.

"counted worthy" - this expression appears only twice in the N.T. apart from the reference here. See Luke 20. 35; and 2 Thess. 1. 5. The sense indicates "suffering now and glory afterwards".

"to suffer shame" - the phrase is a paradox "Counted worthy to suffer shame". The paradox exists between the things of the "name" which they preached and the things of the Sanhedrin who, like Jannes and Jambres, would not yield to the miraculous evidence of the Finger of God. (2 Tim. 3. 8.)

"Beaten" (from the previous verse) - the word translated as "beaten" comes from a word meaning to flay, or skin, as with animals. This means that they would receive very severe damage as a result of the beating. They would be at least partly exposed to the beaters and onlookers, thus adding dishonour to the beating.

They had been warned of punishments. (Matt. 10. 17; Mark 13. 9; Luke 12. 11; 21. 12; John 15. 18; 16. 2. The beating and the shame (dishonour) were small compared with that suffered by Jesus, therefore they were glad that they should, in a sense, be suffering with him.

Verse 42

"And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ".

The final verse of this chapter shows that the result of the warnings and the beating, caused the apostles to pursue more vigorously the preaching of the Name.

"in the temple, and in every house...." shows that they went to Solomon's Porch - presumably - to preach to the world. They also went to every house to preach. Thus they called the world to them (at the temple) and went to the world themselves (in every house.) They let no opportunity slip by.

"to teach and preach" - taking the second of these first, we learn that to "preach" means to evangelise - that is to preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God. To "teach" has a narrower scope and indicates the giving of instruction. This would mean that once converts had been gained by preaching, they would be taught carefully so that they fully understood. This is an answer to the question, "Does it matter what we believe?"

The word "preach" or "preaching" is used in Acts 8. 4, 12, 25, 35, 40; 10. 36; 11.20; 13. 32; 14. 7, 15, 21; 15. 35; 16. 10; 17. 18.

The order given by Luke is quite correct. He puts "teach" before "preach" as if to say that the people were taught first and then had the Gospel preached unto them. The fact is that many people had heard the Gospel and were following the apostles wherever they went. Such people would be taught. Others who had not yet been converted, would have the Gospel preached unto them.

"Jesus Christ". This is another way of stating the subject of their preaching and teaching. It is "Jesus, the Saviour who died and rose again, and is yet to return as the Christ, the Anointed King and Priest."

The chapter began with Ananias, an enemy in the camp of the friends and ends with a friend (Gamaliel) in the camp of the enemy.

1877

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

Chapter 6.

Chapters 4 and 5 dealt amongst other things, with the first persecutions which came to the rapidly growing Ecclesia at Jerusalem. The persecution of Chapter 5 was more than that of Chapter 4. This indicates a growing opposition to rising Christianity which took on a more forceful character as time went on. The persecution was to grow to immense proportions and it was to be motivated by a desire to crush for all time, the new doctrine. The Sanhedrin received a big shock when they found that having put away Jesus for all time, as they thought, his teaching was to revive and be continued on a wide scale by his erstwhile disciples. To add to the discomfort of the Sanhedrin, the power of the Holy Spirit working in the apostles, brought a tremendous following from amongst the common people and the big gatherings wherever the apostles went, would lead to the Romans thinking that a movement towards insurrection was underway. This would embarrass the the relationship between the Sanhedrin, and in particular, the Sadducees, on the one hand, and the Romans on the other. Therefore, politically and spiritually, the Sadducees and through them, the Sanhedrin, had every reason to get rid of the apostles and their following. Chapter 6 is Luke's lead-in to the speech which led to the tremendous calamity of a wide persecution which nearly brought to nought the Jerusalem ecclesia.

Verse 1

"And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations."

"And in those days...." - This connects the activities mentioned in Acts 5. 42, with what follows. There must have been a substantial time lapse between the setting free of the apostles and the growth of the disciples mentioned here. In Acts 1. 15. the expression indicates a few days whereas in Matt. 3. 1, a few years are suggested.

"when the number of the disciples was multiplied...." - note that the followers of the apostles are now called "disciples". The sense is "learners" or "pupils". The growth in ecclesial numbers would bring their own difficulties. In a large ecclesia, such difficulties would present a big problem to the apostles.

"murmuring" - discontent or dissatisfaction with a state of affairs existing at the time.

"arose" - came into being.

"Grecians" - note, not Greeks but Grecians. These were "Grecian Jews" who are also known as "Hellenists". (See Acts 9. 29; 11. 20. and 14. 1.) It refers to Jews who, on account of their dispersion, spoke Greek as their home language. Their Scriptures were the Greek translation of the O.T. known as the Septuagint (LXX).

"Hebrews" - Jews born and bred in the Holy Land who spoke Aramaic (as Jesus did). They were typically Israelites in their aloofness from other nations and were inclined to despise their brethren in the Abrahamic line of Gentile lands.

The sudden bringing together of people with different cultures and ways of thinking, must cause trouble.

"Their widows were neglected...." - This had been a problem in the days of Moses (Exod. 22. 22; Deut. 10. 18.) It also received attention from Paul. (1 Tim. 5. 3/13.) The neglect complained of was not the result of ill-will but in the work they had to do, no one had time to care for them. If they did have time, they would care for their own people who spoke their language and would give scant attention to those who spoke another language.

As a result of this, jealousy must have arisen.

"in the daily ministrations" - in the daily service or attendance. All the members of the ecclesia had all things common so there would have to be a daily distribution of the necessities of life.

Verse 2

"Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables."

"Then".... "so" or "because of this"

"the twelve" - Note that they are now twelve in number, and accepted as such.

"the multitude of the disciples" - they are now a multitude and they are the disciples of the men who were at one time disciples of Jesus. In fact, they were disciples of Jesus too because they were part of the body of Christ. A principle is now being established, namely, the governing of the body of believers by a smaller body chosen by them from amongst themselves.

"It is not reason...." - it is not acceptable before God.

"that we should leave the word of God...." that we should stop for a while the preaching of the Word of God..

"and serve tables." - tables at which meals were served and clothes or other necessities of life were distributed.

Verse 3

"Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business."

"look ye out among you...." - The wisdom of the apostles is shown here where they ask those who complained about their management, to choose from among themselves men who would do the work. The Apostles were men of Galilee and were Hebrews from the language they spoke. They had been criticised by the Hellenists and now asked the Hellenists to choose men from themselves to do that portion of the work which they had criticised. It denotes a spirit of humility amongst the apostles.

"seven men" - there was a precedent for a limitation in numbers as they had the example from Jesus when he chose twelve disciples and seventy other disciples. Seven would appeal to the Jews as it was a Divine number of perfection. The Jewish villages were always ruled by sevens.

"full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom...." They had to be of "honest report" which means that they had to have a public testimony to their worthiness for the office to be given to them. They also had to have received the Holy Spirit. "Wisdom" has a two-fold character, (1) the ability to apply knowledge in a correct manner, and (2) a knowledge of the Divine Plan and Purpose. (Prov. 4. 7.)

"whom we may appoint over this business". The men appointed would not be obliged to serve tables but would have to organise the work and see that it was done in a manner satisfactory to the greatest number.

Verse 4

"But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to ministry of the word."

"But we...." emphatically the apostles as distinguished from others.

"continually to prayer" - not private prayer but the conduct of

public worship. This work was to be continuous. Thus, the apostles having been relieved of a minor task which took up a lot of their time, did not have more leisure as a result, but spent the time gained in further work in the Lord's service.

"....the ministry of the word." Preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

#### Verse 5

"And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:"

There must have been general relief that at last something positive was being done and they were prepared to try it out.

There were seven men chosen as arranged and without exception, all of them have Greek names, indicating that they must have been Hellenists. In view of our definition of "wisdom" given above as "knowledge of the Divine Plan and Purpose", we find it interesting that Stephen is described as "a man full of faith...." The faith is to be regarded here in the light of Paul's definition of it in Hebrews 11. 1/2.

The only other name in the list of which anything is known is Philip who appears as a type of John the Baptist in the early and later histories in Acts. He suddenly appears, does a work for the Lord and then disappears, as did Elijah, the pre-figure of John the Baptist.

Nicolas is described as a "proselyte of Antioch". That would be Syrian Antioch. This means that he was formerly a heathen and had converted to Judaism. Now he transferred from Judaism to Christianity. Many commentators have hazarded a guess that Luke's home town was "Antioch" and that he mentioned it here because he was proud of it. In view of the utter humility shown by Luke in writing his two books, it is very unlikely that he would draw the limelight upon himself even in this indirect manner. We feel that the mention of it is in keeping with his characteristic style in mentioning something, some one or some place as an introduction for something which is to follow. He has already introduced us to Stephen and is now building up a state of affairs where the Christians will eventually clash with the forces which were against them. This clash was to disperse the ecclesia but it regathered itself at Antioch. This may supply the reason why Luke introduces the city in this clever way. We know from our experience of Luke's style, to look out for everything he casually mentions.

#### Verse 6

"Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them."

"set before the apostles...." - The election was left to the brethren and sisters (if sisters had any say) and after the election, those elected were "caused to stand before the apostles." Therefore this is not an election as an election had already been done. It was simply causing those elected to stand before the apostles.

"when they had prayed" - showing that they acknowledged God's guiding Hand.

"they laid their hands on them." The "laying on of hands" was required under the Law as a sacrificial rite acknowledging that the sacrificial animal was at one with the sinner who laid on his hands. The sinner acknowledged that he was at one with the sacrificial animal. When Israel blessed his grandsons, he laid his hands upon them. Gen. 48. 14. In Num. 27. 18/23 Moses laid his hands on Joshua and gave "him a charge." See also Deut. 34. 9. In N.T. days, it was used at a time of bodily healing. (Matt. 9. 18; Mark 6. 5; 7. 32; 8. 23; 16. 18; Luke 4. 40; 13. 13.) Acts 8. 17 records the giving of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands.

It is difficult to ascertain exactly what effect the laying on of hands in this instance had.

It could not have been for the purpose of passing on Spirit Gifts because it is recorded of these men that they were full of the Holy Spirit. The only conclusion we can come to is that the Apostles laid hands on them as an act of blessing them at the outset of their ministry and giving them the Right Hand of Fellowship. From the outcome recorded here, we see that the act of laying on of hands is a type of dedication to the work for which they had been elected.

#### Verse 7

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

The effect of the new arrangement is shown here in that "the word of God increased". (See Acts 12. 24; 19. 20; for other occasions when the word of God increased.)

The teaching seemed to be concentrated in Jerusalem for it was here that the number of disciples increased greatly.

Priests are mentioned here for the first time as being amongst the converts. Luke mentions them last amongst the newly converted people to show the great progress which had been made amongst the people. The ordinary priests formed the larger group of those of the priesthood, the wealthy class of High Priest being comparatively few in number yet wielding immense political power. The ordinary type of priest is that which counted men like Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist and husband of Elizabeth as one of them. Such men were devout in a religious and unpolitical sense and would readily accept the word of God.

In Luke's context, he has built up the tension to a high point. The Truth was spreading rapidly in spite of the commandments of the Sanhedrin not to preach. Now that a large number of the priests has been brought into the fold, we can imagine the effect it would have upon the powerful opponents of Christianity. Luke has now built up our anticipation and we begin to feel uneasy while he introduces his next character as he does now - -

#### Verse 8

"And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

Stephen makes a very brief appearance in Scripture and departs from the scene. His death gave rise to one of the greatest tragedies to befall the new Faith. His appearance is of great importance in the history of those days and it is as well that we should know as much as we can about him. His speech which is recorded for most of Chapter 7 is the longest in the Book of the Acts. He was to become the first martyr after Jesus.

Stephen was a Hellenist and with his wider experience and broader training than the simple men from Galilee, he brings to the Faith a new approach which reconciled the teaching of the Law of Moses, the temple worship, and the history of Israel and the world around him. His speech is summarised by Luke but is a masterly effort. The one important witness who was standing by at his death, was to develop Stephen's style to even greater proportions, maybe another instance of the advantage of education being brought to bear on such matters.

The great importance of Stephen in Luke's historical narrative lies in the fact that he is the link between Peter and Paul. Paul paid tribute to the great teacher Gamaliel whom we met in the last chapter but although Paul did not acknowledge it, it does appear that inasmuch as Stephen set in order and motion a teaching that Paul was later to pursue with great vigor, Stephen was Paul's greatest teacher. In a sense, Stephen was the fore-runner of Paul.



"full of faith and power...." - The word "faith" is taken by some to be "grace". The Greek according to the Emphatic Diaglott, is "charitos" which is the genitive of "charis" and means "favour". That is to say, he was a man who lived according to his Faith and was humble, kind and in every way an outstanding Christian. The "power" mentioned in the verse, is the power which flows from the gift of the Holy Spirit.

"wonders and miracles" are the astonishing acts which a person favoured by the gift of the Holy Spirit can do and the signs which such astonishing acts were meant to portray. This is the first reference to anyone not an apostle, performing any act by the Holy Spirit.

#### Verse 9

"Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia, and of Asia, disputing with Stephen."

"Then arose...." - They stood up to take action. See Acts 1, 15; 5. 17, 34, 35, 36.

"the synagogue...." The word "synagogue" means "a gathering together". The origin of the synagogue is lost in the remoteness of history but it is thought to have started after the Babylonian Captivity. When the nation was led away from the city of Jerusalem and could no longer attend the worship at the temple, they had to have a place of assembly where they could gather one with the other in worship and for study. To what extent this was the case during the Babylonian captivity is impossible to say as no figure emerges from the pages of history who would set up such a building. When the Babylonian exile came to an end and the Medo-Persian occupation started, there arose a man named Ezra who is described in the Bible and details of his work are given. He is very likely, on his return to the country of captivity, to have started such places of assembly where worship and the study of the Word of God would be encouraged. The synagogue gradually became the centre of Jewish Social Life.

Without a doubt, there were a large number of synagogues scattered throughout the countries in which the Jews were dispersed. Also, in Jerusalem there was a very large number indeed and some writings appear to exaggerate the number of synagogues which were to be found in the capital city. It has been estimated that in A.D. 70, there were 394 synagogues in Jerusalem. If this is true, then some of them must have been very small indeed and capable of accommodating very few worshippers. The reason for such a large number is said to be because Jews from all over the civilised world would come to Jerusalem and would like to mix and meet with those who spoke their language, and who shared their social customs which they had adopted in the countries in which they lived. The synagogues eventually became places of intrigue where plots were hatched against the Roman overlords. This eventually led to the destruction of the Jewish way of life and their eventual dispersion throughout the earth. Jesus had prophesied of the dispersion but God permits man to bring about those things which had been foretold, in a natural way, acting according to his own will. For the prophecy by Jesus, see Luke 21. 24.

The grammatical construction of the sentence giving the identity of the dissenting synagogues is confusing and makes identification difficult. There are different ways of reading the list - "synagogue of the Libertines, and (Cyrenians and Alexandrians) and Cilisia and of Asia" or, (1) Libertines, (2) Cyrenians and Alexandrians, (3) Cilisia and Asia. Perhaps there were only two, namely, (1) Libertines, Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and (2) Cilicians and Asia. Whatever the number was is of little importance. The fact is that opposition to Stephen's teaching came from foreign Jews, and the regions of opposition were Northern Africa and that part of the world which we now call Asia Minor.

Libertines: The majority of scholars identify these people with a Latin description, namely, "libertini" referring to freedmen who at one time had been slaves but subsequently were given liberty. Some of these became

Roman proselytes who were fairly numerous in Rome. Another theory is that such people were the sons of Jews who had been carried to Rome as captives by Pompey and afterwards set free. The modern meaning of the word "libertine" has no part in this verse.

**Cyrenians:** Refers to men from Cyrene which was the chief city of Libya, situated about half way between Alexandria and Carthage. It was a Greek city and famous for its culture and commerce. Alexander the Great had granted the rights of citizenship to Jews on equal terms with the Greeks, and it became an important centre for the Jews of the Dispersion. From Acts 11. 20. we learn that there were Cyrenians amongst the early preachers of the Gospel. Other Biblical references are Matt. 27. 32. mentioning Simon who carried the Cross for Jesus; Mark. 15. 21. tells us that this Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus; and it is this Rufus who may be the friend of Paul who was mentioned in Rom. 16. 13. Acts 13. 1. mentions Lucius who was a teacher of Christianity.

**Alexandrians:** The city of Alexandria was founded by Alexander the Great in B.C. 332, and was situated in Egypt, being the Hellenic capital. The Jews who lived there were not popular with either the Egyptians or the Greeks but they were valued for the amount of commerce they brought to the city. It was in Alexandria that the Scriptures were first translated into Greek to cater for the spiritual needs of the Jews who had been brought up to speak Greek more than Hebrew. Having translated their Scriptures into a language that the Greeks could understand, the Jews had to defend their Faith against the Greeks who could read their sacred writings. Thus the Jewish Alexandrian Philosophy which started with Aristobulus and ended with Philo, combined Greek philosophies with the Jewish Faith and opened the way to a marriage between apostasy and Truth, with disastrous results to the latter. Scriptural references to Alexandrians are: Acts 18. 24 which describes Apollos as ".....a certain Jew, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures,....."

**Cilicia:** This is the country abutting the Mediterranean Sea and forms the East/West Coast of Asia Minor up to the point where it joins the North/South Coast of Israel/Lebanon/Syria. It is mentioned as one of the places passed by Paul during his shipwreck journey. (Acts 27. 5.) It is closely connected with Syria and is mentioned with Syria in Gal. 1. 21. This double mention also appears in Acts. 15. 23 and 41. One of the cities of Cilicia was Tarsus which is closely associated with Paul. (Acts. 21. 39.)

**Asia:** See comments under Acts 2. 9.

Verse 10

"And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake".

This is in fulfilment of the promise of Jesus recorded in Luke 21. 15. where the same word "resist" occurs. From the desired qualification of "full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom" of verse 3, we find Stephen, "a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit" in verse 5 and "full of faith and power" of verse 8. Now the "wisdom" and "the spirit" which guided him, his enemies could not defeat him in debate. The Sanhedrin had been defeated by Peter earlier on and before that, they had been overwhelmed by the arguments of Jesus. Therefore they resorted to the unfair methods they adopted with the Lord. This treatment appears in the next verse.

Verse 11

"Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God."

"Then" - at that time.

"They" - the Jews mentioned in verse 9.

"suborned men...." - This is the only use of the word suborned in the N.T. It means to put forward by collusion.

The men were procured for the purpose of false witness. The Greek verb also has a meaning of "secretly instructing them."

Jesus had been falsely accused. (Matt. 9. 3.) The Sanhedrin had also procured false witnesses against him. (Matt. 26. 59/61.) (Mark. 14. 55/59.)

"speak blasphemous words...." - To blaspheme is to utter evil or false words against God. The accusation against Stephen would be that he had maintained that Jesus was the Son of God.

"against Moses, and (against) God". The mention of Moses and God here is not irreverent. Moses was the Law Giver and he gave Laws which had been given to him by God. Therefore to speak against Moses was to speak against God's servant and against God Himself. This would take the form of undermining the Law, thus going against Moses. This would include undermining the Temple order by showing that the form of worship followed therein was done away in Christ who now became our altar and our High Priest. To destroy the form of worship in this way would be regarded as blasphemy against God. The apostles up to this stage had been popular with the people but when they were falsely shown to be undermining (instead of fulfilling as Jesus did) Moses and the Law, the people would regard this very seriously indeed. Any suspicion of loyalty for Moses being destroyed would shatter the image of the apostles immediately among the people. Recourse to this type of appeal to popular prejudice was a disgraceful method of combatting the teaching of Stephen and showed not only the power of his arguments, but the determination of the Sanhedrin to stamp out once and for all, this fast growing religion.

#### Verse 12

"And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes,...."

From their point of view, the Sanhedrin obviously felt they were no match for Stephen so they sought to destroy the support he and the apostles had been receiving from the people. The mind of the public is a fickle one and can be changed by clever, if mean, tactics. This they managed to do and upset the popularity which the apostles had hitherto enjoyed. (See Acts 2. 47; 3. 9, 11/12; 4. 1, 2, 17, 21; 5. 12, 13, 20, 25/26; 6. 8.) The distinct change in the attitude of the people is noticeable in Luke's account here.

"and the elders and the scribes...." These, being part of the Sanhedrin, had already shown their opposition, and would readily join each other against Stephen.

"and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council,"

They descended upon Stephen as they had descended upon the apostles in Acts 4. 1. They had come upon Jesus in a similar manner. (Luke 20. 1.)

"they seized (caught) him and dragged or carried (brought) him...." The arrest was an act of violence because Stephen was forcibly apprehended and taken to a mockery of a trial by the Sanhedrin.

#### Verse 13

"And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law:"

Having chosen and indoctrinated the witnesses as to what they were to say, they set them up, that is, they called them to give evidence. The false witness did not take the form of telling lies about Stephen. This would have been rather risky as the people had heard him speak and knew what he had said. The evidence took the form of deliberate twisting of words so as to produce a false impression upon the public. The unfairness of the trial is shown by "This man...." a term of contempt; "ceaseth not to speak...." a gross exaggeration; "this holy place...." the temple; "and the law...." against Moses.

Verse 14.

"for we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us."

The contempt is carried further here by "This Jesus...." obviously contemptuous of him. "... of Nazareth" - again contemptuous of Jesus. The words Jesus spoke are quoted by false witnesses and given in Matt. 26. 61; Mark. 14. 58; Comparing these two statements, we find that they do not agree exactly. This does not mean that Matthew and Mark have inaccurately reported what was said but that both are accurate, one reporting one false witness and another reporting another false witness. Mark adds "But neither so did their witness agree together." (Mark. 14. 59.) The only N.T. writer to report Jesus' words verbatim was John who recorded the speech in these words:-

John 2. 19. "Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

The Jews who were listening could not understand the deeper significance of his words so they pointed out that the temple had been 46 years in building, so could he possibly rebuilt it in three days? The most obvious spiritual meaning is given by John when he says,

John 2. 21. "But he spake of the temple of his body."  
22. "When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said."

He did refer to the temple of his body which was raised from the dead. But there was another significance and that was the other temple, the body of Christ, which, on the third day of 1000 years from that day, would be raised up to appear in the kingdom of God as a bride adorned for her husband. Paul had something to say of this body. (Ephes. 1. 22/23. and Ephes 2. 20/22.)

The charge of the threat to "change the customs" may have taken the form of Acts. 7. 48. ("Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet,") Stephen may have said this on a former occasion. One gets the impression that Stephen was extra-ordinarily well advanced in knowledge of the Divine Plan and Purpose to the extent of exceeding the apostles in knowledge. He seems to show a greater understanding at this early stage in the history of the Faith and he seems to show more and more that he was a suitable fore-runner for Paul. His understanding of the significance of the temple and its worship is akin to that of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

If he was accused of trying to change the customs of the temple, he must have seen that Jesus' redemptive work made him the Saviour, the High Priest, the altar and the mediator between God and man. This being the case, the temple and its ritual of worship must fall away. The Temple was a symbol pointing to the exclusiveness of the Jewish Faith in the first place, but once the veil of the temple had been rent in twain, the way into the Kingdom of God was made open. Furthermore, there was a rule regarding the Temple that no Greek (Gentile), slave (bond), or woman (female) could go beyond a certain middle wall of partition to worship God. Only accepted Jewish males could go further. To this day, every Jewish male, thanks God that he was not born a Gentile, a slave nor a woman so that he can go up to the altar and worship God. Paul showed that all this was done away in Christ and Stephen must have known of this. Paul's words are given in Gal. 3. 28 and in Ephes. 2. 14/16. Perhaps Stephen had quoted Jesus' words, "... one greater than the temple is here." (Matt. 12. 6.)

The traditions of the Temple also fell away in Christ. Paul felt sorry for Israel for many of them had a zeal of God but not according to knowledge. (Rom. 10. 2.) He pointed out that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." (Rom. 10. 4.)

Stephen may have known of these things which Paul was later to write about. It was not surprising then, that the Sanhedrin opposed him in his teaching against the very foundation of their worship. Nor is it surprising that Paul was to have the same accusations levelled against him, many years later. (Acts 21. 28.)

Perhaps the most telling indictment against Stephen would be that he taught the universal nature of the new faith and that the exclusiveness of Jewish worship was gone for ever. Now, instead of being a house of worship for Israel, the household of Faith would become a "house of prayer for all nations" provided they accepted the Abrahamic promise ("in thee shall all nations be blessed") and signified that acceptance by their baptism.

Verse 15

"And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel."

"All that sat...." - all those sitting in the council,...

"looking steadfastly on him...." - gazing into him. (See Acts 1. 10.)

"...his face as it had been the face of an angel." To the ordinary person even in Luke's day, such a description would have meant nothing as few persons, no doubt, had seen an angel. Therefore any suggestion that Stephen had a glowing face as Moses had when he descended from the mount, or as Jesus appeared in the Transfiguration, is just so much imagination. It is the well-known hyperbole of Jewish and Grecian style of writing. In 1 Sam. 2. 9. Achish said to David, "...I know that thou art good in my sight, as an angel of God:...." In 2 Sam. 14. 17. the woman of Tekoah praised David for his wisdom in these words, "As an angel of God, so is my lord the king to discern good and bad", and again in verse 20, "and my lord is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God,...." In similar vein, Mephibosheth spoke to Saul saying, ".... my lord the king is as an angel of God...." (2 Sam. 19. 27.)

From these passages it can be seen how Hebrew style indulges in hyperbole. This would apply to Luke's description of Stephen's face. He would refer to the calmness and serenity of his appearance. Also, the shock of his arrest and the nature of the accusations which Stephen would know would lead to stoning in terms of the Law, would drive all colour from his cheeks. Whether angels have white cheeks or not, we do not know, but the exaggeration is not intended to convey what it says but to indicate something worthy of closest attention. See Eccles. 8. 1.

Luke has now introduced Stephen and set up the state of affairs which led to his assassination. The atmosphere is charged with apprehension and anxiety and a warning of his death has been indicated by the sudden change in the attitude of the public. Luke has drawn the word picture with great skill and has prepared us for Stephen's masterly defence of his Faith.



# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

## Chapter 7

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The trial of Stephen which Luke records briefly at the end of Chapter 6 is very similar to that of the Lord Jesus. His accusers had no case against him so they had to manufacture one and did this by resorting to unfair distortions of what he had said. This was done in the case of Jesus and the accusation of Matt. 26. 61. and Matt. 27. 40. is similar to that of Acts 6. 14. The big point of difference is that whereas Jesus was as "a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" (Isa. 53. 7.) Stephen was not silent under accusation, but made his speech which is recorded in the chapter we are about to study.

The death of Jesus followed by his resurrection is the most important thing that has ever happened in the whole history of mankind for it provided "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world". (John 1. 29.) Without the death of Jesus, our faith is vain and we are still in our sins. (1 Cor. 15. 17) The death of Jesus and the death of Stephen cannot be compared because Stephen was not a saviour as Jesus was, nevertheless, his death was important for the tremendous repercussions which followed and the effect such repercussions had on the teaching of the Gospel throughout the world.

Stephen's speech is called his "apology" which is used in the sense of being a "defence". It was not made with the motive of securing an acquittal for himself, but was uttered in defence of Christianity. Subsequent speeches by Paul had the same motive, namely, to defend Christianity against either Judaism or the heathenism of the Gentiles. Stephen is not to be criticised because he does not "preach Jesus of Nazareth" because he was very obviously cut short and killed before he could develop his theme to the logical conclusion. The speech is given in answer to Acts 6. 13/14. and was designed to show the pilgrimage character of the true faith even from the days of Abraham. The moveable tent which the Israelites took with them through the wilderness was a more suitable Tabernacle for the Divine Presence than was the immoveable edifice of stone erected by Solomon.

The speech draws a number of analogies from O.T. history showing how the rejection of the prophets of Israel was in keeping with the character in Stephen's day of refusing to acknowledge their Messiah. Joseph suffered at the hands of his brothers and Moses was rejected at the beginning of his service. Their reverence for Moses at this time was more than their fore-fathers had given him. The disobedience of the fathers was repeated by those who rejected their Messiah.

Verse 1

"Then said the high priest, Are these things so?"

Regarding Acts 6. 15. as an interpolation in Luke's story, we see that Acts 7. 1. logically follows the statements of Acts 6. 14. The high priest who presided over this meeting of the Sanhedrin, asked a question as the high priest had asked Jesus. (Mark 14. 60.) In the time to come, Paul, too, was to feel the power which was wielded by the high priest. (Acts 23. 2/5.) The question before us follows the same distortion of the Truth as Jesus had to deal with. Perhaps the high priest, Ananias, may have thought that the question which could not convict Jesus, may have some success with his servant. The high priest does not ask the question to ascertain more about the accusation, but to follow up the method of trial. He may have remembered that Jesus did not reply, and it may be that he was hoping Stephen would also be as silent so that they could convict him and punish him without much further ado.

Verse 2

"And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran."

In opening his address, Stephen speaks to "men", "brethren" to show that they are all fellow Jews and of the same nation; and "fathers" to show respect to the senior Senators and the high priest who would be there.

The phrase "the God of Glory" (the God of the glory) is found here and in no other place in Scripture. His reference to God appearing (by manifestation of a highly placed angel) to Abraham is taken from Gen. 12. 1. and a direct quotation from this verse is given in the next verse. We shall now discuss some difficulties in Stephen's speech before we proceed, so as to clear the air.

1. In this verse we get the first of 15 diversions from the record of the O.T. In this verse, Stephen makes God appear to Abraham for the first time in Chaldea, in Mesopotamia (between the rivers, Euphrates and Tigris.) Josh. 24. 2/3. and Nehemiah 9. 7. support this statement. The Genesis record seems to show that the first call came when Abraham was at Haran. (Gen. 11. 32.) That Genesis is silent about the earlier call does not disprove it and both Josephus and Philo support Stephen's statement. The difficulty appears if we regard the appearance of a manifestation of God to Abraham as recorded in Gen. 12. 1/3. as being after Terah's death. The tense given shows that reference is being made to sometime in the past, with "Now the Lord had said ...." This takes us back into Ur of the Chaldees of Gen. 11. 31. Joshua 24. 2. tells us that Abraham's father and uncle were idol worshippers in Ur of the Chaldees. Gen. 15. 7. indicates that God brought Abraham and his family to Canaan from Ur of the Chaldees. It would have been possible for God to have influenced Abraham to leave with his family, but it is more likely that God caused a visitation by a manifestation of God to visit Abraham while he was at Ur. Gen. 11. 31. does not clearly state that God instructed, but the evidence of the references given above draws us to this conclusion.

2. Stephen says that Terah died before Abraham left Haran (Acts 7. 4.) but Genesis 11. 26, 32. and 12. 4. imply that Terah had yet 60 years to live.

Gen. 11. 26. Terah was 70 and begat Abram, Nahor and Haran.

Gen. 11. 32. Terah died when he was 205 years old.

Gen. 12. 4. Abram was 75 when he left Haran, so at that time, Terah must have been 205 minus 75 = 130 years of age, when Abram was born.

The apparent discrepancy arises through taking Abram to have been the first born because he is mentioned first in Gen. 11. 27. Haran was the first born and must have been 60 when Abram was born. He was born first and died before Abraham.

3. Stephen mentions 400 years as being the period of bondage in Egypt. See Acts 7.6. Exodus 12. 40. says 430 years, and so does Paul in Gal. 3. 17. Paul, however, starts his period with the making of the Covenant.

Abraham's arrival in Canaan to birth of Isaac	25 years.
Isaac's age at the birth of Jacob (Gen. 25. 26.)	60 "
Jacob's age on going to Egypt ( Gen. 47. 9.)	<u>130</u> "
	<u>215</u> years

Jacob's arrival in Egypt to death of Joseph (Gen. 41. 46.)	71 years
Joseph's death to birth of Moses	64 "
Birth of Moses to the Exodus	80 "
	<u>215</u> years

Note that Gen. 41. 46. states that Joseph was 30 when he predicted 7 years plenty. At the end of the 7 years he was 37 to which add 2 years when Jacob came making him 39. Joseph died at the age of 110 (Gen. 50. 26.) Therefore, there was another 71 years to go from the arrival of Jacob until the death of Joseph.

Exod. 12. 40/41. and Gal. 3. 17.	430 years
Birth of Isaac when Abraham was 100, less Abraham's age when he came to Canaan 75, leaving thus leaving	25 "
	<u>405</u> years
Probable time taken for coming from Ur to Canaan leaving	5 "
	<u>400</u> years

Genesis 15. 13. The SEED to be afflicted	<u>400</u> years
This does not include Abraham.	

From the foregoing, we see that both periods 430 and 400 years are correct.



4. It is suggested that because Stephen adds the words "and serve me in this place" to Exod. 3. 12. thus referring to Canaan and not to Mt. Sinai as indicated in Exod, there is a discrepancy.

Stephen uses his words with care. His quotation from Exodus shows that the Israelites would be given a Law under which they would serve God. But Abraham was born and died before the Law was given, therefore, the Law was not essential to salvation. Another aspect is that by bringing in Moses at this stage in connection with the patriarch Abraham, Stephen leaves the inference that Moses was rejected in the early stages by the people, and the people to whom Stephen was now talking, did the same thing by rejecting the Messiah. A further point is that Exod. 3. 12. would be acknowledged as God's words and would point to the fact that before the settlement of the nation in Palestine, God had arranged for worship at Mt. Sinai. If the people wished to regard the temple as inviolate even through criticism of its ritual, then remember that God accepted David's worship before the temple was built. The inference drawn here is that the worship of God was possible in places other than the Promised Land even to the whole world.

5. In verse 14 Stephen says "75 souls". Gen. 46. 27; Exod. 1. 5. and Deut. 10. 22. state 70. Josephus also states 70. Gen. 46. 26. says 66.

Regarding Gen. 46. 26. which states 66, there were the eleven sons and their sons, making 66 in all. To these add Joseph and his two sons, plus Jacob to get 70.

The increase of 5 to make 75, are the sons of Manasseh and Ephraim. These are added by the Septuagint to Gen. 46. 20. Details are given in Num. 26. 29/37 and 1 Chron. 7. 14 and 20. By adding these five, Stephen showed that part of Jacob's family were born in Egypt and from these, two Tribes came. This implies that the exclusiveness of Israel which the Jews tried to establish was not in accordance with history. The "seed of Abraham" could come from other lands too, as did these five.

6. Joshua 24. 32. says that Joseph was buried at Sychem (Shechem) in a parcel of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor. In Acts. 7. 15. Stephen adds "our fathers" meaning Jacob's twelve sons, were buried in Sychem and the grammar of verses 15 and 16 indicates that Jacob also was buried there. Stephen however, does not say that Jacob was buried there. Stephen must have known that he was buried in Machpelah in Judeah. Why should he then state that the twelve sons were buried in Sychem? In view of Stephen's teaching, it is obvious that he wished to show that it made no difference to the Divine Plan and Purpose that the Twelve Patriarchs were buried in despised Samaria. Stephen did not mention the burial place of Jacob in Judea.

The burial places are :- Hebron - Sarah (Gen. 23. 19.) Abraham (Gen. 25. 9.) Isaac (Gen. 35. 29.) Rebecca and Leah (Gen. 49. 31.) Jacob (Gen. 50. 12/13.) in Sychem - Joseph (Josh. 24. 32.)

7. Stephen states in verse 16 that "... Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor THE FATHER of Sychem." The words "the father" are not in the original Greek and must be omitted for they do not record accurately what Stephen said. Gen. 33. 19. refers to Hamor as being Shechem's father.

In the one reference, JACOB bought the land, and in the other Abraham bought it. In Stephen's statement, Emmor (Hamor) is said to be "of Sychem" and in Genesis, he is said to be "the father of Sychem".

Disposing of the second point first, "Emmor" (in Greek) of Hamor (in Hebrew) is a title and not a name. It means "ruler" and is used of all rulers as is the name "Pharaoh". Thus whoever it was who sold the land, he could have been the "father" of Sychem, or he could have been "of Sychem" at one and the same time.

Dealing with the actual purchase mentioned by Stephen, it must be noted that there is no Biblical reference to this purchase in Genesis. The purchases recorded by Genesis are found in 23. 16/20 and 33. 19. In Gen. 48. 22. Jacob said "...I have given to thee one PORTION above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow."

The word "portion" in this verse is "Shechem". It appears that Jacob had taken by force land which did not belong to him, this being contrary to the character of the early Patriarchs who regarded themselves as "strangers and pilgrims in the earth". In all cases of apparant inconsistency in the Bible, except where translation of copying errors have occurred, we must always regard both inconsistent statements as being true. In this case, Genesis tells us that Jacob bought land. Genesis also tells us that he took it by force from the Amorite in an act of war. Abraham had built an altar at Shechem when the LORD appeared unto him. (Gen. 12. 6/8.) Therefore, his purchase was justified. If the Amorite had, in the meantime, taken it away from him, he would be entitled to recover it by force.

Finally, the fact that Jacob bought land at Sychem does not make a difficulty. A later purchase is quite possible.

8. In verse 22, Stephen states that "...Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, ..." but there is no record in Exodus that this was so. Stephen said that Moses "...was mighty in words and in deeds". In Exodus 4. 10. Moses says "...I am not eloquent..." (Mar. "I am not a man of words".) (Afrikaans: "Ek is nie 'n man van woorde nie -") the Afrikaans agreeing with the A.V. margin.

Taking the statement in sections, we find that Moses was brought up in Pharaoh's palace (Exod. 2. 10.) so it is obvious that he would have been educated in a manner befitting one who was called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

Stephen states that he was "mighty in words ..." The word "words" is the plural of the word "LOGOS" which does not mean the written word. This would have been "Rhema" and appears in Matt. 4. 4. Mark 14. 72 and Luke 24. 8. The Greek word "Rhema" is also used as "saying" with reference to the spoken word. Occurrences are Mark 9. 32. Luke 2. 17; 9. 45 (twice) also in the plural Luke 1. 65; 2. 51; 7. 1. LOGOS as we have seen, means a "concept", an "outward manifestation of the inward thought". Moses therefore, had been educated in all the pagan philosophies of the Egyptians. He acknowledges this in a sense by his statement of Exod. 6. 30.

That Moses was "mighty in ... deeds" is not surprising, as he must have been educated in the skills of the Egyptians. If he had been trained in mathematics and architecture as were the Egyptians, he would have been an ideal supervisor for the building of the tabernacle and would have followed strictly the pattern shown him in the mount. (Exod. 25. 40. Heb. 8.5.)

His education and position at the court of Pharaoh was a fitting education for one who was later to be a leader of about 2,000,000 people. But, having been educated in the concepts and skills of a pagan people was not good enough for the leadership of God's people. Therefore, he had to spend 40 years under conditions which were entirely different.

9. In verse 23 Stephen states that Moses was 40 years of age when he had a desire to visit his brethren of Israel. The only information the Bible gives us in regard to his age is that he was 80 when he stood before Pharaoh. (Exod. 7. 7.) His last words were spoken when he was 120. (Exod. 31. 2.) and he died at this age. (Exod. 34. 7.)

Connecting Exod. 2. 11. which states that Moses went to visit his brethren with Acts 7. 23. which says he was 40 at the time, we see that Stephen is supplying information which could well have been traditional or could have been well known at the time. In Hebrew custom, 40 years of age was regarded as

maturity in the same way as one regards nowadays the age of 21. By this is meant that he "came of age". Having regard to these facts, no fault can be found with Stephen's words.

10. Stephen says that Moses was moved with a desire to liberate Israel (verse 25). Exodus says that Moses fled from Pharaoh. (Exod. 2. 15.) This criticism is unfair because Stephen accurately records Moses' fear after he had slain the Egyptian. (Compare Exod. 2. 15. with Acts 7. 29.) Nevertheless, both motives are true. By slaying the Egyptian, Moses showed that he was willing to lead a revolt against the Egyptians. The rejection of Moses by the people - which Stephen quotes verbatim - compare Exod. 2. 14. "Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?" with Acts 7. 27. - put Moses in a very dangerous position with Pharaoh. Therefore, because of the rejection of him by the people - as Stephen quotes - he fled from Pharaoh as Exodus states.

11. The commentators complain that Stephen states "Sinai" in verse 30, whereas Exodus states "Horeb" (Exod. 3. 1.) This presents no difficulty at all if one reads Deut. 4. 10. and 33. 2. Horeb and Sinai are identical. In Exod. 3. 1. we read of "... the mountain of God, even to Horeb", and in 1 Kings 19. 8. we read that Moses went up forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God. We know from other sources that Moses went up Mount Sinai for this period. (Exod. 24. 16/18. and Exod. 34. 28/29. Compare these with Deut. 9. 9. and 18.) Compare also Deut. 4. 10. with Deut. 33. 2.

12. Acts 7. 42. quotes Stephen as saying that the children of Israel turned to the worship of the "host of heaven" which means that they worshipped the sun, moon and stars. The Pentateuch tells us nothing of this part of Israel's history. Actually, Stephen is not quoting from the historical works, but from Amos 5. 25/27. The turn to idolatry did not take place during the Exodus, but during their subsequent history when, as Jeremiah pointed out, they had made "cakes to the queen of heaven ..." - the moon goddess. (Jer. 7. 18.) The prophet Jeremiah is even more explicit and forthright in chapter 8. at verse 2. The criticism we are dealing with narrows Stephen's words to the history of the Exodus, whereas Stephen is reviewing the whole of Israelite history on a broad front.

13. Stephen's words in Acts. 7. 43 are a quotation from Amos 5. 26/27. and are not accurately reproduced. Stephen omits Chiun and adds Remphan as gods, and gives Babylon in place of Damascus given by Amos. We can dispose of "Chiun" by pointing to the fact that the Hebrew letters for "K" and "R" are very similar and may have led to confusion. This would account for the change of Chiun into Remphan or Rephan. Bear in mind that there are no vowels in the Hebrew writing. The actual words are unimportant. The theme of Stephen's teaching is that Israel had turned to idol worship, and as idol worship and the worship of God do not go together, God had to punish them.

In regard to the name Babylon, which Stephen substituted for Damascus, there is a designed sting here for Stephen deliberately takes his listeners back to the days of Abraham and does not go back just as far as Israel under Moses in the wilderness as Amos does. The Jews of Stephen's day were proud of Moses and Abraham. Amos takes them back to the days of Moses, but Stephen adds the sting that their apostasy goes as far back to their very beginning because Abraham came from Babylon. They had not turned against God in the days of Abraham, but because of their subsequent sins, God would not only turn them back into a wilderness where they would be scattered and peeled, but he would take them back to Babylon where Abraham came from. In Amos 5. 27. the prophet stated where the punishment would be, but did not state which nation would be brought against them. In the light of Jewish history, Stephen was able to state that it was Babylon which had punished Israel. This was "beyond Damascus" as Amos had said. (vs. 27.) The lesson of Stephen's words was that they should not repeat the errors of their fathers.

14. Some commentators complain that the persecution and slaying of the prophets mentioned by Stephen in verse 52, is not supported by Scripture except in a few cases such as Zechariah the high priest in 2 Chron. 24. 20/21. and Urijah in

Jer. 26. 23. That such details are not given does not invalidate Stephen's words. Compare the words of Jesus in Matt. 23. 37. also "Zacharias son of Barachias" of Matt. 23. 35. could be the second name of Zachariah the son of Jehoida mentioned in 2 Chron. 24. 21. See also Luke 11. 49. and the words of Paul in 1 Thess. 2. 15. Paul's words having the same warning as those of Stephen namely, what the fathers did, "so do ye". The words of Heb. 11. 36/37 are conclusive in this connection and have a similar teaching.

15. It has been observed that Stephen's statement of verse 53, wherein it is stated that the people had received the law through the "disposition of angels" is a development of a theory that God was aloof from Israel and that a system of indoctrination by angels existed. This is shown by the angel of the LORD appearing at the burning bush and the angel that went before Israel throughout the wilderness journey. (Exod. 23. 23.) It is surprising that Stephen should have continued the acceptance of the "doctrine of angels". (The word "disposition" is used in its military sense of a unified command sent out in array. The Afrikans "beskikkinge" carries this sense. The angels were there at the disposition of God who used each one for His Purpose.)

This objection is not really an objection, but is a misunderstanding of Stephen's reference to the disposition of angels. Stephen is merely stating that God gave His Law through the medium of angels who did His bidding. He is not developing nor supporting any doctrine of angels as the critics suggest.

In this study of the Acts of the Apostles, we have considered it advisable to deal with the fore-going objections as they are there to be answered, but it is better to answer them in a separate work rather than in a study in which one hopes to learn of the harmonies in the Word of God and not the supposed inconsistencies and the objections. As J. Carter points out in his book "THE ORACLES OF GOD", one cannot seek the harmonies of Scripture and find out the Truth of the Word of God by finding an explanation to passages which others find difficult. It is much more profitable as Islip Collyer points out in "VOX DEI" to accept the Bible's challenge of Deut. 18. 20.

#### Verse 3

"And said unto him "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee".

The commandment to Abraham was obeyed. The quotation from Gen. 12. 1. omits "and from thy father's house". Abraham had to leave his country, his kindred and his father's house with all the family ties and relationships. This Abraham was prepared to do in obedience to the LORD'S commands. In this he did what Jesus expects of everyone who would come into the Covenants of Promise by their belief and baptism. Jesus stated this in Matt. 10. 35/38. If Jesus' words are studied in their context, it will be seen that the True Believer should not fear death in following his Faith. God cares for all His children. Families will be divided one from the other and "a man's foes shall be they of his own household". One should put the love of God above all other persons or things. This is what Abraham did before he received the Covenant of Promise from God. This we must all do before we are baptised into the same Covenants of Promise.

The phrase "the land which I will show thee" is too definite. It should be "a land or whatever land I will show thee". This is more in keeping with "...he went out, not knowing whither he went". (Heb. 11. 8.) This points more forcibly to the wonderful faith of Abraham.

#### Verse 4

"Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charan: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell."

"the land of the Chaldeans" is described in verse 2 as "Mesopotamia", which means "the land between the two rivers - Tigris and Euphrates".

In Hebrew, the name is "Aram-Naharayim" or "Aram-Naharaim". The name is connected with Aram described in Gen. 10. as the son of Shem and the father of Uz, Hul, Gether and Mash. (Vs. 23.) In Gen. 22. 20/21. Aram is said to be the grandson of Nahor and the son of Kemuel. In the O.T. Mesopotamia (or Aram-Naharayim) covers the northern part of the Mesopotamia we know, as well as Syria. This makes it much further to the north than is generally accepted. The city of Ur which Daniel knew was the city which was near the mouth of the Euphrates. The Ur of Abraham was much further north and is thought to have been Urartu which is a district and was known as the country of a people called "Haldi". This must not be confused with Kaldu who were people living much further south. The people called Kaldu were later known as Chaldeans. The language of the people from Aram-Naharayim was Aramic and was the language spoken by Jesus.

"wherein ye now dwell" - indicates that the land wherein was Jerusalem, was the Land of the Covenant, or the Promised Land.

#### Verse 5

"And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child".

Heb. 11. 13. is the passage which comes to mind on reading this verse. Stephen is quoting the early promise made unto Abraham for this concerns the giving of the land and not the Messiah of Gen. 22. 17/18. nor the promise of a resurrection as Paul records in Heb. 11. 19. taking this from the analogy of the near-sacrifice of Isaac.

"to set his foot on" - would remind Stephen's listeners of Deut. 2. 5. where God commanded his people to pass through the land of Seir, but they were not to get any portion of it as the land had been given to Esau and his children. Stephen's reference to this incident at Sinai and the prohibition of owning any land in that country, would show to the Sanhedrin that the land in which they rejoiced was a gift from God and was not due to the result of any battles fought by David or anyone else.

"when as yet he had no child". To add considerably to his test of faith.

#### Verse 6

"And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years.

Stephen's reference to the Promises now proceeds from Gen. 12. to Gen. 15. 13/14.

"his seed should sojourn" - from the meaning of "sojourn", the seed (posterity) would live for a while and be gone. They would live as strangers and not as possessors.

"a strange land ..." - This, of course, is Egypt and is allied to the next statement - "...they should bring them into bondage" meaning that the Egyptians should bring the children of Israel into a state where they would not be permitted to come and go as they pleased. They would become bondslaves to the Egyptians instead of servants of God. By analogy, Jesus had to suffer before ascending into his glory.

"and entreat (them) evil..." - the sense here is a wide one going further than doing them moral harm. It also covers physical harm which the people were to suffer.

## Verse 7

"And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place."

"the nation..." - Egypt. It will be judged ten times by the plagues of Egypt. "will I judge..." does not mean that Egypt will be tried as a criminal is tried. The same applies to Judgement Day for all True Christian Believers. When Judgement is given it is a sentence or a liberation or a reward. The sentence was given by God upon a Pharaoh whose heart was hardened.

"serve me in this place" - "this place" is Sinai and the quotation is from Exod. 3. 12. Stephen makes a significant point here by showing that God is worshipped all over the world and the worship of God is not confined to Palestine. The serving of God would come to pass after they had been through the Egyptian bondage. This means that Abraham did not serve God according to the Law of Moses given from Sinai, thus showing that the Law did not have the great importance the Sanhedrin now claimed for it.

## Verse 8

"And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so (Abraham) begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac (begat) Jacob; and Jacob (begat) the twelve patriarchs."

"gave him the covenant of circumcision" - It may have shocked the Council to know that God called Abram when he was an uncircumcised man and accepted worship from such a man. To Jews, this would be unthinkable but with God and Abram, it actually happened. God "gave" him the covenant of circumcision, not as a gift but as a commandment.

It showed the great Faith of Abraham that he circumcised himself at the age of 99. (Compare Gen. 17. 1. with Gen. 17. 10/15.) God gave two everlasting covenants in the early days of which circumcision was the first and the law of the sabbath was the second. That is to say that there were two signs of the Divine Laws and Promises, the one of circumcision being attached to the Abrahamic Promise and the second being attached to the Law. Both were to fall away in Jesus so that circumcision is now the circumcision of the heart (Rom. 2. 28/29.) and the sabbath law is a constant looking forward to the time of "rest" in the kingdom of God.

Circumcision was a sign of the cutting off of his ties with his family and Abraham must have understood it in this way. It was also a sign to him of the cutting off from the lusts of the flesh. It would also have the deeper significance of the shedding of blood. To this day, when the Rabbi circumcises a Jewish child, he is obliged to see to it that blood is shed. The Jews of the days of Stephen and of Paul relied upon circumcision as a sign of the Covenant people and tended to disregard the other aspects. Moses had to remind them of the deeper significance as he did in Deut. 10. 16.

An interesting sidelight to circumcision is the phenomenon of blood clotting, or coagulation. With the exception of haemophilics, everyone has a tendency in their bodies for their blood to coagulate on coming into contact with the air. The Press stories of "blood flowing" or "rivers of blood" could happen only in a world of haemophilics. Any quantity of normal blood would coagulate immediately upon coming into contact with air. This wise provision of God saves us all from bleeding to death. Haemophilics could bleed to death internally if a timely injection to coagulate the blood were not given. Even then it would have to be given in exact doses so as not to stop the flow of blood through arteries and veins. If normal blood clotting capacity is rated at 100, then variations in the capacity would vary from pure haemophilics at 80 to the exceptional clotting types at 115. The ability to coagulate varies according to a persons age but is never at any time of life, better than it is at the age of EIGHT DAYS. At this age, the ability of the blood to coagulate is high even in a Haemophilic. God in His wisdom has provided that circumcision which would

cause bleeding to an infant, had to be done on the EIGHTH DAY. (Gen. 17. 12.)

There is a further teaching in regard to circumcision which can be heard now although it is not part of this study. It had to take place on the 8th day because God commanded that it must. But His commandment in this connection did not contravene the Law which stated that anyone coming into contact with a woman who had born a son would be unclean for she was unclean for a period of 8 days. (Lev. 12. 2.) It was after this time that the child was named. (Luke 1. 60.) The father did the naming and would name the child only when he could touch it and see it. This would be on the 8th day. In like manner, Abraham and Sarah were renamed when circumcision was introduced. (Gen. 17. 5. and 15.) The son could not come into covenant relationship until the unclean period was finished.

"so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him...." The two verbs here are not repeated in the rest of the verse, but the verb "begat" is supplied by means of italics. The sense in Hebrew is a continuation of thought in the sections which follow so that they read - taking the lead from the first use of the verbs - "and Isaac begat and circumcised Jacob; and Jacob begat and circumcised the twelve patriarchs."

The teaching of this is Stephen's argument which he is to use again. The outward condition of Israel had undergone several changes throughout their history, and these changes were just as great of that blasphemy of which he was now charged.

Verse 9

"And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him".

Stephen now points to another change in regard to Israel. They moved into Egypt. But this movement is allied with the cruelty of the sons of Jacob to their brother. When the Bible student of to-day speaks to others about the Divine Plan and Purpose, and quotes historical analogies such as Joseph being a type of Christ, the hearers do not understand and must permit long explanations before they acquire even a slight knowledge of this essential and fascinating part of Biblical Study. The Jews in the days of Stephen, however, were very quick to understand such things. When the Lord gave the parable of the treatment of the servants of the vineyard and the final treatment given to the son, the Pharisees knew that the parable had been directed against them. (Mark. 12. 12.) People to-day must have that parable explained before they can understand it.

Therefore, when Stephen referred to the cruelty meted out to Joseph, the Sanhedrin and people who were listening, would immediately understand that the recent treatment of the crucified Lord was being referred to. This would be driven home more forcibly by the expression, "but God was with him". This called to mind the favourite prophet Isaiah at 7. 14. which reads, "shall call his name Immanuel". (Mar. "God with us"). See also Matt. 1. 23. That which was true of Joseph, also applied with greater force to Jesus whom Stephen had preached.

Verse 10

"And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house."

The analogy drawn in the previous verse is continued here. God who was with him, delivered him out of his afflictions with the pointed meaning that God had delivered Jesus from all his afflictions, even the affliction of death.

God gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh. How pointed this statement was. God had raised Jesus from the dead and released him from all his afflictions, yet the Jews would not accept him as the risen Christ. Yet Pharaoh of the despised Egyptians recognised Joseph, and had been friendly towards him.

"he made him governor over Egypt".... Stephen has listed some of the things God did for Joseph. It is not now to be thought that Stephen makes a sudden change from God to Pharaoh and maintains that Pharaoh made him Governor. The grammar of the sentence does not indicate whether God or Pharaoh is the subject, but it must be that God made Joseph Governor. This would be consistent with Stephen's teaching about what God did for Joseph. The word "governor" means "leading man", "prime minister" "chief official". Continuing the analogy, God has now highly exalted the Lord Jesus and given him a name which is above every name. (Phil. 2. 9/10 and Ephes. 1. 20/23.) A point to note is that the exaltation came in a land other than the Holy Land to which the Jews attached such great importance. Just as Joseph had been given a high position over Egypt, so Jesus would be king over all the world.

## Verse 11

"Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance."

The continued analogy now takes a serious turn. If Jesus had really been the Messiah, what would God do to them now? Surely great retribution would come. The "dearth" came to Canaan as well as to Egypt.

The word "sustenance" is used in the Greek language as "fodder" for cattle. A similar usage is found in Gen. 24. 25 and 32. When the brethren of Joseph went down into Egypt the first time, Joseph "spoke roughly to them" (Gen. 42. 7.) Furthermore, the "youngest was not with them" (Gen. 42. 13.) The discussions between the brothers which followed, showed that they admitted the error of their treatment of Joseph and acknowledged that their affliction had come because of their treatment of him. (Gen. 42. 21/22.) Would the Jews realise that "there was a dearth in the land" at that time. Not a dearth of food, but in the words of Amos, "a famine...of hearing the words of the LORD". (Amos 8. 11.) And Jesus was not with them. If he were, would he speak roughly to them? All these thoughts could have rushed through the mind of any knowledgeable person who heard Stephen's speech.

## Verse 12

"But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent our fathers first".

Jacob, the father of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, sent his sons, the patriarchs, into Egypt, for it was in Egypt that there was sustenance. God at this time, made provision for His people outside the land which He had promised them. Stephen drives his point home with this remark. The attitude of the Jews was that their land was God's land and it would be here that God would show His Mercy. Stephen's point was that the gospel now was to all families of the earth in terms of the promises made unto the fathers. "...in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed". Gen. 12. 3; 22. 18; 26. 4; and 28. 14.

## Verse 13

"And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh".

"The second time" had some significance to Israel. Moses was accepted when he came to Israel the second time after having been rejected the first time. Again, the Israelites were not accepted before Joseph the first time but were received the second time. Stephen must have been preaching the Return of Christ so the Sanhedrin would know of this and would not be slow to discover the analogy Stephen was trying to build up in their minds.

In the verse before us, there is an expression which is given twice. It is "was made known to (unto)". The first of these is in the passive and is used in Greek literature to indicate "knowing again" or "recognising". The second occurrence is a different Greek usage and means "become manifest" or "was discovered" or "was disclosed". The analogy is that at the Second Coming of our Lord,



the Jews will not recognise him until through circumstances they will be made to recognise him. Then the Returned Christ will plead their cause before the Father and the Father's Divine Plan and Purpose will be revealed to them.

Verse 14

"Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, three score and fifteen souls."

At the second appearance, Joseph sent for Jacob afterwards called Israel, and all his kindred. No one was left out. The inclusion of those who were born in Egypt is significant for it shows again Stephen's theme that the Faith is not confined to Israel now, and the pattern of the past shows that this was true even then. The analogy of meeting Joseph for the second time, shows that when Christ comes, the whole Household of Faith, Jew and Greek, will be called to him.

The phrase "Then sent Joseph..." is in the middle voice showing that the sending was one of great benefit to the one summoned. In like manner, when Jesus comes again, those summoned by him will go to him for a great benefit which he is to bestow upon them.

Verse 15

"So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers,"

The sentence in this verse is incomplete and carries on into the next verse. It is significant that Jacob WENT DOWN into Egypt, as if going from a higher plane to a lower. There may be an allusion to the level land of Egypt as compared with the hilly land of Palestine. There also may be an allusion to the moral difference between the two countries. There may be an allusion to both. The Bible always talks of going DOWN into Egypt, or coming UP out of it. See Gen. 12. 9. and compare with Gen. 13. 1. The main point of the remark is that Jacob and the fathers died in a foreign land. Here is a further development of Stephen's theme that the Holy Land did not have the significance the Jews wished to give it. The Covenants of Promise had now been extended to all the world in terms of the Promises, so the aloof, exclusive nature of Israel had been changed. It was to embrace all the True Believers in future.

Verse 16

"And were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the (father) of Sychem".

With this verse, Stephen's second section comes to an end. Having shown that the fathers from faithful Abraham onwards, all died outside the Holy Land, they were buried in despised Samaria. The changes which had taken place were not something new in the history of Israel. The nation had been subjected to frequent change. God had watched them when they were outside the Holy Land and had cared for them. Changes to Israel would come again and it was to be expected that many things would happen to Israel outside their own land.

#### THE PART OF HISTORY CONCERNING MOSES.

Verse 17

"But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt."

(Acts 7. 17/41. gives a historical summary of that given in detail in Exod. chapters 1 to 32).

This sentence is completed in the next verse. Having dealt with the history of Abraham and his family up to Joseph and the bondage of Egypt, Stephen now reaches the transitional stage in the progress of the chosen people. He is leading into the days of the Exodus under Moses, the great leader, prophet and law giver.

During the time of waiting for the promise to be fulfilled, the people of Israel increased in numbers. If we give weight to every word, then here again we get a pointer to the fact that the people in whom a certain portion of the Divine Promises were fulfilled, were born outside the Promised Land, thus showing that it was not essential to be in the Land of Promise to qualify for God's Mercy.

Although Stephen talks about "the promise", he does not refer to all the Promises of God which He gave unto Abraham and to Isaac and Jacob. The Divine Promises to which he refers is that given in Gen. 12. 1. The Promise of Gen. 13. 14/17; 17. 8; 22. 17/18; 26. 3/4; and 28. 13/14, are yet to be fulfilled, for according to them, the possession of the land is for ever and a blessing is to come in the seed. This extension of the promise was not given in Gen. 12. 1. It was to this promise, repeated by Moses in Exod. 12. 25. and mentioned by Solomon in 1 Kings 8. 56. that Stephen now refers.

#### Verse 18

"Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph."

This completes the sentence from the previous verse. In the continuity of words, it would appear that the people grew and multiplied until another king arose, thus giving the sense that once another king did arise, the growth and multiplication ceased. Such a meaning is apparent but not intended. The thought is that when they reached a certain stage in their development as a people, another king arose in Egypt who did not know Joseph. The new king brought upon them persecution and affliction in such a manner as to hinder the further growth.

The persecution and affliction suggested by Stephen is given in the early chapters of Exodus. A particular reference which should be noted is that of Exod. 1. 16. where the Pharaoh at that time, instructed the mid-wives to allow the infant daughters to live, but to kill the sons. When the mid-wives refused to obey, Pharaoh told all the people of Egypt to cast every son of the Hebrews into the river. (Exod. 1. 22.)

The Hebrew women knew that one day through the "seed of Abraham" the Messiah would come and every one of them was anxious to marry and have a child because of the possibility of the Messiah coming through her line. It then became a matter of great sorrow and disgrace if a woman was barren. To have a threat to the safety of their sons through whom their line of descent would be continued, was a heavy burden to the Israelites. It was this threat that eventually caused them to leave Egypt. The danger was not one of arresting the multiplication, because the mid-wives would not co-operate with Pharaoh. The underlying danger was that the rapid multiplication had been slowed down.

The identity of the Pharaoh of the Exodus cannot be established with certainty. Two names have been suggested and the more likely appears to be Merenptah the son of Ramses II. Another is Amenotep III the son of Thothmes III. The latter is thought to be the Pharaoh of the captivity.

#### Verse 19

"The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live."

"dealt subtilly" appears here in the N.T. and nowhere else. It is quoted from the LXX in Exod. 1. 10. In the English translation of the LXX it appears as "craftily". It means to "employ guile and cunning against anyone".

"evil entreated" means "ill treated", "maltreated" or "persecuted".

"they cast out their young..." - "exposed their infants" to a form of brutal treatment which had as its motive, that they might not be kept alive or that they might not be procreated.

#### Verse 20

"In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months."

"In which time" - not a period but a stage in the history of the people.

"exceeding fair" - Stephen gets his information mainly from Exod. 2.2. which describes Moses as "a goodly child" or, leaving out the italics, simply "goodly". The Hebrew meaning is wide and includes "fair", "well-built", "happy", "loving", "good disposition" and "handsome". The LXX has fair. In Heb. 11. 23. he is described as "proper" meaning "elegant", "fair", "beautiful". The A.V. margin gives "fair to God". Profane writers are agreed that he was a person of great beauty. His father's name was Amram. (Exod. 6. 20.)

#### Verse 21

"And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son".

Josephus says that the name of the daughter was Thermutis. Others have suggested Hatshepsut, the daughter of Thothmes I. The O.T. is silent as to her name and, in any case, her identity is of no importance.

The upbringing in Pharaoh's house would bring Moses in touch with the great scholars of Egypt. In those days, Egypt was noted for its learning and wisdom. (1 Kings 4. 30.) Philo, the historian states that Moses was proficient in astronomy, arithmetic, geometry, poetry, music, philosophy and all branches of learning. Moses is thought to have been the inventor of alphabetic writing as opposed to cuneiform writings or hieroglyphics. (Eupolemus in his work "On the Kings in Judea" quoted by Eusebius in his work "Preparation for the Gospel". All this mentioned as a foot-note in "The Book of the Acts" by F.F. Bruce, page 150.)

"when he was cast out..." - Greek "he being exposed..."

"for her own son..." this is expressed in the Greek in the middle voice thus indicating that she adopted the child for her own benefit.

As a parallel with Moses, the infant Jesus was also threatened with death in his youth by the ruler of the land and had to leave his home in Jerusalem or Bethlehem. He was brought up in Egypt and may have learned much of the wisdom of the Egyptians in his youth. Unlike Moses, there was "no beauty that we should desire him". (Isa. 53. 2.) As it was with Moses, he grew in wisdom and stature (mar. "age") and in favour with God and man". (Luke 2. 52.) Just as Moses had been sent to Israel at a time of dire distress, so Jesus was sent to redeem Israel at a time of dire spiritual distress when they had made the commandments of God of none effect by their traditions. (Matt. 15. 6.) It may be forcing the parallel to say that both Moses and Jesus were taken out of water - Moses out of the river and Jesus out of the water of baptism. As we shall see in the next verse, Moses was "mighty in words and deeds". The same was said of Jesus. (Luke 24. 19.)

#### Verse 22

"And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds."

The Jews who listened to Stephen's speech would understand the full impact of his pointed allusions to their beloved Moses and in particular, that he had been educated by the despised Egyptians. In like manner, when he returned from Egypt, the boy Jesus was brought up in despised Nazareth. If they despised Jesus for the place of his upbringing, then despise Moses for the upbringing he had had in Egypt. If Moses was mighty in words and deeds, how much more so was the departed Lord mighty in words and deeds since he did the works of his Father and spoke His words. (John 5. 36; 9. 4; and 14. 10.)

Like Jesus, the education which Moses received was not enough. He had to undergo a further period of preparation.

Verse 23

"And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel."

"full forty years" - the first forty years of his life was drawing to a close - was being filled up with years.

It is interesting to note that the first 40 years of the life of Moses was spent in Egypt. The next 40 years of his life was spent in Midian to which place he now intends to go; and the last period of 40 years was spent in the wilderness journey. Thus his life is divided up into three periods of forty years each. One period of education in the ways of men; one period of education in the ways of God and the final period in the service of God.

"It came into his heart..." - from ancient times, and in N.T. days, the thoughts were considered to be contained in the heart. The brain was thought to control body temperature for it was found that when one had a temperature, the brow was hot. When one had an evil intention or a wicked thought, or perhaps a fright or shock, the heart beat would quicken. It is in this sense that the word is used here. Compare Matt. 15. 19; Luke 2. 52.

"to visit" means to visit for the purpose of relieving or assisting. See Luke 1. 68, 78; 7. 16; Acts 15. 14; Heb. 2. 6. The use of "visit" to bring punishment, is not used here. (Psa. 89. 32; Jer. 14. 10.)

"came" - to come into his heart is the same usage as appears in Isa. 65. 17; Jer. 3. 16; 32. 35. For the first two of these references, see margin. "came" in this sense is a favourite usage in the LXX. In fact Stephen quotes liberally in an extempore manner from the LXX showing the considerable knowledge he had of the Scriptures in that medium.

The implication of Stephen's statements here shows that although the thought entered Moses' mind to visit his brethren the children of Israel, with the intention of liberating them from the oppressor, his was not the initial thought, for his actions were undoubtedly motivated by God's will working upon him. In like manner, the Lord Jesus was raised up in his day to liberate his people, not from the yoke of the Roman oppressor, but from the bondage of the Law. This the Jews could not understand for they regarded the Law as a ritual of worship instead of a "school master to bring them to Christ". (Gal. 3. 24.) The coming of Jesus was in accordance with God's Will.

Verse 24

"And seeing one (of them) suffer wrong, he defended (him), and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian:"

"one of them" refers to one of his brethren of the Israelites.

"suffer wrong" - means either "wronged" or "injured".

"defended..." - this verb is used in the middle voice indicating that what was done was done for the benefit of one's self. Therefore, Moses did not "defend" the one wronged, but defended himself when the Egyptian must have turned on him.

"avenged" - the meaning of taking vengeance is not contained here. The word means "to maintain the right of the person wronged". Whether the meaning is strong such as taking vengeance, is determined by the context. See Rom. 12. 19. this statement being quoted in Heb. 10. 30.

"oppressed" means "worn out" by treatment and bondage.

"smote the Egyptian" indicating that the Egyptian did the wrongful act upon the Hebrew. It is possible that the Egyptian was one of the taskmasters who ill-treated the Hebrews as is described in Exod. 5. 6/14.

#### Verse 25

"For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not."

"would deliver them" - would give them deliverance; Greek - "was giving deliverance".

Why should Moses suppose that the Hebrews would understand that God was giving them deliverance? Stephen is making a very clever point here. In the days of Moses, those who understood God's Word knew that the time of the promise had drawn nigh as is stated in verse 17. They would know from the Divine warning given to Abraham recorded in Gen. 15. 13. The book of Genesis had not been written at that time, but the promise would have been handed down from generation to generation. If the people were truly religious, they would have been watching and waiting for Divine deliverance to come at this time.

By the same token, there were many in Israel at the time of Stephen who were looking for the Messiah to come in terms of the prophecy by Daniel. (Dan. 9. 25/26.) Would they now be as their fore-fathers were in the days of Moses and reject Jesus as their fore-bears had rejected Moses? Both men had been sent by God to deliver His people. How would the people of this generation accept the prophet like unto Moses?

One does not like to find types and anti-types when they are not there, but the Egyptian who was slain by Moses seems to fit in with the pattern of sin over which Jesus gained a victory by his death. The Jews of the days of Moses were heavily under bondage to sin indicated by the maltreatment received because of that sin. Moses came to rescue them. In like manner, the Jews of the days of our Lord were heavily under bondage to sin and Jesus came to deliver them.

#### Verse 26

"And the next day he showed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?"

"the next day" - Heb. "the second day" see Exod. 2. 13.

"he shewed himself" - This indicates a deliberate presentation of himself. This is a delicate point and it is not certain how Stephen used the words. If he spoke Greek, then the word is used to indicate a struggle with words. The usage in this way is shown in John 6. 52; and 2 Tim. 2. 24. Did Stephen deliberately turn a physical struggle of the days of Moses into a verbal contest in the days in which he lived? If he did, then how powerfully he showed the Sanhedrin members that Jesus had come to them to put a stop to the endless quarrelling between Pharisees and Sadducees about the resurrection. Did not Jesus teach them brotherly love?

"set them at one again." - reconciled them one to the other.

## Verse 27

"But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?"

"he that did his neighbour wrong" - Greek: "the one wronging the neighbour..." See Exodus 2. 13.

"thrust him away" - literally "pushed him away physically". Figuratively, "rejected with disdain". See LXX Jer. 6. 19. and Hos. 9. 17. also Rom. 11. 1. and 1 Tim. 1. 19.

The question asked is similar to that asked of Jesus. (Matt. 21. 23.) and later of the apostles. (Acts 4 $\frac{1}{2}$  7.) The question shows that Moses was regarded as being an intruder who asserted some official right to interfere with the people of Israel. Stephen's drawing of the analogy between Moses and Jesus must have hit him very forcibly.

## Verse 28

"Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday?"

"Wilt thou kill me...?" More forcible in the Greek original - "Surely thou dost not mean to kill me as you did...etc., The Afrikaans version shows this well with "Jy wil my tog nie doodmaak soos jy gister die Egiptenaar doodgemaak het nie?" (Surely you do not want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?)

There may be a clever allusion here by Stephen. It may surprise some that the madmen of the N.T. all seemed to know Jesus and asked him "Art thou come to destroy us?" This is a similar question to that asked of Moses but Moses had not come to take away men's lives but to liberate them. In like manner, Jesus had not come to take away men's lives but to offer them salvation. (Luke 9. 56.) The reason why the madmen knew Jesus was that the Pharisees had often told the mentally deranged that they were in that lamentable state because of their sins or the sins of their fathers and that when the Messiah came, he would destroy them. They recognised Jesus because of his fame which preceded him and felt quite sure that he had come to destroy them. But Jesus had cured such men just as Moses wanted to help the afflicted in Egypt.

## Verse 29

"Then fled Moses at this saying, and he was a stranger in the land of Midian, where he begat two sons."

"was a stranger" - he was a sojourner without possessing any land.

"Midian" In Gen. 25. 2. the name of Midian is given. He was a son of Abraham by Keturah. The name of Keturah means "incense" or "the perfumed one". This implies that the people of that part were producers of and traders in incense and spices. In Gen. 37. 25 and 28. Midianites and Ishmaelites are mentioned as bearing spicery, and balm and myrrh for sale in Egypt.

Gen. 25. 4. mentions Ephah, Ephraim and Hanoch as being sons of Midian. Caleb of the tribe of Judah (Num. 13. 6.) had a concubine named Ephah. (1 Chron. 2. 46.) Ephraim is mentioned in the list of the sons of Judah in 1 Chron. 4. 17. and Hanoch was the name of Reuben's eldest son. (1 Chron. 5. 3.) These details are sufficient to show that there was a kinship between Israel and the Midianites in the early days. There was also a kinship between the Ishmaelites and the Midianites as is shown by Gen. 37. 25, 28 and 36. Also compare Judg. 8. 22 and 24. They were not the same because the Ishmaelites came from the Abraham/Hagar union and the Midianites from Abraham/Keturah. They were both desert people with a common boundary.

In the early chapters of Exodus, the Midianites are described as being friendly towards Israel. Jethro the High priest and Moses' father in law, praised the God of Abraham. (Exod. 18. 9/12) The Midianites were also known as Kenites and Saul showed mercy to them because of the kindness they had shown towards Israel in the wilderness. (1 Sam. 15. 6.)

Towards the end of the wilderness journey, just before the Israelites had crossed over Jordan, the Midianites joined with the Moabites in leading Israel to idolatry and whoredoms. (Num. chapter 22 et seq.) The Midianites are not mentioned after their defeat at the hands of Gideon. (Judges chapters 6/8). The historical analogy of Numbers chapter 31 points to the destruction of the nations by the returned Christ. In this connection, Isaiah prophesies of the destruction "in the day of Midian." (Isa. 94. and 10. 26.) Finally, the prayer of the Messianic prophet Habbakuk is significant in its reference to Midian. (Hab. 3. 7.)

That Moses took a wife from the nation which was to be a byword of evil in Israel would not be lost upon Stephen's listeners. After all, the despised preacher from Nazareth never did anything like that! Moses lived in Midian and tended his father-in-law's flock for 40 years. (Exod. 3. 1.)

Verse 30

"And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush".

The LORD appeared unto Moses thus showing that He had remembered His promise unto Abraham and was about to deliver His people. The important point from Stephen's teaching is that God appeared to Moses in Sinai which was outside the Holy Land.

"in a flame of fire" - Hebrew idiom - "a flaming fire". That is not a glowing or smoking fire but a fire that issues in a flame. This is a vigorous fire.

"in a bush" - the fire was in the bush and not round about it. This makes it all the more significant that the bush was not consumed. The analogy of the bush representing Israel, the fire the wrath of God with His people, and the fact that the bush was not consumed, the survival of the Jewish people after years of persecution, and captivity, is not part of Stephen's theme so he does not mention it.

"of Mt. Sinai" - another thrust from Stephen; the LORD appeared in Sinai which was not Israel. The LORD'S presence is not limited to Israel.

Verse 31

"When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him,"

"When Moses saw it....." the Greek form is "And Moses seeing.....and he drawing near....."

"the sight" - Greek word is "vision". This is the only occurrence of this translation in Acts but Luke makes frequent use of the word "vision" which is the same as that used by the Lord in Matt. 17. 9. with "Tell the vision to no man..." See Acts 9. 10; 9. 12; 10. 3, 17, and 19; 11. 5; 12. 9; 16. 9, 10; 18. 9; 26. 19. The translation in all these is "vision" but the sense in Greek is "something gazed at". The translations of "vision" in Luke 1. 22; 24. 23; (optasia) denote "a sight", "an appearance" or "a coming into view". See also Acts 26. 19; 2 Cor. 12. 1; The sole appearance in Rev. 9. 17. refers to that which is seen - a sight.

"to behold it....." to observe more closely. See Matt. 7. 3; Luke 6. 41; Luke 12. 24; (the word "consider").

"came....." Greek "to come into existence". It would appear that Moses was so astonished at the "sight" that he heard it after a while when he had recovered from his initial astonishment.

## Verse 32

"Saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold."

The Greek has "Theos" translated as "God" whereas the original in Exod. 3. 16. has "elohim". It is a pity that in the Greek and in the translation the original Hebrew word is not conveyed in its true meaning. "Theos" in Greek is simply a general name for any God. The "God" whom Stephen meant to convey would be the God of the Covenant with the fathers. There would be no doubt in Jewish minds as to what God was meant. In some manuscripts, the word "God" does not appear before the names Isaac and Jacob indicating that it was the same "God" to all of them. Jesus mentioned the same series of titles as recorded in Luke 20. 37. Jesus quoted the incident from Exod. 3. 16. to show the Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection, that God was the God of the fathers who at that time were dead. In view of the promises which God had made to the fathers, it is obvious that if He were their God, He would raise them from the dead at some time in the future as He is not the God of the dead but of the living. Although Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were dead at the time, they were "living" for the purpose of salvation for their death was a sleep which would terminate at the time of the resurrection.

## Verse 33

"Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place where thou standest is holy ground."

In the East from very ancient times, it has been customary to wear shoes to prevent defilement of the feet. The commandment to Moses as described in Exod. 3. 5. and referred to here by Stephen, is the same as that given to Johhua in Josh. 5. 15. The commandment came from the holiness and purity of God therefore any defilement adhering to the shoes had to be removed before Moses could remain in His presence - the "presence of God" being manifest in the presence of the angel. No defilement can come into the presence of God. (Rev. 21. 27). The commandment was one from God because of His holiness and purity and not because of any Eastern custom from ancient times.

When Jesus sent the twelve forth two by two to preach, he instructed that if any place would not receive them, they were to shake off the dust under their feet as a testimony against them. (Mark. 6. 11.). This, surely was a sign that the place of rejection of Jesus was defiled by their refusal to listen. The Muslim of to-day, do not permit the wearing of shoes when one enters their mosques and give more than one reason for it. One is that shoes are made of leather which is the hide of a dead animal and therefore something which would defile a holy place; a second is that shoes pick up dust and mosques have valuable rugs on the floors which would be damaged by much dirt; and a third is that Mahomed has commanded that shoes shall not be worn in the mosque. Since Mahomet borrowed a lot from Judaism in forming his Faith, the last of these three is very likely to be right. The argument that shoes are made from the hide of a dead animal has no bearing on the commandment given to Moses as the Law of Moses had not at that time been given.

The lesson of Stephen's statement is that God chose to reveal Himself by manifestation in a place which was not Israel. Not only was it not Israel but God declared a particular piece of ground to be holy.

## Verse 34

"I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt."

"I have seen....." Literally "Seeing I have seen....." giving a more emphatic form such as "I have indeed seen....." or "I have certainly seen.....". Comparable emphatic statements are found in Gen. 2.17.(see margin); Gen. 22. 17. In N.T. see Matt. 13. 14; Mark 4. 12; Heb. 6. 14. The repetitive "I have seen.." is to be regarded in this way.

"affliction" - Bullinger defines this word as "ill-treatment, vexation."



"am come down..." - God is everywhere and cannot "come down". God cannot be reduced to human proportions. But God can send down from heaven a manifestation of Himself which He did in this instance. See Gen. 11. 5; 18. 21; Psa. 144. 5;

"And now,..." - since this is so.

"I will send thee..." - The meaning is more forceful than appears in this translation. Schonfield translates "I am going to send..." conveying a definite purpose. The Afrikaans Bible has "...Ek wil jou na Egipte stuur." This is idiomatic and shows a definite plan and purpose to send Moses into Egypt.

The allusion to the state of Jewry at that time would have been noticed by Stephen's listeners. The Jews were under the Roman yoke and found it burdensome. God had intervened on Israel's behalf in the days of Moses and had intervened again in the days of the prophet like unto him.

Verse 35

"This Moses whom they refused, saying; Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush."

The lesson of the previous verse is continued here. The Jews did refuse their deliverer as their fore-fathers had refused the deliverer in the days of Moses. The comparison is not drawn directly in words with the connecting "like" or "as" but the connection is too obvious to be missed by such scholars as Stephen's audience were.

"This Moses..." - These words are found at the beginning of this verse and the beginning of verses 37 and 38. The Greek of verse 36 also begins with "This..."

The pronoun "this" draws a clever distinction between the first Moses and the second one. The first Moses had been "sent into Egypt. The second "Moses" had also been sent into Egypt. (Matt. 2. 13/14.) Now Stephen refers to "This Moses whom they refused..." Who refused him? The people of the days of Moses or the people of the days of Jesus? The people's consciences must have been pricking them very much at this stage.. Stephen was drawing his analogies well. He had referred to the brethren of Joseph rejecting him. Now he referred to the people rejecting Moses. The Jews were well informed as to Type and Anti-type and would not miss the thrust Stephen was making. If they thought about this at all, and it is certain that they did because of their great anger subsequently as a result of hearing his words, they would remember that God delivered His people with signs and wonders by the hand of Moses. It was not long ago that Jesus had shown great signs and wonders in their midst. They could not deny that God was with Moses therefore how could they deny that God had been with Jesus. God had made Himself known to His people by His signs and wonders through Moses. Had not God made Himself known to His people through the signs and wonders which Jesus did through the Power of the Holy Spirit which God had given him? Stephen may well refer to "This Moses..." and leave it to them to decide which "Moses" he was speaking about.

"whom they refused..." - "whom they denied..." See Acts 3. 13/14.  
The effect of "denying" was that inasmuch as both Moses and Jesus represented the Plan and Purpose of God in all that they said and did, the denial was in effect, a denial of God, the God of Abraham, and a rejection of His Promises.

"ruler and a deliverer..." - Stephen has altered his quotation given in verse 27 from "judge" to "deliverer", but not without telling effect. The title "judge" was judge such as we find in a modern Law Court and means a person who dispenses the justice of laws which have been framed by a person (or legislator) other than himself. The title "deliverer" means a "redeemer", one who redeems or pays a ransom and takes away from a place of bondage. In such a case, a ransom had to be paid. With Jesus, the ransom was his blood. (Rev. 5. 9.) The exodus therefore, was a symbol of

an escape from sin as well as taking out of the Gentiles a people for His Name. See Matt. 20. 28; Mark 10. 45; Luke 1. 68; 2. 38; 24. 21; Heb. 9. 12; 1 Pet. 1. 9; In a sense, God redeemed His people when he brought them out of the bondage of Egypt by the man whom He sent, namely, Moses. In Jesus, God again redeemed His people from the bondage of sin.

"by the hand of the angel..." - By the protection and control exercised by the angel whom God had sent.

#### Verse 36

"He brought them out, after that he showed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years. "

"He..." - The original states "This is he..."

"brought them out..." - the original is more emphatic than the translation. It could be "this same man did bring them out..." The reason for emphasis is that Moses was given the commission and he did it. He led the people and they followed him. God gave him strength and gave him power to perform miracles. He was the great legislator by giving them God's Laws. He brought them out after he had shown signs and wonders by God's Power.

The emphasis points more and more to the fact that the prophet like unto Moses also used such power as God had given him and he too, performed signs and wonders. "In the land of Egypt refers to those signs given in the ten plagues and the incident with the rod and the serpent. "In the Red Sea" refers to the crossing which was made possible by the division of the waters. It also includes the destruction of the pursuing host of the Egyptians.

Jesus also performed great signs and wonders by his many miracles on land and in the sea. (The draught of fishes, the coin in the fish's mouth and the calming of the storm.)

#### Verse 37

"This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear."

"This is that (the) Moses..." - Stephen's continued use of this phrase now begins to show the people that the Moses for which they had such a profound respect was being dishonoured by those who thought they were doing him honour by their loyalty. He had prophesied of the prophet like unto him who was to come. If they could believe so implicitly in Moses, why could they not believe in the prophet he spoke about?

Peter mentioned this to many as we find in Acts 3. 22. which quotation is taken from Deut. 18. 15 and 18. All that Stephen had told them of Moses up to this point was showing Moses to have been a type of Christ. Now that same type was the author of a prophecy concerning the Messiah of whom he was the type.

"Like unto me..." - commentators are not agreed as to the true form of this statement. It would appear that the "like" refers to the raising and not to the man. That is to say, Jesus would, like Moses, come from the nation of Israel as Moses did. He would be raised up and not brought down from heaven as an angel was. He came from the brethren of the fore-fathers just as Jesus came from the brethren of the accusers of Stephen. In this, there is not any suggestion of pre-existence. Being raised "up" is too big an obstacle to be overcome in trying to prove that Jesus pre-existed. Being "raised" has a particular meaning which cannot be applied to pre-existence. The verb is transitive and means "cause to stand up". In other words, he was not there in any shape or form either present or pre-existent but was caused to come into being. "From among your brethren" precludes any possibility of Jesus having come from heaven because none of the brethren were in heaven for Jesus to come from them.

"Him shall ye hear..." is omitted by the oldest manuscripts. The R.S.V.

omits the phrase and translates the preceding sentence, "as he raised me up" for "like unto me".

Stephen leaves the Sanhedrin in no doubt as to his meaning that Jesus was the prophet like unto Moses. Therefore, in rejecting Jesus, they and not Stephen, dishonoured Moses. For other references to the prophecy by Moses, see John 1. 21 and 25; 6. 14;

Verse 38

"This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give to us:"

"church..." - the Greek original is "ecclesia" meaning "the body of people who have accepted the invitation to come out of the world..." Just as the member of the modern ecclesia accepts the Divine invitation to come out of latter day Egypt and follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, so the people in the days of Moses had accepted the Divine invitation to come out of Egypt and follow the figure of the "Lamb" throughout their wilderness journey. The "invitation" is an invitation but when it is given by God, one cannot refuse. It then becomes a summons. Inasmuch as no man can come unto Jesus except the Father which hath sent him draw him, (John 6. 44.) when a person comes to a knowledge of the Truth as it is in Jesus, it is because God has invited. This being the case, no one called may refuse to come. This ecclesia made up of all who accepted the invitation to come out of Egypt, was led throughout the wilderness journey by an angel who went before them. Exod. 14. 19; Num. 20. 16.

"oracles" - Greek "logion" being a diminutive of "logos". See here and in Rom. 3. 2; Heb. 5. 12; 1 Pet. 4. 11; The choice of words seems to be very accurate here for the Law which was given at Mt. Sinai was not the whole LOGOS of God but a shadow of good things to come. (Heb. 10. 1.) Therefore the choice of a diminutive seems to be correct.

"lively" used to describe the "oracles". They were words which were spoken by the living God and did not appear in script. Given by the living voice of Almighty God.

"received". Moses was the Law giver but it was God's Laws which he gave. None of the Law was his for he received it all from God and passed on what he had been told.

Stephen's point here is that the chosen people had come out of the world through an invitation from God. In these latter days, God had sent His son who was a prophet like unto Moses, who also gave them God's invitation to come out of this world of tradition, false doctrine and unbelief. Jesus did not speak his words but spoke his Father's words as Moses had done. These words were "lively words". They were spoken from the living voice of our Lord which he had received from his Father. As an angel had spoken to Moses, so Jesus was ministered to by angels. (Mark 1. 13.)

Verse 39

"To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt."

"To whom..." - this is bad grammar copied from Tyndale. It stems from the English "be obedient to". The word "to" can be omitted without destroying the sense.

"would not..." shows an exercise of their will as opposed to the Will of God. They would not do that which they chose not to do.

"thrust away..." - see verse 27. Stephen impresses the rebellion upon his listeners.

"in their hearts..." - the heart was thought to be the seat of the

emotions and thoughts.

"turned back again..." - this does not refer to the desire to return to Egypt for the fleshpots as is described in Exod. 16. 3; 17. 3; and Num. 14. 4. This verse must be regarded as being the first part of a longer verse of which verse 40 is the second portion. Then, following verse 40 with verse 41, we get the full context of what Stephen is pointing to. The reference is to their desire to worship the deities of Egypt. There were many deities in Egypt and because of this multiplicity of gods, Pharaoh's heart was hardened. When the magicians could not copy the miracles done by Moses, they would be quite prepared to acknowledge that the God of Israel was more powerful than their Beelzebul, the god of lice for instance, but they would not acknowledge that God was more powerful than Ra, their sun-god until the plague of darkness that could be felt, provided this was done in the middle of the day when Ra was supposed to shine. So it was that when Moses went up into the mount to receive the Law, the people lost contact with the God they could not see, and asked for a new god to be made for them. (Exod. 32. 1/4; and Neh. 9. 18.) See also Ezek. 20. 5/8.

The lesson which Stephen is giving here shows that just as their fathers made the mistake of turning away from God, they too had done the same thing by thrusting away His son. On the surface they had not done so. They still had that air and bearing of righteousness but in their hearts they had conceived this rebellion when they rejected the Messiah.

Verse 40

"Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him."

This verse is an enlargement upon what went before in verse 39. It shows how the people turned back again into Egypt.

"gods" - the noun is in the plural, being "elohim". In view of the multiplicity of gods which characterised the worship of Egypt, it is very likely that they did ask for more than one god. That only one was made is due to the fact that Moses returned from the mount before another could be made. If Moses had not intervened, it is quite possible that more gods would have been made. The verb "make" is in the plural showing that more than one "make" or manufacture was required.

"to go before us..." - As God had done in a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire. (Exod. 13. 21.) This was not for the purpose of guiding them back into Egypt but to take the place of the God of Israel during the absence of Moses in the mount.

Stephen's reference to this lamentable incident in the history of Israel was for the purpose of showing his listeners that the rebellion of Israel and Judah against the God of Abraham had its beginning in the wilderness. As Stephen is yet to show, Israel continued to reject the God of the Fathers throughout their history and the climax of their rejection was not the rejection of the system of worship which God had laid down, but the rejection of His son. Whereas the pillar of fire had been a light unto the path of Israel, in the latter days, Jesus was the light of the world. Just as the Israelites had rejected the pillar of fire, and had asked for another god to lead them by going before them, so the Jews of Stephen's day had rejected the light of the world and had returned to the blindness that is happened unto Israel. (2 Cor. 3. 14.)

"this Moses..." - This title appears as a niminative absolute without a verb. It is thought to indicate the same degree of ridicule that the Jews at that time accorded Jesus.

Verse 41

"And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands."

"calf.." - The phrase "they made a calf" is taken from one Greek word which appears in the Bible here only and in no other place. It is literally "And they calf-made..." The meaning of the calf portion of the word is "bull" and there can be little doubt that the image made by Aaron was a young bull in shape. In Egypt there were the sacred bulls named "Apis" and "Mnevis" which were supposed to be reincarnations of Osiris and Ra the River and Sun gods respectively. In India, the worship of bulls is well-known and is associated with Siva. The worship of the cow is even better known.

Note the three stages. (1) they made the calf; (2) they brought sacrifices to it; (3) they rejoiced in the works of their hands. For their rejoicing, see Exod. 32. 17/19 and 1 Cor. 10. 7. Taking a lesson from this, (1) idolatry is treason against God; (2) active participation is a greater sin; (3) to rejoice or glory in it, is the greatest sin of all. See Psa. 115 and in particular verse 4. See also Psa. 135 and in particular verse 15.

The rejoicing in the works (plural) is the rejoicing not only in the calf but also in the altar and all that went with it to make the sacrifice possible. God alone has the right to rejoice in the works of His hands. If man should rejoice at all, let him rejoice in God's works and not in his own. To rejoice in one's own works is to yield to idolatry. (1 Cor. 10. 7.) Whatever we make, we make with the materials which were created by God. We can make nothing by ourselves. Whatever skill we have, God gave it to us, therefore whatever we do, we do it because of God, unless our works are evil for then they would be of our own sinfulness. To rejoice in the works of our own hands, is to worship the creature rather than the creator. (Rom. 1. 25.)

Verse 42

"Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness?"

"God turned..." - the verb "turn" is the same as that used in verse 39. The people had turned from God so He turned from them. The "turning away" consists of withdrawing His favour from them. See Josh. 24.20; Isa. 63. 10. God's blessings upon his servants are conditional upon their utter obedience to Him. Jesus also taught this lesson. (Matt. 6. 33.)

"gave them up..." - A pursuance of wrong-doing will result in a sinner being left to his own devices and, his heart being what it is and always has been (Ge. 6. 5.) he will turn to more and greater evil. In this way of leaving man to his own evil way, God gives them up to other worship, whether of other gods or of self. Rom. 1. 24, 26, 28. Ephes. 4. 19; 2 Thess. 2. 11. The "giving up" can take the form of complete disregard. See Hos. 4. 17.

"the book of the prophets" is thought to be the twelve minor prophets which, in Stephen's day, were put into one book.

"host of heaven" - the sun, moon and stars. There is a reference to this in Deut. 17. 3; 2 Kings 17. 16; 21. 3; 23. 4/5; 2 Chron. 33. 3 and 5; Jer. 8. 2; 19. 13; Dan. 8. 10; Zeph. 1. 5; The heathen worshipped the sun because it gave light and warmth during the day and in its absence, there was darkness and cold. As it proceeded south, the days grew shorter and when it came north again, the days lengthened and temperatures became warmer. The turning point from south to north was mid-winter's day and was turned into a festival day which has been given a so-called Christian form and called Christmas Day. The full moon gave light during harvest so that crops could be reaped. The growth of the moon from a crescent to full moon was regarded as the growth of pregnancy and from this point, it was a short step to making the moon a goddess of fertility. In every egg there is a potential of life so the egg came to be associated with the full moon, especially at a time when a festival was held in honour of the moon goddess Astarte (from which we get Easter.) The brightest of the planets was and is Venus which is the morning star in ascendancy and the evening star when setting. Being on the plane of the ecliptic,

it makes a fascinating objected when in conjunction with the moon. This led to the idea of the crescent moon carrying the morning star in her womb, or at the breast or just simply at her knee. This has led to Christianising a pagan idea by the many pictures which have been painted of the madonna and child.

The worship of the sun was done every day by the pagans and it started every morning as the sun rose. To bow in worship to the sun meant that people had to rise early to see it and it could be seen earlier from the tops of the hills than from the valleys. Therefore altars of worship of the sun-god were built in the "high places". Israel joined in this form of worship and even when they returned to the God of Israel, they would turn from worshipping the sun and would worship God but from the "high places". Reference to the cult of the high places is found in many places of which the following are a few:-

1 Kings 3. 2/3; 13. 2; 13. 32/33; 15. 14; 22. 43; 2 Kings 12. 3, 5; 2 Kings 14. 4; 15. 4 and 35; 17. 9/11; 18. 4 and 22; 21. 3; 23. 5, 8/9, 13, 15, 19/20; Mic. 1. 5;

"have ye offered to me...?" The question asked by Amos is not to ascertain whether the people offered sacrifices during the wilderness journey but to enquire as to whether it was to God whom they offered such sacrifices or was it to the sun, moon and stars? If it was to none of these, then it could have been a sacrifice just because a sacrifice had been commanded. Once the sacrifice was offered the ritual had been accomplished and the offeror went his way. The offering of sacrifices required heart-worship to go with it. This required penitence from the worshipper and an acknowledgement of guilt in the eyes of God. The rebellious nature of the people and their insincere worship had its beginning in the wilderness journey and this set the pattern for their subsequent history.

Verse 43

"Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon."

"Ye took up..." - It is positive that Moses who dealt very severely with the golden calf (Exod. 32. 20.) would not have permitted the Israelites to "take up" and carry a "tabernacle of Moloch". The verse however, does not directly relate to the wilderness journey but is an enlargement of Stephen's theme that the people turned to idolatry and that the beginning of it was in their hearts during the wilderness journey. If it could have been manifested then as it was later when they turned to the worship of Moloch (Melech), who could deny that it was being manifested in their later history and even now when the people turn away from God's anointed Son? It was because of these things that God had carried Israel away as prophesied by Amos, and brought Judah into captivity as Daniel and others like Jeremiah had prophesied, therefore it was not unreasonable to expect that God would punish this generation for their wickedness. Stephen does not say all this but it is inferred from his general theme.

The offering of human sacrifices to Moloch is mentioned in the O.T. (Lev. 18. 21; 20. 2/5; 1 Kings 11. 7; 2 Kings 23. 10; Jer. 32. 35. It is referred to as Milcom in 1 Kings 11. 5; 1 Kings 11. 33; 2 Kings 23. 13. and as Malcham in 1 Chron. 8. 9; Zeph. 1. 5.

Verse 44

"Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen."

"the tabernacle of witness" - not the temple situated in a fixed place but the tent where God said "there I will meet with thee..." (Exod. 25. 22; 29. 42; 30/6. and 36; Num. 17. 4;)

"as he had appointed..." - as God had directed in His instructions to Moses. Everything had to be made "...after

their pattern, which was shewed to thee in the mount." (Exod. 25. 40; Heb. 8. 5.)

The theme of Stephen's argument here is that the tabernacle was not in a settled place. It had been made strictly according to the pattern laid down by God but it moved from here to there with no fixed abode. When the people entered the Holy Land under Joshua, the tabernacle went with them and was kept by them until the time of David. It was replaced by the Temple in the days of Solomon. The moving nature of the tabernacle of witness was a witness to the fact that God's Laws undergo a change as they did in the days of Jesus but this was in accordance with the Divine Pattern.

#### Verse 45

"Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of the fathers, unto the days of David."

"our fathers which came after..." - "Which also (the tabernacle) our fathers received by succession or in their turn, and brought it with Joshua into the land which was the possession of the Gentiles (God having driven out the Gentiles nations who were there. (God drove out those nations.) The people kept the tabernacle up to the days of David. This sentence can be shortened as follows:- Our fathers, inheriting the tabernacle, brought it in with Joshua at the conquest of the nations who were there, God having driven them out. It remained with them up to David's day.

During the long interval between the entry under Joshua and the peace which came towards the end of the reign of David, the tabernacle never had a fixed abode. Therefore, from the time when the tabernacle was first given up to the latter days of David's reign, the tabernacle never had a complete rest but went here and there, from one generation to another.

The tabernacle was at Shiloh (1 Sam. 1. 3.) then in Nob, (1 Sam. 21. 1.) and in Gibeon. (2 Chron. 1. 3.) Finally it was carried into the newly built temple of Solomon. (2 Chron. 5. 5.)

#### Verse 46

"Who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob."

In 2 Sam. chapter 7 we read how David was ashamed that he dwelt in a house of Cedar but the ark of God dwelt within curtains (in a tent). This chapter is repeated in 1 Chron. chapter 17. Stephen quotes Psa. 132. 5. from the LXX, in the verse before us.

Stephen's theme is that although David had found favour with God and although his wish was that he should build God a "house", he was not allowed to build it. Therefore it is quite unnecessary for there to be a permanent and solid temple for the worship of God. Men should worship God in their hearts, with desire.

Although it is not part of our present study, it is of advantage to look at Psalm 132 because here David expresses his reverence for God who had given him Divine protection. Throughout all his campaigns, God had brought him safely to a state of peace. God had preserved him with care. In the Psalm, we find a name for God which is not often used. It is "abiyr" and is translated as "mighty God of Jacob". It is used only in connection with Jacob and no other. The name "God" is in italics showing that it does not occur in the original Hebrew. The title is "mighty of Jacob" and occurrences are Psa. 132. 1 and 5; Isa. 49. 26; 60. 16; In Isa. 1. 24. it is translated as "mighty one of Israel" but Jacob's name was changed to Israel. Its first appearance in the O.T. is Gen. 49. 24. where it is used with Jacob. The word carries a sense of "height" and suggests a protection from a height like a soaring eagle. Therefore the "height" comes from One, the Mighty One,

who is above all, and who has looked down upon Israel (Jacob) with protection throughout their history. This had been promised to Jacob. (Gen. 28. 15.) See also Psa. 20. 1; 46. 7; 146. 5. To David, the protection he had received urged him to build God a "house" and to pray that God would enter His rest so that the Ark would no longer wander from one place to another.

Note that Stephen says "find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob."

Verse 47

"But Solomon built him a house."

In spite of his wisdom and the glories of his reign, Solomon occupies a very inferior position to David in Biblical history. Nevertheless God chose him to build the temple because he was a man of peace whereas David had been a man of war. (1 Chron. 22. 8/9; 28. 3.) David was immensely popular amongst all the Jews and Stephen was taking a risk in speaking about him as his words could have been distorted as the Jews distorted his words about Moses. (Acts 6. 11.) Solomon also, was a source of great pride amongst the Jews in spite of the inferior position he held in comparison with Moses. Stephen therefore, mentions both with care, so as not to lay his statements open to distortion and shows that although David was beloved of God, Solomon built the temple.

The word "temple" is used to describe the edifice which Solomon had built but in the whole of the dedicatory prayer by Solomon, nothing is said about it being a place where sacrifices are offered. It seems to have been used solely as a house of prayer. This idea appears to be taken up by Stephen in the next verse.

Verse 48

"Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet."

The temple gave rise to a frame of mind and was akin to Faith. A discussion of what constitutes Faith is not part of our study but a few words will clarify the position for us. If we have Faith in that what God has promised He is able to perform, and if we have Faith that the kingdom is a place that we should all like to get into, then our belief in these things will induce a change in us so as to make us a different person from what we were before our baptism. Having induced a change in our behaviour and thinking, it will also induce a change in the work we do. We shall give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest at any time we should let them run out as leaking vessels. (Heb. 2. 1.) If the Temple of Solomon induced the worshippers to bring about a change in character in themselves, then it would have to a certain extent, fulfilled the purpose for which it was built.

In his prayer of dedication (1 Kings 8. 23/53.) Solomon stated that the heaven of the heavens could not contain God, therefore how much less this house which he had built. (vs. 27.) See also 2 Chron. 6. 14/42. and in particular, verse 18. See also Acts 17. 24. for Paul's quotation of these words.

Solomon's words were not a condemnation of temple worship but were uttered in acknowledgement of the infinite majesty of God. The tent was appropriate while the people were wandering but when they stayed in one place, a more fixed abode was suitable. Nevertheless, the permanent nature of the temple should not be taken for granted because the original temple of Solomon had disappeared and so had that built by Zerubabel. These had disappeared because of the people turning away from God. How sure were they that the present temple built by Herod was permanent?

"built with hands.." - See Mark 14. 58; Ephes. 2. 11; Heb. 9. 11 and 24.

"..as saith the prophet." - See Isa. 66. 1. The reference deals with the quotation of verse 49 and not with this verse we are now studying.



## Verse 49

"Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?"

This verse is a continuation from verse 48 as if the whole read, "Solomon built him a house but Solomon said that the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands, as also the prophet has said, and his words were, "Heaven....etc,"

Stephen now quotes Isaiah 66. 1. following very closely the LXX version. Reference to Solomon's prayer of dedication will show that he asked God to hear in heaven his dwelling place in each of the sections of his prayer. See 1 Kings 8. verse 32 for the oath of ordeal; verse 34 for national defeat; 36 for drought; 39 for afflictions; 43 for the stranger's prayer; 45 for Israel at war; 49 for Israel in captivity; In all of these Solomon showed that God was in heaven.

In the N.T. we find Jesus acknowledging the God in heaven by giving the model prayer, "Our Father which art in heaven,..." (Matt. 6. 9.) Man could not ascend unto heaven, God's dwelling place. (1 Tim. 6. 16.) John declared that no man hath ascended into heaven. (John 3. 13.) and Peter stated that David had not ascended into heaven. (Acts 2. 34.) Peter also quoted Psa. 110. 1. to show that the prophecy of "Sit thou at my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool" was fulfilled in the ascension of Jesus to the right hand of his Father in heaven. See Acts 2. 34/35. Jesus caused John to write:-

Rev. 3. 21. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne."

Stephen was fully aware that God was in heaven and dwelt not in tents made by man's hands, neither was he to dwell in a fixture of stone such as the temples built by Solomon, Zerubabel or Herod. The prophet in verse 2 shows that God would dwell in the heart of a man who is of a contrite spirit and who trembleth at God's Word. Such a man is "...the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." (Heb. 8. 2.) This was Jesus who said of himself, "...Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (John 2.19.) when Jesus taught, God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself. (2 Cor. 5. 19.) and when Christ rules on his throne on earth, God will be in him in a glorious manifestation.

Having shown the Sanhedrin that their fathers had resisted the Spirit of God, and that God would dwell in a Saviour, the attachment they had for the temple made by hands was contrary to what the prophet Isaiah had predicted. Temples in the past had been polluted by false doctrines and ritual of worship. Jesus whom they despised, had shown the true worship which was from the heart.

## Verse 50

"Hath not my hand made all these things?"

The chapter division here is unfortunate for the words of this verse are the opening words of verse 2 of Isaiah 66. The rest of verse 2 is not quoted.

Stephen has now completed his defence. He has shown that he is not guilty of the charges brought against him, namely, that Jesus would change the customs which Moses had taught them (Acts 6. 14.) He has now answered the charge that he was speaking blasphemous words against the temple. (Acts 6. 13.) Jesus had fulfilled the law and the temple in which God was to dwell, was the Saviour, and, through him, the spiritual body of Christ. The Sanhedrin were the culprits. They had permitted tradition to govern temple worship. They had resisted the power of the Holy Spirit as it spake through Jesus. The very Scriptures which they venerated and professed to know and understand, testified

against them right throughout their history as the people of God. Insofar as their charge of Jesus taking the place of the temple, he did not deny this. In fact, he affirmed this and showed from the prophet Isaiah why this was so. Whether the people would understand the deeper significance of the prophet's words which were written against Judah in the time of Manasseh, will never be known but if they did, the quotation was most pointed. Manasseh had shed innocent blood very much till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to the other. (2 Kings 21. 16.) The evil which he did after the righteousness of Hezekiah, was very closely akin to the suggested evil of Israel after the righteousness of Jesus. After stating the words which are quoted in this verse from Acts, the prophet Isaiah said, "but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." (Isa. 66. 2.) Those who heard Stephen's quotation from this verse, must have supplied the rest of the verse and would have known that this referred to the Messiah, the man Jesus.

Thus Stephen's quotation would connect for the people, the history of Israel which condemned them for their behaviour before God, and the similarity between Israel of old and Jewry as Stephen addressed it during his speech. This was contrasted in the behaviour of the wicked Manasseh as compared with the righteousness of Jesus. Stephen's hearers were well enough versed in the Scriptures to know what Stephen meant.

#### Verse 51

"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye."

The accusation of "stiffnecked" must have reminded the listeners of the strong words Moses used against the rebellious people of Israel. (Exod. 32. 9; 33. 3 and 5; 34. 9; Deut. 9. 6 and 13. See also an appeal in Deut. 10. 16. and 2 Chron. 30. 8.) The severe accusations made by Stephen during his speech must have been a trial to the Sanhedrin and now that Stephen goes on to the attack, his remarks must have been even harder to bear. The allegation of "stiffnecked" means "obstinately disobedient (to God)" and being "stiff", "unwilling to bend to His Will."

The accusations of "uncircumcised" has a double meaning, first, they had not cut themselves off from evil thinking. This would apply to an "uncircumcised heart". (See Lev. 26. 41; Deut. 30. 6; Jer. 9. 26; Ezek. 44. 7.) The second meaning is that "circumcision" was first given as a sign of covenant relationship with God. (Gen. 17. 10.) If they were spiritually uncircumcised, then they would come out of the Covenants of Promise. By their rejection of Jesus as their Messiah, they had sold their birthright as the Covenant people.

Being uncircumcised of ear is referred to in Jer. 6. 10. This regarded them as having no delight in God's word and Law. They would not listen to God. Since Moses had said so much about circumcision, Stephen's accusation that they were uncircumcised meant that they were disregarding Moses whom they respected so much. This would be a gross insult to them. Stephen may as well have told them to their face that they were just as much Gentiles (or heathen) as were their fathers who had rebelled against the Moses they so much admired. Thus did Stephen turn their accusation against him back to themselves and with much more convincing proofs than the Sanhedrin had brought to bear.

"Ye do always resist the Holy Spirit..." - as their fathers had done against Moses in spite of the miracles he had performed. They had resisted Jesus who performed wonderful things by the power of the Holy Spirit and later, the apostles had also performed miracles and through such, had gathered many followers. The Sanhedrin were denying the evidence of their own eyes by refusing to believe such things. As their fathers did, so they were doing now. The point would not be lost on all those who heard.

#### Verse 52

"Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers."

Stephen now returns to his first point. The Holy Spirit had been resisted by their fathers not only in the Law but as it spoke to them through the prophets. In whatever form the Power of God had appeared, they had resisted it. As the prophets spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1. 21.) so their fathers had not only resisted them but they had slain them. The great prophet Isaiah had (traditionally) been sawn asunder. (Heb. 11. 37.) These great men who had acted as they were moved by the Holy Spirit had spoken of the coming of the Messiah and now, the descendants of those people who had slain the prophets, now had slain the Messiah.

Stephen accuses the Sanhedrin of the most dastardly crimes it is possible to commit and in doing so, they did not prove the prophets wrong, nor did they prove that Jesus was wrong. In the same way, Stephen uses this for his defence that their accusations against Stephen were not necessarily true. (For an example of the murder of a prophet, see 2 Chron. 24. 20/22.)

Compare the words of Stephen in this verse with those of Jesus in Matt. 23. 29/37. Just as their fathers had killed the prophets who wrote of the Messiah to come, so the people to whom Jesus was speaking, would kill the Messiah of whom the murdered prophets spoke. Stephen concludes his speech with words very similar to those used by Jesus. There must have been many of the Sanhedrin who heard the words of Jesus and were now listening to the same from Stephen. Just as they were anxious to kill Jesus to bring to an end the embarrassing things he had to say against them, so they would now have a desire in their hearts to murder the man who reminded them not only of the sins of their fathers but also of their own sins.

#### Verse 53

"Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it."

Stephen now reaches the most effective part of his speech. They had received their Law from angels of God. This privilege was given to them as the Covenant people and to no other nation on earth. Yet in their attitude, they had betrayed that great honour. Angels were the messengers of God. Jesus was also "sent" by God to give the Divine message to the Jewish people. The reference to the Law has the added thrust that such was given to the people of Israel yet they had acted in the manner of the Gentiles. If the fathers had received the law through the ministry of angels, acting as a well ordered body of soldiers of the LORD, and rejected the Law, how much more did not the members of the Sanhedrin receive at one time the message from God delivered by His Son, the Lord Jesus, and yet they rejected him and his words.

#### Verse 54

"When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth."

"these things..." must refer to the whole discourse of Stephen and not just to the words of attack given in verses 51/53. His argument was logical and the Sanhedrin must have anticipated his summary but put it away from them. Now, at last, they were told directly of their shortcomings and their anger was too much for them.

"they were cut to the heart..." - they were "sawn asunder". The same expression is used in Acts 5. 33. - an idiomatic expression meaning to be overcome with rage.

"they gnashed on him with their teeth." - The verb means to cry out in pain (Mark 9. 18.) or in rage as is meant here. It is accompanied by bellowing, groaning or roaring. They may have clenched their teeth in rage. The idiom indicates that they were overcome with rage and turned upon him in ungovernable rage.

#### Verse 55

"But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,"

"being full of the Holy Spirit..." does not refer to a sudden inspiration, but merely reminds us that, in view of what follows immediately, Stephen had been given the gift of the Holy Spirit. The fact that he was full of the Holy Spirit should be borne in mind when reading verse 56.

"looked up stedfastly into heaven..." - the "look stedfastly" is the same as in Acts 1. 10. That he looked into heaven simply means that he diverted his gaze from the Sanhedrin and looked upwards in a heavenly direction. Some commentators suggest that it was an attitude of prayer but nothing is indicated in Luke's script that Stephen offered a prayer at this instant.

"and saw..." - much more is given to this passage by way of interpretation than actually appears in print. It is quoted to prove that "souls" - whatever such may be - go to heaven at death because Jesus was seen there by Stephen. The immortality of the soul cannot be proved from this verse and neither can the doctrine of the trinity. If, as some maintain, Stephen saw both God and Jesus, then he didn't see the other person of the alleged trinity, presumably because the verse states that the Holy Spirit was in Stephen, since Stephen was full of it! Such distortions of Scripture should be treated with the contempt they deserve.

The verb "saw" in this usage, appears only in the past tense as it does here. Its meaning is not limited to merely seeing by the eye, but also embraces a meaning of "have knowledge of" and "understand". It is also used in Acts 6. 15. where it would appear that the people just saw with the eyes. It appears in Gal. 2. 7. where Paul states that certain men "saw" that the Gospel had been committed to Paul to preach to the Gentiles. "Saw" in this instance, has no relation to sight but rather considers the understanding. The verb is used throughout Revelation where John "saw" certain visionary things which had a symbolic meaning but he did not understand them. In Rev. 1. 7. we find "every eye shall see him..." where the word "see" is translated from another verb which does not have the meaning of "seeing" as a physical act, but embraces the idea of understanding or contemplating. Thus both words are related through showing an understanding of certain events which are seen in the mind's eye or certain events before one, lead to an understanding.

Carrying this idea a little further, we find Job listening to the words of Almighty God as He showed Job that his arguments and self defence had missed the true significance altogether. Job could not understand the righteousness of God for if he had had the slightest knowledge of the Divine Righteousness, he would loathe himself. Once Job had heard the end of God's words, he said

Job 42. 5. "I have heard of thee by hearing of the ear: but now mine eye SEETH thee. "

Since no man hath seen God at any time (John 1. 18.) it is obvious that Job never saw God on that occasion. The Hebrew "ra'ah" has a variety of applications amongst which is the idea of understanding or perceiving. What Job said was that he had heard God's words and now that he had heard them, he began to understand their meaning and realised how foolish he had been. Hence his confession, "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42. 6.)

Applying this reasoning to the passage before us, we find that Stephen has gone to considerable trouble and used great detail to show the Divine Plan and Purpose which the Jews had resisted throughout their history. This Divine Plan involved the coming of the Messiah whom the Jews had rejected. Time and again Stephen compares the early Jews or the Jews throughout history with the Jews present when he was speaking. Stephen showed that he had a wide understanding of Scripture and that he understood the Divine Plan and Purpose as it centred around Jesus of Nazareth. Through that understanding, Stephen could well say that he "saw" the glory of God which before was "in the tabernacle" as a figure of that which is to come, and he "saw" the Son of man "standing on the right hand of God" in a place of high honour. The Jews would give him no honour but the God whom they worshipped had exalted him and given him a name which is above every name. (Phil. 2. 9.) The statement of Stephen relates to understanding and not to actual sight.

"the glory of God..." - from Num. 14. 21. we learn that "all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD." We also know that the glory of the LORD filled the temple. In Stephen's speech, he showed that the LORD does not dwell in temples made with hands and we learnt from this that the glory of the LORD is in Jesus and will be manifested in Christ and the Saints when the Kingdom is established. Therefore, if Stephen actually saw the glory of the LORD in heaven, then his interpretation of the Divine Plan and Purpose as outlined in his speech is wrong. But, regard his statement about seeing the glory of the Lord as an understanding of the Divine Plan and Purpose, then the statement makes sense. He also understood that in spite of all that the leading Jews had done to Jesus, God had exalted him to a position of high honour.

"Jesus standing on the right hand of God," - compare this statement with that of Jesus in Mark 14. 62. "ye shall see the Son of man SITTING on the right hand of power."

In Hebrew custom, one stood up to read (Luke 4. 16.) and sat down to teach. (Matt. 13. 2; 15. 29; 26. 55; Mark 9. 35; 13. 3; Luke 4. 20; 5. 3.) The reference to Jesus sitting at the right hand of God after his ascension, (Mark 16. 19.) shows that Jesus' work was now done and that being so, he sat down. This agrees with the vision of the kingdom given by Jesus when he said, "...many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob,.." (Matt. 8. 11.) The saints work will then be done; they will have gained the prize and will sit down.

It was also a custom that an advocate stood up to defend. This would account for Jesus "standing" at the right hand of God, acting as our advocate with the Father. His act of "sitting" when he comes again, is indicative of the fact that he will return as a King and will "sit" to give his judgements.

The fore-going seems to tie up with Scripture much more than does an extraordinary suggestion by a number of writers that in "standing", Jesus had got up while he waited to help the soul of Stephen into heaven! Such an idea is utterly foreign to the lesson of Stephen's speech and has nothing to support it even remotely, in Scripture.

#### Verse 56

"And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

"the heavens opened..." - here we have more than one heaven. It is not God's dwelling place but the expression is a Jewish metaphor for an insight into Divine things. See Matt. 3. 16; 9. 30; (after their declaration that they knew that Jesus was the Son of David;) Mark 1. 10; Luke 3. 21; Luke 24. 45. Further apocalyptic references are Rev. 4. 1; and 19. 11.

In other words, what Stephen said in effect was, "I understand the Divine Plan and Purpose and can picture Jesus whom ye have crucified, now acting as our mediator, ready to plead your cause if you repent and turn to him."

"Son of man..." - this is the only usage of this expression or title outside the four gospels. The use of it would remind the Sanhedrin more than ever of the Lord Jesus whom they rejected. Rev. 1. 13. and 14. 14. are words by Jesus himself and describe himself as no other writer does except the gospel writers.

Stephen's choice of words here is deliberate for they were very similar to those words used by Jesus in Matt. 26. 64; Mark 14. 62; Luke 22. 69. When the Lord uttered these words, the Sanhedrin regarded them as blasphemy and took immediate action to have him crucified. Likewise with Stephen. The words given here had the immediate effect of precipitating action which led to his death within a very short time.

## Verse 57

"Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord."

"Then they cried out..." - a continuation of the previous verse, and reads, "and crying out..." without saying what they cried about. Their words are unimportant. They could have cried out in anger, or cried out asking or commanding him to be silent and not utter any more blasphemous statements.

"stopped their ears..." - arises out of their cry which is mentioned here. They did not want to hear any more of that which they called blasphemy.

"ran upon him with one accord." - the words "ran upon" are the same as the "ran violently" of Matt. 8. 32. Mark 5. 13; Luke 8. 33. They mean to "put oneself in violent motion" or to "rush". The three gospels mentioned use the words in connection with the headlong rush of swine into whom "madness" has been sent. Here, in the verse before us, the madness of a highly excited crowd, did the same thing. They rushed madly at one man. The highly excited crowd of Acts 19. 29. did the same and the Greek words used are identical.

## Verse 58

"And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul."

"cast him out of the city..." - They obeyed the provisions of the Law by killing him outside the city. See Lev. 24. 14; a reference to stoning outside the city is given in Num. 15. 35/36. Cf. Luke 4. 29;

"stoned him:.." - The punishment for blasphemy. (Lev. 24. 16; See also 1 Kings 21. 10.) The tense indicates a continuous stoning, showing that their temper was such that after he was dead, they went on stoning him.

The law provided for witnesses who discovered anyone doing wrong. If the culprit was guilty, the witnesses had to cast the first stone but to guard against abuse by witnesses, the casting of the first stone was in the eyes of all the people and carried some responsibility.

"the witnesses laid down their clothes..." - in view of the voluminous clothing worn by men in those days, it was customary to remove the outer garment so that stones could be hurled quite easily. Having done the deed, and left non-witnesses to add their contribution to the death of Stephen, the witnesses would lay down their clothes to show that they had been the true witnesses.

"a young man.....SAUL." Here is the first introduction by Luke to one of the most famous men of history, Saul, the great apostle to the Gentiles. The term "young man" does not mean a youth, nor a man in his early twenties. Saul at that time must have been about 30 years of age. It is characteristic of Luke's narrative style to introduce his characters very gradually and without flourish no matter how famous they may become later when his story is developed.

In laying down their clothes, the chief executioners (witnesses) would lay them down to one of authority and to whom they would have to give account if ever the case was examined. Therefore the one before whom the clothes were laid down would have equal guilt with the actual executioners as he would be an accessory after the fact. In later years, Paul acknowledged his guilt and the responsibility of this remained with him for many years. We read of an interesting reference to this in Acts 22. 20.

## Verse 59

"And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

"they stoned Stephen..." - they continued to stone Stephen.."  
There is no record of a proper judgment having been given but it can be assumed that one was given. The Sanhedrin were particular about keeping the Law and many of them were anxious to keep in with the Roman rulers. Therefore nothing would be done to offend the Roman overlords. If Pilate was still in office, it would not have been difficult to get his hurried assent even before the trial started.

The Romans had taken away from the Sanhedrin the right to operate their Law when it came to putting anyone to death. The Jews acknowledged the limitation in John 18. 31. The inference here is that the Jews had the power to ascertain whether anyone had contravened the Law to such an extent that he was guilty of death and then call upon the Romans to carry out the death sentence. If Pilate had been asked to give his consent to the death of Stephen and had agreed to the Jews carrying out the sentence, then all would have been in order. On the other hand, if the Governor in office had been weak, he would not have risked offending the Jews at a time of great emotional stress such as they were going through at that time. This appears to have been the case with the death of James, the Lord's brother. (Acts 12. 1/2.) Herod would not have deliberately killed James unless application had been made by the large body of influential Jews for his death. It is to be noticed that from Acts 12. 3. that Herod, would was always anxious to increase his popularity, was pleased to note that the death of James pleased the Jews. See Matt. 27. 20; Mark 15. 11; Luke 23. 23/24.

"calling upon (God)..." - The title "God" is not in the original. The phrase "calling upon" is simply "petitioning".

"Lord Jesus..." - is taken by all commentators consulted to mean that a prayer was offered by Stephen to the second person of the trinity and that this statement by Stephen proves the divinity of Jesus. One commentator states that Stephen prayed to Jesus because he had already seen Jesus get out of his seat at God's Right Hand and step forward ready to help his ascending soul into heaven! This is a case of one wishful thinking (or distortion of Scripture) leading to another. How Stephen would know what Jesus intended to do was not stated. If this was the actual appeal made by Stephen, then it contradicts all that he said in his dynamic speech. He spoke the Truth of the word of God during his discourse but turned to apostacy just as he died. Nowhere in Scripture are we told to pray to Jesus. Nowhere in Scripture does it say we have a soul which survives us after death. If Stephen's words are to be distorted to mean this, then the immortality of the soul theory rests upon a slender and threadbare foundation. Jesus promised on four separate occasions to raise the true believer at the last day and this promise did not refer to the day of individual death but to the general resurrection which is to take place when Christ comes. (John 6. 35, 39, 40, 44. and 2 Tim. 4. 1. and 8.) If we build our faith on a misunderstanding of what Stephen said, then we must discard the promise of Jesus and the statement of Paul. If we relate Stephen's statement to the promise of Jesus and the firm declaration by Paul referred to in the quotations given, then we find that Stephen appealed for his life in the service of the Lord Jesus to be acceptable in the sight of God.

Stephen was well informed in the Scriptures and must have known a great deal of the teaching of the Master. Therefore he would have known that Jesus said, "...when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another:..." (Matt. 10. 23.) Acts 6. 9. tells us that Stephen went out of his way to dispute with the Jews about Jesus, thereby bringing himself to the notice of the Sanhedrin and bringing severe punishment upon himself, all of which could have been avoided if he had gone about his preaching with less open zeal. But Stephen was courageous and did not spare any effort to preach Jesus to all who would listen to him. He did not anticipate his death, as his appeal shows but it must have worried him for a moment that he was to go to his death and leave a great work of preaching undone. Therefore his last appeal, "Lord Jesus, receive my life..." that is to say, "my work is over. Let it be acceptable such as I have done." That interpretation fits more in with the teaching of Scripture than the wishful interpretations just referred to.

## Verse 60

"and he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep."

Having made his appeal, Stephen now turned to prayer to GOD and not to Jesus. "he kneeled down..." is the same as "bending the knee" of Rom. 11. 4; 14. 11; Ephes. 3. 14; Phil. 2. 10.

"cried with a loud voice..." - as was the case with Jesus as we see from Matt. 27. 50; Mark 15. 37; Luke 23. 46.

"lay not this sin to their charge..." - This is the same plea made by the dying Jesus. The translation is not quite correct here and would be better as "do not set this sin against their account immovably". Compare with the prayer of the dying Zechariah who prayed, "The LORD look upon it and require it". (2 Chron. 24. 22.) with the prayer of Jesus as he was on the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke 23. 34.) Stephen had learnt his Master's lessons well.

It is to be noted that Paul, who was a witness to this murder and consented to it, also made the same appeal in the closing stages of his life when he was about to be offered. See 2 Tim. 4. 16. The important point of difference is that Stephen did not add "...for they know not what they do." The reason is that in the light of Stephen's speech, they did know what they had done.

"and when he had said this, HE FELL ASLEEP." The "falling asleep" is not what one would expect of a dying person whose soul has just gone to heaven to be helped up by the standing Jesus. Surely if the commentators are correct, Luke should have mentioned that Stephen's soul drifted upwards until it entered heaven for the waiting Jesus to receive it. But Stephen used the same expression as Jesus used concerning the dead Lazarus. (John 11. 11.) Both Lazarus and Stephen were dead. Lazarus was raised and Stephen was not. Did the soul of Lazarus go to heaven? If it did, and it must have done to be consistent with the view that Stephen's soul went to heaven, then did not Jesus do Lazarus a great disfavour to bring his "soul" back again to unite it with his body which, in the words of Martha his sister, "stinketh"? (John 11. 39.) Did Martha think that the soul of Lazarus had gone into heaven? The answer is "No" and if souls do go to heaven, it is extraordinary that Martha did not know since Jesus had given so many talks in her house. She said, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." (John 11. 24.) If what Martha said here was wrong, then why was it that Jesus did not correct her?

Luke's record of this stirring event in early Christian history now draws to a close. One chapter closed in the death of Stephen and it is a chapter which was never opened again. The ecclesia was compact, living on pooled resources and as such could not afford, ecclesially or individually, to go from one end of the country to the other to preach under such pooled resources. The large and rapidly growing body of believers felt that the new order was for Jews only and mild efforts were made to bring Gentiles into the Faith as it is in Jesus. Unless these conditions had changed, little progress could have been made in spreading the teachings of Jesus throughout the world. The matter between Stephen and the Sanhedrin was to have tremendous repercussions on both sides and before we close this chapter, we shall give a short consideration to this to prepare ourselves for what follows. The development was two-fold, namely:-

A. The Jews: Many conditions combined to make the controlling powers of Jewry determined to stamp out the rapidly rising movement which started, apparently, with the teaching of one named Jesus, a man from the city of Nazareth who claimed to be the Messiah. One wonders just how much the Jews really looked forward to their Messiah when one considers the power grabbing, or power retention by those who had it, which went on for a long time. The ruler Herod who died just before Jesus was born, set up a ruling dynasty which was to last for some time and the ruling house of Herod became very powerful. The same can be said for the priestly family of Caiaphas whose sons reigned as



High Priests for several decades. Thus all power was vested in two factions who were not fully co-operative but at the same time, were not so opposed to one another as to destroy themselves. There was the rivalry between the Pharisees on the one side and the Sadducees on the other to fan the flames of rivalry. When Jesus arrived upon the scene, he brought with him something which threatened the very existence of the rulers. His doctrines were uncomfortable so there was only one thing to be done, they had to eliminate him. Alongside of the main factions were the Zealots who were opposed to the Roman overlords and they tried everything possible to make the life of the Romans as uncomfortable as they could. In some parts this amounted to open rebellion which was put down with cruel vigour by the Romans and revived again by equal vigour by the resurgent Zealots.

Thus violence was always present in some form or another in the ruling classes of Israel. The Zealots used violence against the Romans and the ruling classes used violence against the Christians. In the death of Stephen, the pattern was set for a general rising against the Christians and the heavy rioting which followed his death led to the virtual destruction of the powerful ecclesia in Jerusalem.

B. The Christians: The growing church as already indicated, was centred in Jerusalem and only the visiting converts who came to Jerusalem were of any value in spreading the new doctrine over a larger area as the brethren at Jerusalem tended to stay where they were. Those returning to their homes were ambassadors for the New Faith but they were few in number and it needed an apostle to make the Jews accept a crucified Christ as their Messiah.

Stephen's martyrdom was the match which kindled the flame of a conflagration which intensified from day to day. This is dealt with in Acts 8. The effect of the scattering of the giant ecclesia at Jerusalem was that those who got away with their lives, preached the gospel up and down throughout the civilised earth at that time.

The Zealots continued their defiance of the Roman rulers and the Jews continued to seek out and destroy the Christians. All this was prophesied in the "persecution Psalms" of David - Psa. 79 and 80. These have a latter-day application as well. The Zealots went too far and precipitated the great siege of Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70 which led to the destruction of the city and the scattering of the Jews throughout the length and breadth of the earth. Out of this devastating event, a remnant of the Jews survived. The Christian Faith however, had been spared this destruction as the Christians had been driven out by the same zealous Jews and, having been driven out, had grown stronger in dispersion than they would have had there been no opposition to them.

The early chapters of Acts up to the conversion of Saul, deal with this growing persecution of Christians. Later in the Acts, Luke takes up the story of the evangelism that was to cover the whole habitable earth and also to record the work of Paul and his helpers. Luke died before the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 but by that time, it was possible for Paul to write to the Colossians and say that the gospel had been preached unto all the world. (Col. 1. 6. and 23.)

Similarity between the death of Jesus and that of Stephen:-

	<u>JESUS</u>	<u>STEPHEN</u>
1. The accusations.	Matt. 26. 61.	Acts 6. 14.
2. The temple.	John 2. 19.	Acts 6. 13.
3. Illegal arrest.	Matt. 26. 47.	Acts 6. 12.
4. Unable to resist his wisdom.	Luke 20. 40.	Acts 6. 10.
5. Slain outside the city.	John 19. 16/17.	Acts 7. 58.
6. The dying prayer.	Luke 23. 34.	Acts 7. 60.

JESUSSTEPHEN

7. Gave up the spirit.

John 19. 30.

Acts 7. 59/60.

8. Divine vision

Luke 22. 69.

Acts 7. 56.

## BIBLICAL MARTYRS:

1. Abel.

Gen. 4. 8.

2. Naboth 1 Kings 21. 13.

2. Zechariah

2 Chron. 24. 21.

4. John the Baptist Matt. 14. 10.

3. Stephen

Acts 7. 59/60.

Luke chose his historical events with great care for the murder of Stephen marks a crucial point in the history of the early ecclesia at Jerusalem. Not only does Luke choose the incident which led to the breaking up of the large Ecclesia but he also chooses this event which was to have repercussions far and wide by the tremendous persecution which followed and which drove the Christians to all parts of the civilised world where they spread the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. It is at this stage too, that Luke introduces one of the great characters of history, Saul of Tarsus, a man who was dedicated to any task he undertook and was as great a persecutor of Believers as he became a teacher of Christianity.

There is a further aspect of this point in Luke's narrative which has escaped all the commentators consulted and for a study of this, we must go back to Genesis chapter 10, and in particular, to the distribution of the family of Noah. Verse 1 of this chapter tells us that the three sons of Noah were Shem, Ham and Japheth. The migrations which took place after the Flood, came from the descendants of these men. The sons of Japheth are mentioned first in Gen. 10. They migrated north into Europe and having arrived there turned westward into the lands of Europe which are now occupied by the white skinned races. The sons of Ham, turned westward and southward into the continent of Africa. On account of the Sahara desert, they kept to the littoral of north Africa in the parts known to us as Egypt (Misraim), Libya, Algiers, Mauretania and Phut. This took the migration to the west coast of northern Africa. On the east, where they were hampered by the desert, the southward migration followed the Nile and the Red Sea coast into Cush, Ethiopia, Abyssinia and southern Africa. How far south the early migration went is difficult to say but it would appear that the voyagers penetrated as far as some miles south of the Zambezi river. There are no artefacts or evidence of foreign occupation much further south than this river except those found on the Zimbabwe line to the coast. It would appear that the country now known as South Africa was unknown to people of Bible days, even as late as the time of Christ. The descendants of Shem, tended to stay more or less where they were and founded the Arabic races and the Semitic (Shemitic) people.

From the fore-going, we learn that there were three major migrations forming three major divisions of the human race, the Europeans (Gentiles), the Africans (Ethiopians) and the Semites. Luke is about to deal with each in turn. In chapter 8 he describes the conversion of the descendant of Ham, namely, the Ethiopian eunuch. In chapter 9 he describes the conversion of the Semite, Saul, and in chapter 10, he tells of the conversion of the son of Japheth, the centurion Cornelius. Thereafter, chapters 11 and 12 give more detail of the work of Peter who, by this time, is ready to fade from the scene so that thereafter, Luke devotes the rest of his work to describing the adventures of Paul.

The fact that in chapter 8, Luke tells us of the conversion of the son of Ham, the Ethiopian eunuch, it must not be taken to mean solely an indication that the Gospel was being preached to all the world and this one-third in particular. There is a further interesting lesson. That the convert was a eunuch is significant because he would be UNFRUITFUL in himself. By one analogy the eunuch was reading about Jesus who left no issue and was a eunuch in terms of Jesus' statement in Matt. 19. 12. To support this, the eunuch was reading about Jesus in Isa. 53. where it is written "Who shall declare his generation?" By another analogy, the Truth has not germinated in Africa and with the exception mentioned in the notes to verse 26 of this chapter, Africa has not been fruitful of believers. All this is typified by an infertile eunuch.

We have stated earlier in these notes, that Stephen was a type of Elijah, being a fore-runner for the Apostle Paul. On his death, Saul (Paul) was introduced by Luke as having been a witness to Stephen's death. Before Saul could be converted, God provided a man named Philip to develop the work still further to open the way for Paul. In this he was a type of Elisha, the prophet who followed Elijah. Up to his ministry, the gospel had been taught to Jews, but

with the coming of Philip on the scene, the gospel was to be extended to the Samaritans. Thus Philip had an important part to play in the early development of Christianity by preaching outside the realm of the Jews. We shall deal with him when we come to him. In the meantime, let us turn to chapter 8 and find out something about the great persecution which followed the death of Stephen.

## Verse 1

"And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles."

The chapter division is very unfortunate here, coming as it does at the beginning of a new phase in Luke's narrative. The phrase "And Saul was consenting unto his death." would have been much more appropriate if put at the end of Acts 7. 60. With the exception of verse 3 Saul does not appear again until Acts 9. 1. so it would have been better if he had not been introduced in chapter 8. The 7th. chapter ends "And when he had said this, he fell asleep." Now add..."And Saul was consenting unto his death". Saul is now cleverly introduced and the mention of him leaves us in suspense until the beginning of chapter 9 with "And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings....etc.,"

"And Saul was consenting unto his death." Note the continuing sense of "was consenting". It is not an separate one-time consenting, but a continuing consent with an act of violence against anyone connected with the new Faith. The word "death" is more violent, being "destruction" to indicate that Paul was consenting not only to his death but also to the violent manner in which his death was brought about. See Paul's description of his attitude in Acts 22. 20; and 26. 10/11.

After Stephen's death, everyone would deplore his passing but it would not have been possible for the Ecclesia to realise that his death was to have an important bearing on the conversion of Paul. Throughout the remainder of his life, Paul had the nagging remembrance of his consent to Stephen's death. He often referred to it for it made him painfully aware of his own sinful state. In the resurrection Stephen will know what his death meant to Paul and how great the effect or it was to be in the life of the ecclesias. Similarly in our lives, things may happen and we may be at a loss to see any reason for them. Yet some good may come from the greatest tragedy.

"And at that time..." The Greek is more specific than the translation. It is "In that very day..." indicating that the persecution followed immediately Stephen had been killed. It is as though mob violence overtook the crowd and they went here and there killing Christians wherever these could be found. The Emphatic Diaglott has "In that the day..." and the R.V. "in that day..."

"there was a great persecution..." - a great persecution arose.

"against the church (ecclesia) at Jerusalem;.." The persecution was against the believers only and directed, of course, against the ONE BODY of unified believers which was at Jerusalem. This unity was about to come to an end through the enforced dispersion.

"all scattered abroad..." - not all really. This is permissible hyperbole in view of the tense situation in Jerusalem. The effect of the persecution however, was to break up the powerful Jerusalem ecclesia in which several thousands of the believers had all things common. This communal way of living was never to rise again.

"throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria..." - This excludes Galilee. The point is unimportant because the name "Judea" could be used as a wide description of a territory embracing Galilee.

"except the apostles." The apostles must have felt their responsibility at this time for if they had fled, the Christian Movement would have been deprived of its leaders. For this reason, it is probable that the apostles stayed on at Jerusalem so as to provide a rallying point if ever the persecution

stopped. As we shall see later, it was a wise decision to stay because when they were wanted, they could be found. The Lord had prophesied something of this nature. Acts 1. 8.

## Verse 2

"And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him."

Luke introduces this quiet interpolation to show that there was no panic amongst the Believers for they went about the burial of Stephen calmly and sedately. The "devout men" were not necessarily Christians but could very well have been religious Jews who knew Stephen and who deplored his death. The "great lamentation" means wailing and beating the breast which was customary in those days whenever a loved one or close friend had died. See Luke 23. 48.

## Verse 3

"As for Saul, he made havock of the church (ecclesia), entering into every house and hailing men and women committed them to prison."

Note the contrast of the vigorous, merciless Saul who invaded the privacy of homes to arrest not only men but women as well, with the quiet funeral rites of the previous verse. While the Christians mourned their dead and buried him, being oblivious to the cruelty of Saul's persecutions, the zealots went about their persecutions. For Christians to have acted in this manner, they must have had great faith in God. Luke's dramatic skill rises to great heights here. "Hailing" is an old English form of "hauling" i.e. violent arrest.

## Verse 4

"Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word."

"Therefore..." - because of the persecution, they were scattered abroad. The scattering was not of their own volition. This is important because one wonders how the Gospel would have been preached to all nations before the end of the apostolic era if this scattering had not happened. The Noun in Greek is "diaspora" which is the word used to denote the dispersion of the Jews amongst the Gentile nations. An important derivation here is that the Greek word is derived from a word meaning "scattering the seed." Here is a two-fold usage for the Christians were "scattered" but in that "scattering" they sowed the seed of the Gospel. They broadcast the good seed well.

"everywhere" - a fulfilment of Acts 1. 8.

"preaching the word" - sowing the seed.

The verb "went everywhere" often appears in the Acts to describe itinerant preaching. See Acts 8. 40; 9. 32; 10. 38; 11. 19; 13. 6; 14. 24; 15. 3; 16. 6; 18. 23; 19. 1; 20. 2, 25. The expressions used are "gone through"; "passed through"; "gone over" etc.,

"the word". As we can imagine, this is the LOGOS - The Divine Plan and Purpose.

The phrase "preaching the LOGOS" gives us an exhortation as to what we should do with the knowledge which the Lord has given us. "Preach the LOGOS". It is far better to preach the Divine Plan and Purpose than to give a lecture on a subject which directly breaks down some false doctrine. A lecture on the "Manifestation of God" built upon a basis of the LOGOS, would leave the false doctrine of the trinity badly shaken if not destroyed. Likewise, a lecture on the Divine Plan and Purpose of Salvation would leave the false doctrine of the immortality of the soul without a prop to keep it from falling. A revision of our preaching methods seems to be indicated. We should be known as a body of people who believe in certain specified doctrines rather than a people who do not believe in this and who do not believe in that. Whatever we speak upon must be constructive and not destructive.

To adopt a constructive method of preaching is to develop interest in what we have to say. By developing the theme of salvation in the Kingdom of God on earth, a question may arise about the immortality of the soul. We should not straightaway try to break down that belief otherwise we shall get our listener on the defensive and it is very difficult to break down anyone's defence. Rather let the person attempt to explain what he understands by the immortality of the soul and when he finds his attack breaking down, he is more likely to lose confidence in his opinion.

As we study the Book of the Acts, we should pay careful attention to the method adopted by the apostles when they preached the gospel. After all, they spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit therefore their methods must be faultless. We can learn a great deal from them.

Verse 5

"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them."

Here we find the second mention of Philip in the Acts, the first having been in the choice of the "seven". See Acts 6. 5. After the incident mentioned in chapter 7, he disappears from Luke's narrative for a long time until many years later we find him at Caesarea ("Maritime" on the Palestine coast) where he lived with his four daughters who were virgins and who prophesied. See Acts 21. 8/9 and note that he is referred to as "the evangelist", this being the only time in Scripture that anyone is given this title. He must have been one of the seven because the apostles stayed on at Jerusalem and this Philip did not. He was unable to pass on the Holy Spirit and the other Apostles were. We shall read of this in this chapter.

"the city of Samaria" - Jesus connected the Gentiles and the Samaritans in Matt. 10. 5. as if to indicate that the Samaritans were Gentiles. In 2 Kings chapter 17 we read that in the days of Hoshea, king of Israel, Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, came against Israel and Hoshea became a vassal king and had to pay yearly tribute. (vs 3) Hoshea, however, sent messengers to Egypt and stopped paying tribute whereupon the king of Assyria put him in prison. (vs 4) The king of Assyria came against Israel and also went against Samaria, besieging it for three years. (vs 5) In the ninth year of the reign of Hoshea, king of Israel, the king of Assyria carried Israel away captive and put them in a part of Mesopotamia and in the country of the Medes. (vs 6) Thus Israel were carried away out of their own land. (vs 23) Having taken the people of Israel out of the cities of Samaria, the king of Assyria replaced them with people from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath and Sepharvaim. (vs 24) The newcomers brought their pagan gods with them and this false worship brought upon them the wrath of God who sent lions amongst them to punish them. (vs 25) When he recognised the hand of God upon the people, the king of Assyria called for a priest to go to the people and teach them the ways of the LORD. (vs 26/27) Nevertheless, the people still worshipped after the manner of the Gentiles. (vs 27/41) In the days of the good king Josiah, the false worship of Samaria was destroyed. (2 Kings 23. 19.) It is extraordinary that people could combine paganism with its abominable ritual with the worship of the God of Israel, yet this is what the people did.

When the Jews returned from the Babylonian captivity, and started to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and the temple, the Samaritans offered to help the Jews but this offer was refused. (Ezra 4. 2/3.) Once they were refused, the Samaritans tried all they could to prevent the work from going ahead. (Ezra 4. 5.) See also verses 7/13. The Samaritans were a fickle people in so far as their religious loyalty was concerned for they would change "face" as and when it suited them. Samaria was under the rulership of Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian rulers until, with Palestine, it fell under the yoke of the Greeks (Macedonians). The Greeks permitted them to build a temple on Mt. Gerizim and it was in this temple that the Samaritans offered sacrifices after the manner of the Jews. Although they showed a weak kind of a desire to worship God, they would bow in acknowledgement of any heathen conquerer if they thought it was politic to do so.

There were many Samaritans in Judah in the days of Jesus. They were much despised by the Jews as we see from John 4. 9. There must have been some

inter-marriage with the Jews and we see evidence of such affinity in John 4. 12. How could the Samaritans speak of "our father Jacob" unless they considered themselves to be in the Covenants of Promise through some marriage tie. The Samaritans then, were a pagan people with some knowledge of the Plan and purpose of God (John 4. 25. see also verse 22) but who did not worship God in Truth or in purity. Philip was the first to preach the Gospel to such people, thus being the first to preach the Gospel to Gentiles.

"and preached Christ unto them". - To "preach Christ" is to preach the Messiah and this means preaching the promises made un-to Abraham and all that flows from such a study.

#### Verse 6

"And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did."

The Samaritans were very superstitious people so that a person like Simon (Magus) who we are to meet in verse 9, would have great power over them. Philip did much greater works than Simon as we shall see from verse 7 so the people, with one accord, listened to his word. If they associated themselves with the coming Messiah and the establishment of the Kingdom of God, they would be intensely interested in all that Philip had to say about "Christ".

"hearing and seeing the miracles" - one does not "hear" a miracle. The phrase should be "hearing of the miracles" and "seeing them". Therefore the people, having heard of many miracles which they did not see and having seen many for themselves, believed the words which Philip spoke to them. This is more than the Jews did in response to the miracles and teaching of Jesus. Jesus had to appeal to the Jews, "or else believe me for the very work's sake". (John 14. 11.)

#### Verse 7

"For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them; and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed."

Unclean spirits crying when they came out, are mentioned in Mark 1. 26; 3. 11; 9. 26; Luke 4. 41. The "unclean spirits" of course, did not utter a sound. It was the afflicted person who cried out. It was the custom of the times to think that people were possessed of devils or unclean spirits when they were physically or mentally sick. There would have been no point in Jesus or any later teacher telling people that there were no such things as "unclean spirits" because the people of those days could not be expected to understand 20th. century medical science. The most important thing at that time was to teach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. Correct diagnosis was not to come for more than 1800 years.

Luke stresses here what he has just said in the previous verse and is proving his point. The grammatical construction of the first part is difficult and the R.V. has "For from many of those which had unclean spirits, they came out, crying with a loud voice:.." The RSV puts it - "For unclean spirits came out of many who were possessed, crying with a loud voice;.."

"taken with palsies.." - lit: paralysed.

#### Verse 8

"And there was great joy in that city."

The "great joy" which came to the city after Philip's preaching, is what one would expect from a doctrine which was known as "the good news" of the Kingdom of God. When one comes to an understanding of the Divine Plan and purpose, one experiences a joy which never grows less, unless through neglect, one turns away from the great Hope of Israel.

There would be joy because of the healing which was done but the more lasting joy would arise from a realisation that one is in the Divine Plan of Salvation.

#### Verse 9

"But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:"

This verse introduces us to a conflict between the Faith as it is in Jesus and a system of ritual or regimented thinking which has poisoned mankind for thousands of years. Nations differ amongst themselves in regard to their susceptibility to mysticism. In our time, Eastern countries would have little "religion" if mysticism was taken away from them. Amongst Europeans, superstition is more rife than is generally realised because obvious superstitions are regarded as Biblical doctrines and the Scriptures are distorted to "prove" them. One would think that in this scientifically advanced age, silly superstitions such as a personal devil who is given the name of "satan" would find no place. In spite of its "wicked giant" character, responsible men and women will not grow up mentally and leave it in the nursery. If advanced western thinking and education cannot show people the folly of such iniquitous doctrines, how much less would the Samaritans be able to cope with mysticism, coming as they did, from pagan and superstitious origins. In such a world of primitive thinking, a person like SIMON MAGUS or SIMON THE SORCERER would exercise unusual power.

In the Bible he is called "Simon" and he appears only in this chapter. In verse 24 of this chapter, he makes his last appearance for he is not heard of again. Luke mentioned him in his historical account to warn his readers against the evil forces which were at work to exalt the individual and destroy the Faith. The name "Magus" which was given to Simon comes from the same word "Magi", this being the plural form and referring to prominent people such as scholars and wise men. The wise men guided to the young Jesus were men of this type. The lesser and evil form of such men also existed and of this type, Simon was a prominent example. Justin Martyr who lived about the year 150 A.D. wrote about Simon and said that he was a Samaritan from a village called Gitta. There is no doubt that he used his name in his works, the name from which the word "Magic" is derived. By using his name, he was a "magician" and performed many wonders amongst a superstitious people so that he was regarded as the Bible says, "...some great one." He claimed that there was a statue erected to him at Rome with the inscription "SIMONI DEO SANCTO" meaning "To Simon the holy god". It was not until the year 1754 that this statue was unearthed on an island in the middle of the river Tiber. It carried the inscription "SEMONI SANCO DEO FIDIO" meaning "To the god Semo Sancus" this being a Sabine dignity. This great deception was sincerely believed by well meaning but misguided people.

Simon founded a sect known as the "Simonians" which survived until the 3rd. Century A.D. He was regarded by Irenaeus as the founder of Gnosticism which was a philosophical exercise of the mind running concurrently with the growth of early Christianity. In its wider extension, it embraced extraordinary ritual, incantations, and spoken formulae which were supposed to guard one against devils and evil gods. Simon had a woman named Helena with him who was formerly a prostitute but who was supposed to have been created by Simon. With his magic arts, Simon "seduced" many and had an enormous following. Coupled with the intellectual enquiry, he was accepted by the scholars of the day and this may have induced Paul to warn Timothy, "...keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: which some professing have erred concerning the faith..." (1 Tim. 6, 20/1.) It is said by many profane historical writers that Simon's greatest enemy was Peter with whom he first clashes in this chapter which is before us. The famous quarrel between Peter and Paul which is referred to in Gal. 2. and in particular verse 11. has led to the extra-ordinary theory that Simon was actually Paul under another name. Simon called himself the "great power of God" while Paul claimed that "he lived by the power of God".



(2 Cor. 13. 4.) It is insinuated that whereas Simon attempted to buy the Holy Spirit with money, Paul attempted to buy apostleship by the gift of money to the Ecclesia at Jerusalem. This ingenious theory is discounted by the behaviour of Paul, and his writings which are so opposed to anything which savours of gnosticism. His wide knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures do not lend any support whatsoever to such a view.

After the encounter with Paul, apochraphyl history states that Simon returned to Rome where he went from strength to strength through his magic. He used all the subterfuges of the modern "magi" of the baser type who build up an atmosphere by incantations and other psychological aids such as the clever use of lighting. When at the peak of emotionalism, the entranced participants "come to Jesus" or "give themselves to Jesus" and are temporarily cured of certain ills. The deception of "faith healing" brings great wealth to the so-called "healer" and Simon's confidence in the power of money would attract him to this.

Simon was the leader of false doctrines. He was the leading heretic of the apostolic age and his trickery with magic and incantations, chants and such like, made him the great enemy of Christianity as taught by the apostles. He was the greatest impostor of his time and it is on his methods and theories, that the intellectual apostacy of Roman Catholicism was based. Since those days, they have always held the people in a trance by their sorceries and have accumulated a great deal of money in the process. Simon did not found the Roman Catholic church but he laid the foundations of apostacy upon which it was built. He has given his name to the English language with the word "simony" which means buying ecclesiastical preferment i.e. buying high office in the church.

Samaria gave rise to a combination of Judaism and paganism. In like manner, Roman Catholicism has attempted to combine Christianity with heathenism to produce their form of worship. They have retained the altar and the priesthood, pretending it is taken from the Bible. The altar of the Law of Moses has no resemblance to the Catholic altar and the priests of the Mosaic pattern wore white clothes (Exod. 28. 40/42.) whereas the Catholic priests are attired in the black of the pagans. The prophet Zephaniah has something to say about the clothes of the priests when he prophesies of the punishments to be brought upon the "Chemarims" (Zeph. 1. 4.) The meaning of this word is "black-frocked priests". The incantations are to be found in the Latin chants and the use of lighting is found in the many candles in their churches. Simon took his ritual from paganism and Roman Catholicism has done the same, led in the first instance by Simon and his followers. That modern Catholicism is opposed to Faith healing does not disprove these statements. They do not need faith healing when their priests claim to have the power to forgive sins - which they do for a fee. We shall meet other pretenders to extraordinary power later in the Acts.

"beforetime in the same city.." - means that Simon reached the city of Samaria first, before Philip got there.

"used sorcery..." - from Greek "mageuo" (the noun "magos" - Magus) meaning "used the skill of the Magian lore". This is not the same word as in Rev. 9. 21. and Rev. 18. 23. (sorceries). See also "sorcerers" in Rev. 21. 8; and 22. 15. These words from Rev. come from "pharmakos" from which we get our English word "pharmacy" and "pharmaceutical". The sense in these words is "drugs", "potions" or "spells". Simon was a prominent person of the type of "vagabond exorcists" of Acts 19. 13. He would reach the city before Philip during his "wandering".

"giving out"... Middle English idiom for "declaring", used in the sense of putting something forward with his tongue in his cheek. Bluffing.

"that himself was some great one". - compare this teaching with the apostles teaching that JESUS was some great one. They had no interest in bringing fame to themselves.

"bewitched" - Greek, "existemi" meaning "to put someone out of their

wits" - "to astound". The meaning is a neat one, showing that whoever was the subject of this influence was put out of their mind. This word is not the same as that used in Gal. 3. 1. where the Greek is "baskaino" meaning "to malign" or to "fascinate by false pretensions".

The analysis of this verse shows clearly how old is the tendency for false teachers to fascinate people with false doctrines. The recipients of such doctrines are put out of their minds. Festus had the idea about Paul that much learning made him mad. (Acts 26. 24.) This remark from Festus was made sarcastically and in contempt. Paul's admonishment to the Galatians was made in astonishment that they should permit themselves to be so deceived.

#### Verse 10

"To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God."

"To whom they all..." - the word "they" can be omitted for it is not in the original. It should be "To whom all gave heed..." (Afrikaans: "En almal... h. t hom aangehang...") The R.V. and R.S.V. retain "they".

"gave heed..." - compare the use here with the same in verse 6. In the former verse, the people gave heed to Philip preaching "Christ" (vs 5) and in the second, the people gave heed to Simon preaching about HIMSELF and his great power.

"the least to the greatest..." - Hebrew idiom meaning "all ages and classes, young and old."

"the great power of God". Diag: "This is the power of the God which is being called great". Traditionally this is Simon's description of himself. There is no record of what Simon called himself but the fore-going is quite possible. If he did give himself the title then he was doing no more than many pseudo mystics did before him. This is an off-shoot of Babylonian mystery which was confined to the priesthood. When Gnosticism was advanced as a philosophy combining religion with philosophy and science, the idea of mediatorship between God and man developed. Simon would have claimed to be the chief of all mediators by calling himself the great power of God. From the expanded version given above we see that Simon also claimed to be a "god" which means that in accordance with Babylonian practice, he would claim to be re-incarnated. The false theory of the pre-existence of Christ arose from Babylonian thinking and not from Scriptural teaching. The present Pope makes a bold and unfounded claim to be God's vicar on earth but this is mild compared with the claim of Simon to be a "god".

#### Verse 11

"And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries."

"had regard..." - same as "gave heed..." of verses 6 and 10.

"of long time..." - he had been there several times and was just doing one of his annual or periodic visits. Therefore he was well-known to the Samaritans. The more frequently he visited them, the more he was likely to deceive them for they had no knowledge of the scientific principles he put into effect in playing his "magic" nor would they know of the mechanical effects he used.

"he had bewitched them with sorceries." He had astonished and confounded them by his magical illusions. To get an idea of what he did, we should realise that Juggling is pure skill requiring dexterity in balancing objects on hand, foot or chin; throwing objects into the air and catching them as they fall; and otherwise showing great control over the movements of certain objects like spinning plates etc. It is hardly likely that Simon would bother to keep in practice doing things which others, if they were persevering enough,

could do after much practice. Conjuring originally meant to bring things to view which were not there before, but it has come to embrace the skill of the fingers and hands in making things disappear and recovering them from nowhere. This requires great digital dexterity and sometimes cleverness in guiding the gaze of the onlookers away from that which is being done. No doubt Simon had a few of these at his finger tips. The modern magician does not bother about such methods but uses apparatus to bring about an illusion. Thus, he is sometimes called an "illusionist". He can do nothing without apparatus. The modern "escapologist" (escape expert) who gets away from hand-cuffs, straight jackets and sealed boxes, is merely a specialist in illusion. He cannot escape from any hand-cuff, straight-jacket and sealed box. He has his own special apparatus.

#### Verse 12

"But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women."

Note that baptism FOLLOWED belief. This is the pattern of the early chapters of Acts. Again and again we read of "hearing", "believing" and "being baptised". The belief is stated to be (1) the things concerning the kingdom of God, and (2) the name of Jesus Christ. The one must be considered with the other for they are inseparable. One cannot just "believe in Jesus" or "accept Jesus as my saviour" without knowing the promises concerning the Kingdom of God. A consideration of the Kingdom of God must give rise to a study of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and this will, in turn, require a study of Jesus the Christ. When studying Jesus (Yahweh will save) we must understand the Divine Plan and Purpose as it is in Jesus, the Saviour. God is the ultimate Saviour but He will save by Jesus. Then, Jesus cannot be fully considered without Christ. In his capacity as a Saviour, our Lord is JESUS. In his future capacity as King, he is CHRIST. This leads us to a study of the Promises for we must realise that the Promises were not made to us but to Abraham and his seed. (Gal. 3. 16.) A study of the type and anti-type of Melchizadek will show that of the two men, Jesus is the Senior for Melchizadek gave bread and wine. But we must remember that the promises were made to Abraham and Jesus only and not to us. Therefore if we are to share in those Promises, we must recognise the Abrahamic Faith, believe in it and practice it. To be associated with this Faith, we must be baptised into Christ for it is only then that we become the "seed of Abraham". (Gal. 3. 27/29.) We know from John 4. 25. that the Samaritans looked for the coming of the Messiah but we note, too, that Jesus had to relate that coming with himself. The Samaritans appeared to be ignorant of this. Therefore it is highly probable that Philip enlarged upon these points.

"both men and women." Luke's introduction to this fact is taken by some commentators to regard Luke as a lover of women. This may be so, for Luke mentions women more than any other N.T. writer but we submit that he stresses the point which Paul stresses in Gal. 3. 28. that there is no longer a distinction between male and female for we are all one in Christ Jesus. It is necessary in this early stage of Christianity about which Luke writes, to stress the breaking down of the sex distinction in regard to baptism.

#### Verse 13

"Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptised, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done."

"Then..." - at that time - not afterwards. He heard Philip preach, saw his miracles and believed. Having believed, he followed the usual course and responded to the impulse of his belief and was baptised.

"he continued with Philip,..." - he went with him from place to place. It was during this time that his faith was to undergo its stiffest test and he was to "be weighed in the balance and found wanting". It is difficult to understand why an ambitious, wordly man such as Simon was, should follow Philip wherever he went. He may have been overcome by the logic of Philip's arguments and he may genuinely have desired salvation. One would like to think so but it is hard to get away from the feeling that having seen Philip's

miracles, and having seen in them a great threat to his livelihood as a faith healer (exorcist), he went with Philip to see what could be done if one had the power of the Holy Spirit, and to see HOW the miracles were performed. It must be remembered that MAGIC such as Simon practiced, was ILLUSION. He knew that nothing he did was genuine but Philip's acts must have looked genuine enough to Simon. Like every magician, he was keen to see how his rival did his "tricks" so he did a mean thing by travelling with him in order to study his methods and find out how it was done. One commentator suggests that Simon went with Philip to hide his identity from the public for he could not match the "skill" of Philip. We submit that this applies a feeling of hostility to Simon which he did not have. We feel he was out for pure gain and nothing more.

"and wondered..." - a suitable headline here would be "The Bewitcher Bewitched!" for that is what happened. Philip was "bewitched" - this being the same word as used in verse 9 and 11. His false teaching and his magic had "bewitched" others whereas Philip's Truth and the Power of God had "bewitched" him. Luke uses a clever play on words here.

"beholding..." - looked earnestly as a curious spectator. Having a chance to examine the works of the opposition, he would give earnest attention to all that Philip did.

"the miracles and signs..." - Here is another example of Luke's clever play with words. The words in Greek for "great" and "miracles" are the same as those for "great power" in verse 10. Note the A.V. margin against "miracles", this being "signs and great miracles". Now compare with "great power" of verse 10. The phrases used are identical showing that whereas Simon called himself "the great power of God" he was now lost in admiration of the great power of God shown by the miracles, signs and wonders which Philip did.

Simon had developed a theory of "Powers" and claimed to be the chief Power. The theory must have exercised the early preachers for we find references to "powers" in Rom. 8. 38; Ephes. 1. 21; 1 Pet. 3. 22, 1 Cor. 1. 24;

Verse 14

"Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:"

In spite of the persecution of Christians, the apostles were at Jerusalem. This seems to bear out the view that they elected to stay there as in the confusion which followed the persecution, they could always be found if they were wanted. Now the wisdom of staying there in spite of the dangers, is apparent.

"Samaria had received the word of God..." - the preparatory work done by Philip was bearing fruit. The apostles must have been surprised at this because they made no attempt that we know of to help the evangelists. Once they heard of the success of Philip's preaching, they did not wait for an invitation, but went of their own accord.

The apostles must have shown concern because in the absence of Philip in his missionary journeys here and there, the baptised believers in Samaria would be on their own with no one of authority to guide them in their studies of God's Word. The problem was a serious one as it is now when new converts are made in strange lands or cities and there is no chance of a follow-up. The solution in Philip's day was for the apostles to send someone to Samaria so that they might pass on the Holy Spirit. Having done this, the recipient of the heavenly gift would have inspired knowledge to help him teach others.

"they sent them Peter and John". Again the two friends go together. The remarkable thing about John being sent on this occasion is that some years previously, John had noticed that the people of Samaria were not prepared to accept Jesus so he asked Jesus if fire could come down from heaven and destroy the people. (Luke 9. 54.) Now John was being sent to those same people, not

to destroy them, but to help them in their Faith. This is the last mention of John in the Acts. He disappears from the narrative altogether at this stage.

#### Verse 15

"Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit."

The preliminary prayer offered on this occasion shows that the apostles did not have the power at any time to pass on the Holy Spirit. The power to do so rested with God alone.

The point to notice is that the apostles had to be present for the passing of the Holy Spirit. With God it would be possible for the Holy Spirit to be given at any time and in any place but here, God was going to use His servants for this work. Therefore the servants had to be on the spot. The modern claim by the Pope to have the power of passing on the Holy Spirit to the priests has no basis in Scripture. No matter where a priest may qualify, when he is ordained, he is supposed to receive the Holy Spirit regardless of where he may be. In Biblical days, this would not have been possible and there is nothing in Scripture to indicate a change having taken place.

One wonders how it can be believed that the Holy Spirit is a God when the apostles had to pray to One God for Him to grant that another God may be given to men!

#### Verse 16

"(For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus.)"

As the brackets indicate, this is an interpolation of explanation as to why the apostles wished to bestow the gift of the Holy Spirit to men.

"he was fallen..." - "he" is used here as personification. Jesus used the same idiom in John 14. 16 and 26.

"fallen..." - metaphorically "to overcome". Examples of this usage are Acts 10. 10. (trance) 19. 17. (fear) 13. 11. (blindness) In none of these examples is trance, fear or blindness personified because each of them is a state of the mind - in a trance, he was not his normal self; fear - the people mentally, were overcome by fear; blindness - the ability to see was withdrawn. In the case of the Holy Spirit, it could never be a constitutional change. It was an extraneous power given by God and as such, could be personified.

"in the name of the Lord Jesus." - the same as "the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2. 38.) Note that the baptism is always into a NAME. This indicates a NAME which is the outcome of the Divine Plan and Purpose.

#### Verse 17

"Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit."

The "laying on of hands" is referred to in Acts 6. 6. in connection with the Seven; and in Acts 19. 6. when Paul passed on the Holy Spirit to others. The bestowal of the Holy Spirit in this instance was not because of the wish of the apostles but because God willed it so.

In many quarters of modern Christianity, it is thought that what Peter and John did was the proto-type of "confirmation" which can be done only by a bishop. This of course, is stretching the meaning of the passage before us to an extent which the passage cannot bear. Modern confirmation is unscriptural so cannot have any foundation whatsoever. Commentators find difficulty in explaining why those at Pentecost did not require the laying on of hands; others required baptism alone and the Holy Spirit fell upon them; others, as

with Cornelius, required baptism AFTER receiving the Holy Spirit. The answer is that God is not subject to rules which He imposes upon Himself nor does He work haphazardly. Consider the following:-

1. The disciples were baptised into John's baptism apparently although there is no record of this. They were NOT baptised into the NAME of Jesus.
2. Jesus washed the disciples' feet and pronounced them clean. This was equivalent to their baptism. (John 13. 5. et seq.)
3. The disciples received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost without being baptised. They had been symbolically baptised when their feet were washed. (Note: the washing of feet also carried a lesson on humility, hence the remark from Jesus that they should wash each others' feet.)
4. The people on the day of Pentecost received the Holy Spirit AFTER baptism. They were Jews and proselytes. They would need the Holy Spirit to guide them as the Jews would find it almost impossible to accept a crucified man as their Messiah. Therefore God was merciful to them and gave them the Holy Spirit to help them in His Way.
5. The people of Samaria had to be baptised first and then, subsequently, to receive the Holy Spirit as they had a mixed belief formerly and it was essential that they should be given Divine help in their new Faith. The Divine help was given only after some time had elapsed so that they would have had time to prove themselves worthy of such an honour and gift.
6. Cornelius received the Holy Spirit BEFORE he was baptised. (Acts 10. 47.) It must have created a tremendous impression with Peter when Cornelius, a Gentile, received the Holy Spirit the same as the Jews. The vision given to Peter in Acts 10. 11/16. was insufficient to impress upon him thoroughly that the Gospel was to be given to the Gentiles. The giving of the Holy Spirit before baptism must have given him that final assurance that this was so.
7. The men of Acts 19 had been baptised with John's baptism but had not received the Holy Spirit. It was given to them with the laying on of Paul's hands. Such people believed in the Gospel but the heavenly Gift had not been given to them until Paul, seeing that it was necessary for them to have it at Ephesus, the "home" of Diana the great goddess and the "home" of such powerful paganism. The effect of the gift at that time is given in Acts 19. 6. where the twelve men prophesied and spake with tongues. This would help them in spreading the gospel amongst the pagans.

From the fore-going, we see in each case where the Holy Spirit was given, there was a Divine Plan behind it.

Verse 18

"And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money."

Here Simon breaks down under test. We can never know what desire had entered his heart when he was baptised. We can never know for sure why he followed Philip around for a while. We can only surmise and from his subsequent break-down as recorded here, we can assume that his conversion was not really a conversion. It was an impulsive act which he felt was necessary at the time and which may lead to better things for himself. It was only when "he saw" that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, that his careful observation is revealed. So this is how it was done. Just get an apostle to lay his hands upon you and you have all the power you want at your disposal.

Simon wanted POWER for power's sake. He wanted it for what it could do for him and not for what he could do for others. He was a magician wielding power by the cleverness of his illusions. Now he did not need to carry around

such apparatus. The power of the Holy Spirit could bring about results without apparatus. In other words, Simon was a magician and not a religious convert.

He had wielded power in the past but from now on, with the Gift at his disposal, he could wield a much greater power for himself and earn a lot of money in the process. He had a love of POWER and MONEY. In no sense could Simon say that his conversion and baptism had made him a new creature. He was still the same ambitious, power grabbing, covetous Simon.

"laying on of the apostles' hands..." - it was only through the apostles that the Holy Spirit could be given. There are other cases where it was not one of the twelve who did the laying on of hands. Such a one was Ananias who was "sent" by God to lay his hands upon Saul, and pass on to him the Holy Spirit. (Acts 9. 17.) Later we shall study another one who was "sent" (Barnabas) and shall find that he, too, became an apostle because of being sent. Remember that the meaning of the word "apostle" is "one sent".

From the fore-going, we can understand that in the absence of anyone being sent now, there are no apostles to pass on the Holy Spirit. The historical period in which we are now living is between the former and the latter rain and is a period of spiritual drought where the sun has gone down on the prophets and we are without the Holy Spirit to guide us except in so far as the Spirit abides in the Word of God. The statement in this verse that only the apostles could pass on the Holy Spirit is something people cannot answer when trying to prove that they have the Holy Spirit. This verse is a hurdle they cannot surmount and must always remain so until the truth is acknowledged that nowadays the Holy Spirit is withdrawn.

"he offered them money". Hence the English word "simony", the buying and selling of ecclesiastical office for money or money's worth. The pronoun "them" indicates that both Peter and John were there.

This incident must have impressed itself upon Peter's mind for he referred to it indirectly many years later when he drew attention to the people like Balaam who have a heart which "they have exercised with covetous practices;" and who "loved the wages of unrighteousness". (2 Peter 2. 14/15.) Another Scriptural "type" is Gehazi, the servant of Elisha who coveted money. (2 Kings 5. 20/27.) Such men fall under trial because their heart is not right with God. They do not put spiritual things first.

Verse 19

"Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit."

This verse is a continuation of the previous one. "Give me this power" shows that Simon regarded it as a "power" which it was. It is the Power of God. The modern trinitarian could hardly call it a "power" and be true to his trinitarian doctrine. Either it is a "God" or a "power" but it cannot at one and the same time, be both. The Greek word means an authority with the added implications that what is authorised will have effect. Such a meaning could in no way apply to a God such as is contemplated in the doctrine of the trinity.

Simon's reason sounds good enough but we cannot believe that he was sincere in his desire to pass the gift on to others. He wanted it for the power it gave whoever possessed it in such a way as to make its possession powerful. If for instance, he was given the gift of tongues, he could extend his tours to other countries and so extend his influence.

Verse 20

"But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money."

The two Simons confront each other - Simon Peter and Simon Magus. We saw above that from the word "them" we may infer that John was still there,

Now we see again that Peter takes the initiative and does the talking.

"Thy money perish with thee..." - Commentators are not agreed as to what was spoken here. It would appear that Peter stated that both Simon and his money would perish but this hardly makes sense. Money is an inanimate thing. From the "way of escape" suggested in verse 22, it would appear that Peter's statement in verse 20 suggests that if Simon did not repent, his money would lead him to destruction. The evils of money are plainly taught in Acts 1. 18; 5. 1/11; 6. 1; 8. 18; 13. 6/11; 16. 19; 19. 25/27.

"the gift of God..." - the Holy Spirit was a GIFT and was not merchandise. God cannot be Bought and neither can His gifts. We have nothing of ourselves that we can give to God for whatever we have, must come from Him. The only thing we can give God is our obedience to His Will, and that Simon did not know. The only will he was concerned about was his own. It was a sin to attempt to bribe God and it was a sin to THINK that the GIFT could be bought. If it could be bought, it ceased to be a gift.

Verse 21

"Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God."

"part nor lot..." - the O.T. reference is in Deut. 12. 12. where the law for the Levites who had no inheritance, was given. Another reference is in Deut. 14. 27/29.

"matter..." - the Greek word is LOGOS, the outward manifestation of the inward thought - the Divine Plan and Purpose. The word "matter" comes from the same word translated as "Word" in John 1. 1. and John 1. 14. What Peter said to Simon was, in effect, "Your thought that the gift of God can be purchased with money is a philosophy which is entirely opposed to the Divine Plan and Purpose. Your plan and purpose is not the same as God's Plan and Purpose therefore you have no part, no inheritance in the Kingdom of God." God had given him his wealth, therefore just as also the early Israelites had to pay tithes, Simon had to pay a spiritual tithe of dedication to the Lord's Service. If he continued with his covetousness, he was not giving spiritual service to God and that being the case, he had no part or lot on which tithes could be paid.

"thy heart is not right..." - indicating that a true religious attitude is one where one's thoughts are continually in tune with the Divine Plan and Purpose. In other words, one must continually be spiritually minded.

Verse 22

"Repent therefore of this wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee."

There is always a way of escape from every sin. (1 Cor. 10. 13.) Simon has sinned grievously but if he repented sincerely and prayed to God, he would be heard. Repentance requires a change of heart (mind or thinking) and if Simon could do this, God would forgive him. Note that it is WICKEDNESS that was involved. Sinfulness is the result of that which is in our evil, sinful nature. Wickedness is false doctrine which must be entirely forsaken if God is to forgive.

"pray God" - this is essential. Without an approach to God in prayer during which one confesses the sin, there is no proper basis for forgiveness being granted. Simon had regarded iniquity in his heart and therefore, God would not hear him. He would have to discard the evil thought first and then make his approach to God through prayer. (Psa. 66. 18/20.)

"thought of thine heart..." - the word for "thought" here is the only time used in the N.T. It means a premeditated plan which has been conjured up in the mind. This was no sudden impulse. Simon had thought about it.



Note also that the LOGOS referred to in verse 21 is again referred to in verse 22 as "the thought of thine heart". Simon's LOGOS, or Plan and Purpose was in his mind and manifested outwardly when he offered payment for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

#### Verse 23

"For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."

The R.V. renders this passage in the margin as, "...thou wilt become gall (or a gall root) of bitterness and a bond of iniquity." The first portion of this statement by Peter is a quotation from Deut. 29. 18. In this verse, reference is made to the Israelite who turns away from God and becomes a root that beareth gall or bitterness. The A.V. margin has "poisonful herb" or "rosh" for gall. What Peter means is that Simon has made a statement which points to the fact that he may very well be an influence for evil amongst the people to whom he preaches. This is borne out by the second portion of the statement which is taken from Isa. 58. 6. where the prophet takes the people of Judah to task for the insincerity of their fasts. The fasts that God wanted included the lessening of the bands of iniquity which means, a cessation of the iniquitous practices they had been warned about. Applying this to Simon, Peter saw that he was such a man who would encourage iniquity rather than bring it to an end. Iniquity in the days of Isaiah was a bond which held the people back from repentance. Simon was of that evil type which would hold people to iniquity. Peter's statement goes further than has been indicated here for it carries the hint that the work of Simon will have serious repercussions on succeeding generations who will follow in his way. The "poisonful herb" of his LOGOS would spread throughout the whole world and hold many millions in its grip.

#### Verse 24

"Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me."

The arrogant Simon is very much taken aback at the powerful words spoken by Peter. He adopts a more humble attitude with...

"Pray ye to the Lord for me..." - Simon must have been at a very low ebb spiritually if he has to ask another to pray for him to the Lord. If he really felt repentant, the first thing he would do would want to pray to God, asking for forgiveness. Yet, Simon asks Peter to pray for him. At this stage Simon is in a repentant mood for he does not argue the point nor defend himself with Peter. He asks the apostles to pray for him just as a powerful church to-day, will pray to the virgin Mary or other dead people such as Peter, and ask them to intercede for them. The best we can say for Simon at this stage is that he is moved by great fear in the presence of an apostle who could deal with him as firmly and drastically as he dealt with Ananias and Sapphira.

In this verse, Simon disappears from the Book of the Acts and from Scripture but not from history. He went to Rome where he became famous in the sphere he had chosen for his livelihood and became a great enemy of Peter. His entry into Luke's record of the early growth of Christianity is appropriate because he was the first to introduce heresy into the faith. He did not start Roman Catholicism but he laid the foundation for false doctrines and the marrying of pagan beliefs with Judaism and Christianity, just as it suited his purpose.

No one can be sure of tradition and legend concerning anyone and Simon in particular. His antagonism towards Peter at Rome was a legend encouraged no doubt, to bolster up the idea that Peter had been to Rome and was the founder of the church at Rome. While we cannot say for sure that Peter did not go to Rome, the indications are that he never went within several hundred miles of it. That Simon went to Rome is pretty certain because many prominent men wrote of him having been there. From what we know of him as described by Luke, he is the intellectual type who would have gone to Rome in those early days.

In comparing Simon with other figures of the Bible, we think of GEHAZI the servant of 2 Kings 5 et seq., Gehazi coveted money. He who coveted money is to be contrasted with Naaman who obeyed and was baptised. Likewise, Simon who coveted money is to be contrasted with the Ethiopian eunuch who obeyed and was baptised.

## Verse 25

"And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans."

Luke has now finished with the story of Simon and has to introduce the next episode in the work of Philip. He makes the transition by telling us how "they" - meaning Peter and John - returned to Jerusalem. Being a skilful author, Luke does not leave Peter and John in Samaria but brings them back to Jerusalem and on their way there, he records that they preached in other places in Samaria. This shows their activity for they did not remain at the city where they met Simon but continued through the country, holding a preaching campaign on a wide scale. While this was going on, Philip received his next assignment.

## Verse 26

"And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert."

We are now to be given the story of PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH. Philip received a visitation from an angel. It has been suggested that an angel appeared to Philip in a dream and that Philip was told to "arise!" There is nothing in the passage to indicate that Philip was asleep when he received his assignment, we can take it that the command "arise!" simply meant that Philip had to make a start now.

"south..." - by implication only, it means "south". The word comes from the position on the sundial and means "noon" or "midday". "Go toward the midday quarter (of the sextant).." implies, go in that direction which is southwards. Acts 22. 6. has the translation "noon" because it refers to a time of day, in the context. Acts 8. 26. and 22. 6. are the only occurrences in the N.T. All other translations of "south" comes from a different word, namely, "notos".

"down" - south or southwards was always considered to be the lower half of the heaven or the earth so one went "down" south and "up" north. In the case of Jerusalem, it is situated at a high altitude therefore one always went "up" to Jerusalem or down from it, irrespective of whether one was going north or south.

Gaza - This was one of the five cities of Philistia and was situated almost on the Mediterranean coast. It was in a territory where there were large sand-dunes which often threatened to engulf the city when a lasting wind blew. It is felt that the town which Samson knew, must long since have been buried under sand. Inland from the town is a ridge rising nearly 300' above the plain and it is thought that this is the "hill that is before (in the direction of) Hebron" which Samson climbed after he had wrenched out the doors of the gate of the city and the two posts. (Judges 16. 3.) As a side-issue, we should like to mention that the story of Samson being held prisoner in the city during the night and getting away in the morning in the manner described, is a beautiful analogy of the Lord Jesus lying in his grave during a period of darkness (the death state) and on the dawn of the next day, (his resurrection), he took out the doors and posts (he took captivity captive) when he ascended into heaven. (Ephes. 4. 8.) (when he ascended the mount.)

Gaza is one of the oldest cities of the Bible, being mentioned in Gen. 10. 19. It is mentioned as one of the cities captured during the invasion of the Holy Land by the Israelites. (Judges 1. 18/19.) It figured in many

wars between the Egyptians and Assyrians because it lay in the only accessible path between the two nations. In the time of Alexander the Great, B.C. 332, it had a great protection from the high sand-dunes which guarded it. It fell to Alexander eventually. Prophecies of its decay are given in Jer. 47. Amos 1. 6; Zeph. 2. 4; Zech. 9. 5. There are two rivers where the eunuch could have been baptised, one being five miles from Gaza and the other 12 miles.

There is always a danger in looking for "types" as one may find a type which is not there. Nevertheless, we must mention a character which fits in with the eunuch and his nationality as an African and a descendant of Ham. Those who have been engaged in the preaching of the gospel to Africans, will know of the tremendous difficulty there is in getting even a mild response from an African. There are exceptions of course, Malawians being an outstanding one. But by and large, Africans are impenetrable in the matter of preaching the gospel to them. This seems to show how appropriate it was that Philip should be sent to meet the eunuch at Gaza where it was so barren that far from anything growing in the sand, there are sand-dunes so big that they can swamp a city. The countryside was unfertile, and by analogy, anyone trying to plant the seed of the gospel in African hearts, will find a very unfertile soil. Our reason for giving this "type" is that the verse we are studying from Acts, ends with "which is desert" as a description of Gaza. There must have been a purpose in adding this description and maybe the "type" we have suggested, gives the answer. But see the notes to the beginning of the next verse.

#### Verse 27

"and he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,"

"behold" - as we have explained in these notes, the word "behold" is used in Scripture to indicate something surprising to follow. Perhaps this may be the reason why the words "which is desert" appeared in the previous verse. If the country was desert, one would not expect to find anyone there. Therefore it must have surprised Philip to find the eunuch sitting in his chariot, reading from Scripture. One does not do that sort of thing in chariots in deserts!

"a man of Ethiopia,.. " - Ethiopia is mentioned very early in the Bible and appears in Gen. 2. 13. as one of the boundaries of Eden. It is in Africa and in the Genesis reference, has a marginal note of "Cush". whereas Libya is that part of Africa to the north which abuts the Mediterranean Sea, Ethiopia lies to the east of the northern portion of the continent and is bounded by the Red Sea.

"a eunuch..." - In early days, the word meant "chamberlain" which is the person who looks after the most intimate portion of the harem. The inner room is called a "chamber" and the person in charge, is called the Chamberlain". In view of the prohibition of Deut. 23. 1. a eunuch was seldom found in Israel. "Blasius" of Acts 12. 20. was not a Jew but a Roman. He was chamberlain to Herod, see Gen. 37. 36; Esther 1. 10.

"great authority..." - being under the ruler - (in this case the Queen) the eunuch would be the mediator between the Queen and many of her officers of rank. It would be possible for him to pass on his own rulings under the pretence that they were the Queen's.

"under Candace..." - "Candace" (Candake) is a title and not a name.

"had charge of all her treasure..." - he would be in charge of the royal treasure and money. This gave him a position of great trust.

"had come to Jerusalem for to worship". No doubt came up for the feast of Pentecost for that year. He must have been a Hellenist or a proselyte from paganism to Judaism.

## Verse 28

"Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet."

This verse completes the sentence which was started in the previous verse.

"Was returning..." - He had completed his visit to Jerusalem and was on his way home via Gaza, thence to Egypt and on to Ethiopia.

"in his chariot..." - that he was in a chariot shows his rank. No doubt he had others in attendance with him.

"read..." - lit. "was reading" showing the continuous nature of what he was doing. The version he was reading, would be the LXX which was written in Greek. He had just come from a place of worship and was still full of enthusiasm for his Faith.

"Esaias the prophet." - Isaiah 53.

## Verse 29

"Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot."

"Then the Spirit said..." - this is not the angel of verse 26. Philip must have received the Divine instruction within himself. It would be similar to the prophets of old when they wrote, "The word of the LORD came unto me, saying..." The "word of the LORD" did not speak out aloud but spoke to them within.

"Go near,..." - not go within speaking distance or near enough to touch him, but go near enough to make actual contact.

"join thyself..." - the meaning in Greek is stronger and much more forceful than it is in English. It means "go to the chariot and do not leave it until the Divine Purpose has been accomplished."

## Verse 30

"And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?"

"ran thither..." - note the immediate obedience to the Divine Command. He did not just walk quickly on his assignment. He ran. In the manner in which this information is given, we feel that Philip did not delay for one moment in carrying out the Lord's Command. His action was two-fold. He started immediately and he ran.

"heard him read..." - this means that the eunuch was reading out aloud. Ancient Greek writing was very difficult to read and had to be spelt out letter for letter. It was much easier to do this aloud than quietly, hence it was quite possible for Philip to "hear him read".

"the prophet Esaias,..." - the actual portion being read was Isaiah 53 half way through verse 7 to half way through verse 8 in the Septuagint version which differs slightly from the A.V.

"understandest thou what thou readest?" - there is a play on words here. The Greek for "understand" is "ginoskein" and for "read" is "anaginoskein".

## Verse 31

"And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him."

"except some man should guide me?..." - The eunuch confesses his inability to understand the Scriptures. His use of the word "guide" seems

appropriate here. Jesus said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: " (John 6. 44. see also verse 65.) Paul had a similar teaching in 1 Cor. 3. 6/7. where he shows clearly that God gives the increase. God, therefore was working in this instance. He had chosen Philip as His agent and servant in this matter. The Power of God had caused Philip to go to the eunuch. He had brought them together at that particular time for His Purpose. In all this, God had guided them. Now He was to use a man to guide the eunuch to that narrow path of righteousness which leadeth unto life. It is a "way" and the newcomer needs a guide.

"How can I...?" - In the Greek idiom, the meaning here is wider than just "How can I?". It carries a strong sense of doubt in the speaker's mind as if he had said, "How can you expect me to understand this unless I have some assistance?"

"he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him". This not only shows a degree of humility - for the eunuch did not resent this sudden intrusion upon his private study of God's Word - but he also showed that he recognised Philip as being the type of person he needed above all others to give him the instruction which he needed. That "he desired" a solitary man to come up into the chariot with him showed a wonderful trust for a man who was intelligent enough to attain a high position in his own country. He would surely know the danger of inviting anyone into his place of defence in the chariot. Nevertheless, the eunuch was not afraid and the common interest of both men in the Word of God seemed to be the assurance that both needed for their own safety.

#### Verse 32

"The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:"

The next verse (vs 33) continues the extract from Isaiah. As stated in the notes under verse 30, the particular reference from the prophet was Isa. 53. 7/8. as taken from the Septuagint version.

The prophet Isaiah who was God's messenger in such words as are quoted here must have wondered who the "sufferer" of his prophecy was to be. Peter wrote many centuries later:-

- 1 Pet. 1. 11. "Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.  
12. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."

It is doubtful whether anyone during the time between the utterance of that prophecy and its fulfilment knew who the "sufferer" was to be. This was one of the mysteries which was to be revealed, when the Messiah should come the first time. If a person had known the Scriptures and had kept the Faith of Israel pure and unadulterated by tradition or superstition, then he must have been able to connect the "suffering Saviour" with the subject of the prophecy of Isa. 53. Thus it is that God's Word is revealed as time goes on, only to those who understand the gospel. It is not revealed to those who worship in apostasy. What person of the Mosaic era would have believed that his Saviour was to be led as a sheep to the slaughter? Once the "sheep" was indeed led to the slaughter, the prophecies concerning him and the sacrificial symbolism of the Law would begin to fall into place. As times goes by, it becomes more and more difficult to fit the pieces of the scriptural jig-saw together because of the growing lack of interest in scripture. To the Jews of Philip's days however, Type and Anti-type was well understood so the details of the death of Jesus should not have been missed by any serious student of God's Word.

The eunuch happened at this time to be reading of the atoning work of the Lord Jesus. Paul's exposition of this in Romans chapters 4 and 5 is masterly but, for all that, it cannot be understood by those who believe in the trinity and who believe that Jesus was not mortal.

#### Verse 33

"In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth."

The R.V. says "In his humiliation his judgment was taken away:  
His generation who shall declare?  
For his life is taken from the earth."

The R.S.V. says: "In his humiliation justice was denied him,  
Who can describe his generation?  
For his life is taken up from the earth."

The commentators have great difficulty in explaining this verse. It may be that the doctrine of "clean flesh" makes it difficult or even impossible to imagine a Saviour being humbled as a servant (Phil. 2. 7.) and having sin's flesh upon him so that he had to get salvation for himself first. (Heb. 9. 7. and verse 12 read without the italics). In his humiliation of having our sins upon him (Matt. 8. 17, quoting Isa. 53. 4.) he went to his death. He had no sin in himself but was offered as a willing sacrifice. This was his "judgment" which in the passage before us, refers to the "verdict" or "sentence" which brought him to an undeserved death. Because of his sinless character, his "sentence" did not remain but was "taken away" and as a result of that, he was raised from the dead.

In support of the foregoing point of view, it must be noted that the previous verse refers to his being led as a sheep to the slaughter. This must mean that he was a living sacrifice and went to his death meekly. Therefore, that which follows must be connected with this "lead-in". In going to that death, the verdict which he faced, namely death, was not permanent because he was taken from the earth (the ground as opposed to the heaven) which is another way of saying that he was raised from the dead. Because he was not only taken away from the earth by ascension into heaven, who can recount his generation? His generation is to be a multitude without number.

#### Verse 34

"And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?"

This verse deals with an answer with no question immediately preceding it. The question was asked in verse 30, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" None of the writers of the Mosaic era found the answer to this question. Some suggested that the "suffering servant" might be Israel and in this interpretation there is a certain amount of truth. Nevertheless, it is a Messianic prophecy and is something which no Jew could have understood because their training in the Law made it impossible for them to connect their Messiah with a person who DIED and became a DEAD BODY. To make it even more impossible, a CRUCIFIED Messiah was more unacceptable to them. The writers of old had suggested that Isaiah was referring to himself whereas others suggested it may refer to Jeremiah.

#### Verse 35

"Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus."

In preaching about Jesus, taking one's proofs from the O.T. a better chapter could hardly be found. Philip must have preached the Gospel and the atoning work of Jesus. The lesson can be broken down into many parts:-

In preaching unto him Jesus, Philip followed the same scripture. This starts with the sacrifice of Jesus and speaks of his resurrection and ascension into heaven. The ascension must lead to an explanation of his return. The "same scripture" was only a beginning of Philip's teaching so more of Isa. 53 must have been considered. That this is true can be seen from the verb translated as "preached". This word means "evangelised" which embraces the glad tidings of salvation. This incorporates the promises made unto Abraham and the covenant with David, the first giving rise to the doctrine of the Messiah and the second, telling of the "Son of God" who was to come, both these promises being centred in Jesus, the Lamb of God. The promises were made unto two men and nobody else. These two were Abraham and Jesus. Therefore, if one wishes to partake of the salvation offered in these promises, one must become associated with the Abrahamic covenant and become related in some way to the Son of man. This way is by baptism, after believing in these things. From the eunuch's question which followed Philip's teaching, it is obvious that Philip must have spoken about baptism and if he spoke about that, he must have shown the arguments which lead up to it.

#### Verse 36

"And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptised?"

"certain water" - the Greek gives the sense of some water, indicating a quantity. Obviously, the eunuch must have meant, "see, here is sufficient water..." This would agree with the Greek word for "certain".

Some have cast doubts upon the eunuch's observation that there was water nearby. The country in which they were travelling was dry and sandy. There are two brooks within reach of Gaza, one being Wady-el-Hessy which is 12 miles from Gaza and Wady-el-Halib which is 5 miles away. Both are on the Jaffa to Gaza route and were conveniently placed for the baptism.

Note that the request for baptism followed belief and did not precede it. The doubt running through the eunuch's mind lends support to the view that he was, previously, a proselyte and followed the Jewish Faith. Under Gentile rules there should be no hindrance at all but under Jewish Law, the fact that he was a eunuch would preclude him from any participation in Divine worship. (Deut. 23. 1.)

#### Verse 37

"And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest. And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

This verse, which gives a logical reply to the eunuch's question, is considered to be spurious. It does not appear in the "best" Greek manuscripts. What constitutes the "best" in manuscripts has not been defined. Age is not necessarily an assurance of genuineness and reliability. Some of the oldest MSS include this verse and it is quoted by such ancient writers as Cyprian and Irenaeus. Having regard to the declarations of belief given in Matt. 16. 16. and John 6. 69; as well as John 11. 27. the expunging of this verse from Scripture does not destroy the truth of the teaching it proclaims. Coming in the context of Luke's story of this event and the one immediately preceding it, the harmony it has lends support to the view that it is genuine. Philip recently had experience of Simon Magus who was baptised without believing in his heart. This is a lesson to us all not to baptise people without making quite sure that they know what they are doing and that they understand the Truth. How appropriate then that in the eunuch's case, Philip should make it quite clear to him the terms under which baptism was permissible.

We cannot resist the observation that whereas early translators and scholars added to the Word of God such verses as suited their particular beliefs (1 John 5. 7/8. are examples of this), so it is possible that they would expunge a passage if it became an embarrassment to them. The verse before us is not the emphatic doctrine now that it was in Philip's day.

## Verse 38

"And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."

"he commanded the chariot to stand still..." He could not have given a commandment to the chariot but to those or to him who drove it. This proves that the eunuch was not alone but had someone else with him.

"they went down both..." - One commentator (Alexander) states that the "going down into the water" could be done for a purpose other than baptism. For instance, they could have gone down into the water to wash their hands but all the time could have remained standing in the water. This may be true but when used with the word "baptized", there can be no doubt that there was a complete immersion. The word "baptize" is used by dyers who would never attempt to change the colour of a material by sprinkling it with water. They would dip the article right under the water. Thus, proper baptism is complete immersion whatever the meaning of "went down" may be.

Note Luke's use of the double "both". The first of these is the word "amphoterōs" meaning both components of two. The second of the words translated as "both" comes from the Greek "te" which implies a connecting relationship, joining one to another. In other words, positively BOTH. The use of two words, each meaning "both" gives the sense, "the two of them went down into the water, the two together, one alongside the other."

## Verse 39

"And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing."

We must guard against being too confident with the expression "come up out of the water" for this can mean that, having been standing in the water up to their ankles, they came up out of it. Nevertheless, we cannot get away from the fact that baptism was the rite performed in that water and for the eunuch, it was a matter of coming up out of it. Philip may have been in water up to his knees, i.e. deep enough to have immersed the eunuch completely. We are not told how the rite was performed, but from the meaning of the word, complete immersion is the only way in which baptism could have been performed.

"the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip..." - The Greek word here for "Spirit" is "pneuma" from which we get the English word "pneumatic". This word is translated as "spirit" with a small "s" and "Spirit" with a capital "S". It appears in "the Holy Spirit". An examination of all these references, will show that the great Power of God is meant. It does not mean another God. If it did, then this other God belongs to God and God gives "him" to whomsoever He will.

"caught away" - the Greek is the same as that translated "caught away" in 1 Thess. 4. 17. It means (actively) to take away by force, hence the Diaglott giving "seized". It has the sense of "suddenly," and "unexpectedly". The Afrikaans Bybel has "skeilik weggevoer" meaning "suddenly kidnapped or abducted". The R.V. says "caught away" and the R.S.V. has it as "caught up".

There seems to be no reason for the sudden removal of Philip from the scene except that God had finished the purpose for which He brought Philip there. This being the case, He removed him and prevented the eunuch giving any praise or thanks to Philip instead of to God. For this principle, see 1 Cor. 3. 7. How Philip was taken to Azotus, the Scriptures do not state and it is not important that we should know.

"the eunuch saw him no more" - to be contrasted with Simon Magus who continued with Philip after his baptism. Acts 8. 13. Apparently Simon was put under test whereas Philip was not.

"he went on his way rejoicing." - See Matt. 5. 12; Luke 6. 23; Luke 10. 20; Luke 19. 37; John 4. 36; 14. 28; Phil. 1. 18; 3. 1; 4. 4;



Compare the eunuch's rejoicing with the rich young man who went away sorrowing. (Matt. 19. 22; Mark 10. 22.)

The eunuch now disappears from Luke's story. Apparently he returns to his home without the gift of the Holy Spirit. See notes under verse 26. The eunuch represents the acceptance of the Truth by the sons of Ham. (see Introduction to chapter 8) Preaching the Truth has always been difficult for preachers in Africa as the African has a mental block against religion which is hard to remove. Malawi seems to be the only exception and David Livingstone found it so too. Therefore, in the type, the place of the baptism was in the unfertile lands of Gaza. The person baptised was an African. To complete the analogy, he was a eunuch who was infertile in himself. We do not read of any work which he did although the Ethiopians claim that he founded their church. There is no proof of this. Irenaeus writes of him but his information must be tradition and not known fact. The best we can do is be kind and infer that he spent the rest of his life preaching the things that Philip taught him. If God wanted us to know what happened to the eunuch, He would have told us. Failing any Divine message, we shall take our lesson from Luke's story and leave it at that.

Verse 40

"But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea."

"But Philip was found at Azotus..." - the "was found" information does not indicate that he was looked for. The verb means "come upon" without being looked for. "Azotus" is the N.T. name for the O.T. Ashdod. It is not far away from Gaza and lies to the north. Its Hebrew name means "fortress" and it was one of the five cities of the Philistines. They were Gaza, Ashdod, Eshkalon, Gitta and Ava. (Josh. 13. 3. See also Josh. 15. 47; 1 Sam. 5. 1. 2 Chron. 26. 6.)

"passing through" - lit. "went about".

"in all the cities,..." - probably Ekron, Jamnia, Lydda, Joppa and Antipatris.

"Caesarea". There are two "Caesareae" in the Bible. One is Caesarea Philippi of Matt. 16. 13. where Peter made his declaration of faith. There was another Caesarea in north Africa in Mauretania abutting the Mediterranean Sea, but this is not mentioned in the Bible. The second was at Caesarea Maritime on the Mediterranean coast north of Joppa and the modern Tel Aviv. It was a territory given by Augustus Caesar to Herod who rebuilt the town which used to be called "Stratos Tower. He named it after Caesar. It had a harbour which no longer exists and the big open air theatre which he built, still stands as a fine example of its type. Caesarea Maritime will be known as the one city which cleared up a difficulty for Bible students. The critics showed that there is no record in Roman history that Pontius Pilate ever existed and because of this, doubts were cast upon the Bible story of the trial and conviction of Jesus. A few years ago a stone inscription was found bearing the engraving of the name "PONTIUS PILATUS PROCURATOR". The modern ruins show evidence of occupation by the Saracens through an "onion top" tower here and there. There is also evidence that the Crusaders were there and had heavily fortified it. Around the settlement there is a deep moat to keep out invaders. There is also a relic of a Roman water aqueduct leading from the north into the town. It is said that water was led in those days from the Mount Carmel hills in the north. If this is so, then it must have been a stupendous feat of engineering to have led water so far in those days.

Here Philip stayed and he now leaves the Book of the Acts for a period of at least 20 years when we shall pick him up again in the narrative in chapter 21 at verses 8 and 9.

In telling his story, Luke has carefully omitted any mention of Peter in this chapter. Peter is about to disappear from the Acts of the Apostles and Paul is about to take over. Luke very cleverly drops Peter for a while but not altogether. He still has an important work to do with the conversion of Saul and of Cornelius. Having introduced Saul casually but suddenly in Acts 8. 1. and 3, Luke drops Saul for the rest of the chapter so that he can tell us of Simon and the eunuch and then bring us to Caesarea where the next big event is to take place. Now we are to hear Peter again but we are also to be brought face to face with Saul, the greatest man who ever lived from the days following the ascension of Jesus up to now.

## THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

### Chapter 9

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In the layout of the Book of the Acts, Luke records the incident of "Saul's" conversion after the baptism of Simon Magus and the Ethiopian eunuch. It must not be thought that the one event followed the other for if we read carefully Acts chapter 8 at verses 1 and 3, we shall see that Luke drops Saul for a while so that he can deal with Simon Magus and the Eunuch. Once he has told us their stories, Luke returns to take up where he left off with Saul. Therefore when reading Acts chapter 9 we should start with 8. 1/4, and then go straight on with Acts 9. 1 et seq. The 8th. chapter is an interpolation which records events that took place at the same time as the stirring events of chapter 9.

The death of Stephen was an important stage in early Christian history for it marks the beginning of the great persecution of Christians and the scattering of the believers. This dispersion meant that the Gospel was preached over the whole world at that time and the stories of Simon Magus and the eunuch tell us a little of the early dispersion, and the preaching which was done by those people who worked away from Jerusalem. The death of Stephen also marks a very important happening and that was the introduction to the general reader of that great character, SAUL.

Saul was a man of aristocratic birth and upbringing. He differs from the other apostles in that he was brought up in a home where there must have been money and influence. The story of the portion of his life which Luke has given us shows that he had private means. We shall see that money and influence were to bring him before some very prominent people. The governor Felix gave him a private audience and this would have been impossible for an ordinary Roman citizen who did not have means. King Agrippa and Queen Berenice listened to him. Felix "hoped that money (a bribe) should be given him of Paul, that he might loose him:..." (Acts 24. 26.) No Governor would look for a bribe unless he confidently felt that the bribe he expected would be a big one. When Paul was at Caesarea, he was "kept in Herod's judgment hall". (Acts 23. 35.) The appeal unto Caesar was not possible for every Roman citizen. Only the wealthier people would have a chance to be heard provided they were prepared to pay for the very expensive trial that this would entail. Paul obviously, realised his value to the growing ecclesias and was prepared to pay what was required to get himself freed.

Coming from a wealthy family, Saul was given the best education possible at that time. His zeal for the things he undertood to do must have applied to his education for he became one of the most outstanding men of his age, being a scholar, a man of letters, a man of affairs, and a theologian. He was born at Tarsus which was an ancient city and the capital of Cilicia. It was known for its university and school of philosophy. In these institutions of learning, Tarsus University was considered to be behind only Athens and Alexandria. He was sent to Jerusalem to be taught by the great Rabbi, Gamaliel, the greatest teacher of his day and a man who was popular with Jew and Gentile alike. Paul had a married sister and nephew at Jerusalem.

Saul had something else which was very valuable at that time, namely, Roman citizenship. The ability to say "CIVIS ROMANUS SUM" (I am a Roman Citizen) gave him a tremendous advantage over other Jews who did not have this right. It could have come to him in one of three ways - (1) by "manumission" (handing down from father to son). This meant that his father may have been a Roman slave and was subsequently liberated. When such a slave became freedman, he was given Roman citizenship. (2) Roman citizenship could be bought, but it cost a lot of money. See the remark by Claudius Lysias to Paul recorded in Acts 22. 28. Note Paul's reply, "I was freeborn". (3) By a gift. In this case, it would be given as a favour for some great service rendered to the State. It would then be given by a General or an Emperor.

Saul was the complete man to satisfy all types. He was a Jew, of the tribe of Benjamin, and understood the Hebrew language. (Acts 21. 40. and 22. 2.)

He was very well versed in the Law of Moses - as one would expect of a pupil of Gamaliel. He knew Jewish tradition and upheld them with characteristic vigour. (Gal. 1. 14.) He had a spiritual insight which enabled him to grasp the things taught by Stephen during his last speech for Paul showed in later years, how much he understood of the lessons from Jewish history. 1 Cor. 10. 1/12. is one indication of his understanding.

Paul was acceptable to the Greeks because, having been brought up at Tarsus, he would be able to speak Greek and would learn Greek customs, literature and philosophy. Speaking to the men of Athens, he referred to the Greek poets. (Acts 17. 28.) His references to the Olympic Games are well known. (1 Cor. 9. 24; Gal. 2. 2; Phil. 2. 16; Heb. 12. 1;) He was also acquainted with boxing. (1 Cor. 9. 26.)

Paul was acceptable to the Romans as we see from the courtesies given him by Felix and his wife Drusilla, and Agrippa and his wife Bernice. His deep knowledge of Roman law would earn him the respect of Roman citizens. He was given a Roman name which was Paul and it is certain that he would also be given a "gens" name, this being a surname to identify him more closely. For instance, Joseph the historian, took the Latin form of his name, being Josephus, but, at the same time, he was given a surname of Flavius. We are not told what Paul's "gens" (surname) was and it is not important that we should have been told. Nevertheless, it would have been nice to know.

Saul was a Pharisee (Phil. 3. 5.) and had the zeal of the most righteous Pharisee. He was a born leader of men and showed this by his great work amongst the Gentiles. With his brilliant brain, his tireless energy which enabled him to make use of every faculty he had, and his profound scholarship and great understanding of human beings, Saul stood out amongst his fellowmen. Nevertheless, there was a weakness about him which caused him great grief all his life and which he acknowledged had been given to him lest he should become conceited. (2 Cor. 12. 7.) We are not told what it was and many guesses have been made. Some suggest it might have been a squeaky high pitched voice, or a stammer, because he acknowledges that it was said of him that he was "rude of speech" and that his speech was contemptible. (2 Cor. 10. 10. and 11. 6.) This however, cannot be altogether true because Paul confesses that he prayed to the Lord thrice that it may depart from him. (2 Cor. 12. 8.) A squeaky voice would remain with him all his life but a stammer is curable. Others have suggested that he was bald and very bandy legged. Being bald would not be contemptible but being bandy would bring a lot of ridicule upon him. Still it is difficult to see how Paul could pray that bandy legs should depart from him. However, there is an element of truth in this for the Grecian form of the Hebrew Saul would be "Saulos" and it is suggested by some that the meaning of this is "waddling" which describes the manner of walking of a very bandy person. Paul's prayer then would be that the ridicule rather than the bandiness should pass from him. Other suggestions are that he was an epileptic. All sufferers from this were held in great contempt in those days. Whatever it was must always remain a mystery.

It is to be noted that Saul was of the tribe of Benjamin as was Saul, the son of Kish. (1 Sam. 9. 1/2.) Saul, the Benjamite, tried to prevent David's accession to the throne of Israel. Saul of Tarsus persecuted Christians. Under Rehoboam, Benjamin stayed with Judah. Saul (Paul) the Benjamite, became a devoted follower of Jesus.

In the early days of Christianity, Peter and Paul will always stand out as the great protagonists of the True Faith, Peter to the Jews, and Paul to the Gentiles. Both had a tremendous personality and both were untiring in their efforts for the Faith. It is appropriate that a meeting between the two should have come about and that this meeting should draw to a close with the baptism of Paul. Just as Peter's pride was to be abased (when the Lord asked him the same question three times - John 21. 15, 16, 17.) so Paul's pride was abased in more ways than one and we shall deal with these when we come to them. We should note however, that Saul's Roman name - Paul - means "Little".

PETER and PAUL are as inseparable as Elijah and Elisha of the O.T. The one should not be considered without the other. Elijah performed eight recorded miracles and Elisha performed sixteen which are recorded. Thus it appears that Elisha did the greater work. In the same way, Peter did a wonderful work in the Lord's service but Luke records more of what Paul did so we must consider that he was the greater of the two. The work of the two men was extraordinarily similar. What the one did, so did the other. Rackham in his valuable commentary, sets out the following parallelism between the work of the two evangelists:-

1. After his conversion, Simon was called Peter. After his conversion, Saul's name was also changed and in his case, he was called "Paul".
2. Peter receives baptism by the Spirit. (Acts 2. 1/4.) Paul was separated by the Spirit. (Acts 13. 2.)
3. Peter was accused of being drunk and Paul was accused of being mad. Both men denied the respective allegations and answered by making a forthright speech. (Acts 2. 13/14; 26. 24/25.)
4. Both men preached to Jews. Cf. Acts 2. and Acts 13.
5. Both healed a lame man. Acts 3. 1/11; 14. 8/10.
6. In both cases, the lame men were cripples from birth. Both Peter and Paul "fastened their eyes" or "steadfastly beheld" - both expressions meaning the same thing. Both cripples were told to rise. Both leaped and walked. In both cases, the people who saw, greatly wondered. The cures brought both men into trouble.
7. Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none." (Acts 3. 6.) and Paul said, "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold,.." (Acts 20. 33.)
8. Peter and Paul were both arrested in the temple and brought before the Sanhedrin. (Acts 4. 1. et seq. 5. 18. et seq.) and (Acts 21. 25. also chapter 23.)
9. Peter and Paul were both "filled with the Holy Spirit". (Acts 4. 8. and 13. 9.)
10. Peter was considered to be "unlearned and ignorant" (Acts 4. 13.) and Paul was considered to be mad because of "much learning". (Acts 26. 24.)
11. Both men were confronted with the practice of "curious arts" (magic, faith healing, etc.) Peter in Acts 8. 14/24. and Paul in Acts 19. 13/19.
12. Signs and wonders were done by the hands of both men. (Acts 2. 43; 4. 30; 5. 12. compare with Acts 14. 3.)
13. Miraculous cures were associated with both Peter and Paul. (Acts 5. 15; and 19. 12;) These were the shadow of Peter and the handkerchiefs of Paul.
14. The success of the preaching by Peter and Paul brought opposition and anger from the Jews. Acts 5. 17; 13. 45.
15. Well known Gentiles help them by their speeches. See the speeches of Gamaliel (Acts 5. 34/39.) and Gallio (Acts 18. 14/15.) A beating follows in each case for the evangelists. See 5. 40; and 18. 17.
16. Peter ordains the "seven men of honest report". (6. 6.) and Paul ordained elders. (14. 23.)
17. By laying on of hands Peter passes on the Holy Spirit (8. 17.) and Paul does the same. (19. 6.)
18. Those who received the Holy Spirit in this way, spoke with tongues. 10. 46. compare with 19. 6.
19. Peter denounced Simon Magus. (8. 20/23.) Paul denounced Barjesus. (13. 10/11.)
20. Peter cured Aeneas of palsy. (9. 34.) Paul cured the father of Publius of dysentery. (28. 8.)
21. Peter presented Dorcas alive. (9. 41.) Paul did the same for Eutychus. (20. 9/10.)
22. Peter's first Gentile convert had a Latin name - Cornelius. Early in his ministry, Paul preached to Sergius Paulus. Cf. 10. 1. and 13. 7.
23. Peter spoke to Cornelius, a centurion of Caesarea. (10. 1.) and Paul was given into the care of a centurion at Caesarea. (27. 1.)
24. Before his mission to Cornelius, Peter is hungry. (10. 10.) Paul was without food or drink for three days. (9. 9.) Peter had a vision at midday. (10. 9.) so did Paul. (22. 6.) Peter heard a voice, (10. 13.) Paul also heard a voice. (9. 4.) Peter's vision was repeated three times. (10. 16.) Paul's experience is repeated three times in Acts. (9. 3/8; 22. 6/10; 26. 12/18.)

25. Cornelius sees a vision which led to a meeting with Peter. (10. 3/6.)  
Ananias saw a vision which led him to Paul. (9. 10/16.)
26. Cornelius felt inclined to worship Peter. (10. 25.) The Lycaonians wanted to worship Paul and Barnabas. (14. 11/13.) Cornelius fell at Peter's feet. In Paul's experience, the jailer at Philippi fell down before him. (16. 29.)
27. The question of circumcision gave trouble to Peter. (11. 2/3.) and to Paul. (15. 1/2.)
28. Peter was arrested by Agrippa I. Paul defended himself before Agrippa II. See 12. 3/4. and 26. 2/29.
29. Peter was imprisoned in Jerusalem. Chapter 12. Paul was imprisoned at Philippi. Chapter 16.
30. Both Peter and Paul were delivered miraculously. See chapters 12 and 16.
31. An angel appeared to Peter. (12. 7.) and an angel appeared to Paul. (27. 23.)
32. In Peter's case, prayer was followed by an earthquake. (4. 31.) In Paul's case, see 16. 25/26.
33. Peter was bound with chains. (12. 6.) Paul was also bound with a chain. 26. 29.
34. Both Peter and Paul beckoned with the hand. See 12. 17. and 13. 16.
35. When Peter was released from prison, he went to the house of Mary. 12. 12. When Paul was released, he went to the house of Lydia. 16. 40.

## Verse 1

"and Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,"

"yet..." - this word shows the connection between that which follows and Acts 8. 4.

"breathing out..." - the word does not occur elsewhere in Scripture but is peculiar to this context. It means "breathing in" and carries a meaning of angry fervour like a wild beast snorting with rage.

"threatenings and slaughter..." - The plural of "threatenings" is an error. The word means "threatening". "Slaughter" means "murder".

"the disciples of the Lord..." - those who had disciplined themselves after Christ. Does not mean the apostles.

Paul's confession of his intense hatred for Christians and the measures he took to exterminate them, is given in Acts 26. 10/11. Note particularly verse 11 which records "I persecuted them even unto strange cities."

## Verse 2

"and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem."

"Desired of him letters..." - This verse is a continuation of verse 1. The word "desired" is really "asked" or, better still, "asked for himself". The "letters" which he asked for would give him a commission to carry out the work he intended to do. This work was to take him to Damascus. Saul succeeded in getting the letters he wanted. We read about this in Acts 22. 4/5 and Acts 26. 9/11.

"to Damascus..." - The high priest's authority would extend to Jewish communities outside of Palestine. As President of the Sanhedrin, he would be the head of Israel in so far as its internal affairs were concerned. The religious authority of the high Priest was upheld by the Roman authorities. By claiming that certain Jews were offenders against Jewish laws, Saul could have demanded their extradition.

Damascus is supposed to be the oldest city in the world. It is first mentioned in the Bible in Gen. 14. 15. in connection with the defeat of Chedorlaomer by Abraham. See also Gen. 15. 2. The Jewish population of Damascus at the time of Nero must have been very great indeed for Josephus states that 10,000 Jews were massacred there at that time A.D. 66, Ananias who is mentioned later in connection with the conversion of Paul, might either have gone there after the persecution of Stephen, or the gospel may have been taken there by the Jews who were scattered and driven out of Jerusalem by the persecution which followed the death of Stephen. There must have been a large number there for Saul to have taken the positive action which is recorded here. Some might have gone there after Pentecost.

Damascus is about 60 miles from the sea and about 2,200 feet above sea level. It was at one time on the highway of traffic between Egypt and Mesopotamia. Several caravan routes converged there. In the 7th. Century it came under the control of the Muslims.

"this way" - the word "way" is used many times in the N.T. to indicate the Christian Faith. The meaning in Greek is a "path" or "highway", being the same as the word Jesus used when he said, "I am the way, the truth and the life" (John 14. 6.) and "straight is the gate, and narrow is the way..." (Matt. 7. 14.) Also the seeds which fell by the "wayside". (Luke 8. 5.)

Consider the following:-

- (1) The WAY of God. Matt. 22. 16; Mark 12. 14. Luke 20. 21. Acts 18. 26.
- (2) The WAY of the Lord. Matt. 3. 3. Mark 1. 3. Luke 3. 4. John 1. 23.
- (3) The WAY of peace. Luke 1. 79. Rom. 3. 17.
- (4) The WAY of salvation. Acts 16. 17.
- (5) The WAY of truth. 2 Peter 2. 2.
- (6) The WAY of righteousness. 2 Peter 2. 21.
- (7) The WAY of the kings of the east. Rev. 16. 12.

Compare with:-

- (1) The way of the Gentiles. Matt. 10. 5.
- (2) The way of Balaam. 2 Peter 2. 15.
- (3) The way of Cain. Jude 11.

"men and women.." - Saul, who later as Paul, wrote so tenderly about women, did not consider their sex when he turned his violence upon them. His zeal was above all other considerations.

"to Jerusalem." - To the Sanhedrin which was centred at Jerusalem. As stated above, the Sanhedrin were permitted by the Romans to punish their own people if they contravened Jewish Law.

Verse 3

"And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus; and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven."

"As he journeyed..." - Greek "In the journeying..." In the act of progressing from one point to another.

It is not mentioned here, but the time was about mid-day. See Acts 22. 6. and 26. 13.

"there shined..." - Greek usage of this verb is applied to the flashing of lightning. The sense here, is one of continuous shining and not a momentary flash. It was the brightness which was like lightning.

"from heaven..." It was not a light coming from heaven. The passage refers to the direction from which it came. Luke must have described the light in this way to show that it was of Divine origin.

Verse 4

"And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

The act of a man who was suddenly overcome and confounded. Those who were with him also fell to the ground. (Acts 26. 14.)

"heard a voice..." - compare this statement with Acts 22. 9. "they heard not the voice of him that spake to me." The answer is that Paul not only heard the voice but understood what was said. Those that were with him, heard the voice but did not understand what was said.

"Saul, Saul,..." - the name here is given in the Hebrew form "Shaul, Shaul,.." This agrees with the information given in Acts 26. 14. which says that the Lord spake in the Hebrew tongue.



The repetition of the name is a character of the writings of Luke. See "Martha, Martha" of Luke 10. 41; "Jerusalem, Jerusalem," of Luke 13. 34; "Simon, Simon," of Luke 22. 31. all of these references contain a certain measure of rebuke, and warning. In the O.T. there is an interesting example in "Samuel, Samuel" of 1 Sam. 3. 10. where the LORD called Samuel preparatory to "calling" him to His service. In the case before us, Saul's name is uttered twice and in the events which followed, it is obvious that in this there was a REBUKE, a WARNING and a CALLING. For those to whom the LORD gives the increase, there are:-

1. The REBUKE - thou shalt not
2. The WARNING - dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return.
3. The CALLING - believe and be baptised.

In this we see a further connection with the dream which "was doubled unto Pharaoh twice;..." (Gen. 41. 32.) The reason given for this was that "the thing is established by God,..." In other words, it was the Divine Plan and Purpose that this should be so. Connecting this with our own "calling" in Christ Jesus, we must agree that inasmuch as "God giveth the increase" (1 Cor. 3. 6.) it must be the Divine Plan and Purpose that we should be called. John, the writer of the Fourth Gospel, depicted Jesus as the manifestation of God and His Purpose, so we find throughout that gospel, the repeated words of Jesus, "Verily, verily..." The doubling up of this word is not found elsewhere in Scripture. It occurs 24 times in John. Whatever Jesus said after opening with those words, must have had something to do with the Divine Plan and Purpose. A study of these instances can be most rewarding. See John 1. 51; 3. 3, 11; 5. 19, 24, 25; 6. 26, 32, 47, 53; 8. 34, 51, 58; 10. 1, 7; 12. 24; 13. 16, 20, 21, 38; 14. 12; 16. 20, 23; 21. 18. It will be found that in every one of these instances, there is some facet of the Divine Plan and Purpose. The double worded introduction shows that they are all given because they are "established by God".

"Why persecutest thou me?" - Many years later Paul was to write, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular". (1 Cor. 12. 27.) See also his words in Ephes. 2. 19/22. The words of Jesus in Matt. 25. 44. have a bearing on this principle. Any persecution of the "body" of Christ must be a persecution of Jesus himself.

The word "diokō" translated as "persecute" has the meaning of "drive away" and "put to flight" - these being brought about by the undeserved cruelty which had been inflicted upon the followers of Jesus. When Paul came to realise how severe he had been, he never forgot it and wrote about it many years afterwards. See Gal. 1. 13. where he acknowledges that he had gone beyond what would normally have been required. His shame at what he did is acknowledged in 1 Cor. 15. 9. His confession is also contained in Acts 22. 4. and 26. 11.

#### Verse 5

"And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

The question "Who art thou, Lord" is asked with a good idea as to what the answer was. This is shown by the title "Lord" instead of "Sir". There was a doubt of course, but the sudden realisation that this was something Divine is shown by the use of the word "Lord".

"I am Jesus..." - The pronoun here is emphatic. It is as though Jesus replied, "I am that very Christ, - the one whom you are persecuting." The emphasis goes further because Jesus identifies himself with his people. He refers to "that Jesus - the very one whom you are persecuting" showing that Jesus and his people are one. It would not have been said if Saul had been persecuting pagans.

Compare this incident with that described in John 18. 4/6. The officers had come to arrest Jesus and he asked them "Whom seek ye?" knowing full well who

they were (unlike Saul who had a good idea but who was not sure.) Once the Lord was identified, the people fell to the ground. Saul fell to the ground too, but not because of identification. It was due to the brightness of Christ's presence. The people had come to arrest the literal body of Christ. With Saul, he had come to arrest the spiritual body of Christ.

"it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." This expression is well known in Hebrew, Greek and Latin literature. It is omitted from most English texts and appears in italics in the Amplified Version. Knox includes it with a very free translation of what was said. It is therefore, accepted as being a spurious introduction into some later manuscript. Nevertheless, it has some merit for it is indeed a painful thing to continue to sin when we know that we are sinning. We ignore the pricking of conscience and continue to do those things which we ought not to do. It is generally well known to all who read their Bible, that the pricks mentioned here refer to the spiked goad which is used to urge oxen to pull the plough.

#### Verse 6

"And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."

"And he trembling.....the Lord said unto him,...." All this section is an interpolation to fit the context after the introduction of the statement "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." The next word "Arise.." should follow immediately after "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest:" Now continue with "Rise,..etc.," This has the effect of running verse 5 into verse 6 as one continuous statement.

"Arise...." - The Greek is "Rise". There is a usage in Heb. 7. 15. but this word is nearly peculiar to Luke. See Luke 15. 18; 17. 19; Acts 8. 26; 9. 6, 11, 34, 40; 10. 20; 11. 7; 12. 7; 20. 30; 22. 10, 16; See also Paul's use of it in Ephes. 5. 14. Note the number of times it appears in the sentence "Arise and go..." indicating that one must get up and go somewhere to do the Lord's bidding.

"go into the city..." - It is just as well that the Lord gave Saul these instructions. He was in such a state of mind at that time that any detailed instructions as to what he had to do would have been lost on him. The journey into the city would give him a chance to collect his thoughts, calm down a bit and be in a fit state to follow out further commandments.

The city was Damascus as we shall see. It was to this city that Saul was going. See verse 2. "It will be told thee..." - this prepares us for what follows. We know that God will call upon another servant to speak to Saul. Note how God works through His servants.

#### Verse 7

"And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man."

Paul was not alone but had men with him. This shows his importance in those days because he would be in charge of the whole party. We are not told who they were but the fact that the Bible mentions them without giving them a name, shows that they have some teaching value. The Bible is the Word of God so if people are referred to even indirectly, they are a type of something or someone. They would not have been Gentiles as Paul was too much of a Jew to have anything to do with the despised Gentile. They were a type of the unbeliever.

"stood..." - in contrast with Saul who fell to the ground, they stood still, without moving. It also indicates standing, in opposition to sitting or lying down, that is they stopped further movement. A moment later they must have fallen. See Acts 26. 14.

"speechless,..." - the Greek word indicates those who were both deaf and dumb. Many years later, Paul said that "they that were with me saw indeed the

light,.... but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me." (Acts 22. 9.)  
When they saw the light, they were speechless (and deaf in a sense).

"hearing a voice,.. " - a similar phenomenon is found in John 12. 28/29. where the people heard a voice from heaven and said that it thundered. They did not distinguish articulated words. It was the same here where Saul's companions heard the voice, but could not understand the speech. In Acts 22. 9. Paul recounts that his companions did not hear the voice. It is true that they heard the sound but we must not take it further than this. They heard not the articulation of the voice. This distinction is drawn from "hearing a voice" from the verse before us and "heard not the voice of him that spake to me". This latter from Acts 22. 9. In the one they heard a voice and in the other, they heard not the voice that spake. The one which was heard was just a sound of a voice. The one which was not heard was the speaking of the voice.

"seeing no man." We must draw a distinction here between the seeing no man by Saul's companions and the sightlessness of Saul which we shall read about in verse 9. The companions did not lose their sight. It is just that they saw no one.

#### Verse 8

"And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus."

"Saul arose..." - the first act of obedience by Saul. His reaction to the command "Arise!" was immediate.

"when his eyes were opened,..." - The sense here is not that he had previously kept his eyes closed and now suddenly opened them to find that he could see no man. It is that in spite of his eyes being opened, he could see no man, not even his companions who were with him.

"but they led him..." - "they" as a word in this sentence, is tied to "man" which Saul did not see, not even his companions. "they" must mean his companions.

"brought him into Damascus." Commentators sieze upon this statement to show that the incident took place outside the city. Tradition is referred to which states that the scene was at a little bridge outside the city. Such information is of no value whatsoever. To say that it occurred here or there would convey no teaching lesson for us. But the Bible mentions that Saul was taken to Damascus and God must have had a purpose in stating this. The answer is that in the first place, Saul wished to go to Damascus. He arrived there in due course, but not of his own freewill. No doubt he would have been pleased enough to return to Jerusalem to wherever his home was. He reached Damascus because God willed it so. He went because he was told to go and he must have told his companions to take him there otherwise they would have brought him back to his home. The companions had not heard the articulated voice so did not know of the special instructions to go to Damascus. Saul must have instructed them, thus giving the second evidence of his obedience to the Word of the Lord. In these few words, recorded in Acts, Luke shows his consummate skill as a writer. He has a tremendous capacity for using an economy of words.

#### Verse 9

"And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink."

"three days..." These are analogous to the three days our Lord spent in the grave when he lay prone on the ground; he saw nothing; he was speechless; and he did neither eat nor drink. In other words, this was Saul's spiritual death in symbol. The Saul that arose was a very different person from that which started out for Damascus. It was appropriate in the Divine

scheme of things, that Saul, the great enemy of the body of Christ, should follow the pattern of the man whom he persecuted. God led him through the way of that man whom he had despised. Saul the man who would save no one of the WAY of righteousness had been brought face to face with him who would have saved even those of the way of Cain if they turned to him. Having been given this revelation, Saul acted immediately in belief and the Saving Grace of the Lord came upon him, bringing him through the same stages as our Lord, and electing him to high office.

It is appropriate at this stage, when in Luke's narrative, the scene swiftly changes from Saul on the road to Ananias at Damascus, that we should compare the three versions of this remarkable incident in Paul's life.

#### Acts

chapter 9. vs 3/9.

3. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven.

4. And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

5. And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: (it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.)

7. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

6. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

chapter 22. 6/11.

6. And it came to pass that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.

7. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

8. And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.

9. And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

10. And I said, What shall I do Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.

chapter 26. 12/18.

12. Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,  
13. At midday, O King, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.

14. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

15. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

16. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee.

chapter 9. 3/9.

chapter 22. 6/11.

chapter 26. 12/18.

17. Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I now send thee,  
 18. To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

8. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.

11. And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.

9. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

Whereas some have criticised Luke for inconsistency in narration, the fore-going will show that at one telling, certain things were included and omitted from others. In others, we are given certain information which is missing from the earliest account. It is to be noted that the inclusion of certain words in verse 5 and 6 of chapter 9 are accepted as being by interpolation, yet the same words included in Acts 22. 10. are in order. It is a case of what Luke actually wrote and not of what was actually said at the time. Luke did not include these words in Acts 9. 5/6. but included them in 22. 10. In the translation of chapter 9, the words have been borrowed from Acts 22. 10. The additional matter given in chapter 26, verses 17 and 18 is interesting. Note "to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light..." No doubt Saul would think a great deal on these words during his three day spell of blindness. It is significant that he remembered the words for so many years.

The value of the revelation of Jesus Christ to Paul lies in the call which was made and the preparation for the teaching of the Word to the Gentiles. The story is told simply and without embellishment. Nothing is made out of the incident which is not there. The glory of the appearance of Jesus to Saul is left to our imagination. Luke's motive is not to add anything of ostentation but to reveal some facet of the Divine Plan and Purpose. This is consistent with his introductory remark, "that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed."

The appearance of the Lord Jesus in Glory is recorded for us on two different occasions. The first is the transfiguration on the mount to Peter, James and John. (Matt. 17. 1/9. Mark 9. 2/9. Luke 9. 28/36.) The second is here in Acts 9. Three other occasions are (1) the statement of Stephen that he saw the heavens opened...etc., We have seen that this was not an actual revelation but a declaration of understanding. (2) The appearance of the Lord to John on the Isle of Patmos was by vision and not by sudden appearance as to Saul and to the three on the mount. (3) To Ananias in a dream.

Verse 10

"And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias, And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord."

"a certain disciple...Ananias.." - It is very unlikely that this disciple, Ananias by name, who is introduced to us here for the first time, was

a refugee from the persecution of Christians at Jerusalem. Acts 22. 12. tells us that he was a devout man who was held in high esteem by the Jews there. It seems likely therefore, that he was converted either by one who returned after the miracle on the day of Pentecost, or one who subsequently took Christianity to Damascus. No doubt there were converts other than he in Damascus but he was the one selected by God to do a certain work for the Lord. This is the first time we meet him in the Bible and it is the last, except for a repeat appearance in Acts. 22. 12. He suddenly appears in the narrative, does his work for the Lord and then disappears altogether. His name is the Greek form of the Hebrew name HANANIAH meaning "Yahweh hath dealt graciously". There are two others of the same name in the N.T. and they are Ananias of Acts 5. and Ananias the high priest who was noted for his greed and whom Paul was to meet on a later occasion. (Acts 23. 2.)

Ananias was given a vision wherein he heard a voice telling him to do a certain work. Luke is anxious that the supernatural nature of the vision will be understood so he is deliberate about his telling of it.

"Behold, I (am here) Lord." - Greek is "behold I, Lord." Note the italics of "am here" in the A.V. The usual reply would be "Here am I". See Gen. 22. 11. This is the same answer given by Samuel when he heard his name called. (1 Sam. 3. 4, 5, 6.) The case of Samuel is not parallel with that of Ananias because Samuel was not asleep so heard an actual voice. Ananias dreamed that he heard it.

Verse 11

"And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth."

"Arise and go..." - see notes to verse 6.

"the street which is called Straight.." - "Straight Street" still exists in modern Damascus. The word from which "street" is translated, means a lane or alley and not a broad highway. The Straight Street of modern Damascus is long and straight - something which is extremely rare in Middle East towns or cities. It goes through the whole city from east to west. It is probable but uncertain that this is the actual street referred to here - the only place in the N.T. where a street is named. Damascus has been subjected to many attacks and has been rebuilt many times. The street is named here because it was unusual for streets to have names. Ananias had to seek Saul as Saul was incapable of looking for anyone, because he was blind.

"enquire in the house of Judas,..." - "enquire" is "seek". The Greek word means "to look for", "to strive to find". Coupling this with the address "the house of Judas", we infer that Judas, or more commonly Judah, was a well known name, so it must refer to a particular Judas (Judah). It must have been a boarding house known as "Judas'" and there Ananias had to strive to find the man named Saul.

"Saul of Tarsus.." - There would be many "Saul's" but to limit it to a certain Saul of the city of Tarsus was to narrow the search considerably. Saul at that time, was well known throughout all Judea.

"for, behold,..." - once again, the word "behold" indicates something surprising is to follow.

"he prayeth". - here is the surprise. Saul, instead of going about seeking those whom he may destroy, was PRAYING. If Ananias was afraid, perhaps this piece of information would comfort him. Ananias was a devout worshipper of God otherwise he would not have been called, so if he were told that Saul was now praying, his opinion of him may change.

## Verse 12

"And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight."

This verse is a continuation of the previous verse. Ananias is told that Saul is praying because he hath seen a man named Ananias coming in...etc., If Ananias connected this with the prayer of Saul, he might have had more confidence in the success of his mission because Saul would see a man he had never seen before, come in and put his hand on him. Furthermore, he would know that this man's name was Ananias. How would he know and recognise all this unless God had revealed it unto him? Ananias is also told that Saul is blind and that when he puts his hand on him, Saul's sight would be restored.

## Verse 13

"Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:"

The consternation of Ananias when he heard his mission, can be understood. To ask any Christian to go looking for Paul the assassin, the murderer of many a Christian, would be like asking someone to touch a live wire. They would know they were going to get a shock and would be very much afraid that the shock would kill them! His fear is akin to that of Obadiah when Elijah told him to go to Ahab and say "Behold, Elijah is here." (1 Kings 18. 8.) Ahab had been looking for Elijah for a long time with one idea, namely, to kill him. To tell Obadiah to go to the king and say that Elijah was here and that he had sent Obadiah to tell the king, would bring certain death upon him. The king would want to know why Obadiah did not kill Elijah instead of letting him go. The consternation of Obadiah can be felt when reading 1 Kings 18. 9/14. Likewise, we can sympathise with Ananias who was told that Saul knew he was to come to him and knew he would recognise him straight away. Such a fierce persecutor could hardly become a reformed man in a short time. Hair-raising stories must have abounded about Saul, as Ananias indicates with his complaint, "I have heard by MANY of this man,..."

"how much evil he hath done to thy saints..." - he had gone about with companions who arrested people, bound them and took them to Jerusalem for punishment. Saul was one problem, but what of his companions too?

"thy saints." - the people whom God had called to come out of the world to be a separate and peculiar people to himself - a royal priesthood. (1 Pet. 2. 9.)

## Verse 14

"And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call upon thy name."

"And here..." - even HERE, in a foreign city, Saul has authority from the high priests to capture and extradite all Christians who, by their Jewish origin, would come under the control of the high priest.

"all that call upon thy name." This would apply to preachers more than to the humble converts who did no preaching but gathered together for breaking of bread and prayers. Those that call upon the name of the Lord are defined in Rom. 10. 13/15. Following Paul's reasoning through these verses, we find that to call upon the name of the Lord is to profess the Faith and proclaim it abroad. Such people would become known and that is what had become of Ananias. He was a prominent Christian and one whom Saul wanted more than others.

How Ananias would know the terms of Saul's mandate from the high priest, is not stated. We can infer that Saul's companions gave out the news and it was the type of news that would spread very rapidly amongst the Jews. They would want to warn each other as quickly as they could, if they had become converts to the new faith. In those days, there would not be the rapidity of communication between cities to enable advance news to reach Damascus. If Saul's

companions had told of their object, then the news would spread.

#### Verse 15

"But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:"

"the Lord said,..." - Jesus said. We know that it was Jesus because of the explanation given in verse 17.

"Go thy way..." Lit. "Go!" a complete disregard of the objections raised in the previous verses. When God calls, and when Jesus calls, it is not for the chosen servants to show reasons why they should not go. This rule must apply to our lives as "the elect". There is no excuse for non-attendance at a breaking of bread. It is an invitation which cannot be ignored. There can be a reason such as illness, absence on holiday, one's turn to "baby sit" and so on, but never an excuse. If there are to be any excuses at all, there should be excuses as to why we should neglect other considerations and attend the Table of the Lord. The same principle applies here.

"a chosen vessel..." - The use of this metaphor to describe the "elect of God" appears to have its explanation in Rom. 9. 21. which says, "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" If God gives the increase, and if God makes us as we are before our call, then He is the great Potter, making one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour. Those nations who do not turn to a worship of the God of Israel are vessels of wrath just as Pharaoh and the Egyptians were. (Rom. 9. 17.) Everyone who comes into the world is a vessel of some sort. Consider the following:-

- |     |                       |   |                 |   |              |
|-----|-----------------------|---|-----------------|---|--------------|
| (1) | The weaker vessel     | - | the wife        | - | 1 Pet. 3. 7. |
| (2) | The chosen vessel     | - | servant of God  | - | Acts 9. 15.  |
| (3) | The vessels of wrath  | - | the nations     | - | Rom. 9. 22.  |
| (4) | The vessels of mercy  | - | the believers   | - | Rom. 9. 23.  |
| (5) | The vessels (earthen) | - | fragile mankind | - | 2 Cor. 4. 7. |

The word "chosen" (eklektos) means "chosen" and is translated as "elect" in other places. The Divine Potter has chosen Saul and fashioned him throughout his life for the work he is to be called upon to do. Saul was separated from his mother's womb to be a servant of the Lord. (Gal. 1. 15.)

"to bear my name.." - "to bear" means to carry a heavy burden. He who had brought burdens to bear upon others would now have a heavy burden to bear. "my name..." - the name of Yahweh which is the prophetic name of God and which contains the Divine Plan and Purpose. ("I will be who I will be") This was manifested by Jesus, the Son of God and manifested through the power of the Holy Spirit, hence the triple baptism into the name of God the Father, and the Name of the Son and the name of the Holy Spirit. (The Divine Plan and Purpose which is God, - John 1. 1. - manifested by the Son through the power of the Holy Spirit.)

"before the Gentiles..." - It was necessary that such a man be prepared for the work of bringing the gospel to the Gentiles. Saul's good education, his wealth, the connections he had through family influence, his ability to meet highly placed individuals at their own level, were things which are rarely found all together in one individual. Such a man was Paul of the mission years. Paul's letters to the various ecclesias show the extent to which he preached to the Gentiles.

"and kings,..." - Paul preached to governors and kings. To Agrippa in Acts 26. Some think that the "lion" of 2 Tim. 4. 17. is a metaphor for NERO.

"and the children of Israel." These are mentioned last because in the order of work, Paul did not spend a lot of time with them. Nevertheless, he did not lose interest in them. See Rom. 10. 1.

The extent to which Paul suffered in his work for the Lord is shown in the list he gave in 2 Cor. 11. 23/33.



## Verse 16

"For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."

"For I will shew..." - this is complementary to "Go thy way..." of the previous verse. In other words, You go Your way and I will do my own part. The emphasis is not shown in the English Translation. Saul had made others suffer for the Truth's sake. Now he was to suffer too in much the same way as he made others suffer. For this reason, Ananias is told to get on with what God has called him to do because God will now give Saul just a glimpse of what God is going to do to him.

"how great things he must suffer..." - the sense seems to be "Ananias, do not worry about what Saul may do to you. His days of persecution are over. If anyone is going to suffer, it is Saul and not you."

"for my name's sake." - the sense here is "bending over to protect". Therefore Saul was called to the Lord's Service to protect those people whom God is taking out of the Gentiles to be a people for His name. They had to be protected from such a Saul; they had to be encouraged; they had to be taught; others had to be brought into the Faith; the Gentiles were to come into the covenants of promise.

## Verse 17

"And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

"went his way and entered..." - lit. went away and went in. The passage of time between going out of his own house and entering the house of Judah, is not indicated by the text. It should be understood after careful reading.

"the house." - the house of Judah (Judah) which would have to be looked for unless Ananias knew it very well.

"putting his hands upon him..." - when hands were put on as indicated here, it was an indication that the Holy Spirit was given. It made a contact between the servant of God and the one to whom the servant was sent. It was also a sign of authority. This authority is indicated in the short speech Ananias gave.

"brother Saul..." - a brother of Israel, a fellow man, and a fellow servant, not yet a brother in the Lord by baptism, but a chosen vessel unto God.

"the Lord Jesus that appeared unto thee - hath sent me..." Here is a statement of the authority which was indicated by the putting on of hands. In this speech, Saul also gets to know definitely that it was indeed, Jesus who appeared unto him in the way. This appearance ranks with the appearance of the Lord to his disciples after his resurrection. (1 Cor. 15. 8.)

"hath sent me..." - it is the same Lord acting on each of us. Jesus commanded me and has also commanded you. This ties up with the salutation of "Brother..."

"that thou mightest receive thy sight." - Saul was blind for three days. Vs 9 above. Therefore the events recorded in the foregoing few verses did not take long to happen. This was the third day after the appearance of Jesus to Saul.

"be filled with the Holy Spirit." - The passing on of the Holy Spirit by Ananias is contrasted with the inability of Philip to pass it on and having to call upon Peter and John for this purpose. It is suggested by some that on the authority of this verse, anyone could pass on the Holy Spirit. The fact is

that God is not limited by any rules. The passing on of the Holy Spirit was subject to the Will of God. If it was God's Will that Philip could not pass on the Holy Spirit, then it would be so. If Ananias suddenly found that the Holy Spirit was passed on through his agency, then that does not set a pattern which would bind God to a course of action. It is the passing on of the Holy Spirit which is important to our study. The agency through whom it was passed on (presumably Ananias in this case), is quite unimportant. It is unusual for anyone to receive the power of the Holy Spirit on the third day of his conversion but it was God's Will that this should be so and we must accept it as such.

## Verse 18

"And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptised."

"immediately..." - as soon as Ananias had declared what God intended to do, it was done, immediately.

"there fell..." This is the only occurrence of this word in the N.T. It was a term used by physicians for the falling off of diseased parts of the body. Luke's usage of such a word here shows his medical training.

"scales..." - here again is the only occurrence of this word in the N.T. It refers to rind, husk or anything not wanted which can fall off. It is purely a medical term and is another sign that Luke was a physician.

"received - arose - baptised." Saul could do little while he was blind. Once his sight was restored, he arose - He did not delight in the restoration of sight but was concerned to do God's Will immediately. The word "arose" always signifies action of some sort. Saul was baptised because one cannot start to be a servant of God without being baptised and thereby coming into the Covenants of Promise.

Saul was the only Apostle who was baptised into the Name of Jesus. The other apostles did not have to be baptised after the death of the Lord because he had already washed their feet and proclaimed them clean, every whit. Saul also had the very important qualification of an apostle because he had seen the Lord Jesus after his resurrection, thereby being a witness of the fact that he had been raised physically from the dead. (Acts 1. 22.) The men who were with Saul do not fall into this category at all. In the pattern of things, they represent those who do not believe and, as a result of that unbelief, are not baptised. The narrative shows that although they heard a voice, they did not understand. Many hear the gospel preached but it does not sink into their understanding so they do not hear the articulated voice. If they are baptised, their baptism is not the one that Jesus commanded. This is signified by the fact that they were not blind for three days. They had no proper association with the Lord Jesus in his death.

## Verse 19

"And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus."

"...he had received meat..." - a typical observation by Luke, the physician who would be concerned that a man should abstain from food and water for three days. The word translated as "meat" does not mean solely the flesh of an animal. It means "sustenance", "nourishment", "food".

"he was strengthened." The verb means to invigorate and to make strong. That is to say, Saul was not only made physically stronger, but his energy was improved. There is also a very strong suggestion that he was spiritually strengthened too for this verb appears in Luke 22. 43. where it is recorded that an angel appeared to STRENGTHEN Jesus in his time of severe trial.

It could very well be that food at once strengthened him and invigorated him. Thereafter, a breaking of bread ceremony would have strengthened him spiritually.

"Certain days." - This expression appears in Acts 10. 48; 15. 36; 16. 12; 24. 24; 25. 13. Wherever it is found, it means a comparatively short period of time.

"with the disciples..." - Saul now openly identifies himself with those whom he recently had persecuted.

#### Verse 20

"And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God."

"straightway" - means "immediately, without delay". This has an important bearing upon the narrative here. In Gal. 1. 15/17. Paul states that when he had turned to God and His service, he went to Arabia where he sought retirement with God. When he returned, he came back to Damascus. (vs 17) The word "immediately" means that the visit to Arabia cannot be put between verses 19 and 20 to indicate that he went to Arabia before preaching. Saul must have preached as indicated here so that the historical record of his sojourn in Arabia could be placed between verses 21 and 22 to get the sequence right.

"he preached Christ..." - he preached the Messiah, to use the Hebrew "Messiah" in place of the Greek "Christ". The Messiah was the one anointed to be king - the one who would possess the gate of his enemies. (Gen. 22. 17.)

"the Son of God." - this refers to the covenant with David that a son (son of man) would come through the line of David but that God would be his father (the Son of God). 2 Sam. 7. 14. The preaching of Christ and the Son of God simultaneously, combines the two covenants - the one with Abraham and the other with David - and centres them both in Jesus, the son of man and the son of David.

The preaching of these two themes was tantamount to preaching the very things which Saul had formerly denied.

"in the synagogues..." - Saul now preached in the same places to which he went to get his authority to persecute Christians. He carried letters from the Sanhedrin to such places, authorising him to persecute such people as he now was, who preached Christ and the Son of God.

#### Verse 21

"But all that heard him were amazed, and said, Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests."

"they were amazed..." - this is an understatement. They must have been utterly astonished. Saul was a well-known figure throughout Judea and in Damascus. He was, without a doubt, well known in every synagogue. For him suddenly, without warning, to walk into a synagogue and preach those things he had fought so vigorously against, would be sensational. Could we imagine a person like the Russian national leader, suddenly preaching the gospel instead of his political doctrine? The people must have listened to him with astonishment as well as shock.

"is not this he..." - here is an indication of the extent of their astonishment and shock. The people asked each other, being too afraid to ask Saul what had happened to him that he should preach those very things he had so vigorously condemned.

"destroyed them..." - literally wasted them as in war. See Gal. 1. 13.

"them which called upon this name..." - See Acts 2. 21. and notes thereon.

"and came hither for that intent..." Lit. "had come". "for that intent" shows some knowledge of Saul's character and work. They knew him as a man who did not turn from his purpose once he embarked upon a project. Now he was doing the very opposite of what he was known to do. This work was so much part of him that, not being content with persecuting Christians, at Jerusalem, he had volunteered to go as far as Damascus to carry the persecution still further. His "about face" in view of his resolute character, made it all the more astonishing.

"bring them bound..." - giving them no chance of escape, thus indicating the severity of the punishment which was in store for all arrested. People would try to flee from a severe punishment which often ended in death.

"to the chief priests," - to the Sanhedrin of which the chief priest was the leader. The chief priests stood to lose a great deal through the growth of Christianity, therefore Saul could take them to no people more determined to destroy the followers of Jesus, than the chief priests. Luke's descriptive writing here powerfully indicates the drastic measures which were taken against Christians and, above all, the absolutely amazing character of his sudden change. The letters he had asked for (verse 2 above) and received, were not presented to the synagogues. Saul was too well known a figure for his change to pass unnoticed.

#### Verse 22

"But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ."

"increased the more in strength..." - lit. "was continually strengthened more and more" (the verb is passive). The "strengthening" of course, refers to spiritual strengthening. Paul was aware of the spiritual strengthening which was so necessary in the "Christian walk", and often referred to it. See Rom. 4. 20; Ephes. 6. 10; Phil. 4. 13; 1 Tim. 1. 12; 2 Tim. 2. 1; Heb. 11. 34;

"confounded..." - See note under this heading to Acts 2. 6.

"proving..." - The Greek word means "put together and compare". That means that Paul quoted Scripture to prove his points.

"this is very Christ." - This is indeed the Messiah - the singular seed (Gal. 3. 16.) promised unto Abraham." The use of the word "very" shows the emphasis given to THE Christ. "This is THE Anointed One".

#### Verse 23

"And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him."

"many days..." - Lit. "sufficient days". See verse 43 Acts 18. 8; 27. 7; It means a long period of time. See Gal. 1. 17/18.

"took counsel..." - planned with each other" as they had done in the case of Jesus.

#### Verse 24

"But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him."

"laying await" - used in Acts only. See Acts 20. 3. and 19 and 23. 30. Means "to plot". Paul referred to this plotting many years later. See 2 Cor. 11. 32. The reference from 2 Cor. gives the name of the ruler at the time. This was Aretas. Coins from the period show that Damascus came under Roman administration in A.D. 33 - 34. If Aretas had control of the city, it could have come into his possession only after A.D. 33 - 34. Therefore Damascus must have come under his control a few years later.

Roman Emperors did not encourage giving rule to one man in this manner but one particular Emperor did and his name was Caligula who ruled during the period A.D. 37 - 41. He is the most likely of all Emperors to have given Aretas the control of Damascus. The year is probably A.D. 38 and is most likely the year of this incident recorded by Luke. Comparing Luke's account with Paul's story, it is obvious that Aretas co-operated with the Jews in trying to arrest Saul.

The phrase "watched the gates..." is found in Mark 3. 2. where the Pharisees kept watch upon Jesus to accuse him. Luke 6. 7; 14. 1; and 20. 20. are all used in this sense too. In Gal. 4. 10. the observation of "days, and months, and times, and years" are referred to.

"the gates" - the only means of ingress and egress to and from the city except in the most unusual manner described in the next verse.

#### Verse 25

"Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket."

In this verse is recorded one of the most humiliating experiences in the life of the once very proud Saul (Paul). In the recent past, Saul had sought out the disciples (followers) of the Christian Faith and had led them bound to Jerusalem. Now, the same pursued people were leading Saul - not bound, but under fear for his life. Saul now owed his life to his erstwhile enemies who were risking their lives to save his. He weakly submitted to their leadership. Hitherto he had travelled openly by day. Now he crept furtively by night, afraid to show himself to his own people.

"let down...in a basket". As if being led by those whom he had earlier sought to kill, and committing himself to their care, he had the even more humiliating experience of being let down by a basket.

The basket of Acts 9. 25. is a "spuris" which is a lunch basket and large enough to hold a man. The "basket" of 2 Cor. 11. 33. is described as "sargane" which is a different word and tells us of the material from which it was made. It was a "wicker" basket. It does not indicate a different type of basket. Both words are correct for the type of basket used. It is the same type as used by the disciples of Jesus in Matt. 15. 37; 16. 10; Mark 8. 8. and verse 20. In Matt. 14. 20; 16. 9; Mark 6. 43; 8. 19; Luke 9. 17; and John 6. 13; Jesus uses the word "kophinos" which again does not make it a different type of basket from "spuris" or "sargane". Whereas "spuris" refers to the large basket, and "sargane" refers to the wicker from which it was made, "kophinos" refers to its size and tells us that it was a very big one and large enough to carry a man. This particular basket could have been a basket for carrying a dead body and from the teaching of verse 43, it would appear that this was so. Paul was very ashamed of this, that he should be carried down through a window instead of walking through the gates which would always be opened to an important person such as he was. Apart from being let down through the window and apart from having to look to the disciples for his safety, (not the disciples of Jesus but the disciples of Christianity), Paul had to suffer further indignity by being put in a basket which had been used for carrying a dead body. This association with death would contaminate anyone who had regard to the Law of Moses. When Jesus fed the 5,000, the fragments were gathered up in a "kophinos" thus indicating that all those "fragments" of Christianity who will be saved, will be saved, will be taken from the dead.

In view of the wonderful teaching of the "basket", we can see that the old "Saul" was about to die (symbolised by the "kophinos").

#### Verse 26

"And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple."

"Saul was come to Jerusalem..." - Many years later Paul described this

in Gal. 1. 18. From this letter to the Galatians we learn that Paul went to Jerusalem especially to meet Peter. In Gal. 1. 22. Paul writes of the "churches of Judea" showing that the ecclesias were still scattered throughout Judea and had not all gone back to Jerusalem. Others had been formed in the meantime.

"he assayed..." - imperfect tense - "kept on trying".

"to join himself..." - to come into fellowship with the disciples. Note how often "disciples" are mentioned in this chapter. There were men who "disciplined" themselves after Christ and they were to be found over a wide area.

"they were all afraid of him..." - imperfect tense - the fear of him continued for some time. Such was the apparent impossibility of the conversion of Saul that the disciples could not bring themselves to believe that the change had taken place.

"he was a disciple." How impossible that this Saul should be a disciple and discipline himself after the character of CHRIST.

#### Verse 27

"But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus."

"Barnabas" - the "son of consolation" was ready to console Saul in his troubles. This is the second mention of Barnabas. See Acts 4. 36.

"to the apostles..." - from Gal. 1. 18/20. we learn that these were Peter and James, the Lord's brother who had been appointed as an apostle through the subsequent appearance of the Lord to him. (1 Cor. 15. 7.)

"he had seen the Lord in the way..." - Barnabas refers to this astonishing event. Paul was to mention it on two occasions which are recorded by Luke. No doubt Paul mentioned it on many other occasions which have not been recorded. It made a profound impression on him. Acts 22 and 26.

"he had spoken to him" - Jesus gave him a commission. The additional record in Acts 26. 16/18. is very enlightening in regard to the work for which Paul was called. Being spoken to by Jesus gave him a very special position amongst the followers of Christ. His immediate obedience was praiseworthy.

"preach boldly" - the original Greek is one word and this is the only occurrence in Scripture. It means to preach freely and in full candour, holding nothing back.

"in the name of Jesus." - This is the Plan and Purpose of God as it is in Jesus. This was the name into which converts had to be baptised. (Acts 2. 38.)

#### Verse 28

"And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem."

"he was with them..." - he was accepted by the apostles and lived with Peter. (Gal. 1. 18.) He was not only "with them" as a companion and guest, but he associated with them in preaching labours. The word "them" indicates the apostles and not the other disciples who were now scattered at this time

It is important to note that the special mention earlier on that the apostles remained at Jerusalem during the persecution shows that the Hebrew or Aramaic speaking apostles stayed at Jerusalem. The Hellenists (the Greek speaking Jews) were the scattered ones. Paul was to associate himself with the Hellenists later in his ministry.

"coming in and going out..." - See Acts 1. 21. in connection with Jesus.

See also John 10. 9. Anyone not going in or coming out by the door is a thief and a robber. They are evil. But those who go in and come out by the door - which Jesus also claimed to be - are true followers. They are to be trusted. The same teaching appears in regard to David in the O.T. See 1 Sam. 18. 16. The connection of "going in and coming out" with Saul shows that he must have become a leading figure amongst the Jews and that he set them a good example.

It must be remembered that by this time, when he was in Jerusalem, Saul had been a convert for three years. (Gal. 1. 18.)

#### Verse 29

"And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians; but they went about to slay him."

The verbs "spake" and "disputed" are in the imperfect tense showing that they continued speaking and disputing. In Acts 6. 9. we find that Stephen "disputed" with the synagogue. Now Saul, once on the side of the synagogue against Stephen, was successor to Stephen and disputed with the synagogue.

"in the name of the Lord Jesus". See notes to Acts 2. 38.

"the Grecians:.." - the Hellenist Jews who had withstood Stephen. Saul had previously been their champion. Now he was against them.

"they went about to slay him." - This seemed to be the best way of getting rid of a man who could tie them up in any argument on the Scriptures. See notes on verse 22 and in particular the word "proving" where he gathered various parts of Scripture together and fitted the puzzle together so as to make a complete picture.

It is at this stage that, in the continuity of Paul's history, that the vision of Acts 22. 17/21. took place. Paul was not to leave Jerusalem and it was this sudden departure that saved his life. This accounts for the story as told in the next verse from Luke's record.

#### Verse 30

"which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus."

"which when the brethren knew,.. " - lit. "But the brethren having known". The word "which" is supplied by the sense of the passage. Note the intimate "brethren" showing the unity of the disciples at that time who regarded each other as brethren in Christ.

"they brought him down,.. " - Paul allowed himself to be brought down to the coast. Here is another humiliation for Saul who, not long before, would have directed his own steps and would not have permitted anyone to guide him. The reason for his willingness to be brought down was due to the vision of Acts 22. 17/21. referred to in these notes at verse 29 above.

"sent him forth,.. " - this expression is the same as "send thee afar" as in Acts 22. 21. The idea is that Saul is to be sent on a long journey and some it would be by sea, hence the reference to Caesarea (Maritime) which was a sea port. Saul was sent to Tarsus, his home town and here, for the present, Luke leaves him to continue with the history of Peter. We shall meet Saul again in Acts 11. 25.

It is as well that we should note a slight difficulty in correlating Acts 9. 29/30. with Acts 22. 17/21. It is not absolutely certain that the vision incident is historically tied up with Saul's first departure from Jerusalem. It may well have been after the visit made to Jerusalem during the great famine, this being recorded in Acts 11. 29/30. Having regard to Acts 13. 4. which tells us that Saul and Barnabas were "sent forth by the Holy Spirit,." it is possible that they were moved by the Holy Spirit after the vision and that

Luke's way of referring to the vision after the second visit was to mention in Acts 13. 4. that they were moved by the Holy Spirit. This would account for the apparent discrepancy in Acts 9. 30. which leads one to believe that the disciples led Saul away to save his life, and the reason given in Acts 13. 4. that Saul had left Jerusalem because they were led by the Holy Spirit. There seems to be a greater tie-up between Acts 22. 17/21. and Acts 13. 4. than there is between Acts 22. 17/21. and Acts 9. 29/30. The point is not proved, but it is as well that we bear this possibility in mind.

THE DOOR OPENS TO THE GENTILES.

In the introduction to chapter 8, we pointed out that in Genesis chapter 10, we are given the distribution of nations after the Flood. This divided them into three major groups, namely, the sons of Ham, the sons of Shem, and the sons of Japheth. It was pointed out that these three ethnic types would be dealt with in Acts chapters 8, 9 and 10. In 8 we were introduced to the Ethiopian eunuch, the son of Ham, and in chapter 9 we learnt of the conversion of Saul the son of Shem. Now we are to be introduced gradually to the third stage, namely, the opening of the door of the household of Faith to the Gentiles by the baptism of Cornelius the son of Japheth. He is dealt with in chapter 10 but the balance of chapter 9 from here on, brings us back to Peter and builds up the introduction to Cornelius. The Ethiopian eunuch was also a Gentile but he was also a stranger. The Truth never made headway in Africa until the sudden spiritual explosion of 1960 onwards in Malawi.

Verse 31

"Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, were multiplied."

"Then..." - this word leads us to believe that because of Saul's conversion, the ecclesias throughout Judea had rest from persecution. This is not quite true. The persecution would have died down a bit because the chief persecutor had stopped persecuting but Saul had done most of his persecuting in foreign cities. (Acts 26. 11.) The Greek of this verse starts "So then..." which does not limit the connection to the departure of Saul from Jerusalem. Luke has made a switch from writing about Saul to writing about Peter so if we go back a little, we may find a connection. Peter stayed in Jerusalem after the murder of Stephen and it was necessary that he should remain there to supply a rallying point for the believers. Acts 8. 4. tells us that during the great wave of persecution, the disciples went about preaching the Word and this preaching took Philip to Samaria. (Acts 8. 5.) Now we learn that after Saul had gone from Jerusalem, all Judea, Galilee and Samaria had peace. Whereas Saul took a very big part in the persecution, he was not the only one so we cannot infer that because he went to Caesarea (Maritime) the persecution stopped. Therefore, if we time the coming of peace with the advent of Philip, we can join Acts 8. 4. to Acts 9. 31. and get "...they...went everywhere preaching the word so then the churches had peace throughout all Judea, Galilee and Samaria." In between all this, came the incidents of Simon Magus, the eunuch and Saul. Having given us these incidents, Luke returns to the story of the ecclesias and leaves individuals alone for a short while.

Much persecution came about as a result of the actions of Caligula, the mad emperor. After the attack on the Jewish quarter of Alexandria by the Gentile population of that city in A.D. 38, the emperor Caligula ordered the erection of his image in the temple at Jerusalem. The certain war which would have broken out had this project been put into effect was averted by the assassination of Caligula in A.D. 41. It was a combination of influences that brought about the peace which Luke refers to.



"had the churches rest..." - the word translated as "rest" means "a state of repose, tranquillity" and is the same word translated as "quietness" in Acts 24. 2. Therefore "rest" does not give quite the true rendering. The state of there being no peace had changed to one where there was peace.

"and were edified,..." - the word "edify" refers metaphorically to building a house. The house which was now being built as a result of the peace was first, the house which they were, that mortal body of sin which was destroyed at their baptism and which was now being built up spiritually. Secondly, the body of the ecclesias of which Jesus was the chief corner stone.

"walking in the fear of the Lord.." - permitting the Faith to work in them that it would bring about a change in their character. This new walk was evidence of the spirit of Christ working in the believers. The principle is expressed in "walk in a newness of life" of Rom. 6. 4. The "fear" is not of a servant for an unforgiving lord, but the profound respect of children who can call God "Abba, Father".

"comfort of the Holy Spirit.." - the word "comfort" means "consolation" and is defined by Bullinger as "a calling near, a summons to one's side, hence, an admonitory, encouraging and consolatory exhortation, invitation or entreaty." Usages are "consolation" in Luke 2. 25; 6. 24; Acts 4. 36; 15. 31; Rom. 15. 5; 2 Cor. 1. 5; twice in verse 6 and once again in verse 7. 2 Cor. 7. 7; Phil. 2. 1; 2 Thess. 2. 16; Philem. 7; Heb. 6. 18; as "Comfort" in the verse before us; Rom. 15. 4; 1 Cor. 14. 3; 2 Cor. 1. 3 and 4; 7. 4 and 13; Phil. 2. 19; Bearing in mind the meaning of encouraging, exhortation, at one's side, we can understand the application to the gift of the Holy Spirit and the name which Jesus gave it, the COMFORTER. This comes from the same word PARAKLETOS and "comfort" comes from PARAKLESIS. The Power of God brought them knowledge, understanding and spiritual wisdom. All this would be a great comfort to them.

"were multiplied." - Imperfect tense therefore "were continuously multiplied".

This introductory verse brings us again to Peter to witness a great extension of the growing church.

Verse 32

"And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda."

We left Peter at Acts 8. 25. when he had finished with Simon Magus and had returned to Jerusalem. Now we find him going down from Jerusalem in the hills of Judea and going to Lydda on the plains. Peter at this time, found that the great persecution having died down, he was able to leave the capital city and go elsewhere. Luke's account of the work of the early Christians gives only a very small portion of the work done because a record of the work of even half of them would take up more space than the rest of the Bible. In summarising the work done by all, Luke is masterly in his choice of events because it will be found that in bringing the Gospel to the three major groups of mankind, (Shem, Ham and Japheth) he chooses the work of Peter. In view of his subsequent long friendship with Paul, it may be wondered why he chose to give so much publicity to the work of Peter. We think that it is because Jesus had told Peter that he would give to him the keys of the kingdom (Matt. 16. 19.) This ordained Peter to preach the gospel and Luke shows how Peter was instrumental in bringing the gospel to Saul (Shem) and Cornelius (Japheth). It was left to Peter to take down the barriers between the Hope of Israel and the Gentiles.

"passed throughout all (quarters).." - allowing the word "quarters" to remain, we get the idea that Peter passed through every part of the country between Jerusalem and Lydda. The word is in italics and so must be disregarded. Reading the phrase as "Peter passed throughout all,..." the idea is changed to Peter going from one place to another, from one ecclesia to another and from

one believer in isolation to another. No part of the Household of Faith was neglected.

"the saints which dwelt at Lydda." - The word "saints" comes from the Greek "agios" meaning "devoted to the gods" or "pious" and "pure". Applied to people, it must refer to those who devoted their lives to God and who tried to be pure in the doctrine and blameless in their walk through life. In the Bible it is limited to those who are in the Household of Faith because Paul writes to the "saints" and to no one else. Other references will show that this is the only meaning it can be given. The commentators, as well as Bullinger's Lexicon describe it as applying also to God's heavenly people". This meaning does not emerge from the pages of Scripture. 2 Thess. 1. 10. tells us that Christ will return again to be admired by his saints and all them that believe, thus grouping the two together - the saints and those who believe. The saints in the verse before us were believers who dwelt at Lydda. This place is called LOD in the O.T.

Lydda lies eastward from the Israel coast, and about 10 miles south east of the twin cities of Joppa and Tel Aviv. It is on very flat country which is part of the plain of Sharon. The flat nature of the country has helped in the choosing of a site for the national airport of Israel. It is mentioned in O.T. history in 1 Chron. 8. 12. wherein it is stated that the sons of Elpaël built the cities of Ono and Lod. During the return from the Babylonian captivity, Ezra 2. 33. tells us of the children of Lod and others who went back. Zerubbabel also brought people of Lod, Hadid and Ono (Neh. 7. 37.) and the same book Nehemiah at chapter 11 verse 35 describes Lod as "the valley of craftsmen".

Lydda was on the great caravan route between Babylon and Egypt. This route passed through what is now known as the Gaza strip. Such a trade passing through would give rise to a demand for leather work, saddlery, sacks and general repairs. This explains why Nehemiah describes Lod as "the valley of craftsmen". The proximity to the sea-port of Jaffa would also help the trade of Lod. From the Second Century onwards, it was called in Greek "Diospolis" but this name never took hold. Therefore over the years, the name has changed to the modern Lydda. Richard the Lionheart is said to have built a church to "St. George" (whoever he was!) and it is said that the ruins of this church can still be seen.

It was to this ancient city that Peter now came.

Verse 33

"And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy."

"Found.." - Peter did not go looking for him and then FIND him. He came upon him accidentally.

"which had kept his bed..." - who had been lying upon a bed or couch. This is the "krabbatos" which is a mean sort of bed. A mattress for the poor.

"palsy". The word here could mean "very weak and enfeebled". The normal use of this word is "paralysed". The most likely meaning is that he could feebly move his head and hands but otherwise he was paralysed.

Verse 34

"And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately."

It is not stated whether Aeneas was a convert or not. We can assume that he was a Gentile from his Grecian name.

"Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." - Peter shows him very clearly that it is not by Peter's power that the cure is to be done but by the power given to him by Jesus. There is a play on words here in the Greek language. "The healer healeth thee".

"Arise" - Lit. "stand up" - an act which, a few moments ago would have been impossible for him. If the man had failed to "arise" when instructed to do so, Peter and the Faith he represented would have been brought into contempt.

"make thy bed..." - lit. "spread thy bed". This was a custom requiring little effort or skill but when asked of a paralysed man, was a severe test of the power which was to perform the miracle. The man had to sit up or stand up to do it. The imperative tense shows that the command had to be obeyed there and then without delay.

The phrase can also mean "get ready to eat" by making the bed (the KLINE) on which one reclined at meals. They did not sit at a table in those days. It is to be noticed how Luke, the Physician, sees things through the eyes of a physician. He has noticed the poor bed on which Aeneas lies. He learns it has been going on for eight years. Every physician wants to know how long a person has been incapacitated. Now he tells the man to get ready to eat, thus showing the concern for a healed person to eat which Jesus showed. Luke 8. 55. Mark 5. 43.

"he arose immediately". After putting the Power under test, the miracle was performed and the man arose immediately. All he had to do would have been quite impossible for a paralysed man.

Verse 35

"and all that dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and turned to the Lord."

The indication in this verse is the gradually widening of the Gospel net. Looking back over recent history covered in the Book of the Acts so far, we find

1. Jews and proselytes of the dispersion at Pentecost. Acts 2. 9.
2. The Grecians (Hellenists) Acts 6. 1.
3. The Samaritans. Acts 8. 5.
4. The Ethiopian eunuch Acts 8. 27.
5. Semi-Gentile towns. Acts 8. 40. 9. 20.
6. Lydda and Sharon valley, from Joppa to Mt. Carmel in the north. Acts 9. 35.
7. Cornelius. Acts 10.

"turned to the Lord," - The area was semi-Gentile so in this we see a definite spreading of the Gospel to all the world.

Verse 36

"Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did."

The miracle at Lydda was a sign of the healing which comes in the Lord Jesus. All our infirmities are healed in him. The fame it attracted paved the way for the call which introduced Cornelius to the Faith. After mentioning how the fame of it spread throughout Lydda and Sharon, Luke now takes us to Joppa where he introduces another character who is to be cured and that cure is to bring further fame and further converts to the movement.

"Now.." - "at the same time..."

"Joppa" - the modern Jaffa. This is one of the seaports of Israel on the Mediterranean coast. Another seaport is Haifa in the north but this was not a harbour in Biblical days. It was at this port that the materials for the building of the temple by Solomon were landed, 2 Chron. 2. 16. When the temple was rebuilt after the return from the Babylonian captivity, Joppa was again used. (Ezra 3. 7.) In Joshua 19. 46. Joppa is mentioned as being part of the inheritance of Dan. It was used by the Crusaders as a landing port. The name in Hebrew means "beautiful".

"Tabitha" - this is a woman and she had two names, one being Aramaic (Tabitha) and the other Grecian (Dorcas). It means a gazelle or antelope.

The two names indicate the possibility of there having been mixed nationalities there. The corresponding name of Tabitha in Hebrew is "Zibiah" - see 2 Kings 12. 1. The names are symbolic of tenderness, gracefulness and gentleness.

"full of good works and almsdeeds..." - The "good works" refer to any works which are praiseworthy such as general behaviour, piety and morality. They do not necessarily mean generosity. This is conveyed by the next word "almsdeeds". This means giving away unto others not as well placed; helping others not only by giving but also in doing.

"which she did". This is in the imperfect tense and means "did continually".

#### Verse 37

"And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber."

"in those days..." - during the days Peter dwelt at Lydda.

"when they had washed..." - the word "washed" comes from the Greek "louo" meaning to wash the whole body and not just the face and hands. In this case, it obviously refers to preparation for burial. The verb is masculine plural suggesting that inasmuch as she was prepared for burial by more than one male, the family must have called upon undertakers to prepare her, and, probably to bury her. Luke mentions this work to show how far she had gone in death before the miracle took place. The washing would be a purification of the in terms of the Law of Moses.

"upper chamber". meaning "upstairs", "upper room", "top storey". Things seemed to happen in "upper rooms" - see Acts 1. 13; 9. 39; 20. 8.

#### Verse 38

"And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them."

"being near to Joppa.." - 10 miles on a very flat road.

"the disciples had heard..." - the group of believers mentioned here as "disciples", were still acting as a body - as one unit.

"two men" - frequently two men are sent. Acts 8. 14; 9. 38; 13. 3; 15. 27; 19. 22; 23. 23; Luke 10. 1.

"desiring..." - Greek "parakaleo" meaning "to use every kind of speaking which is meant to produce a particular effect" - "to appeal to the head rather than to the heart". "to encourage" "Toexhort." see Matt. 18. 32; Acts 8. 31; 9. 38; 19. 31; 28. 14; 1 Cor. 16. 12; 2 Cor. 8. 6; 2 Cor. 12. 18; For translations as "exhort -ed - ing - eth" see Acts 2. 40; 11. 23; 14. 22; 15. 32; Rom. 12. 8; 2 Cor. 9. 5; 1 Thess. 2. 11; 2 Thess 3. 12; 1 Tim. 2. 1. (see margin) 1 Tim. 6. 2; 2 Tim. 4. 2; Titus 1. 9; Titus 2. 6 and 15; heb. 3. 13; 10. 25; 1 Peter 5. 1. and 12; Jude 3.

"do not delay..." - "do not hesitate nor put off coming."

#### Verse 39

"Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them."

"went with them..." - went to Joppa with the two men.

"the widows stood by him weeping..." either the widows of the Joppa ecclesia or the widows to whom Dorcas had given gifts. We note that the ecclesia cared for its widows. There were "keeners" in those days - people who were hired to bewail the passing of a member of the household. It is possible

that some of these were present.

"shewing the coats and garments..." - The verb is in the Middle Voice indicating that they must have shewed coats and garments which Dorcas had made for them. That is, they must have been wearing them as they shewed them.

The coats and garments would mean the lower and upper garments which were common to both sexes in oriental custom of those days.

"which Dorcas made..." - the verb is in the imperfect tense showing that she used continually to make them.

Verse 40

"But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, Arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up."

"put them all forth/.." - Peter did what Jesus had done in the case of Jairus daughter. (Matt. 9. 25; Mark 5. 41; Luke 8. 51;) There is a hint that Jesus put them out because many laughed him to scorn. Symbolically those who scorn the Truth will not see the Resurrection.

"kneeled down and prayed.." - Peter acknowledges that he is merely the instrument of God's Power.

"Tabitha arise" - very similar to Jesus' commands recorded in Mark 5. 41. "Talitha arise".

In the case of the miracle performed by Jesus, we note that there were people there who made much ado with their weeping and moaning. These might have been professional mourners. They and those that scorned were put out. The mother and father of the damsel and all those who were with Jesus were allowed to remain. Symbolically all those who mourn for what they know not, those who worship under a false faith, will not experience the resurrection of the dead. It will be for the household only.

We note also that Jesus was not contaminated by his contact with the dead. Under the Law he would have been ceremonially unclean for a prescribed period. Peter too, was not under the Law and was therefore, not ceremonially unclean by entering the room where Dorcas was. Nevertheless we must remark that Peter did not touch the woman yet Jesus "took her by the hand" (Luke 8. 54.) Peter gave her his hand after she was "raised" - when she was alive. Jesus gave the damsel his hand when she was dead. There is no discrepancy here. Rather is there a lesson for us that Jesus will raise the dead when he comes again. Peter did not symbolise what Jesus will do but showed what can be done by the Power of God. Therefore in the first instance, Jesus touched the girl while she was dead and in the second, Peter touched the woman after she was made alive.

It is interesting to note that none of the commentators take Peter to task for being so cruel as to bring her soul back from heaven! The issue is avoided. The inference is not drawn that Dorcas was dead. Her life had departed. Her breath had gone forth and she was dead. There was no return from bliss here. Just an awakening from the sleep of death.

"she sat up" - Having opened her eyes and seeing Peter whom she had never seen before, it was natural that she should immediately sit up.

Verse 41

"And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints, and widows, presented her alive."

"gave her his hand - see notes to previous verse.

"called the saints.." - Bible commentators state that "saints" often are the heavenly host of angels. This does not apply. In Rom. 15. 25. we read that Paul had to go to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. In the next verse (26), Peter says that a collection had been made for the poor saints which are

at Jerusalem. The word obviously refers to the members of the ecclesia.

Verse 42

"And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord."

"it was known..." - what had been performed is, to any ordinary person, a miracle. To the Bible student or to those who show interest in the Plan and Purpose of God, a SIGN has been performed and witnessed. It was a sign that in the finality, Jesus would raise the dead. Those who are to be raised however, are of the household of faith only. Those who scoff are not permitted to come into the household but will be put out. This sign was known through all Joppa but not all believed. Only MANY believed. It is assumed that once they believed, they would signify that belief by their baptism for it is only in that way that one may come into the Household of Faith.

"believed in the Lord." A wide statement which has its answer in Rom. 10. 11/17. It is a simple matter to state "I believe in Jesus" but not so simple to explain that belief. One must know what Jesus has achieved by his death; what he means to us now - being our high priest and mediator; and what he means to the Plan and Purpose of God.

Verse 43

"And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner."

"it came to pass..." - Luke does not state how it came to pass that Peter, having been called there by a state of emergency, decided to stay there. The opening phrase of this verse indicates that staying on at Joppa was not his original intention but that he found it expedient to do so.

"many days" - sufficient days (for the purpose in hand.)

As it happened, his next call was to deal with Cornelius. Men from Cornelius were sent to look for Simon's house. This no doubt, would have been easier to find than Peter's lodging at Lydda.

"Simon a tanner." - This man has the same name as Peter (Simon the son of Jonah - Simon Barjona - or Simon Peter). This was Simon the tanner. The trade of a tanner was one which made the tanner ceremonially unclean under the Law as he constantly came into contact with the skin or hide from a dead body. (Note skins come from sheep and goats. Hides come from cattle.) That Peter was content to dwell with such a man showed the gradual breaking down of the Law and the traditions which flowed from it. This would prepare the way for the next work which Peter was to do and that was to extend the precious covenants of promise to the Gentiles.

Chapter 10

In the Roman army, the regiment was called the "Legion" and it comprised 6000 men. Therefore, when Jesus said that if he prayed to his Father he would receive twelve legions of angels, (Matt. 26. 53.), he had in mind 72,000 angels. The literal number was of no importance in the meaning Jesus attached to it for he knew he was the personification of Israel, the first-born of God and that Israel consisted of twelve tribes. Therefore he would require one legion of angels for each tribe. Alternatively, he could have required one legion each for himself and eleven apostles but this is doubtful. Twelve must be associated somehow with Israel. See the pattern of this in Rev. chapter 21.

In each legion, there were ten cohorts, each cohort consisting of 600 men. The officer in charge of a cohort was called a "tribune" in Latin and "Chiliarch" in Greek. For example of this office see Claudius Lysias in Acts 23. 26. and 24. 7. He was called "the chief captain" which is the same as "chiliarch". The cohort was divided into six divisions called "centuries", each century comprising 100 men. The person in charge of a century was a "centurion" in Latin and a hekatontarch in Greek. This sub-division would give the centurion the rank equivalent to a sarjeant or some non-commissioned officer in a modern army.

The centurions we meet with in the N.T. are all men of outstanding character. See the centurion of Matt. 8. 5; and Luke 7. 6. Note the humble acknowledgment of the Divine Sonship of Jesus expressed by the centurion of Matt. 27. 54; Mark 15. 39; and Luke 23. 47. Note also the fairness and consideration of the centurion in Acts 22. 25/26. The centurion who was with Paul during his disastrous sea voyage of Acts 27 was friendly to Paul and showed himself to be kind and considerate as well as trusting.

The centurion of Capernaum and Cornelius were men who had been impressed by the teaching of Judaism concerning the One God of Israel. This seemed to be more acceptable than the worship of the multi-gods of paganism. It is said of the centurion of Capernaum that "he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue." (Luke 7. 5.) We shall see in a moment that Cornelius was a man who had turned to the God of Israel and was well known amongst the Jews.

The Romans allowed service in the Centuries and the Cohorts to be voluntary. (In Acts, "cohort" is translated as "bands"). The volunteers never served in the place where they volunteered but were always moved elsewhere. Service in a Roman legion, cohort or century automatically gave Roman citizenship to the soldier. Centurions never rose above non-commissioned rank and at the end of their military life, they retired and lived on what they had been able to save. Being in a position of authority, they would respect authority. If this could be combined with devotion in worship and a feeling after God, then a man of unusual character would emerge. Such a man was Cornelius, the centurion of Acts chapter 10 - a Gentile.

Verse 1

"There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band,"

Cornelius is a famous name amongst the "gens" of Roman history. Scipio and Sulla were of this "gen". How closely Cornelius was related to them is unknown but he was evidently a man of great personality and influence in spite of his non-commissioned rank.

In the A.V. the word "band" is in italics, showing that it was not in the original. The "Italian band" means the "Italian cohort" and was composed of volunteers who were recruited in Italy and who could not find a place in the Praetorian Guard. This Guard was the Royal Bodyguard for the Emperor. The title "praetor" was given to the commander of the army and the Guard which was founded by the Emperor Augustus in the years before Christ, became the Imperial Guard and operated close to the king. In later years, it became very powerful indeed and had a considerable political influence until it was suppressed by Constantine in A.D.312. All those who failed to enter the Imperial Guard were posted to the other regiments of which the Italian Band was one.

Before we go to the next verse, we shall observe that Jesus also met a centurion during the early part of his ministry. He was so impressed by him and the simple faith he exhibited that Jesus remarked, ".....many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." See also the record by Luke in Luke 7. 2/10. Now in the Book of Acts, we are to read of another centurion who was no less full of faith.

## Verse 2

"A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway."

"A devout man....." - this qualification is written from the point of view of the Jewish worshipper. Although Luke wrote these words, he was correct in his interpretation of how the Jews would regard Cornelius. There were many proselytes such as he who attached themselves to the Jewish faith and attended the synagogue. They approved of the monotheistic worship and preferred the complete absence of images of any description which was so characteristic of Judaism. They observed the Sabbath laws and kept strictly to the food laws as well. The main point of difference is that they were not circumcised. Because of this, they were not allowed into the Holy part of the temple.

"one that feared God....." - Cornelius feared God to the extent that he opposed the worship of other gods. He abided closely to the laws of God as far as he knew and understood them.

"with all his house....." - Cornelius brought his religion into his own home and brought up his family in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. (Eph.6.4.)

"gave much alms....." - The association of prayer with alms-giving is found in the Bible. See the proximity of the teaching of the one with the teaching of the other in Matt. 6. 1/8. See also 1 Pet. 4. 7/8 where prayer and charity are coupled closely.

"to the people." - not to all people but to the Jewish people. In the Acts this word "laos" (from which we get the English word "laity") is used in connection with Jews. On every occasion where the word "people" occurs up to Acts 7.34. the Greek word is "laos" and it is used in connection with Jews. In the chapter we are studying, the word occurs at verses 2, 41 and 42.

"prayed to God alway." He did not continually pray to God but meticulously observed the standard Jewish hours of prayer. We find one of these in the next verse.

## Verse 3

"He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him and saying unto him, Cornelius."

"He saw in a vision....." - "he saw a sight.....". See notes to Acts 7.31.

"evidently" - this word occurs in Mark 1. 45; John 7. 10. as "openly", and in the verse before us. It does not occur elsewhere other than in these places. Other words translated as "openly" carry the meaning "frankly"; "bluntly". In this verse, the meaning is "in the sight of" "openly" showing that Cornelius did not see the "vision" (or "sight") in a dream but saw the angel actually standing in front of him. There was no illusion.

"about the ninth hour....." - This was one of the Jewish hours of prayer. See Acts 3. 1. and the Notes recorded there.

"an angel of God....." - see Notes to Acts 1. 10. and 5. 19. regarding angels. The popular idea of angels having wings is derived from the Biblical description of the cherubim. (Exod. 25. 20; 37. 9; 1 Kings 6. 24 and 27; 2 Chron. 3. 11/12.) Angels however do not have wings and there is nothing in Scripture to suggest they have.

"coming in to him....." - coming into his house.



## Verse 4

"And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God".

"he looked on him..." - see Notes to Acts 1. 10. "looked steadfastly". Cornelius must have been astonished at the sight and gazed very intently upon the angel to try to convince himself that what he saw before him was indeed an angel (as it appeared to be).

"he was afraid..." - It was unusual for soldiers to be afraid. Luke mentions the fear so he must have had a reason for mentioning it. The usage of this expression is peculiar to Luke. In Luke 24. 5. we find the women bowing their faces to the earth with fear at the appearance of two angels. Verse 37 tells us of the fear of the disciples when they saw Jesus suddenly appear in their midst. Apart from being uniform in usage, the expression shows that the supernatural is always something greatly to be feared. There is a vast gulf between man and the Power of God.

"...thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God".

The angel immediately puts Cornelius at his ease. It was a great fear amongst the Jews to be forgotten by their God. After the return from Babylon, Nehemiah prayed to God asking Him to remember. "Remember me, O my God...", see Neh. 1. 8; 4. 14; 13. 14, 22, 29, 31. See also Psa. 25. 6; 25. 7; 74. 2; 106. 4; 132. 1; 137. 7; Isa. 38. 3; Lam. 5. 1.

The angel used the words of the Law. The "Meal offering" of Lev. 2. 2. records a ceremonial offering which was "a memorial". In Lev. 2. 9. we read of an offering which had to be burnt on the altar and which was a sweet savour unto the LORD. The sacrifice ascending upwards to God was a form of worship. See also the sin offering of Lev. 5. 12. which was also a memorial. Another appears in Lev. 6. 15. this being the priestly meal offering. There is another offering by fire for a memorial in Lev. 24. 7.

Such forms of worship were to be remembered. In the N.T. another form of worship appeared where the nameless woman anointed Jesus "for his burying". This act said Jesus, would be spoken of in the years to come "for a memorial of her." (Matt. 26. 13. and Mark 14. 9.) In the case of Cornelius, his prayer (incense) and his alms (meal offering) would ascend unto God as a memorial for him. He had no part in temple worship because of uncircumcision but God recognised his worship.

## Verse 5

"And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon whose surname is Peter."

The same principle applies to Cornelius as applied to Saul, namely, that he would not get a direct revelation from heaven but would have to go to the ecclesia for information. In doing so, he would have to humble himself.

"to Joppa" - men were sent to Joppa as Cornelius may find it difficult to leave his military duties. Joppa would be about 30 miles away from Caesarea Maritime. This long journey by foot would account for the time lag which will have to be explained in verse 30.

"and call for..." - the Greek means "send one for another" or "summon".

"Simon, whose surname is Peter". - On the authority of Matt. 16. 17. Simon's surname (as we understand a surname) was "Bar-jona" meaning "son of Jonah". Peter was the nickname given to Simon by Jesus, this being the Latin form of a word meaning "stone". (Luke 6. 14.) Peter was also called "Cephas" which is a Greek word also meaning "stone". (John 1. 42.) The Greek word translated as "surname" is "epikaleomai" meaning a name "called by". It is not a family name so the word "surname" should be "nickname".

## Verse 6

"He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea-side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do."

"He lodgeth..." - passive "he is entertained as a guest."

"a tanner, whose house is by the sea-side:..." - the fact that Simon was a tanner must be considered together with the fact that he lived by the sea-side. In the first place, a tanner, plying an obnoxious trade because of the smell coming from tan pits, made it obligatory for a tanner to be outside the town. The fact that his house was beside the sea is regarded by the commentators as being due to the fact that a tanner requires water for his tannage and would draw his water from the sea. This assumption is incorrect because the tanning liquor must be acid in character to do the work of tanning. Sea water being full of salts, would be alkaline and would hinder the tanning process. Having regard to the fact that Simon was outside the town of Joppa, the next problem was to state where. The answer given was that his house was beside the sea which would narrow the search down to the coast line.

"he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do." The same principle applies to Cornelius as applied to Saul. He did not receive a direct explanation from heaven but was sent to an ecclesia where he would be told by the servants of God.

#### Verse 7

"And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually."

"was departed..." - shows that the angel was real because he departed. If it had been a vision, he would have disappeared.

"he called two of his household..." - Cornelius the soldier was used to giving orders and having them obeyed immediately. Another centurion was also accustomed to immediate obedience from those under his command. (See Matt. 8. 9.) When commanded by a higher authority, Cornelius gave the same immediate obedience. He called servants from his daily work of being a soldier and also from his private life. These were two of his domestic servants and one batman who attended him in the army. More than one batman waited upon him in the army but Cornelius chose only one of them and he was a man who was a worshipper of God. Cornelius chose his messengers very well. It is inferred that the two household servants were devout because Cornelius had them working for him and he would surely tell them of the Hope of Israel. Such servants which also appear in Rom. 14. 4. and 1 Pet. 2. 18. were closer to the family unit than were the ordinary slaves.

"waited on him continually." - the same verb is used here as appears in Acts 1. 14. where it is translated as "continued". This is unwearied continuance such as is found in Acts 2. 42. ("continued steadfastly"), 6. 4. ("give continually"), Rom. 12. 12. ("continuing"), Col. 4. 2. ("continue"). Cornelius had servants of the right type, for the conversion of a whole household to the true Faith.

#### Verse 8

"And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa."

The inference drawn in the previous verse that Cornelius would surely have told his servants about the Hope of Israel seems to be confirmed here because Cornelius explained everything to them before he sent them on their way.

"declared all these things..." - Luke used a similar statement in Luke 24 verse 35 where the men on the road to Emmaus "told what things were done...". They gave an historical survey of all that had happened. The same meaning is in the verse before us. Cornelius must have recounted all that had happened from the time of the appearance of the angel. R.V. "rehearse" R.S.V. "related" Afrikaans "vertel" (to make known by narration). See also Acts 15. 12 and 14; and 21. 19.

"sent them..." - Bullinger defines this word thus "When anyone is thus sent it implies the mission which he has to fulfil, and the authority which backs him."

## Verse 9

"On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour."

With characteristic narrative skill, Luke leaves the three servants of Cornelius to complete the time interval of their journey to Joppa. While they are on their way, Luke picks up another thread of the story.

"On the morrow..." - the day after they set out. They spent a night on the way. This time period will have some importance to us when we study verse 30.

"as they went on their journey..." - lit. "pursuing the journey of them"

"and drew nigh unto the city..." - lit. "they to the city drawing near..."

"upon the housetop..." - Greek "dōma" from which we get the English "dome". Modern usage supplies the idea of a curved dome but this was not the characteristic of houses in Judah or Israel in those days. The word means "housetop" as translated but it should be noted that houses had flat roofs. Often the house was built around a court and examples of this can be seen in the ruins of Pompeii. Access to the rooftop was by means of a stair outside the building. Around the edges of the parapet, a small raised wall was built for safety. The open court in the middle would be covered by a covering similar to the modern awning in effect. This explains how a man with the palsy was let down before Jesus "through the tiling". The light tiles made of clay would cover the open court, See Luke 5. 19. The housetop is used in Scripture to indicate a place of leisure. See 2 Sam. 2 where David was relaxing "upon the roof of the king's house" when he should have been at war as it was the time when Kings go forth to battle (vs 1). See Matt. 24. 17; Mark 13. 15; Luke 17. 31. for the warning from Jesus not to leave the housetop (place of idleness) and go into the house to collect possessions, but to go straight from the housetop to flight. In other words, do not bother about worldly goods when Christ comes.

See also 1 Sam. 9. 25/26; Neh. 8. 16.

"the sixth hour" - This was one of the three hours of prayer for the Jewish people. It was about noon. See notes to Acts 3. 1.

## Verse 10

"And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance."

"...he became very hungry..." - Greek "prospeinos" this being the only occurrence of the word in Scripture. The root word is "peina" meaning "hunger". The addition of the prefix "pros" intensifies the meaning thus giving the translation "very hungry". The R.V. gives just "hungry". Afrikaans "hy het baie honger" - "he was very hungry."

(A point of interest is that the only other place in Greek literature where this word is found is in a work by Demosthenes who was an eye doctor. His work was quoted by a sixth century writer named Aetius who was a medical writer. Thus with the medical background to the word, it is understandable that Luke should use such a rare word. It is further proof of Luke being the author of Acts. Being a doctor, he must have read Demosthenes' work.)

"and would have eaten" - lit. "wished to taste food".

"while they made ready..." - lit. "they preparing". "They" refers to the people he was living with. They were preparing the mid-day meal.

"he fell into a trance." - He was in a state of being out of his senses. The word occurs again in Peter's explanation of what happened. (Acts 11. 5.) and in Paul's explanation of what happened to him during his conversion. See Acts 22 verse 17. The Greek word is "ekstatis" from whence we get the English "ecstasy" meaning to be in a state of rapture, to be bewildered, to be carried away out of one's senses. The same word occurs, translated as "amazed" in Mark 16. 8; Luke 5. 26; Acts 3. 10. For a translation of "astonishment" see Mark 5. 42.

The original Greek is "fell on him a trance" which carries a different meaning to the A.V. translation. The R.V. and R.S.V. are the same as the A.V. The Afrikaans conveys the meaning more accurately with "het daar 'n verrukking van sinne oor hom gekom:" "a rapture of the senses came over him", The point is that the ecstasy overcame him because it emanated from a higher power. It came to him from a source exterior to himself and did not originate within him by any form of self-hypnosis.

#### Verse 11

"And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth."

"saw heaven opened..." - being in a trance, he saw this in a vision. It would not be God's Dwelling Place which opened. It merely indicates the direction from which the sheet came. See Acts 7. 56. This would indicate to Peter - when he had time later to think about it - that whatever was to be revealed to him in this vision, was part of the Divine Plan and Purpose because it came from the direction of heaven. It appears here in the singular.

"a certain vessel..." - Greek: "skeuos" a general term for any kind of container. See Mark 11. 16; Luke 8. 16; John 19. 29; Acts 9. 15; 10. 11; 10. 16; 11. 5; Rom. 9. 21; 1 Thess. 4. 4; 2 Tim. 2. 21; 1 Pet. 3. 7.

"a great sheet..." - occurs only here and at Acts 11. 5. The word "sheet" is misleading because one may think that a bed-sheet is indicated. The word refers to the material from which it was made (linen) and does not refer to shape. That it was made of linen might indicate that inasmuch as linen symbolises that which is clean (righteous) the contents of the "sheet" may now be regarded as being clean.

"knit at the four corners..." - lit. "four ends having been bound". The "ends" referred to here are the extremities and could apply to corners. The Greek philosopher Hippocrates uses this word "ends" to indicate the end of a bandage. Thus we have another proof of the authorship of the "beloved physician" Luke.

"let down to the earth". The whole assembly was lowered until it touched the ground.

#### Verse 12

"Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air."

"all manner of fourfooted beasts..." - we are reminded of Lev. 11 and Deut. 14. wherein details are given concerning all forms of edible life both clean and unclean. "Clean beasts" were those which divided the hoof and which chewed the cud. Symbolically this meant that:-

1. The cloven hooved beasts walk steadily without stumbling and were surefooted like the mountain goat. The True Christian Believer is careful how he walks through life and does not stray. He may stumble through the weakness of the flesh but he will soon regain his balance and poise.
2. The True Christian Believer does not offer his worship in gulps but "chews" slowly. He studies God's Word by "ruminating" over the Daily and other Readings.

In Gen. 6. 20. three types of creatures are given, namely, birds, cattle and creeping things. The Greek for "creeping things" is "erpeton" which is also the word for "serpents". This embraces all creatures that fly through the air; that walk upon the ground and that creep from here to there.

When Noah brought the animals into the Ark, he followed the Divine Instructions by bringing the "clean" beasts in by SEVENS and the "unclean" beasts by TWOS. (Gen. 7. 2.) The anti-typical teaching underlying all this is:

1. The Ark represents the Millennial age;
2. Noah represents Christ;
3. The SEVENS represent the people of Israel after the flesh who will have a privileged but mortal state in the Kingdom;
4. The TWOS represent the Gentile nations who, in terms of Zech. 14. 61 "shall even go up from year to year to worship the King..."

Seven is the Covenant Number and a symbol of Divine Perfection. Two is the number of "division" and represents the nations. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos. 3. 3.) "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." (Jas. 1. 8.)

Applying the fore-going to the verse we are studying, we find that the number of unclean beasts must represent in anti-type, the Gentile nations. Such under the Law of Moses were unclean and no Jew should come into contact with an unclean beast or a Gentile otherwise he would be defiled. Complete separateness was required. During his ministry, Jesus showed that these things would be done away. The prohibitions regarding the eating of unclean things would also disappear. (Matt. 15. 17.) Peter may have remembered this teaching but he was due in a few moments to have this impressed upon him in no uncertain manner. The removal of the restrictions in regard to clean and unclean "meat" has a double application, the first being the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles and the second lies in the future during the Millennial period. That all types will have a place in the Millennium is shown by the covenant given as under:-

- Gen. 9. "And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you;
10. "And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth.
11. And I will establish my covenant with you; ...
12. And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations:"

Then followed the covenant of the rainbow. (Gen. 9. 13/17.)

"and wild beasts..." - to distinguish between domestic and wild animals. In the anti-type here, there is a hint that both civilised and uncivilised nations will have their place in the Millennium and in the preaching of the Gospel.

Verse 13

"And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat."

"Rise, Peter;..." - Peter must have been on his knees. Therefore the trance came upon him while he was in the attitude of prayer. This was the position taken by Solomon as recorded in 2 Chron. 6. 13. Ezra also prayed while on his knees. (Ezra 9. 5.) Daniel knelt upon his knees three times a day in prayer. (Dan. 6. 10) See Paul's remark in Ephes. 3. 14. for the continuation of the prayer which he had started in verse 1. - note the repetition of the words "For this cause..." in verses 1 and 14.

On a previous occasion the same command was given which also required immediate action. See Acts 9. 6. The commandment "Rise" or "Arise" can also carry a command to do something at once.. See also Acts 9. 11. where the same theme of a commandment requiring immediate attention occurs.

"kill..." - the Greek is "thuo" which has a meaning limited to killing for sacrificial purposes. It is translated as "kill" in Luke 15. 23; John 10.10; and in the verse before us. The translation of "killed" appears in Matt. 22. 4; Mark. 14. 12; Luke 15. 27; 22. 7; Translated "sacrifice" in Acts 14. 13 and 18; 1 Cor. 10. 20 (twice); as "sacrificed" in 1 Cor. 5. 7; The act of Sacrifice is translated as "sacrifice" and comes from "thusia". See Matt. 9. 13; 12. 7; Mark 9. 49; Luke 2. 24; Acts 7. 41; Ephes. 5. 2; Phil. 2. 17; 4. 18; Heb. 7. 27; 9. 26; 10. 5, 8, 12, 26; 11. 4; 13. 15;

"and eat" - The Greek is "phago" which means "to eat up", "devour". Bullinger draws a distinction between this word which he says means "eat and drink" and "esthio" which is confined to eating alone and not the combined act of eating and drinking. Vine says this distinction is not drawn in the N.T. The point is of no importance but what is of significance is that Liddell and Scott define "phago" as having a meaning "to eat of" i.e. to eat part only.

Applying this meaning, we find the teaching that Peter was to understand that the Gospel would be preached to the Gentiles but only a part - and a small part represented by what Peter could eat in relation to the whole - would be taken away for food. That is to say, "few there be that find it."

#### Verse 14

"But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean."

Peter's answer here indicates that the Holy Spirit which was given to him at Pentecost, was not a Power and "Comforter" which he could call upon at all times as Jesus could use the Power which had been given to him. Had this been the case, the Holy Spirit would have made him understand what was required of him. In the case of the apostles, and others to whom the Holy Spirit was given, they are often recorded as praying before they used the Spirit Gift.

"Not so, Lord;..." - This reminds us of Peter's rebuke of his Master, "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." (Matt. 16. 22.) The impulsive Peter was immediately horrified that he should act against the commandment which had been drilled into him from early childhood. His protest "Not so!" is followed by "never" and "anything".

"I have never eaten..." - Several centuries before, the prophet Ezekiel had cried out in similar words. (Ezek. 4. 14.) Luke's record of this is important to our study because the Mosaic Law which prohibited the eating of unclean animals, implied that the Gentiles who ate these things, were unclean also. Therefore, the very act of going to Cornelius, a Gentile, was repulsive to a devout man such as Peter was.

The lesson of the sheet full of unclean animals now becomes more clear. The indication pointing towards the Gentiles would show Peter when he thought about it, that visiting the Gentiles and sharing the Covenants of Promise with them was the Divine Will.

"common or unclean" - There are two qualifications here, namely, "common" and "unclean". The word Common means not called out; not separated; not chosen. Unclean means impure and, in a Levitical sense, unatoned. Peter now declares that he will not defile himself now because in the past he has never defiled himself with anything which had not been separated by the LORD and which was impure and without atonement. In a metaphorical sense, this applied to the Gentiles who were not chosen by God nor did they come under the law of atonement.

#### Verse 15

"And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common."

"the voice..." - like Paul's companions, Peter heard a "voice" but saw no one. The difference in Peter's case of course, is that he understood.

"the second time..." - Scripturally, when a thing is done, revealed or spoken twice, it is because it is the Word of God. (Gen. 41. 32.) Although this was the second time that the voice spoke, it was the first time these words were spoken. Nevertheless, God had spoken them on a previous occasion through Jesus when he said, "...whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him." (Mark 7. 18.) In this lesson, Jesus made all meats clean.

That all meats were now clean was fully understood by Paul. See Romans 14. 14., also 1 Tim. 4. 4. Some commentators refer to Gen. 1. 31. but this verse cannot apply here as the idyllic state in the beginning has not yet been restored.

"What God hath cleansed..." - "cleansed" is translated from "katharizo" meaning "to pronounce clean in a Levitical sense." That is to say, God has now removed the stigma of the Law against such meats.

"call not thou uncommon". - "do not regard it ceremonially unclean".

Verse 16

"This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven."

"This was done..." - the whole scene of letting down, speaking, commanding and taking up again was done.

"thrice..." - Three is the figure of Divine completeness. This signifies that the change which was symbolised in the vision is in complete harmony with the Divine Plan and Purpose.

"was received up..." - Greek "analambano". Occurs in Acts 1. 11. where it is translated as "taken up", and in 1 Tim. 3. 16. as well as in the passage before us. The meaning expresses the idea of reception after ascension. The ascension had to be made and having been made, the sheet and the contents were received.

"into heaven." Peter was not looking at God's Dwelling Place so it must not be inferred that the whole assembly went to heaven as souls are supposed to go to heaven. The teaching point here is that inasmuch as the living creatures had now been ceremonially cleansed by God, they were in harmony with him. In the anti-type, the Gentiles who are received into the Millennial Age, will come into harmony with God.

Peter never forgot the incident of the sheet full of unclean animals. Many years later when he wrote his First Epistle, he was to make an indirect reference to it in these words:-

- 1 Pet. 1. 14. "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:
- 15. "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;
- 16. "Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."

The wording of these verses reminds us of the Law of Unclean Beasts as given in Leviticus chapter 11. A comparison between a portion of this Law and the vision which Peter saw, is interesting. Taking the Law first:-

- Lev. 11. 41. "And every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth shall be an abomination; it shall not be eaten.
- 42. "Whatsoever goeth upon the belly, and whatsoever goeth upon all four, or whatsoever hath more feet among all creeping things, that creep upon the earth, them ye shall not eat; for they are an abomination.
- 43. "Ye shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creepeth, neither shall ye make yourselves unclean with them, that ye should be defiled thereby."

The fore-going forbids the eating of any creeping thing. We also read in this chapter of the prohibition as food of other animals, birds and fish. All such were contained in the sheet Peter saw in the vision. The connection between this and the verses quoted above from 1st. Peter is shown by:-

- Lev. 11. 45. "For I am the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God; ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy."

It is this particular verse from Leviticus that Peter quotes with obvious reference to the Law of Unclean Beasts. The teaching of Leviticus was that of physical separation from other nations and people. The teaching of Christianity

is a spiritual separation known as "holiness". Without this explanation, why should Peter quote from Lev. 11. 45? Peter knew that the people of Israel were called out from Egypt to be a peculiar people unto the LORD. (Deut. 7. 6.) Now, the gospel was preached unto the Gentiles and they too, were called to separation from latter-day Egypt to be God's peculiar people. (1 Pet. 2. 9.)

## Verse 17

"Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate."

"Now..." - translated as "but" in verse 14 indicates incompleting action. The incident and story was still going on even after the sheet and the contents had disappeared and the trance had come to an end.

"Peter doubted..." - he was at a complete loss. See notes to Acts 2. 12. and 5. 24.

"this vision..." - see notes to Acts 7. 31. under "the sight".

"had made enquiry..." - Greek "dierotao" meaning "to enquire diligently right through to the end." This is the only occurrence of this word in the N.T. The use of such a word signifies that the servants had a great deal of trouble trying to find the house of Simon the tanner. They persevered until they found it. In this, the servants of the Lord have an example of continued service which carries on right through to the end.

"the gate." Greek "pulon" meaning a gate or a vestibule. The gateway leading from the street. (Acts 12. 13/14. Acts 14. 13.)

## Verse 18

"And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there."

"And called..." - doors were kept locked in those days as a safety measure. The visitors, having knocked, would have to shout out details of their errand before the door would be opened to them.

"and asked..." - Imperfect tense indicating "kept on asking" which seems to indicate that they all stated their errand.

"whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter,..." - not Simon Peter because that was not his full name. His full name was Simon Bar-jonah but he had been given another surname (or nickname) by Jesus which seems to have stuck to him. The messengers asked for him because they had already ascertained where Simon the tanner lived. All they wanted to know now was "Is Peter here?".

## Verse 19

"While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee."

"While Peter thought..." - lit. "Peter pondering..." The meaning is that Peter was turning thoughts over in his mind. There is an intensity of thought which the English translation does not give. Therefore it is better regarded as "thought very deeply". The vision agitated Peter in his mind and he thought very intensely about it.

"the spirit said,..." - See Acts 8. 29. Some Commentators point to the personality of the Holy Spirit given here but this is quite unfounded. There is no indication that a god known as the Holy Spirit was there with Peter. The verse tells us the intensity of thought in Peter's mind and then continues with the information that as these intense thoughts were going on, the Spirit spoke. Obviously the Spirit spoke in Peter's mind.

"behold,..." - again this word introduces something which was surprising and unexpected.



"three men seek thee." Note the narrative skill of Luke who now brings the ends of two threads together to tie the knot. Two diversions in the story meet at this point.

## Verse 20

"Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them."

"Arise therefore..." - lit. "But having arisen..." The Spirit tells Peter that he must get up from his recumbent or sitting position which he must have assumed while thinking deeply upon what happened. The command also requires immediate action on the part of Peter.

"get thee down..." - Peter was still on the roof and had to go down to meet the visitors.

"and go with them..." - there is a connection between the word "Arise" and the word "go" making the phrase "arise and go" as in Acts 9.11. See Notes to Acts 9. 6. The commandment to "go" comes from the Greek "poreuou" meaning to "go" by proceeding from one place to another, and not just "go away" from here. There is a destination in mind.

"doubting nothing..." - the verb is in the active voice suggesting that Peter should cast aside all doubts. He had to go with the men notwithstanding that they were Gentiles. This usage appears in Acts 11. 12. where Peter, relating this incident, says he was told to go "nothing doubting". This means that he was not to make any distinction between Jew and Gentile.

"for I have sent them." The command was of Divine origin. Connecting this with the angel, the vision, the voice during the vision and now the voice speaking within, Peter must have known that there was a Divine pattern to be revealed to him when he reached whatever destination he was being taken to.

## Verse 21

"Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek; what is the cause wherefore ye are come?"

"Then Peter went down..." - Lit. "Then Peter descending..." That means he went down by the stairs at the side of the house leading from the roof to the ground level.

"to the men..." - who were standing at the front door.

"Behold, I am he..." - Compare with the reply given by Ananias in Acts 9 vs 10. "Behold, I (am here), Lord." The use of "Behold" which indicates a surprise to follow, gives the idea of "You don't know me and have never seen me before. I don't know you but I am the man you want". It also shows courage on Peter's part. As indicated, doors were kept locked in those days. A voice or voices cry from without and Peter goes boldly down to declare that he is the wanted man without first enquiring as to why they wanted him.

"what is the cause..." - Peter asks the reason why the men are there. After the two communications (the vision and the voice within) he gives no indication that he knows why the men have come.

## Verse 22

"And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee."

"Cornelius the centurion..." - There were many centurions so the introductory "...the centurion..." seems to be incorrect. It would be a better translation to put "Cornelius a centurion..." (See Acts 21. 32.).

"a just man..." - a man who walked in God's Way. Vine points out that the English word "righteous" was originally "rightwise", i.e. "in a right way". This explains the word before us. (Expository Dictionary page 283).

"one that feareth God..." - See note to verse 2. The meaning is not that he FEARED but that he feared GOD and not the gods of the pagans.

"of good report..." - Greek "martureo" meaning "to be well testified of". It carries a meaning that Cornelius would be spoken about and people would testify to the fact that he was a just man.

"among all the nation of the Jews..." - hyperbole. All the nation would not know of him but many in Caesarea would. This was known amongst the Jews and Peter was told this because he was a Jew as well. No doubt Cornelius was equally well known amongst the Gentiles to be a worthy man but this would not impress Peter as much as if he were told that the report was wide spread amongst the Jews.

"warned from God..." - same verb as is used in Matt. 2. 12, 22; and Heb. 8. 5; (admonished) Heb. 11. 7. The word for "warn" means to do business dealings; regarding money, to transact business; re kings and magistrates, to do business publically and to give audience to ambassadors; in regard to Divine matters, to speak as an oracle, and to warn from God. The phrase is "divinely instructed" as in the Diaglott. The A.V. "from God" is supplied by the translators to fit the sense of Divine authority. Afrikaans "'n goddelike openbaring" a Divine revelation.

"by an holy angel;.." - The commentator J.A. Alexander considers that this phrase draws a distinction between a holy - "unfallen" - angel and the "devil and his angels"! This observation is absurd. The qualification "holy" distinguishes between the angelic and separated "servants" of God and the mortal servant of God such as Peter.

"to send for thee..." - explains why Cornelius did not come himself. He had been instructed by God to SEND for Peter to come to him. When Peter came to understand fully the lesson there was in the whole incident, he would realise that the Lord's servants must go forth to preach and must not expect others to come to them. Hence Peter the preacher, was instructed to go to Cornelius and Cornelius was not expected to go to Peter.

### Verse 23

"Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him."

"Then called he them in..." - Greek - "Having therefore, called them in..." from "eiskaleo". The derivation is "eis" meaning "in" and "kaleo" from which we get English "call". This is the only occurrence of "eiskaleo" in Scripture. The verb "kaleo" appears in Matt. 20. 8, when the labourers are called in from the field; Matt. 25. 14; where the man about to travel in a far country, "called" his servants to deliver them his goods. Also used by Paul in Rom. 8. 30, referring to the Divine call to the Faith. See also 1 Cor. 1. 9. 1 Thess. 2. 12; Heb. 9. 15.

"he lodged them..." - the verb in Greek is "xenizo" meaning "to receive as a guest", "to entertain". Coupled with "calling them in" and then lodging them, we get the idea of inviting them into the house and giving them some food. The invitation to enter would cover shelter for the night and lodging would take care of all meals while they were being housed. Thus Peter was putting into effect the first lesson of the vision.

"went away with them..." - lit. went OUT with them, i.e. went out of the house and of the city.

"certain brethren..." - actually six in number. See Acts 11. 12. If there is a lesson here, it must be that preaching is not only the responsibility of one person but of the Ecclesia. Peter's immediate thought must have been to have witnesses with him.

## Verse 24

"And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends."

"On the morrow after..." - the day after leaving Caesarea. Therefore they must have spent a night on the way. 30 miles would be a long walk but it could have been covered the same day. The test of duration is given in verse 30. 10 men would travel more slowly than four.

"Cornelius waited for them..." - the verb "waited" comes from "prosdokao" meaning "to watch for". This indicates that Cornelius must have been waiting outside watching for Peter or he must have told a slave or servant to take up a position where he could watch for the arrival of the party. His anxiety in this connection can be understood in view of what had happened over the past four days.

"called together his kinsmen and near friends." Cornelius called his relatives and his very intimate friends. The assumption is that he called these people together with him for their own spiritual benefit and not just to keep him company while he waited. Cornelius was a devout man and would wish his closest friends and relations to derive the same spiritual benefit he was looking forward to receiving from Peter's visit.

## Verse 25

"And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him."

"..Peter was coming in..." - Peter was entering the house. The entrance of verse 24 was into the city.

"..fell down at his feet, and worshipped him." Falling down at the feet and worshipping are inseparable acts of veneration. Both go together. The "worshipping" is not the same as worshipping the Creator in prayer although the attitudes may be identical. It is an act of homage and was customary in the East. It is probable that Cornelius did not copy this eastern custom as it was not followed by Jews nor by the Romans. Cornelius acted in a spontaneous manner such as is found in the N.T. where one is about to ask a favour of another. Examples are found in Matt. 8. 2; 9. 18; 15. 25; 18. 26; 20. 20.

## Verse 26

"But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man."

"But Peter took him up..." - In protest Peter helped him to his feet so as to bring to an abrupt end the assumption of a prone position. This act of Peter is not to be compared with that of Paul in Acts 14. 15. where Paul and Barnabas were worshipped as gods and not as men. In the homage shown by Cornelius, Peter was not in a position to know what it meant; so took the precaution of stopping any possibility of worship. The exhortation here for the humble servant of the Lord is clear. It is the Word which speaks and not the speaker, therefore give glory to God and not to man.

## Verse 27

"And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together."

"as he talked with him, he went in..." - the entrance of verse 25 was interrupted by the act of veneration by Cornelius. Peter was in the act of "coming in" and stopped while he corrected Cornelius. He could hardly have walked past him. Now both walked into together to the company which was assembled inside. As they entered, they linked arms, or put arms on each other's shoulders or did whatever was customary in those days to show intimate association. The verb "talk" is used here only and in no other place. The holding of conversation is not indicated by this verb.

It is much more appropriate to the story that Peter and Cornelius should be linked together in a friendly embrace rather than they should hold a conversation which Luke fails to record. This is another instance of Luke's narrative skill that he mentions this friendly approach one to the other to prepare us for what Peter says in the next verse about it being contrary to Jewish custom to enter the home of a Gentile. It shows how Peter is prepared to disregard all the Jewish aloofness towards a Gentile which had been nurtured in him since childhood.

"many that were come together". All those mentioned in verse 24.

#### Verse 28

"And he said unto them, ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean."

"ye know..." - meaning that they, the Gentiles, not only knew of Jewish aloofness in regard to associating with Gentiles, but that they also had had experience of it. That Peter used the word "ye" instead of "we", shows that he was speaking to the Gentiles and not to the whole company which included his own brethren in the Lord from Joppa. (vs 23).

"an unlawful thing..." - this illegality applied to custom rather than to the Law of Moses. The Mosaic Law forbade marriage with a Gentile but did not forbid having anything to do with them. If all association had been forbidden, then how could proselytes have been made? The ancestry of Jesus would not have included such as Rahab and Ruth.

"God hath shewed me..." - Peter now realises that the vision was a lesson from God.

"I should not call any man common..." - Note that the vision gave no such instruction. In the vision Peter was told not to call any FOOD common or any ANIMALS common. Peter now sees that animals which were previously regarded by the Law as being unclean, referred by analogy to Gentiles.

#### Verse 29

"Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?"

"Therefore came I unto you..." - Because of what I have just said, namely that I have been shown by God that no man is to be regarded as being common or unclean from now on, I am obeying God's Words and coming to you. Furthermore, I came as soon as I was told to go. I obeyed instantly, without refusing.

"I ask therefore..." - Having told the people how it was that he, a Jew, now mixed with Gentiles and how he had obeyed God instantly without question, Peter asks why they had invited him.

"what intent..." - the Greek is LOGOS, as if Peter asked "what Logos?" Peter had acknowledged the hand of God in his visit to Cornelius therefore whatever Peter did must be God's Will. He now recognises that whatever it was that induced Cornelius to send for him it must have been God's Will too. By recapitulation, Peter acknowledged that it was God who sent him to Cornelius. That is to say, it was God's Plan and Purpose that Peter was sent to Cornelius. Now, what was the Divine Plan and Purpose that made Cornelius send for Peter?

#### Verse 30

"And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing."

"Four days ago..." - lit. from the fourth day. This construction has given rise to the view that he had been fasting for four days prior to the vision. It is difficult to separate the four days from the narrative, but it would appear to be the following:-

- 1st day: Cornelius has the visit from an angel and despatches the servants. vss. 3/8.
- 2nd day: The servants visit Peter and spend the night under his roof. vss. 9/23. (During this period, Peter has his vision.)
- 3rd day. The journey from Joppa to Caesarea is started. vs. 23
- 4th day. The party arrives at Caesarea. Vs. 24. They enter the house. vs. 25.

"fasting..." is not in the original.

"until this hour..." - that was the ninth hour (see vs. 3.), therefore Peter arrived at the house and went in at "this hour". He must have arrived at the ninth hour. (3 o'clock in the afternoon.)

"behold,.." - again the use of this word to indicate that what follows is unexpected.

"a man stood before me..." - Alexander says, "...a man, because in human form, whether merely apparant, or belonging to a real body, worn for the occasion and then laid aside, perhaps dissolved." It is tragic that such an explanation could come from so great a scholar. The idea is absurd. Confusion arises because in verse 3 the visitor is described as "an angel" and in the verse before us, it is described as a man. Why confusion should arise is strange because the Scripture cannot be broken (John 10. 35.). If both terms, angel and man, are used, it must show, surely, that an angel is a man. The same is said of Christ Jesus in 1 Tim. 2. 5. where he is referred to as "the man Christ Jesus." This is another of the many tragedies of false belief which have arisen as a result of the Platonic theory of the immortality of the soul.

#### Verse 31

"And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God."

"thy prayer is heard..." - Greek "eisakouo" to hear by answering, as in Matt. 6. 7; Luke 1. 13; Heb. 5. 7. See also 1 Cor. 14. 21. See also notes to verse 4.

#### Verse 32

"Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee."

"Therefore..." - This corresponds to the "And now..." of verse 5.

"in the house of..." - this is a much more definite statement than the "lodgeth with one Simon..." of verse 6.

The repetition by Cornelius of his experience is one part of the whole story. The other half is given by Peter in ll. 5/14.

#### Verse 33

"Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God."

"Immediately..." - Greek "Forthwith" or "from the same time" or "from that very moment".

"therefore..." - because of what he had just explained. What he did subsequently arose out of the commandment given him by God.

"thou hast well done..." - a form of expressing thanks. It is also used as a form of approval. See Matt. 12. 12; Mark 7. 37; Luke 6. 27; Jas. 2. 19.

"we are all here present before God..." - an important statement in view of the next clause. Peter was here but it was God who had called Cornelius and God who had called Peter to come to this place. Therefore this was God's work and not man's. Paul expressed the same idea in 1 Thess. 2. 13.

"to hear all things that are commanded thee of God" - We have been gathered together to hear those things which God has willed that we should hear. In other words, Cornelius acknowledges the power of God working in all of them.

#### Verse 34

"Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons."

"opened his mouth..." - suggests the commencement of a speech. See how this is used of Philip in Acts 8. 35. It is also used in connection with Paul who was about to make a speech. See Acts 18. 14.

"Of a truth..." - see notes under Acts 4. 27.

"I perceive..." - Greek "katalambano" meaning "to lay hold of"; "to comprehend". The use to which it is put here seems to indicate that Peter meant he was gradually laying hold of the lesson in his understanding. It was beginning to dawn upon him in full what the vision was all about. What he understood is given in the balance of the sentence.

"that God is no respecter of persons." The term "respecter of persons" comes from one Greek word "prosopleptes" which is used here only and in no other place in Scripture. It means one who is partial in his acceptance of persons. The impartiality of God is referred to in the O.T. in Deut. 10. 17; 2 Chron. 19.7; Peter was to remember the lesson he had learnt for he repeated it in his epistle. See 1 Peter 1. 17. The Greek "aprosopoleptes" is the negative form and appears in the verse from 1 Peter 1. 17. One word therefore, means "without respect of persons".

We stop to take an exhortation here for it is enjoined upon us to disregard persons in all our judgments. Impartiality was required of the children of Israel as we see from Lev. 19. 15; Deut. 1. 17; 16. 19. See what James has to say to us. Jas. 2. 1 and 9.

The meaning which Peter attaches to this impartiality is that anyone who will turn to God will receive His Blessing and will be led to the Truth. Furthermore, God would not limit participation in His Promises to one nation but would offer salvation to all.

#### Verse 35

"But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."

"he that feareth him..." - whereas God's Word would be preached unto all nations, it is not all nations nor any one nation which would receive it. Peter makes this quite clear with his limitation of God's acceptance to "he that feareth him". To fear God is not to be frightened of Him but means to have such profound a sense of humble duty towards Him that one would make a very special effort to doing that which God commands. This in turn, requires that the worshipper shall know who God is and what His Plan and Purpose is. To know God is to know His Plan and Purpose because in John 1. 1. we are told that God was the Logos. To know His Plan and Purpose is to know God as manifested by Jesus Christ. See Notes to Acts. 9. 31.

"and worketh righteousness..." - the Knowledge of God and His Plan and Purpose which comes from fearing the LORD, is not enough for salvation. This was a lesson Cornelius was to learn. His piety and morality impressed man but was insufficient in the sight of God for the purpose of salvation. The lesson was that works by themselves are "dead" just as a full knowledge of the Faith without the works is also "dead". It was one of the Divine commands that all believers must be baptised. If Cornelius feared God he would ask for baptism. Having been

baptised, he would then be required to "walk in a newness of life". (Rom. 6. 4.). Thereafter he "should not serve sin". (Rom. 6. 6.).

"is accepted with him". Is acceptable to him.

#### Verse 36

"The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:)"

"The word which God sent..." - the translation here is a bit free and does not accurately record what was said. Peter is outlining the history of the work of Jesus showing that the gospel was first taught in Galilee. But Peter acknowledges that this was God's work which was done through His Son, Jesus. The opening sentence here, then, reads, "He (God) sent the word unto the children of Israel..".

"preaching peace by Jesus Christ:.." - The Gospel was a gospel of peace. The peace is not one of non-combatant existence but the peace which comes from harmony with God. This harmony had been broken ever since the sin of Eden but the Gospel gave that binding back into harmony with God (religion) to all who would hear. The binding back again would come when the Kingdom is established. The Gospel destroyed the discord there had been between Jew and Gentile and made peace between them. This was another facet of the Gospel of peace. As Paul wrote in later years:-

- Ephes. 2. 14. "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;
15. Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;
16. And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:"

In the first place, all this had been preached unto Israel but now it was to be preached to Gentile nations too. The first preaching was done, as Peter said, "by Jesus Christ". The preaching to the Gentiles had been foretold by God through the prophet Isaiah. (See Isa. 42. 6; and 49. 6.) Luke recorded the quotation of these prophecies by Simeon. (Luke 2. 29/32.) For the Gospel of Peace taught by Jesus to bring harmony between God and man in the Age to come, see Rom. 5. 1/2; 2 Cor. 5. 14/ 21; Col. 1. 19/23. The Peace all True Christian Believers can look forward to is given in Luke 2. 14.

"by Jesus Christ":.. - The word which God sent was preaching peace by Jesus Christ. That is to say, Jesus was the Gospel. Everything we may study about the Plan and Purpose of God will finalise itself in Jesus. The Gospel then, is not a meaningful promise but a living actuality in Jesus. He is the Word made flesh. (John 1. 14.).

"(he is Lord of all:) Because the whole Plan and Purpose of God centres around Jesus and will be fulfilled in him, he must be Lord of all. God's Plan will be manifested in him and he will manifest God's Plan. Both are entirely wrapped up in each other. He is Lord of Jew and Gentile.

#### Verse 37

"That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached."

"That word..." - Greek word for "word" in this verse is "rhema" and not "logos". It does not refer wholly to the Divine Plan and Purpose but to the uttered part of it. (see Ephes. 6. 17.) See also acts 28. 25; Rom. 10. 8 and 17; 2 Cor. 13. 1; Gal. 5. 14; 6. 6; Ephes. 1. 13; 5. 26; Heb. 1. 3; Heb. 6.5; 11. 3; 1 Pet. 1. 25; (both).

Having started the previous verse with "The word..." and added a few words of explanation, Peter starts again with the phrase "That word..." in this verse. It was the word of God which was preached when Jesus started his ministry in

Galilee and he started that after the ministry of John the Baptist. You know about it because you heard it. It was published throughout all Judea.

"ye know" - Cornelius and his friends must have heard the Gospel preached by Jesus.

"throughout all Judea..." - indicating all the country beyond the border of Judea.

"after.....John..." - John the Baptist knew that this would be so. The prophet Isaiah prophesied of John the Baptist in Isa. 40. 3. This was the first of the "servant" prophecies of Isaiah. The prophecy of Jesus as a servant of God was given in Isa. 42. 1/7. See John's remarks in John 3. 28/31.

Verse 38

"How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him."

"God anointed Jesus..." - at the very beginning of his ministry, God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit. (Matt. 3. 16; Mark 1. 9/11; Luke 3. 21/22; John 1. 32/33.)

"with the Holy Spirit..." - The anointing of Jesus was similar to the anointing of the apostles. See Notes to Acts 2. 3. The effect however, was vastly superior in the case of Jesus for he received power without measure. (John 3. 34.) Jesus could call upon the Divine Power at any time. The apostles could not do so but often prayed before they used it. The Holy Spirit was a Power which could be passed on by an apostle and which Simon Magus wanted to buy for money. (Acts 8. 30.)

"with power..." - The "power" comes from the Greek "dunamis" from which we get "dynamo", "dynamic" and "dyne", (unit of force). If the Holy Spirit was a Power, then Jesus did not have to have power to use it. The power of healing, performing miracles etc., was given with the Holy Spirit. The power referred to here was that power which enabled Jesus to use the power of the Holy Spirit on any occasion and in any manner which he saw fit.

This anointing was prophesied by God through His prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 61. 1/2. Actually the prophecy of the baptism of Jesus extends to halfway through verse 2. This was as far as Jesus quoted when he opened the Scriptures and read therefrom. See Luke 4. 18/19. The latter half of the verse related to the Second Coming of our Lord when, in terms of the prophecy, and not quoted by Jesus, it will be "the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn."

It is extra-ordinary how the commentators, who are all trinitarians, make no attempt to explain how one God could anoint the other God with the third God. In explaining the verse, they acknowledge that God anointed Jesus by giving him the power of the Holy Spirit and that it was in fulfilment of Isa. 61. 1/2. that this was done. Yet in the next breath, as it were, they will support the trinitarian doctrine by regarding the Holy Spirit as a God.

"went about doing good and healing..." In contrast to the rulers of Judea at that time who had tremendous power but abused it, Jesus went about doing good. The "healing" was symbolical of the ills of mankind which will be cured in the Kingdom of God. (Rev. 21. 4.). Luke is summarising Peter's speech but we know from the teaching of Scripture that this symbolism is so.

"all that were oppressed of the devil;" - the Greek for "oppressed" is "katadunasteuo" meaning "to exercise power over". It occurs here and in Jas. 2. 6. The Greek for "devil" is "diabolos" from which we get the English "diabolic". Note that the "healing" did not apply to those who were sick. The people here were those who were oppressed by the "slanderer, false accuser, or traducer". It is interesting to note that the great Greek Lexicon "Liddell & Scott" which gives the meanings of words as they are used in Greek literature, does not give any meaning of "devil" to Diabolos except to say that this meaning occurs in the N.T. only.



Luke would not have understood "diabolos" to have the popular meaning of "devil" as Christianity has it today. To him it would have the meaning ascribed to it by all the Greek writers throughout the ages. Those who were "oppressed of the devil" were those who had been led astray by false doctrines or those who had no religion in them at all but in whom a desire to worship God had been stirred.

"God was with him." See 2 Cor. 5. 19.

It is considered by commentators that when Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power, he was then anointed as the CHRIST. The title "Christ" means "anointed". It is not true to regard Jesus as having become the Messiah the moment he was baptised and the Holy Spirit was given to him. On the occasion of his baptism, the voice of God said, "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. 3. 17; Mark. 11; Luke 3. 22). John does not mention this Divine statement. This baptism did not constitute Jesus as the Messiah or the Anointed King of the whole world, but gave him a title which he did not have before, namely, "Son of God".

The same statement was heard during the transfiguration on the mount. (Matt. 17. 5; Mark 9. 7; Luke 9. 35). The statement had an additional "Hear ye him" (or "hear him" in Mark and Luke). During the vision, there appeared two men with Jesus, namely, Moses and Elijah, representing the Law and the Prophets. There being no representative of the Priesthood there, Jesus must be regarded as being anointed a priest on that occasion.

When Jesus comes again, Jesus will return as a King. We must consider that his kingship has been given to him in heaven by God. This would agree with Jesus' parable in Luke 19. 12/27. concerning the "certain nobleman" who went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. Jesus has gone into heaven to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. Therefore, he was not fully "Christ" when he ascended into heaven, having been "Son of God" and a Priest after the order of Melchizedek. On his return he will be the full Christ, anointed to be a King and a Priest while, at all times, he will be "Son of God".

"went about doing good..." - a pointed comparison with the priesthood who did not do good, and with the Romans who were cruel overlords.

Verse 39

"And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree."

"And we are witnesses..." - See Acts 1. 8. The apostles were to carry on the work of Jesus. There were six stages in the work, namely,

1. The work of John the baptist and his baptism. This is stated in verse 37.
2. This was followed by the ministry of Jesus starting in Galilee. Verse 37.
3. The ministry of Jesus started with his baptism and the giving of the Holy Spirit. Verse 38.
4. The crucifixion. Verse 39.
5. The resurrection of Jesus. Verse 40.
6. The apostolic ministry. Verse 42.

Peter is now explaining briefly stage 4.

"they slew and hanged on a tree." Preparatory statement to the comparison which is drawn in verse 40 where Peter states that God raised him up. The apostles were witnesses to this resurrection.

Verse 40

"Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly."

Here follows the comparison of what the people did and what God did. The Jews slew - God raised.

"And shewed him openly." This is the only occurrence of the verb "emphanes" where it is translated as "shewed...openly". In Rom. 10. 20. it is translated as "made manifest". That God "shewed him openly" means that Jesus appeared in exactly the same state as everyone knew him. Although he was immortal by the time he shewed himself to his disciples, he appeared to be no different from what he was as a mortal man. This enabled them to establish his identity beyond all doubt.

#### Verse 41

"Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead."

After his resurrection, Jesus did not appear to all the people. Those to whom he appeared are listed in 1 Cor. 15. 5/8.

"witnesses chosen before of God..." - Although Jesus chose his disciples, he chose as God directed him. This is inferred from John 17. 6, which states that the disciples were given to Jesus by God.

"who did eat..." - See Luke 24. 30; and verses 41/43. John 21. 12/15. All this is further substantiation of the fact that the disciples are witnesses to the physical resurrection of Jesus. It should be noted that Peter stresses the physical resurrection of Jesus and does not mention anything about his soul being in heaven which it must have been if the Platonic theory is true.

#### Verse 42

"And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead."

"he commanded..." - Thus Peter gives his authority to be the teacher he is. Later on, Paul was to be very careful to state his authority when writing his epistles. See Rom. 1. 1; 1 Cor. 1. 1; 2 Cor. 1. 1; Gal. 1. 1; Ephes. 1. 1. In Phil. 1. 1. Paul claims to be a "servant" of Jesus Christ. Col. 1. 1; 1 Tim. 1. 1; 2 Tim. 1. 1; When writing to Titus, Paul claims to be a "servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ". Tit. 1. 1; To Philemon (Phil. 1. 1.) Paul says he is "a prisoner of Jesus Christ...". In both his epistles, Peter claims to be "an apostle of Jesus Christ". (1 Pet. 1. 1; and 2 Pet. 1. 1.).

"to testify..." - having the prefix "dia", the Greek word means to "call throughout to witness."

"ordained of God to be the Judge..." - See John 5. 27. Jesus is to be the Judge because he is the Son of man. All judgment has been committed to him. (John 5. 22.) Jesus has been given that quickening life which he can give to others at the Judgment. (vs 26). Since Jesus overcame sin in himself, he is now the Judge. Having been made "like unto his brethren" (Heb. 2. 17.) he is able to judge according to knowledge.

"quick and dead." - Jesus as the Saviour appointed to be the Judge, (Acts 17. 31.) has been given the power to resurrect. This is stated in John 5. 28/29 and is indicated in this verse. If Jesus is to judge the quick and the dead, then there must be a resurrection and the Judgment will take place at the resurrection and not before. The resurrection here is not confined to Jews only. It is not specifically stated that the resurrection will be for Gentiles as well but in view of the vision given to Peter, this can be inferred with confidence.

#### Verse 43

"To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."

"through his name..." - this is a very important qualification and directly affected Cornelius. The centurion is described in verse 2 as having been a devout worshipper of God and a benefactor of his fellow men. This was not enough. He had to believe in Jesus. The prophets had borne witness to Jesus, thus showing their belief in him. Therefore anyone looking for salvation must also come to Jesus and, as we shall see, be baptised into his Name. (See Notes on Acts 2. 38.) The importance of Jesus is such that Peter gives an historical summary of his work,

starting from John the Baptist. No matter how exemplary we may be, our behaviour before God is incomplete until we believe in Jesus and signify that belief by baptism into his Name.

"remission of sins." See Notes to Acts 2. 38. The "whosoever" shows no partiality to Jews. All men are included in the "belief" qualification for salvation and for forgiveness of sins.

Verse 44

"While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit fell on them which heard the word."

"spake these words..." - "words" comes from the Greek "rhema". Being in the plural, it cannot mean "Logos", because there is only one Logos.

"the Holy Spirit fell on them..." - this is most unusual. The Holy Spirit usually fell on people in this way only after baptism and not before as in this case. There was a good reason for this because of two problems facing the Jews. These were:-

1. The acceptance of a crucified Messiah. The Sanhedrin were determined to discredit Jesus by all means in their power. Having him crucified was an act most calculated to make him unclean in the eyes of all Jews who had even the slightest knowledge of the Law. If Jewish converts could believe in Jesus in spite of this, then they were well on the way to salvation. The gift of the Holy Spirit after their baptism would bring them further knowledge and understanding.
2. The sharing of the Promises with Gentiles. The "untouchability" of Gentiles was such that Jews found it very difficult to accept the fact that Gentiles were to come into the Covenants of Promise. The lesson had been given to Peter through the vision and he was to get another powerful lesson that uncircumcised Gentiles were to be accepted by God as the "seed of Abraham". We shall see in a moment what effect it had on him.

Verse 45

"And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit."

"they of the circumcision..." - This does not refer to Jews only but to Jews who insisted that Gentile converts should be circumcised. When such men saw that uncircumcised Gentiles had received the same Holy Spirit that the Jews had received, they were astonished. They would be converted Jews.

"as many as came with Peter..." - those who were astonished as explained above were those who had come with Peter.

"on the Gentiles also..." - all Gentiles would be involved. Cornelius was a Roman but we do not know the nationality of his companions. It is quite possible that they would have been other than Roman, thus showing that the Gospel would be preached to all nations.

Verse 46

"For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,"

It would appear that the first manifestation of the Holy Spirit conferred in this way was to speak with tongues. In speaking with tongues, they did not speak the gibberish that today goes for the modern pretence of receiving the Holy Spirit. They praised God. See Acts 2. 4. and notes thereon. The speaking with tongues was necessary as evidence that the Holy Spirit had been received by all the Gentiles. Speech immediately following would be heard and would be understood as something miraculous.

In view of the similarity to the day of Pentecost, this occasion is referred to by scholars as the "Gentile Pentecost".

"Then answered Peter," - This should introduce verse 47.

Verse 47

"Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptised, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?"

Peter's question substantiates the views expressed in these Notes against verse 44. The Gentiles received the Holy Spirit BEFORE baptism to dispel any doubts amongst the devout converted Jews that the Gentiles were now to come into the Covenants of Promise. The speaking in tongues had been recognised as a sign that the Holy Spirit had been given, so Peter was immediate in showing that he fully understood now the lesson of the vision.

The question is asked in the form of a challenge. If God had accepted these men, then can any MAN forbid water to them?

"as well as we?" Thus showing the absolute equality now between Jew and Gentile. No longer did Israel hold an exalted position in the eyes of God in regard to the preaching of the Gospel.

It is to be noted that Peter asks a question, "Can any man forbid water?" The eunuch asked a similar question, "What doth hinder me to be baptised?" (Acts Ch. 8. 36.) From this it would appear possible that a custom of the land and times was to ask this form of question as we now have to ask during a marriage, if there is any just cause or impediment.

Verse 48

"And he commanded them to be baptised in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days".

"he commanded them..." - Peter commanded them to be baptised thus showing the importance of this rite. They may have the Holy Spirit but without the essential washing away of sins and the submission to baptism, they cannot be the Covenant People. That Peter "commanded" shows that he did not perform the baptism himself but delegated it to others who were with him.

"Then prayed they him to tarry certain days." They asked him to stay with them for a few days. To "tarry" means "to remain with for longer". This would mean that Peter had to live with, eat with and associate with men who were the despised Gentiles in Jewish eyes. A hurried or short visit may pass unnoticed but if Peter were to stay with them for some time, then news of his prolonged visit would get around and tongues would start wagging. It was not all men who had received the privilege of a vision from God as Peter had.

Thus Luke, with his narrative skill, prepares us for what follows in chapter 11.

Verse 1

"And the apostles and brethren that were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God."

The chapter division is unfortunate here because the result of such division is to lose the effect of the last words of chapter 10 which read, "Then prayed they him to tarry certain days." The inference is that their persuasion was effective and that Peter did stay with them for some time during which, he would preach unto them. To talk to Gentiles was something many proud and aloof Jews would not allow but to live with them in their homes was going from bad to the very worst. A reaction amongst Jewry was bound to follow so Luke in his characteristic way, gives us a hint of the protest which was to follow by stating casually that the Gentiles persuaded Peter to stay with them for a certain period. Now he leads up to the bitter climax by adding that the apostles and brethren heard about the Gentiles receiving the Faith which was based upon the Promises made unto the fathers. All this is also an introduction by Luke to the story of the building up of the great ecclesia at Antioch.

"the apostles and brethren..." - Indicates that the apostles were still residing in Jerusalem or the environs. The "brethren" would apply to those who were the officers and teachers of the ecclesia.

"the Gentiles..." - The nations represented by Cornelius and his friends.

"in Judea..." - throughout the country of Judea, showing that ecclesias had been formed outside Jerusalem and were in existence in Judea.

"received the word of God". The word "received" indicates that they accepted it and believed in it.

"the word of God." The "word" comes from LOGOS which is the gospel, or the Plan and Purpose of God. This is the same word as "Word" of John 1. 1. and is not Jesus as some would say. It is the gospel and all that flows therefrom and all this must centre in and around Jesus.

Verse 2

"and when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him,"

"when Peter was come up..." - from the coast at Caesarea to the heights of Jerusalem.

"they that were of the circumcision..." - This refers to converted Jews of the type mentioned in Acts 10. 45.

"contended with him," - disputed with him (Peter) for talking to Gentiles, teaching them about the precious Promises, entering Gentile homes and living with them.

Luke now shows how a great division started which was to exist for some time. The Jews had not had the benefit of a vision such as Peter and Cornelius had had. They were still full of Jewish prejudices against the Gentiles. Luke's mention of this dispute prepares us for the quarrel which Peter was to have with Paul over the question of circumcision and the Christian converts. It also prepares us for the rise of James to a position of authority after Peter's authority had been called in question. If Peter as the leader of the Christians had entered the home of a Gentile and conversed with or taught other Gentiles, then a breach between Jew and Gentile would have been started. It is from such small beginnings that big things can come.

## Verse 3

"Saying, Thou wentest in unto men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them."

The accusation is directed to Peter personally. The offence is twofold, namely, meeting with uncircumcised men and eating food with such men. Under the Law, association with the uncircumcised was forbidden and orthodox Jews were very particular about such association. Their uncircumcision made the Gentiles unclean in the eyes of the Jews and the fact that they were ceremonially unclean would make them unfit companions at a meal. The attitude of the Jewish converts to Christianity who retained the feelings of Israel in such matters, was one of hostility to Peter because he was now a leader amongst the Christians. He was not taken to account for baptising Gentiles because Jews were used to receiving proselytes into fellowship with them.

## Verse 4

"But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, saying,"

Peter's defence is to begin at the the beginning and tell them all that had happened. Luke's repetition of these details shows what importance he attached to them.

"by order..." - in telling them, Peter recounted the events in the order in which they had occurred.

## Verse 5

"I was in the city of Joppa praying and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me:"

In Acts 10.11. the sheet was seen "descending unto him..." Here it is related that it came unto him. This is further detail than is given in chapter 10.

## Verse 6

"Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air."

Luke adds further detail to say that Peter fastened his eyes upon the contents of the sheet thus indicating that he observed it closely. This guards against an accusation of mistake. He did not look casually. He observed very closely.

"I considered..."- having observed closely, I gave much thought to what I saw.

## Verse 7

"And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat."

This is an accurate repetition of Acts 10. 13.

## Verse 8

"But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing uncommon or unclean hath at any time entered my mouth."

In Acts 10. 14. it is recorded that Peter said, "I have never eaten...". Here it is recorded that "nothing...hath...entered my mouth".

## Verses 9 and 10

"But the voice answered me again from heaven. That God hath cleansed, that call not thou unclean. And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven."

The difference between these words and those recorded in chapter 10 is "all were drawn up..." instead of "was received up..." The former is more expressive.

## Verse 11

"And, behold, immediately there were three men already come into the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me."

This is a brief summary of the occurrences of 10. 17.

## Verse 12

"And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me; and we entered into the man's house:"

"Behold..." - indicating Peter's surprise at something unexpected.

"nothing doubting..." - without hesitation - without wavering.

"these six brethren..." - the number is mentioned here but not in chapter 10. The expression "these six brethren" tells us that they had accompanied Peter to Jerusalem. They were there for him to refer to them as "these..."

"the man's house." - Cornelius' house. That Cornelius is mentioned as "the man..." shows that he had not accompanied Peter to Jerusalem. It appears that Peter's speech here is summarised and that he may have said "we entered into the house of the man whom you now accuse me of associating with."

## Verse 13

"And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter;"

"he had seen an angel..." - the original Greek has "he had seen THE angel" which is more emphatic and refers to a particular angel.

## Verse 14

"Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved".

"words..." - not LOGOS but *REHMA* meaning discourse. To be distinguished from LOGOS as part of that which is spoken, or part of a sentence, or part of a discussion. In all senses it is only part of the whole and cannot be the whole LOGOS.

"whereby thou....shall be saved." - Differs from 10. 6 which infers the ritual to be followed, namely, baptism. Here the requirements are willed into "words" which connotes doctrines. For all that Cornelius was a pious man, he had to have a knowledge of the TRUTH and then had to act upon that TRUTH by following it to its logical conclusion. In this case, he would learn about the Covenants of Promise and how he could become Abraham's seed by his belief in this and his signification of belief by baptism.

Cornelius was shown that piety and morality are not enough. One must know of the LOGOS and believe in it. Then one must show belief by submitting to baptism.

## Verse 15

"And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, as on us at the beginning."

"began to speak..." - not at the moment he had started to speak. It carries the sense of "after I had begun to speak" but does not say how long after.

"fell on.." - not from a height but from "above" in the sense that it had a Divine origin.

"as on us..." - an important remark. This showed that the giving of the Holy Spirit was "as on us" without distinction because they were Gentiles and we were Jews. The gift was the same in both cases.

## Verse 16

"Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptised with water; but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit."

Peter now quotes the words of Jesus before his Ascension and given in Acts 1. 5. Their baptism of the Holy Spirit was in fulfilment of that promise but here again was another manifestation of it. This being the case, Jesus' words must have applied to Gentiles as well as to Jewish believers.

"the word..." - same as in verse 14.

## Verse 17

"Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?"

"the like gift.." - the same gift to the Gentiles as was given to the Jews. Thus once again the fact is emphasised that there is "neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female" but that all are one in Christ Jesus.

"who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ,.." - an important distinction. Peter had been called upon to state why he had associated with the circumcision, and why he had associated with them. Now he shows that it is not circumcision that makes a person acceptable to God. The state of acceptability rests on BELIEF ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. In view of this statement by Peter, it is surprising that, in preaching to the circumcision, he erred in regard to circumcision for converted Gentiles. See Gal. chapter 2.

"what was I,....?" - now that God had shown very clearly that former barriers were to be broken down, who was Peter to maintain those barriers? That middle wall of partition which kept apart Jew and Greek in the temple was now broken down as a result of the death of the Saviour. (Ephs. 2. 14.)

## Verse 18

"When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."

"they held their peace..." - indicates a cessation of argument rather than a full understanding. They had been told how God had made no distinction between Gentile and Jew and to them, that must have been a rather shattering realisation. Rather than comment upon it, they said nothing. They accepted the situation as it stood in so far as the Gentiles were to come under the mercy of God for purposes of Salvation. The question as to whether such new converts were to be circumcised or not was not fully settled then as history records. All they did was to accept Peter's words and glorify God for having permitted salvation to come to the Gentiles.



THE ECCLESIA AT ANTIOCH.

In the days of the history we are now studying, there were two cities having the name of Antioch. One was in Pisidia in Asia Minor and the other was in Syria. It is the latter which is meant now. It was founded by Seleucus Nikator of the Seleucid Empire. This was after the conquest of the world by Alexander when the Greeks from the European mainland flocked into Asia. With the fast expansion of the Grecian Empire, it was necessary for the Greeks to have a capital city on the Mediterranean and in Asia Minor. The site chosen was about 16 miles (120 stadia) from the sea on the river Orontes. It was strategically placed to control access to a valley through the mountains. The port at the sea was called Seleucia and the new city was named after the father of the founder, namely, Antiochus. It was built partly on an island in the river and partly on the north bank. This helped to build up a strong defensive position against any attack from the south. The Greeks as well as their Roman successors built large public buildings and, of course, their pagan temples. Seleucus Nikator permitted Jews to live in Antioch so they were there from the foundation of the city. During the centuries between the founding of the city and the days after the ascension of Jesus, many Jews flocked to Antioch to get away from Roman persecution, particularly after the Maccabean rebellion. When the Roman General Pompey conquered the city, he made it a free city. It became the seat of the Prefect and was the capital city of the Roman province of Syria. Herod the Great built theatres, Roman baths and streets.

As is the case with a mixed population, the skills and arts of each were joined to make the city exceedingly prosperous and vigorous. Their achievements in art and literature have been mentioned by Greek and Roman historians and philosophers. Such was the great progress made at the time of Paul that Antioch was the largest city in the Roman Empire after Rome and Alexandria. Christianity reached Antioch early in the Christian era for we find a proselyte of Antioch being one of the seven chosen men of Acts 6. 5. His name was Nicolas. After the persecution which followed the murder of Stephen, the powerful ecclesia at Jerusalem was largely destroyed and it never regained its former importance. Many Christians must have fled to Antioch because the ecclesia which grew there at that time became very influential. We shall read much about it in the chapters of the Acts which are to follow.

## Verse 19

"Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only."

Luke now picks up another thread of his story, this being the one he dropped temporarily in Acts 8. 4. The verse read, "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word." Here Luke uses the same words but adds more detail. His starting point in time is the period during the terrible persecution which came after the murder of Stephen. This is indicated by the words "upon the persecution".

"about Stephen..." - during the time of the scattering which came about as a result of the murder of Stephen.

"travelled as far as..." - they passed through the intervening country and taught there. The places mentioned form the limit of their teaching.

"Phenice..." - on the Levantine coast in Lebanon. It is not a port or city but is a strip of land stretching along the coast and taking in the ports of Tyre and Sidon. It is also known as PHOENICIA.

"Cyprus..." - an island in the eastern Mediterranean. In ancient and medieval times, Cyprus was a producer of copper. The metal derives its name from that of the island. The supplies were exhausted during the middle ages and are not worked now. At the time of the history recorded in this verse, Salamis was the principal city. The Government of the island at the time was

at Paphos. This city is mentioned in Acts 13. 6. and 13. From the use of the plural in Acts 13.5. we learn that there was more than one synagogue in Salamis. Joseph the Levite, surnamed Barnabas and a great friend of Paul and uncle of John Mark the gospel writer, came from Cyprus. (Acts 4. 36.) Another convert to Christianity who came from the island was Mnason, (Acts 21. 16.)

"Antioch" has been mentioned in these notes above. Anyone starting a religious campaign at that time would hardly choose Antioch because of its infamy as a city given over to the worship of sex. The nearby grove was dedicated to Artemis and Apollo at a place called Daphne. At the same place the pagan goddess Astarte was worshipped. It is from her name that we get the modern Easter. Nevertheless the early pioneers endured and prevailed to such an extent that Antioch became the most important centre for Christianity.

"none but unto the Jews only." The Jews at Antioch formed a separate community on their own and had their own governor. They were prosperous and boasted a large body of proselytes. Their aloofness which was and is characteristic of the Jewish people and the low abominable morals of the cult of Artemis and Apollo would tend to keep the Jews apart from all others. Thus it is not surprising that when they adopted the new faith of Christianity, they kept it to themselves. Hence, the Faith was taught to none other than unto Jews.

Verse 20

"And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus."

"men of Cyprus..." - these men would be Hellenists (Greek speaking Jews) like Stephen and Philip. Barnabas was also one of these. He is mentioned in Acts 13. 1. as is Simeon (probably an African, because he is called Niger, meaning "black" such as "Nigeria", the land of the Blacks. There is also the word used in countries outside South Africa - "nigger" being an insulting term for such people.)

"and Cyrene..." - Cyrene was a town in Cyrenaica of North Africa, situated at a spot between modern Benghazi and Tobruk. Such visitors would include Lucius mentioned in Acts 13. 1.

"spoke unto the Grecians..." - There has been much discussion amongst the critics as to whether "Grecians" (Greek speaking Jews) or "Greeks", non-Jewish people were taught. Textual certainty is impossible because the texts differ one from the other and the most ancient is not necessarily the most reliable. If Greek speaking Jews is meant, it is surprising that Luke should mention that the gospel had been taught to them because this had been the case from the beginning. See Acts 2. 5; 6. 1; and 9. 29. From what we know of Luke's Style and his cleverness in introducing some small piece of information preparatory to recording the full story later, we can imagine that on this occasion, Luke is giving us a hint that the Gospel is about to be preached unto the Gentiles. Therefore we shall assume that those who came over from Cyprus and Cyrene taught, not only their own people the Greek speaking Jews, but to Gentiles as well. It was because of this that Antioch became such a powerful centre for Christianity.

"preaching the Lord Jesus." Preaching the things concerning the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Acts 28. 31.

Verse 21

"And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord."

"the hand of the Lord was with them:.." - see Luke 1. 66. in connection with John the Baptist. God was with him because he was to do the Lord's work amongst men. The "finger" of God was used to perform miracles. Exod. 8. 19. and Luke 11. 20. The "hand of God" was used to show God's mighty works. See the plagues of Egypt. These are works amongst men. The "arm of God" was used to show the omnipotence of God. Deut 4. 34. and in the

protection and selection of His people. Isa. 53. 1; John 12. 38; Acts 13. 17.

"a great number believed..." - The "hand of the Lord" was there so the Lord gave the increase. We take an exhortation here when we read that God blessed the effort which was made by the early evangelists. If we do nothing but hope for converts, the Lord will not bless us. We qualify for consideration in this way only if we work and make an effort in the Lord's Service.

"and turned unto the Lord." The word "turn" here indicates a turning away from one course and facing another. The same idea was conveyed in the name Orpah of Ruth 1. 14. Her name means "back of the neck" indicating turning away from God and showing Him the back of her neck. See verse 15 which reads, "thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods." The reverse could take place where one turns away from his pagan gods and turns to the God of Israel. One can also turn from evil men and evil ways and return unto God. (2 Tim. 3. 5.)

It cannot be said with certainty which conversion was first in point of time, that of Cornelius or those of the Greeks mentioned here. The point is not of any importance because the conversion of Cornelius had a teaching value which does not appear in the chapter we are now studying. In the case of Cornelius, he was a type. With the eunuch and Paul, he forms a trio, namely, the eunuch representing the sons of Ham, Paul representing the sons of Shem, and Cornelius representing the sons of Japheth, thus showing the universality of the teaching of the gospel. In the case of Cornelius, there was also the teaching that piety and morality were insufficient in themselves to qualify one for salvation. Belief and baptism were essential before one could even make a start along the road to eternal life. In the chapter before us, we are shown a facet of the growth of the Christian church and we are introduced to the historical fact of the teaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles. Exhortatively we are shown that if we are to expect God's blessing, we must work in His Service.

#### Verse 22.

"Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch".

"Then tidings..." - the word "tidings" comes from LOGOS and not from "evangelion" which is the gospel as in Luke 8. 1. This raises the matter far above a normal report of activities in that part of the world. What was conveyed to Jerusalem was the whole plan and concept of the preaching campaign with news of the results to show that the campaign was having the Divine Blessing.

"came unto the ears..." - Hebrew idiom "came to their knowledge."

"of the church..." - Greek "of the ecclesia". It is to be noted that the tidings came to the ears of the ecclesia and that the Apostles are not mentioned. This cannot mean that there were no apostles there for Acts 15. 4. shows clearly that the apostles were still there. Matters of management were, by that time, given over to the managing panel in the ecclesia while the apostles would be out preaching.

"they sent forth Barnabas..." - a wise choice since he came from Cyprus and had had a wide experience of Greeks and Jews. He had a persuasive manner as is indicated by his nickname meaning "son of consolation" or "son of exhortation".

"he should go as far as Antioch." - the phrase "as far as" means that he had to do his preaching all the way up to Antioch. This included all the country in between Jerusalem and Antioch. When he reached Antioch, he stayed there.

## Verse 23.

"Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord."

"when he came, and had seen..." - Greek : "having come and having seen". The "having come" portion of this sentence means that he had not only come all the way from Jerusalem and arrived safely but he had also accomplished what he had been commissioned to do.

"the grace of God..." - having seen the effects of the mercy God had bestowed upon the work of the evangelists. Barnabas must have been astonished at the Grace of God operating amongst the uncircumcised Gentiles.

"was glad" - the fact that Gentiles had now turned unto the Lord did not upset Barnabas as many devout Jews would have been upset. On the contrary he was glad about it.

"exhorted them all..." - the use of this word may be a play on the nickname of Barnabas. He gave them encouragement as well as advice. Note the words "them all" which must include people of all nations who had been converted to the Faith. Having been glad, he would not be above giving advice and encouragement to all people, Jew and Gentile.

"cleave unto the Lord.." - Greek "to adhere in the Lord". To stand together, firmly united one with the other in the Lord, and to stand firm in the Lord and not turn away. This is guarding against any back-sliding amongst the new converts.

"with purpose of heart" - to have a purpose in their faith. It is one thing to be religious but another to have such Faith that work in the Lord's service becomes a desire of the heart. This can be cultivated by thinking about it a lot and building up enthusiasm.

"The word "cleave" is in the Middle Voice showing that they must cleave to their own advantage. By cleaving, they would derive a benefit. The adherence is like that of one metal joined to another - joining by fusing.

## Verse 24.

"For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of Faith: and much people was added unto the Lord."

"For he was a good man..." - It is difficult to account for the apparent meaning here. Are we to understand that because Barnabas was a good man he exhorted them: or was it because he was a good <sup>man</sup> that he had been sent from Jerusalem; or because he was a good man did the ecclesia grow at Antioch? There seems to be a connection with this verse and verse 23 which states that Barnabas "was glad". This would then give the sense - when Barnabas saw what he immediately acknowledged as being the work of God, he was glad because he was a good man. That is to say, he was a gentle, fair-minded person who would not adversely criticise nor condemn without a reasonable cause. He was also full of the Holy Spirit which would give him a capable discernment so that he could see easily that the hand of the Lord was there.

"(full) of faith:.." - his implicit faith in the things he taught would influence his hearers.

"much people were added..." - compare verse 21. This number is in excess of those of verse 21 because they believed after Barnabas had come.

## Verse 25.

"Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul:"

In the original Greek, the name "Barnabas" does not appear. The sentence stands as "Then he departed to Tarsus, to seek Saul." Saul had

gone there after his conversion. (Acts 9. 30.) Tarsus was Saul's "home town" (Acts 21. 39. and 22. 3.) He was born there and had been brought up there.

"for to seek Saul." Barnabas had met Paul (Acts 9. 27. and had heard him preach. He had brought Saul all the way from Damascus to Jerusalem and must have got to know him better than most during that journey. Saul was just the type of man who would impress the Gentiles so Barnabas, having noticed Saul's excellent qualities and having seen his complete conversion to Jesus of Nazareth, must have considered him worthy of seeking out with a view to using his talents as a preacher. He would be much better with Gentiles rather than with Jews.

There is no doubt that finding Saul would be difficult. As we have seen, there is a strong possibility that Saul came from a wealthy family and had private means. This being the case, his family would have been well known in Tarsus. Nevertheless, Saul's conversion to the new Faith in Christ Jesus would have estranged him from his family. There is a strong hint that Saul must have been disinherited. Paul writes of Jesus "for whom I have suffered the loss of all things,..." (Phil. 3. 8.) Enquiring from his family would bring little help so Barnabas would have to search far and wide.

Verse 26.

"And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."

"when he had found him..." - suggests that some trouble was experienced in finding him.

"it came to pass,..." - the result of finding Saul and bringing him to Antioch was that Barnabas and Saul were associated together in the ecclesia.

"were called Christians..." - There is some doubt about the origin of this word "Christians". All commentators agree that there was a man named Chrestus who brought about insurrections against the Romans. It is suggested that his followers were called "Chrestians". One thing is certain and that is that the Jews would never have used the term "Christian" because to do so would acknowledge that there had been a "Christ" or "Messiah". Even to-day the Jews do not like mentioning the title "Christ" but prefer to use the name "Jesus".

Antioch was known for its epigrams and witty nicknames so it is understandable that the New Believers would soon be given a name. The name would be epigrammatic in form and would have a touch of humour about it. The name "Christian" would fit none of these requirements. The Greek word "chrestos" would be known to all who heard it. To give the disciples the name "Christianos" would mean nothing to anyone who had not heard Christ preached. Yet the name "Chrestianois" would be known by all who heard it. The meaning is "worthy fellows" and would describe the character of the new believers which would be so different from the pleasure loving Greeks of Antioch. The nick-name "worthy fellows" would not be given through admiration but rather through contempt as one would be described as a "goody-goody". Agrippa used the word as a term of contempt. "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian". (Acts 26. 28.) Paul's reply was not in reference to his Faith but in regard to his physical state. "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds (Acts 26. 29.) If Agrippa had used a word meaning a follower of Christ, Paul would hardly have given the reply he did. But if Agrippa used a term of contempt, Paul could be expected to show that he cared nothing for such contempt and preferred that all men should be in the same state of contempt as he was. When writing about the sins of the world, "murder", "thieving", "evildoing" and being a busy body, Peter asks that no one should suffer as a Christian, thus linking it with the outside world. In other words Peter says, "Do not

suffer as a criminal through the abominable practices of this world, but if any of you suffer as a "worthy fellow" LET HIM NOT BE ASHAMED. (1 Pet. 4. 16.) Being a Christian was more likely to bring fear of death but to be regarded as a "worthy fellow" was something connected with shame and contempt. The same contempt was given to such people as "Quakers", "Methodists", "Puritans". With the exception of Peter's statement and as used by Agrippa just quoted, there is no record in the N.T. of the use of the name "Christian" by Paul or other writers. The Christians would not have had contempt for each other and would not have used a term which was known to be contemptuous, therefore it is quite understandable that Paul in his writings, never once used the term. If it had been coined as a term for a "follower of Christ" then we could expect Paul to use it. Whereas our point is not proved, we submit that the evidence in favour of "chrestians" far outweighs anything that may be said in favour of the term "Christians". Our conclusion therefore, is that the disciples were not called "Christians" in those early days but were contemptuously called "chrestians". The fact that the earliest profane writers known to us used the term "Christians" does not prove that this term was given at Antioch. The use of the term at the present time is in order. As long as we know who is meant, why change it?

#### Verse 27

"And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch."

"in these days..." - the days contemporary with the joint preaching of Saul and Barnabas.

"prophets..." - The prophets are usually confined to the O.T. for during the Christian era, there were disciples, apostles and individual teachers. Certain "prophets and teachers" are mentioned in Acts 13. 1. and amongst these are Barnabas and Saul. In Acts 15. 32. we find Judas and Silas described as "prophets". In Acts 21. 10. we find Agabus said to be a prophet. In 1 Cor. 12. 28. prophets are mentioned second after apostles. In verse 29 they are put between apostles and teachers. See also 1 Cor. 14. 32 and 37; Ephs. 2. 20; 3. 5; 4. 11. The prime function of a prophet was to teach but in doing so, he preached God's Word and, on other occasions, foretold of something which was to happen in the future. The use in this verse means teachers who were inspired by God when giving His message to the people.

"from Jerusalem..." they would have had contact with the apostles. That they came to Antioch shows that the Christian movement had got off to a good start through the hard work of the early teachers, followed by the offices rendered by Saul and Barnabas. Luke now shows us a reason for the rapid growth of the ecclesia at Antioch. If God blessed the work giving the increase and if "the Lord was with them", it is appropriate that inspired teachers should be sent there.

#### Verse 28

"And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar."

"Agabus..." - We now see why Luke introduced the coming of PROPHETS to Antioch. Here we are introduced to one of the prophets who was going to foretell of an important event. That he "stood up" shows that he preached his message in public. We meet Agabus again in Acts 21. 10. where he prophesies an event.

"signified..." - used by John to indicate a disclosure of the future. See Rev. 1. 1. See also John 12. 33; 18. 32; 21. 19.

"by the Spirit..." - as is usual with prophets. They do not speak their own thoughts but speak as they are moved by the Holy Spirit. See 2 Pet. 1. 20/21.

"there should be a great dearth..." - this helps to date the events we are now studying. Luke tells us that the events which were prophesied came to pass in the days of Claudius. This man was emperor of Rome from A.D. 41 to 54. The famine took place during the 4th, 5th, and 6th years of his reign which would make it A.D. 45, 46 and 47. Josephus states that during the reign of Claudius, "so great a famine was come upon us, that one-tenth deal was sold for four drachmae..." (Ant. Book 3. Chap. 10. 3.)

During the reign of Claudius, there was no single famine throughout the world. The famine mentioned by Josephus was one in Judea and not over the civilised world. In the 9th. year of his reign, there was a great famine in Greece. In Ant. 20. 5. Josephus mentions that Helena the King's mother, went to Jerusalem and saw the effect of the famine there. She sent to Alexandria for corn and to Cyprus for dried figs. (See also Book 20. chapter 5. section 2 for a further report of the same famine.) According to Josephus, the date is between A.D. 44 and 48.

"throughout all the world". - Throughout all the civilised world. To the Greeks, the world would mean their own world and no more. To the Roman the world would mean the Empire but not beyond. To the Jew, if they regarded the event in the same way, would limit the famine to Judea, Samaria and perhaps Syria. We have ~~no~~ however, that there is evidence that the famine extended to Greece.

"Claudius Caesar." - All commentators point out that the title "Caesar" should be omitted. It is not in the original.

#### Verse 29

"Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea."

"the disciples..." - this included everyone who disciplined themselves after the teaching of Christ.

"according to his ability..." - the disciples obviously believed the words of Agabus, the prophet, and began to prepare for the famine which they felt was sure to follow. The phrase here, in the original, means, "according as each had prospered". Actually the mood is passive "as each was prospered". One does not prosper. It is God who is the Giver of everything we have. He prospers some but not all.

"determined.." - this has nothing to do with inflexibility of purpose. It refers to the assessment of what each should contribute. The basis of reckoning was how much each had been prospered. This idea is carried into the next analysis which now follows.

"to send relief..." - if the famine was to be over the whole earth, then surely Antioch would suffer as much as would Jerusalem. The point here follows upon the determination of contributions. Whereas the people of Antioch were more prosperous than were the brethren of Jerusalem, it was fitting that they should help their less fortunate brethren. This shows that the difference in wealth was considerable. Alongside of this, there was also a filial devotion to the Mother Ecclesia. See Mark 12. 41/43; Luke 21. 1/4; Rom. 15. 25/27; 1 Cor. 16. 1/2; 2 Cor. 8. 1/15; 9. 1/15.

"which dwelt in Judea." Judea has always been poor due to the mountainous terrain, the poor rainfall, and the lack of arable land.

#### Verse 30

"Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul."

"Which also they did.." - This is complementary to the determination of verse 29. Having determined, they did. That is to say, whatever they had

decided upon, they put it into effect.

"the elders..." - The identity of these is found in 1 Pet. 5. 1. where the APOSTLE Peter describes himself as an ELDER. In 2 John 1. 1. John describes himself as an ELDER, he being the apostle. The same is found in 3 John 1. 1. These references show that the ELDERS were the high ecclesial officers. This is the first mention of the office of an ELDER in the ecclesial organisation. The Greek word is "presbuteros" from which is derived the word PRESBYTER. Fine's Expository Dictionary explains that the Greek word derived from "presbus" meaning "an old man" and is used to describe an elder who receives office because of long ecclesial experience. Therefore the money was taken to those who were put in charge of ecclesial affairs.

It is to be noted that the money was not sent to individuals and, in sending it, the donors did not attach any strings. Therefore the elders at Jerusalem could distribute the bounty to any deserving case, whether Jew or Greek.

"by the hands of Barnabas and Saul." "by the hands..." - through the mediation of. The ecclesia did not SEND Barnabas and Saul but sent the money with them. That means that Barnabas and Saul were planning to return to Jerusalem after their year of ministry was finished, so they seized upon the opportunity of sending the money with them. Relating the incident to the times in which it took place, we find that the ecclesia put a very high trust upon Barnabas and Saul.

Note that precedence is given to Barnabas over Saul. This is to continue until chapter 13 at verse 9 where Saul is mentioned for the last time and the name of Paul appears. (See verse 7) Compare with verse 43.

This was the first of the collections on behalf of ecclesias and Paul was to remember it in after years. See Acts 24. 17; Rom. 15. 25/27; Gal. 2. 10.

Paul's journey on this occasion is mentioned in Gal. 1. 18.



## Chapter 12

## Verse 1

"Now about that time the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church."

"Now about that time..." - The close connection with the previous chapter is shown by these few words. Usually the connecting word "Now" means "And" or "But". In this instance however, the connection is closer with "about that time" meaning "while all that was going on". What was going on is the ministry of Barnabas and Saul at Antioch recorded in Acts 11. 26/29, terminated by the visit of verse 30. It was when Barnabas and Saul were on their way to Judea that Herod stretched forth his hands as described in the verse before us.

"Herod the king..." - this is Agrippa 1, the grandson of Herod the Great. Having been brought up in Rome he became friendly with Caligula who, when he became Caesar, gave Agrippa the tetrarchy of Galilee. See Luke 3. 1. His father was Aristobulus and his mother was Bernice, daughter of Salome, Herod's sister, her father being Costobar. When Caligula died at the age of 41, the new Emperor Claudius gave him Judea and Samaria over which he ruled until his death. He observed all Jewish customs and paid the cost of many who wished to fulfil their Nazarite vows. He showed much more loyalty to Judaism than did his grandfather Herod who built the temple which bore his name. When his daughter Drusilla was engaged to Epiphanes, Son of Antiochus, king of Commagene, he made his future son-in-law undertake to be circumcised. This pro-Jewish character makes it understandable why he turned against the Christian movement and had James beheaded. It also explains why he had Peter arrested.

Josephus has a story about him (Ant. 19. 8. 2.) which is basically the same as that recorded in Acts 12. 21/23. He went to Caesarea to preside at the games which were being held there in honour of Caesar. He was surrounded by all the leading men of the province. On the second day he wore a robe of silver and when the first rays of the sun shone upon it, a wonderful effect was produced. The people thereupon cried, "Be propitious; if up to now we feared thee as a man, henceforth we confess that thou art more than mortal." Agrippa did nothing to stop this form of praise. Immediately he was seized with severe pains and died about 5 days after. The account by Josephus and that by Luke in this chapter should be compared.

This Herod is not the Herod of Matt. 2. 1 and 3 who was Herod the Great. During the end of his reign, Jesus was born. Also, he was not the Herod of Mark 6. 14. who was Herod Antipas, the uncle of Agrippa. Luke refers to Agrippa 1 as Herod as we find it in this verse. Luke gives his son the name of Agrippa. See Acts 25. 13.

"stretched forth his hands..." - he arrested. Luke uses this expression as in Acts 4. 3; 5. 18; 21. 27; See also Luke 20. 19; and 21.12.

"to vex..." - Greek "to affect with evil"; "to do evil to anyone physically"; "to maltreat"; "to harm". This tells us that dreadful persecution and illtreatment was handed out to the Christians.

"certain of the church". "certain of the ecclesia." Note that only one ecclesia is referred to, showing that the ecclesia at Jerusalem and in Judea was considered to be one ecclesia. Although there are many ecclesias in the True Christian Faith to-day, each having complete autonomy in themselves, they are nevertheless all part of one world-wide ecclesia.

The word "certain" means "those belonging to". This indicates that the persecution came upon those belonging to the ecclesia only, and not to other people. The ecclesias tended to be widely scattered after the persecution of Stephen but in the vicinity of Jerusalem, it was still one

ecclesia.

Verse 2

"And he killed James the brother of John with the sword."

This was Herod's way of pleasing the Jews. Eusebius "Ecclesiastical History" Book 2, chapter 9 page 58 states that the man who led James to judgment was so impressed by his testimony to the faith that he believed and asked James to forgive him. The inference is that James did forgive him but this is most unlikely. It is more than probable that James would tell him to ask God in prayer for forgiveness. The story is continued to say that both the guard and James were beheaded together. Laying aside this story which Eusebius quoted from another historian named Clement, a death by being beheaded is very likely how James met his end because Herod would know that this manner of death was considered disgraceful by the Jews.

Thus James received the death prophesied of him by Jesus. "Ye shall indeed drink the cup that I drink of..." Mark 10. 39. His brother John outlived him by many years and, in fact, whereas James was the first apostle as far as we are told, to be put to death, John his brother, was the last to die. The father of James and John was Zebedee. Jesus surnamed them "Boanerges" which means "The sons of thunder". (Mark 3. 17.)

In the four Gospels, Peter, James and John are often mentioned together in that order. When the two brothers are mentioned, it is usually "James and John" and never "John and James", except in Luke 9. 28. Again, the order of mention is "John the brother of James". The only time we get "James the brother of John" is in the verse before us.

"with the sword". Probably the decapitation for the reason as stated above. This is supported by the fact that "it pleased the Jews" as we shall see in the next verse.

Some commentators are astonished that the martyrdom of an apostle should receive so little publicity in Luke's work. One commentator gives the following extraordinary theory, - "For an apostle indeed it was a birthday, an entrance into true life and return to companionship with the Master" (1) (Sackham op. cit. page 174.) This absurd theory can be ignored. Luke's omission is quite in order. His present "treatise" is the LOGOS and the death of God's servants is not part of the LOGOS. Therefore Luke mentions it to preserve the historical record and to prepare us for the further persecutions which were to follow.

Verse 3

"And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)"

"it pleased the Jews,..." - the Jews would be pleased enough to see the prominent men of any religion other than their own suffer in this way but it would please them more if it happened to men who consorted with the despised Gentiles. The incident of Peter and Cornelius would be well known so the Jews would be pleased to see him taken by Herod because he had dropped Jewish standards by consorting with Cornelius. The word "pleased" means "proved acceptable".

"he proceeded further" - Luke used this phrase (which means "he added") in Luke 19. 11. This now carries the meaning that having killed James, he saw it would please the Jews if he took Peter because of his prominence amongst the apostles. Therefore he added to his crime by arresting Peter.

"Then..." - not the adverb of time but a continuative particle meaning "Now" or "And". In verse 1 it is translated as "now" and in verse 2 it is translated as "and".

"were the days of unleavened bread").) - This referred to the days of the Passover, the Law having been given in Exod. 12. 15/20. See also Deut. 16. 1/4. This period is also mentioned in Matt. 26. 17/19; Mark 14. 1; and 12; Luke 22. 1 and 7/14. We find a further reference to it in Acts 20. 6. The day according to the law was the 14th of Nisan which corresponds to our March or April. At the time of "unleavened bread", there would be a large multitude of Jews at Jerusalem, so Herod could be sure of pleasing the greatest number at this time. The fact that the murder of James "pleased the Jews" was significant of further trouble to come for the leading Christians. Having derived some popularity by this dastardly act, Herod would try something else. His test of public opinion so far had gone his way. Luke does not keep his readers waiting long before telling them of Herod's next move. He had Peter arrested.

Verse 4

"And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people."

"And when he had apprehended him,.." - lit. "whom having also siezed." The verb "apprehend" comes from the Greek "paizo" meaning to "take by force" "to take in a violent and hostile manner". For this we can be sure that Peter was arrested in a brutal manner and suffered some pain. John uses this word six times when describing attempts to arrest Jesus. See John 7. 30; and verses 32 and 44; 8. 20; 10. 39; 11. 57. In Rev. 19. 20. the violence to be done to "the beast and the false prophet" is referred to. In 2 Cor. 11. 32; Paul refers to the danger of arrest which threatened him in Damascus. In John 21. 3. there is an unusual use of the word in connection with catching fish.

"and delivered him..." - this expression follows that telling us that Herod put Peter in prison. "Putting in prison" is one act and "delivering" is another. It is mentioned to show the unusual precaution which was taken to ensure the safety of such an important prisoner. Luke does not waste words so we are warned of some extraordinary happening which would take place in spite of the precautions taken. We know enough of Luke's style by now to measure carefully everything he says. It would be quite unnecessary for Luke to add this precaution if something unusual did not happen later.

"four Quaternions of soldiers..." - One quaternion consists of four soldiers. It is more precise than using the modern term "squad" which indicates a small group of soldiers without saying how many in the group. This is not another way of saying "sixteen soldiers" but is exact in its meaning. There were four groups of four soldiers each. The night was divided into four watches, each watch lasting for three hours. When Jesus told Peter that before the cock crew twice, he would deny him thrice, Jesus did not have the literal crowing of a cock in mind, but referred to a particular time of the night. This is shown by Mark 13. 35. which mentions the watches by saying, "at even, (9 p.m) or at midnight (12 p.m.) or at the cockcrowing (3 a.m.) or in the morning (6 a.m.)" Note that each watch was three hours long so each quaternion of four soldiers would be on guard duty for three hours each over the night of twelve hours.

These special precautions were necessary, not because Herod thought Peter might escape through his own efforts, but because he had many friends amongst the Romans, such friends being interested in his teaching and his healing, so they might plan and bring about his escape. Two of the soldiers would be chained to him and would be at his side in the prison. The other two would be on guard at the doors, one at the inner door and the other at the outer.

"after Easter..." - this is a deliberate mis-translation of the Greek original which states Passover" and not Easter. The festival of Easter was brought into Christian favour in the Second Century A.D. The dispute as to

which date was to be observed was one of the reasons which induced Constantine to summon the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325. It then became an official church function. The Passover however, was of much earlier date.

"to bring him forth.." - to bring him to trial.

"to the people." - In their presence. Not to them as judges but as spectators so that, by means of false accusations, they may convince the people of their error in following such men. Their attention to the ritual of the Passover would help them to turn against the leaders of the New Faith.

#### Verse 5

"Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him."

"kept in prison..." - Greek, "Peter was watched by the guard".

"prayer was made without ceasing..." - this does not mean continuous prayer but refers to its intensity. The ecclesia would be very upset by this arrest and no doubt, many saw the violence of the soldiers in arresting Peter. Luke must mention that intensive prayer was made on behalf of Peter, so that his readers may derive a lesson from it. When they found themselves in a difficulty they prayed to God. Finding that the difficulty was greater than they first thought, and coming so quickly after the murder of James, they prayed to God more earnestly. A parallel case is found in the case of Jesus who, praying in the Garden of Gethsemane before his arrest, is recorded as "he prayed more earnestly". (Luke 22. 44.) The lesson is that prayer is necessary in all our difficulties and, if the difficulties are not resolved after the first prayer, then pray more earnestly.

"of the church..." - the ecclesia is still regarded as one, and they pray jointly, as one body.

"unto God..." - many might have preferred to petition Herod for Peter's safety. If the young men of an ecclesia are arrested for refusal to do military service and are put in prison because of that refusal, maybe we shall feel inclined to petition the Minister of Defence on behalf of those arrested. At the same time, we shall take the precaution of praying to God as well on the principle that it is better to have two methods of approach in case either break down. Our lesson is that we should not bother to approach men at all but should pray more earnestly as an ecclesia, united in the common weal. Men, like Herod, would do whatsoever is good for them and for their public image. God would act with utmost justice and mercy.

#### Verse 6

"And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison."

Luke is now about to show how effective was the earnest prayer which was made.

"would have brought him forth..." - Greek "was about to bring him forth". Herod was determined that Peter would go the same way as James but, having tried out public opinion by killing James, and finding that it pleased the people, he was determined to do this more openly in regard to Peter.

"the same night..." - the night before Herod would have brought him forth. That is, the night before the proposed bringing to trial before the people.

"Peter was sleeping..." - Peter relaxed in sleep for a number of possible reasons. (1) his reaction to the bruising of his violent arrest.

(2) The result of earnest prayer having been made for him. (3) utmost faith that God would deliver him. (1 Pet. 5. 7.) We shall see later how Peter's experience at this time fitted by analogy, the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus.

"between two soldiers..." - as he would have to be bound to each of them. See notes to verse 4.

"bound with two chains..." - one chain for each soldier. See notes to verse 4.

"the keepers before the door..." - the inner and outer door. See notes to verse 4.

#### Verse 7

"And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands."

"behold,..." - the usual warning of something very unusual about to happen or appear.

"the angel of the Lord..." - a messenger of Yahweh. The Greek word translated as "Lord" here is "Kurios" being the Greek equivalent for LORD in Hebrew. Where the spelling of LORD is all in capitals, the word is YAH<sup>W</sup>EH.

"came upon him..." - Greek "stood by him" i.e. stood at his side, or stood in his presence.

"a light shined in the prison." - it was a supernatural light brought by the presence of a Divine messenger. The "prison" is, in Greek, "oikema" meaning "a dwelling" being a mild expression instead of the harsh word "prison". The cruel place of incarceration has now become, through the presence of an angel, a place of temporary abode.

"smote Peter..." - the verb "smote" is used in Matt. 26. 31; and Matt. 26. 51; Luke 22. 49/50. to denote a smiting with violence. The angel did not strike lightly. Peter was deep in sleep and he had to be aroused quickly and firmly.

There is a possibility of a future analogy in the manner in which Peter was aroused. When Christ comes, he will send his angels to the four corners of the earth to gather his elect to the Judgment Seat. (Mark 13. 27.) When the elect receive the summons, they will be in either of two states, (1) they will be dead and in their graves, or (2) they will be alive at His coming. In either case, they will be summoned to come. Those who are in the prison of the grave, will be vigorously awakened. Both will be told to dress quickly and to come with all haste.

"raised him up..." - does not mean to pick up, nor to bring to a position of being erect, but means to awaken out of sleep. In the analogy drawn above, this would obviously refer to awakening the dead who sleep.

"Arise up, quickly..." - stand up in haste. As Jesus (and Peter on another occasion,) "I say unto thee, Arise" when raising the dead.

"his chains fell off from his hands." - Greek literally, "And fell off of him the chains out of the hands." By falling "out of the hands", we get the idea that the chains being heavy, were held off the wrists by being carried in the hands. When he was raised out of sleep, Peter would stand up and in doing so, hold his chains. Then he would let them go.

In the analogy of the return of Christ and the sending forth of His angels which has been drawn above, we see in this portion, a loosening of the

bonds of death for those who will be raised. For those who are alive at His coming, we see the loosening of the forces which bind us to where we are, so that we may be transported with haste to the Judgment seat. We can learn from this that when we are summoned to appear before the returned Lord, we shall have to go in haste in the same manner as at the time of the Passover, when the people had to be ready at all times to leave in haste. (Exod. 12.11.)

#### Verse 8

"And the angel said unto him, gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me."

"Gird thyself..." - Biblically, this is something which was always followed by action. (1 Sam. 17. 39; 1 Kings 18. 46; Jer 1. 17; John 13. 4; 1 Pet. 1. 13.) The long tunic was loosened during the night and fastened again in the morning. Note the precision of the angel's directions. He did not say simply "Get dressed" but detailed what articles of clothing had to be secured.

By analogy, when we get the call to the Judgment Seat, if left to ourselves, we might be so excited or anxious, that we shall forget many things which should be done before we are ready to go. We have no fear about this because we shall be told everything that is necessary for us to know as to what we should do.

"so he did." - Peter did not doubt. It was a severe test for him to be awakened out of a deep sleep to suddenly find himself in the presence of an angel and commanded to dress and follow the angel. A slight time lag is indicated by the phrase "and so he did" but this necessary for the dressing process. So, by analogy, when we get the call to the Judgment Seat, we shall be given time to do what we are told to do.

Peter did not hesitate. He had faith in the angel as God's Messenger. Likewise with us, we must not hesitate to do exactly what we are told when we are told.

#### Verse 9

"And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision."

"And he went out..." - lit. "And having gone out he followed him..." That is to say that Peter, having gone out of the prison cell, followed the angel, thus showing that the angel led the way.

"wist not that it was true..." - he was not aware that his experience in this matter was real and not just a dream.

"thought he saw a vision." The imperfect tense indicates that he continued to think that he saw a vision.

To continue the analogy which has been drawn above, it is very likely that when we receive the call to the Judgment Seat, we shall imagine that what we see is a dream. This will prevent any panic such as might happen if such a vision suddenly came upon us. As long as it lasts, we shall continue to see the whole "call" as in a dream.

#### Verse 10

"Then they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of 'is own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him."

"past the first and second ward..." - Greek "passing through first and second guard..." The "guard" in this sense is the place where prisoners are kept and means the first and second divisions of the prison. The Greek is "phulake" meaning a place of detention and is not "phulax" meaning the keeper of the place of detention. This dispenses with the easy speculation of thinking that they passed the first and second guards who were the other two soldiers of the quaernion on guard at the time. It now means that Herod had caused Peter to be put in a very central part of the prison so that access to him by his friends would be impossible and any chance he would have of getting away would be most improbable as he would have to go through so many divisions of the prison.

"the iron gate..." - a massive gate which was the last obstacle before the freedom of the city was reached. The question would arise "Who shall open for us the gate?" in similar manner to the question "Who shall roll us away the stone from the tomb?" (Mark 16. 3.)

"which opened to them of his own accord..." - "And when they looked they saw that the stone was rolled away..." thus runs the record from Mark 16. 4. In the same way, Peter saw the gate opening of its own accord. That is the way it would appear to him but to us, we know that the power of God opened the gate.

"they went out..." - The Bezan text adds "and descended the seven steps". These led from the prison gate to the roadway.

"passed on through one street..." - lit. "Went forward street one..." This means that either they went the length of one street or they went past one street to the next block.

"forthwith the angel departed from him." - Lit. "immediately stood the messenger from him." The word "stood from" must be regarded as the opposite of "came upon" of verse 7. In English the words of verse 7 could mean "appeared" and in verse 10 which we are studying now, the meaning could be "disappeared." It is not simply that in the one instance an angel appeared and in the next, it disappeared. The angel was there by his presence and in the second, the angel withdrew the presence.

In the future analogy, we shall be taken to the Judgment Seat but once on our way there, the angel who summons us will withdraw, leaving us to continue the journey by the Power of God.

#### Verse 11

"And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from the expectation of the people of the Jews."

"when Peter was come to himself..." - lit. "And the Peter having come into himself..." What had appeared as a dream was now apparant to him. It was real and not a dream. Peter's reaction to this realisation is now given.

"Now I know of a surety..." - "now I know really and truly, without any doubt..."

"the Lord hath sent..." - "the Lord hath sent forth.." or "sent out" thus signifying having sent a great distance, or sent forth from His Presence.

"his angel..." - his messenger. The English word "angel" has a meaning now which was not apparent when the N.T. was written, nor for that matter, when the O.T. was written. In all cases, the word "angelos" means a messenger without any implication that the messenger is a Divine one. The Divine nature of the heavenly messenger is to be found only in the words uttered by that messenger or in his acts. There was no distinction drawn between a heavenly angel and a human one, except that which was obvious from

what he said or did.

This has led some critics to seek to find some practical reason for Peter's escape. The angel was not necessarily a Divine one and could have been a human collaborator working from the inside. In view of the great detail given by Luke as to the obstacles to be overcome, it is almost impossible for the messenger to have been a human one. In this order, Peter had to pass the following hurdles: (1) loose his chains without disturbing the guards. (2) collect his clothes and get dressed (3) leave the cell after getting the door open. (4) get past the first guard. (5) get past the second guard. (6) pass through the iron gate. (7) get the iron gate open.

It is extraordinary that scholars should seek for a practical way in which an apparent miracle could have been performed. To us, it is obvious that a miracle had been performed.

"hath delivered me..." - the verb used is the same as that in Acts 7. 34. which speaks of the LORD delivering His people from Egypt. This was done during the Passover. This surely, is a clever play on words because at that time, the Passover was about to be held and Peter was delivered by the special "passover" of God delivering His servant from the people, and from Herod. Thus the analogy of the people of Israel being saved from Pharaoh and the people of Egypt, was repeated in a very small way by Peter being saved from Herod and the people.

"all the expectation of the people..." - with reference to a watching for or expectation of something of evil. The only other use of this word in the N.T. is in Luke 21. 26. The people would be looking forward to something which would be evil to Peter but pleasure to the people.

"of the Jews." - All the Jewish nation who were present at that time. It does not refer to any particular individuals.

Verse 12

"And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many gathered together praying."

"when he had considered the thing..." - when he had given thought to the circumstances of his deliverance. The word occurs again in Acts 14. 6.

"he came to the house..." - implies that he "came upon" the house by chance. He was deep in thought concerning his deliverance and in this deep mental state, he suddenly found himself at a certain house.

"Mary..." - the Greek in regard to this name is in the genitive form "Mirias" which is derived from Miriam, a common Hebrew name. We are not told who her husband was so we must assume that she was a widow at this time. She was the sister of Barnabas. (Col. 4. 10.)

"whose surname was Mark..." - in agreement with the custom of the times which was to give a person a Roman surname to add to his very common Hebrew name of John. Thus, his surname would be Marcus. The Greek form of the name is Markos. John Mark was a close friend of Peter for we find Peter referring to him many years later. (1 Pet. 5. 13.) Whereas Paul did not hold him in much esteem at first, (Acts 15. 38.) he later regarded him with great admiration and affection (2 Tim. 4. 11. Philem. 24.) The surname "Mark" would be known as the "gens" name.

"many were gathered together praying." Prayer was often made by the brethren and sisters but on this occasion, they could very well have been praying because of the present emergency.



**FURTHER NOTES ON MARK:** "John" was his Hebrew name and Mark was his "gens" or Gentile name. From Col. 4. 10. we learn that he was a cousin of Barnabas or his nephew. "Sister's son" could mean that Barnabas and Mark were sons of two brothers, two sisters or brother and sister of the same family. When Saul and Barnabas left Jerusalem to return to Antioch, Mark went with them. (Acts 12. 25.) He later went with them to Cyprus. (Acts 13. 4/5.) When they got to Perga in Pamphylia, Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem, thus incurring the anger of Saul, who by that time, was called Paul. (Acts 13. 13.) Paul therefore, refused to have Mark with him and this refusal precipitated a quarrel between Paul and Barnabas and split the Paul/Barnabas preaching team. (Acts 15. 36/39.) Many years later he was to join Paul in Rome. By this time, he was a more reliable person and was Paul's trusted companion. (Col. 4. 10. and Philem 24.) Mark left Rome and during Paul's second imprisonment there, we read of him asking Timothy to come to Rome and bring Mark with him. (2 Tim. 4. 11.)

Mark was also, in his earlier days, a friend of Peter's. In later years we find him mentioned by Peter in 1 Pet. 5. 13. Many scholars think that the second gospel story which bears Mark's name was written by him at the dictation of Peter. There is no proof of this.

#### Verse 13

"And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda."

"as Peter knocked..." - in the Greek original, Peter's name is not mentioned. The passage reads, literally, "Having knocked at the door of the gate..."

"the door of the gate..." - this is the same as the "gate" of Acts 10. 17. In those days, the door led on to the street but once this was open, access was available into the house. Having passed through the doorway, a visitor would come to the courtyard and would have access to the rooms leading off. Sometimes the doorway was a double door. One leading into a vestibule, and the other leading to the courtyard.

"a damsel..." - a maidservant. This showed that Mary was fairly well off or she had such a large boarding house, that she was obliged to have a maid-servant to help her.

"to hearken..." - the meaning here is to listen from a place of concealment. The word is used in the Classics to denote "answering the door." One would hardly "listen" if one heard the knocking and as a result of so hearing, went to the door. The margin of the A.V. states "to ask who was there" and there is a great deal of truth in this. Having heard the knocking, the person going to the door would ask who was there and would listen from a place of concealment for the reply.

"Rhoda." The name means "a rosebush". It does not apply to a rose but to the bush which produces it. Thus it is allied with the word "rhodon" a rose. With his characteristic love of people, Luke mentions her name. This lends charm to his narrative.

#### Verse 14.

"And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in and told how Peter stood before the gate."

"when she knew Peter's voice." - Lit. "and knowing the voice of the Peter..." This could mean that Peter had been in the habit of visiting the house but we cannot be sure of this. They may have heard him speaking in Solomon's Porch or some other place. Perhaps his accent as a Galilean may once again have "betrayed" him as in Matt. 26. 73. and Mark 14. 70.

"she opened not the gate for gladness..." - Luke introduces a very human touch here showing his capacity for noticing details about human behaviour. We can imagine the household at prayer, earnestly pleading to God to spare His servant Peter, when suddenly they hear a knock at the door and Rhoda, going there, suddenly finds Peter there. Her joy would compete with her utter astonishment and her joy at knowing Peter was safe would compete with her joy knowing that God had answered their prayers. "Joy" and "gladness" are the same in the Greek as we see from a comparison of Matt. 13. 44. and Luke 24. 41. The first of these is used in a parable and the second is the historical record of the joy when the disciples knew Jesus had risen from the dead.

"ran in..." - she hurriedly turned from the vestibule and ran to the room where they were gathered together in prayer.

"told how..." - Greek, "give intelligence"; "bring word from any person or place"; "relate"; "inform of"; "tell what had occurred". The same verb is used in Acts 4. 23; 5. 22; 25; 11. 13; (shewed us) and in verse 17 of this chapter, we find "go shew these things".

"the gate". - See notes to verse 13.

#### Verse 15

"And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel."

"they..." - the people of the house who had been gathered together in prayer. The word is also used in this way in Acts 10. 10. See also Acts 5. 12.)

"Thou art mad." - The same one Greek word from which this expression is translated is also used in John 10. 20. It is also used against Paul by Festus. See Acts 26. 24/25.

"constantly affirmed..." - also comes from one Greek word which carries this meaning. The same verb is used by Luke 22. 59. and it is also used about Peter but in a different way. The meaning carries a sense of persistence, giving "persisting in confidently affirming."

"it was even so." - Lit. "thus to be." making the sentence, "she persisted in confidently affirming this to be." The same expression occurs in Acts 7. 1.

"It is his angel." - See notes to verse 11. Basically the word means "messenger" and this is very likely what the people in Mary's house thought. They knew that Peter was in prison and they knew that escape from such a place was impossible. But inasmuch as in certain prisons, people could visit certain prisoners such as those who were in for debt, and prisoners in certain categories could send messages outside, it is reasonable to suppose that the people thought something like that had occurred here.

Some commentators quote Matt. 18. 10. to prove the existence of a personal guardian angel who looks after individuals. This cannot be proved from the text of Matt. 18. 10. because Jesus refers to the fact that angels do behold the face of his Father and control over affairs in this world has been given to angels. From the beginning the Elohim have been closely involved with this world and the human race which was made in their likeness.

The idea of a Guardian angel is of remote antiquity and starts from Gen. 48. 16. This verse however, is a prophecy of the future and does not cover anything that was with Jacob in those days. He says in his blessing upon Joseph that the angel, or messenger of the LORD "redeemed him from all evil". He used the past tense but the utterance dealt with a time in the future when a particular messenger of God would redeem him from all evil.

During his lifetime, Jacob had not been redeemed from all evil so his remarks must refer to a future time. This particular angel was JESUS who was yet to come at the time of the blessing. It definitely did not refer to Jacob's alleged guardian angel.

Another passage quoted is Heb. 1. 14. but this verse discusses the position of the angels who are public serving spirits who are sent to look after the interests of those who will be heirs of salvation. That is to say, they go forth to care for the household of faith as a group but not as individuals. One may quote Psa. 34. 7. which says, "The angel of the Lord encampeth about them that fear him and delivereth them". Here one angel is mentioned as caring for many people. If we cry unto the LORD, He will save us. This is the teaching of verse 6 of that Psalm. Verse 7 follows naturally upon such a teaching but does not indicate that we all have guardian angels. Exod. 14. 19; 23. 20; 32. 34; 33. 2. mention an angel who is to look after the fortunes of the people of Israel and does not in any way refer to a guardian angel looking after an individual.

Two or three centuries before Christ, the doctrine of angels had taken hold of Judaism. By the time of Jesus, the Sadducees strongly opposed the doctrine. The conclusion is that very probably the people of the house still believed in guardian angels but this is nowhere taught in Scripture. Nowhere do we find a teaching that at birth an angel is sent to look after us. Such a theory cannot be proved from the verse we are studying nor from any of the verses mentioned in the discussion.

#### Verse 16

"But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished."

"Peter continued knocking..." - in view of the urgency in getting under cover, there is no doubt that Peter continued knocking in increasing anxiety. This was one place where the soldiers would come to look for him so something had to be done quickly. The delay in opening the door must have worried him a lot.

"they had opened the door..." - if Rhoda had returned to open the door, the passage would have read "she opened the door". But now that "they" did the opening, it shows that they all, with one accord got up and went to the door in their excitement at the prospect of seeing Peter.

"they were astonished." - The clue to their astonishment must be found in verse 12 which records them all as praying together. They must have been praying for Peter's release and while praying, the answer comes. Their astonishment must have been full because his release was most unlikely, his escape impossible, yet their prayers had been answered. How had this been done? They would all want to know. With Peter in their midst, some would be raising their voices in excitement and astonishment. Luke's narrative builds up a very natural situation under such circumstances.

#### Verse 17

"But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of prison. And he said, Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place."

"beckoning..." - the Greek word indicates a shaking up and down of the hand to indicate silence. See Acts 13. 16; 19. 33; and 21. 40. This verb is used in Acts and in no other place in the Bible.

"hold their peace." - The Greek word is only one word and indicates "be silent". This request was necessary because of their excitement at seeing him. Excitement would lead to a lack of caution. One thing they

wanted least of all was to draw attention to themselves.

"Go shew these things..." - Report these happenings..." As stated above, Mary's house would be one of the places to which the soldiers would come in their search for Peter. Therefore he had to go and his departure was extremely urgent. There was no time to lose. Obviously certain prominent brethren were not there so Peter asked that news of the happenings to be transmitted to them.

"James..." - the Lord's brother. He was to take a very prominent part in ecclesial affairs. We shall read of him again in the Acts.

Peter now walked out into the night and disappeared so completely that he was not found. There is no record where he went into hiding so it must forever remain a mystery. In case any sect should insist that he went to Rome, he does make a very brief appearance in Jerusalem again in Acts 15. 7. but apart from this, he disappears from Luke's story and does not re-appear. Luke closes the chapter with a record of what took place in regard to Herod and this brings to a close the first portion of his story.

#### Verse 18

"Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter."

"Now as soon as it was day..." - lit. "Having become and day..."

"no small stir..." - lit. "no small commotion..." this being understandable amongst the soldiers who were responsible for the safe incarceration of the prisoner. Under Roman Law, they would be liable to suffer the same penalty as would have been given to the prisoner, had he not escaped. The phrase here occurs again in Acts 19. 23. these being the only occurrences in Scripture.

#### Verse 19

"And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and there abode."

"sought for him..." - In Greek the whole phrase translates "Herod, and having sought him, and not having found, having examined the guards,..." indicating a continuous action or thorough search.

Under Roman military law and practice, Herod would command that a search be made. If the prisoner were not found, he would institute a Court Martial where the guards would be put under trial.

"they should be put to death." - The Greek means "to be led off" in which case, the translation could well be "commanded that they be led off to punishment" without stating what the punishment was. The punishment would most probably have been death.

Taking up the analogy again, when we are taken to the Judgment Seat of Christ, a search for us will be made but we shall not be found.

"went down from Judea to Caesarea." - Herod went from Jerusalem to Caesarea on the coast. Jerusalem is high above sea level therefore the journey from there to the coast could only have been downwards. But both places are in Judea. Judea in the broad sense was the whole province and in the narrow sense, referred to the limits of the Jewish realm of Judah. See Acts 21. 10. for a similar use of this phrase. This was to be Herod's last journey.

## Verse 20

"And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, having made Blastus the King's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's country."

"highly displeased..." - see margin "bare a hostile mind intending war". This marginal reference goes a little too far because Rome would not have permitted a war between two of its dependencies. Therefore the reference should stop at "bare a hostile mind..." The Afrikaans Bybel is more correct with "En Herodes was verbitterd teen die Tiriers en Sidoniers." He was not so much displeased "WITH" as hostile "AGAINST".

"them of Tyre and Sidon:.." - Ports arise because of several reasons. Sometimes all are present (such as London) and sometimes only one or perhaps two localising factors are present. In the case of Tyre and Sidon, there was water deep enough up to the shore line to make a harbour possible but the hinterland was poor and would not justify the building of a harbour. Nevertheless, Tyre developed because of its entrepot trade and because of the skill and industry of the people, plus the large mercantile fleet which had been built up. See Isaiah chapter 23, and Ezekiel chapters 27 and 28. Note the enormous import and export trade which was carried on. Tyre and Sidon, the two cities of Phenicia, were dependent upon Palestine for essential supplies. For this reason there had been a close commercial relationship between the cities and Palestine. This had been in evidence since the days of Solomon. (See 1 Kings chapter 5.)

"they came with one accord to him..." - having found that the quarrel, whatever it was, was turning out to their disadvantage, they came jointly to Herod to restore the former harmony which had existed for so long. The "one accord" suggests that they may not have been in agreement before, but now, under difficult circumstances, they were of one mind.

"Blastus..." - this is his only appearance in Scripture.

"the king's chamberlain..." - lit. the one in charge of the king's bed chamber. In modern usage of the term, he was the one who was the king's chief officer of the realm.

"having made....him their friend..." - lit. "having persuaded..." They could have accomplished this diplomatic success by bribery.

"desired peace..." - does not mean that they simply wanted peace but that they asked for it. Afrikaans "vrede gevra" (asked for peace).

"their country was nourished..." - shows in what manner their country was dependant upon Judea. They imported food.

## Verse 21

"And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them."

"upon a set day..." - a day by arrangement. See notes to verse 1. It was the second day of the games which were held at Caesarea.

"arrayed..." - see notes to verse 1 for the impressive clothes which he wore. The verb is the middle voice which means he was so arrayed for his own advantage. This shows the vanity of Herod Agrippa which was the cause of his downfall. Had he been humble when elaborate praise was heaped upon him, God might have spared him to live.

"sat upon his throne..." - an elevated seat. It is translated as "judgment seat" in Acts 18. 12, 16 and 17; 25. 6, 10 and 17. See also Matt.

Matt. 27. 19; John 19. 13; Rom. 14. 10; 2 Cor. 5. 10. Josephus says that this incident took place in the theatre. If this is so, the theatre still exists and the higher seat can be seen.

"made an oration..." - Greek "harangued the people..."

"unto them". - The "them" must refer to the delegates from Tyre and Sidon.

#### Verse 22

"And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man."

See notes to verse 1 for the comment of Josephus on this event.

"the people..." - Bullinger defines this word as "the people as a municipality, free citizens enjoying a popular constitution". The Greek word is "demos" from which we get the English "democracy". The Greek "laos" from which we get the English "laity" is used to refer to the people of God, Israel or Gentile believers. For Israel see Matt. 2. 6; 3. 23; John 11. 50; Acts 4. 8; Heb. 2. 17. For Christians as the people of God see Acts 15. 14; Titus 2. 14; Heb. 4. 9; 1 Pet. 2. 9. The word in this verse, then, refers to the Greeks.

"gave a shout..." - acclaimed (Herod)". Loudly acclaimed Herod. This shows that the meeting must have composed Greeks and not Jews. No Jew would ever shout out such a thing for a man otherwise he would be guilty of blasphemy.

#### Verse 23

"And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the spirit."

"the angel of the Lord..." - see notes to Acts 5. 19.

"smote him..." - In Book 19. chapter 3 paragraph 2 Josephus said of this incident, "Upon this the king did neither rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery." Then follows an account of how Josephus presently saw an owl sitting on a rope over his head and felt this was an evil omen. He fell into a state of deep sorrow. Just then a severe pain arose in his belly. Josephus continues, "He therefore looked upon his friends, and said, 'I whom ye 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...'" As he spoke his pain became very violent and he was carried to the place where he died about five days later, in the 54th year of his age and the 7th year of his reign. Historians assign the date 1st August A.D. 44 to his death.

The verse before us may give the idea that he died immediately whereas in the account of Josephus, it is evident that Agrippa died about 5 days later. In the verse, the word "immediately" applies to the verb "smote" and not the his death,

Luke omits any mention of Agrippa seeing the owl and attaching an evil significance to it. We mention it here to show that the king was full of superstition. Such foolishness should be rejected by all truly God-fearing people. There is no room in true religion for superstition of any sort.

"he gave not God the glory..." - lit. "gave not glory to God". The expression "glory to God" is also found in Luke 17. 18; John 9. 24; Rom. 4.20; and Rev. 11. 13. He allowed praise to be given to himself and made no

attempt to correct the people in their misdirected adulation.

"eaten of worms..." - this is the explanation given by a medical man. What cause of death would be given now is hard to imagine. One does not die by permitting worms to eat one without making an attempt at having the irritation removed. One could hazard a guess that Herod had a sudden attack of appendicitis and that it burst. After his death, an autopsy may have been carried out and the abominable appearance of the intestines then observed. Luke must have had a reason for giving us this information for, as we have noticed, he is very sparing in his use of words and he would not add those details just from a point of view of medical interest. Worms are used in Scripture to show that if children of Israel did not obey implicitly the commandments of God in regard to the gathering of manna, it would breed worms and stink. That is to say it would be of no use to them. (Exod. 16. 20.) Again, if the people of Israel would not hearken to the voice of the LORD their God, then if they planted vineyards, they would not eat of the fruit thereof because the worms would eat it. (Deut. 28. 39.) In the case of Job, he was shown that life is a hard bondage from which there is no escape other than death. He said, "My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust; my skin is broken, and become loathsome". (Job 7. 5.) This suggests that he was stricken with leprosy which symbolically, represents the slow, inevitable decline towards death to which we are all subject because of the sinful nature of our flesh. Yet Job knew that in spite of the complete obliteration of his body by "worms" - the symbol of eternal death, he would yet stand in the presence of God. (Job 19. 26.) This analogy of worms and death is also found in Job 21. 26. In Isaiah 14. 11. it is used as a metaphor to depict the everlasting destruction of Babylon. See also Exod. 16. 24; Job 17. 14; 24. 20; 25. 6; (twice) Psa. 22. 6; Isa. 14. 11; 41. 14; 51. 8; 66. 24; Jonah 4. 7. In the N.T. Mark 9. 44 and 48. In all cases the worm symbolises complete destruction.

The conclusion therefore, is that failure to give God the glory, and to disobey God by being puffed up with a feeling of one's own importance and pride, dooms one to eternal destruction.

"gave up the ghost (spirit)" - see notes to Acts 5. 5.

Verse 24

"But the word of God grew and multiplied."

"But..." - a contrast is drawn between the unpleasant death of Herod and the virile growth of the new Faith as it is in Jesus.

"the word of God..." - lit. "the LOGOS of the God..." If Jesus was the LOGOS made flesh (John 1. 14.) then he was the Plan and Purpose of God made flesh. In like manner, the spiritual Body of Christ was made flesh too on this occasion, grew. The point to note is that the "word of God" could not grow. The Divine Plan and Purpose was not something small in the beginning so that it had to grow bigger. The Body of believers was small in the beginning and had to grow. After the death of Herod, it did grow whereas a proud man like Herod was to be eaten of worms.

"and multiplied." - lit. "it was multiplied". That is, its numbers were added to as time went on.

Verse 25

"And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark."

"Barnabas and Saul..." - Still retaining the same order of mention. Compare Acts 13. 7. with Acts 13. 43. where Saul is now Paul and is accepted as an apostle.

"returned from Jerusalem..." - Acts 11. 30. recorded their going to Jerusalem. Now they are coming back to Antioch. They had gone to Jerusalem in anticipation of the predicted famine. Some commentators state that Barnabas and Saul returned to Jerusalem and, in a sense, this is correct. They worked in Judea and returned to Jerusalem before proceeding to Antioch.

"fulfilled their ministry" - the word "ministry" means a service in which there was some work to do. It does not necessarily refer to preaching. The work which Saul and Barnabas had to do was to distribute the charity which had been entrusted to them as we saw in Acts 11. 30. The work done was not confined to Jerusalem but was spread through Judea.

The year given to this work is A.D. 46 which is two years after the death of Herod.

"John, whose surname was Mark." See notes to verse 12.

The First Volume of Luke's narrative of the growth and development of the early Christian Church now draws to a close with the return of Saul and Barnabas to Jerusalem, and the disappearance of Peter. The first volume can be called the Story of Peter and the second volume can be called the Story of Paul. The first volume has concerned itself mainly with the preaching of the Gospel to the Jewish people and has shown how the work developed in spite of the antagonism of the Sanhedrin. The work amongst the Jews reached its climax with the conversion of the 5,000. (Acts 4. 4.) Thereafter, Jewish converts to the new faith became more and more difficult to get. The Jews found it almost impossible to surrender the ritual of the Law, especially that of circumcision and this was a big stumbling block to many Jews, even to those newly converted. These difficulties added to the reluctance of the Jewish people to share the precious Promises with the Gentiles, led to the teaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles. It is the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles by Paul that forms Luke's second volume from chapter 12 onwards. It is at this stage that Jerusalem declines and Antioch arises as a centre from which the gospel is taught.

We shall close this Volume dealing with the work of Peter by giving a summary of the teaching of his recent imprisonment and his remarkable release therefrom.

#### The Teaching Plan of Peter's Imprisonment and Escape.

It is possible that this story was not given purely for the sake of interest. Luke does not waste words and, being inspired by God to write as he did, gave us an allegorical picture of what the resurrection or the call to the Judgment Seat will be like.

Verse 5 "Peter therefore was kept in prison..." Those who are alive when Christ comes are kept in the prison of sinful flesh and of mortality. Those who are dead, are kept in the prison of the grave.

"But prayer was wont to be made..." During the existence of the Ecclesiastical, prayer is always made for all brethren and sisters to be sustained during their time of weakness against sin.

Verse 6 "when Herod would have brought him forth..." This suggests that before Christ comes, the True Christian Believer will be tried severely by the Government of the land in which he lives.

"Peter was sleeping..." Either those who are dead are sleeping in the grave, or those who are alive are literally asleep in their beds.



"bound with two chains..." apart from the "chain of the Hope of Israel" by which both the dead and those who are alive are bound, there is also the bond of death for the death for the dead and sinful flesh for those who are alive. These are the two chains.

Verse 7 "the angel of the Lord came upon him..." The angel comes to awaken the dead or to call those who are alive (and asleep) to the Judgment Seat.

"a light shined..." If we are raised or awakened at night, we shall need light. This will be provided by the presence of an angel.

"he smote Peter..." The manner of calling us out of sleep.

"his chains fell off..." The chains of death or the chains which bind us to earth.

Verse 8 The angel gives full instructions as to how we shall dress and gives us time in which to obey. He will see to it that we do not omit to do anything we are told. We shall not suffer the embarrassment of appearing before the Judgment Seat half dressed. We shall all be told to dress in a modest manner. The angel will lead the way.

Verse 9 "wist not that it was true..." Just as Peter thought it was all a dream, so we shall also think our call is a dream. Thus we shall be spared the utter panic which could besiege us at such a call. As with Peter, we shall think that "we saw a vision".

Verse 10 They passed the first and second ward. This indicates that the angel will guide us through the place of Judgment. If we come through that test, we shall be given immortality. This is indicated by the iron gate which opens on its own accord. Then we pass into the city and the angel departs from us when we get immortality.

Verse 11 As Peter "came to himself" so we shall come to ourselves and realise that it was the Will of God that we are where we are.

Verse 12 Peter came to a house where they were all praying. If we are given a place in the Kingdom of God, we shall come to a gathering where they are all praying, giving thanks to God for His Mercy towards them.

The conclusion of the story tells how the people were delighted to see Peter. In like manner, when we enter the company of the redeemed, there will be great rejoicing when we see each other.

Introduction to the ministry of Paul.

The closing verses of Acts 11 tells us that Saul was brought to Antioch because he could be of great use to the growing ecclesia. Then at the end of the chapter, Barnabas and Saul are sent on a journey to Jerusalem with help for the poor in view of the impending famine. After the story about Peter being released from Prison, we come to the end of chapter 12 which tells us that Saul and Barnabas returned to Jerusalem. Between chapter 11 verse 29 and 30 and chapter 12 verse 25, the story of Herod's persecution and Peter's imprisonment appears. This is dated A.D. 44. Acts 11. 29 states that it was decided to send relief to the brethren at Jerusalem. Some commentators say that relief was not sent to the apostles because the apostles were not there. This inference however, is not correct. We have seen from chapter 6 verse 2 that it was considered unwise that the apostles should "serve tables" but that they should devote themselves to preaching. Therefore, it would have been out of order to have sent the relief to the apostles as it had already been decided that they would delegate this work to others. Note that the

same Greek word "diakoneo" is used in Acts 6. 2. for "serve" tables as Paul uses in 2 Cor. 8. 19. where it is translated as "administered" with reference to the distribution of gifts for the ecclesias.

Paul does not mention this visit to Jerusalem in any of his epistles but gives brief details of his later visits in Gal. 1. 18. and 2. 1. This may indicate that the visit mentioned by Luke in Acts 11. 29/30 - Acts 12. 25 was not made specifically to Jerusalem but to the district. The effect of this visit would be to make Paul better known to the ecclesias and to give him ecclesial experience in difficult circumstances which would stand him in good stead in the years to come when he wrote his epistles to the various ecclesias and helped them with their problems.

The narrative prepares us for the history of Paul and his preaching and gives us information concerning the growth of Antioch as the new Christian centre.

# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

## Chapter 13

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### PART 2

#### THE ACTS OF PAUL

##### PREACHING TO THE UNCIRCUMCISION

##### FROM ANTIOCH TO ROME

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Part 1 which covered chapters 1 to 12, gave an outline of the preaching of the Gospel to the Circumcision and showed the progress of the Ecclesias from Jerusalem to Antioch. In Volume 2, we are to read about the preaching of the Gospel to the Uncircumcision and follow the progress of the ecclesias from Antioch to Rome. The field of endeavour was confined during Part 1 to the Holy Land but in Part 2, it extends into the Roman Empire, using as its base, not the Jerusalem of Part 1, but the new metropolis, the city of Antioch. It is from this city that Paul's First Missionary Journey is about to start. The year when all this began was about A.D. 46.

#### Verse 1

"Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul."

"in the church..." - literally "in the being ecclesia..." The word "being" creates a difficulty for the translator for it could mean the "existing" ecclesia as it then was, or it could draw a distinction between the true church as opposed to the false one. The false church would be the one following Judaism. The R.V. has "in the church that was *there*" with the word "there" in italics. The R.S.V. simply says "Now in the church..." The Afrikaans has a convincing "in die plaaslike gemeente" (in the local congregation) which refers to the local ecclesia in existence at that time and in that place.

"prophets..." - A prophet is often identified in Scripture by the words "The Word of the LORD came unto me saying,..." or "Thus saith the LORD,..." Then would follow a teaching of some sort, whether it foretold something which was to happen in the future or whether it was an exhortation to better living and behaviour or an appeal to turn from a false way and return to the LORD. In the stirring events which introduced the coming Christian era, prophets were heard. We find this in the "magnificat" of Mary (Luke 1. 46/55.) and Zacharias (Luke 1. 68/79). Another was Simeon (Luke 2. 29/35) and Anna (Luke 2. 38.)

On the day of Pentecost, the disciples prophesied and spoke in other tongues. In Acts, we read of several prophets namely, Stephen who was a prophet after the style of Elijah or John the Baptist. Acts 2. 17. records the prophecy of Joel who wrote that at this time, "your sons and your daughters shall prophesy..." Up to this stage in our studies, we met Agabus in Acts 11. 28. who prophesied the famine which was to come and we shall meet him again in Acts 21. 10. when he prophesied of the captivity of Paul by the Romans. In this chapter (Acts 21.8.) we also read of the four daughters of Philip who prophesied. The early apostles were also prophets. As proof of this we find prophecies in 2 Peter 3. 10. and Jude 14/15. In 1 Cor. 12. 28. Paul lists them in this order:- Apostles, prophets, teachers,.... Prophets and teachers were associated with one another as we see from Ephes. 2. 20. and Ephes. 3. 5. In Ephes. 4. 11. they are listed as follows:- apostles; prophets; evangelists; pastors and finally teachers.

As the years went by, prophets became a class of persons and some of them like the damsel of Acts 16. 16. had a large following. Others were false prophets who did the Christian Faith great and lasting harm. See Acts 20. 29/31. and 2 Tim. 4. 3.

"and teachers..." - Under the Law of Moses, when the Law itself was codified and commentaries were composed on the Scriptures, men were required by the worshippers to teach the Scriptures. Such men were called "scribes" and "lawyers", such men opposing Jesus on many occasions. They were addressed as "Rabbi" and "Master". Jesus was so addressed as we see from Matt. 8. 19; 12. 38; 19. 16; 22. 16, 24, 36; 23. 8, 10; 26. 18, 25; and many others in Mark, Luke and John. The Greek is "didaskalos" meaning "teacher of scholars and disciples" with special reference to those who were acquainted with the Word of God. The title Rabbi comes from "Rabbi" meaning a guide and a great Master, this being a title of honour in Jewish schools. In John 20. 16, we get "Rabboni" which is a title of the highest dignity amongst the Rabbi. See Matt. 23. 7, 8; John 1. 38, 49; 3. 2, 26; 6. 25.

From the day of Pentecost onwards, the disciples became teachers and their method of teaching has become clear to us after our studies. The teaching would cover the death and resurrection of Jesus; his moral teaching; the ritual of worship; discipline within the household of faith and finally, the Divine Plan and Purpose as is shown by the strong meat of the Word. It can now be understood that Luke mentions "prophets and teachers" with a purpose to show that although the ecclesi- at Antioch was a comparatively new one, it was well-equipped with the right type of men to build up a following.

"as..." - both the R.V. and the R.S.V. omit the word and the Afrikaans Bible has "naamlik" (namely). The Greek word "te" means "both". This makes the sense "not only Barnabas but Simeon... etc."

"Barnabas..." - named first as he no doubt, was the most senior man there, not only in age but also in knowledge and repute. He had been sent to Jerusalem. (Acts 11. 30.) This would distinguish him above the others.

"Simeon..." - His Roman name was "Niger" as mentioned here. This would suggest that he was an African with a typical dark brown skin which is more black than brown in West African negroes and probably not as light brown as is the skin of some South African Bantu people of Abenguni origin. He may have been Simon of Cyrene who was compelled to bear the cross (stake) of Jesus. (Matt. 27. 32; Mark 15. 21; Luke 23. 26.)

"Lucius of Cyrene..." - also from Cyrene and may have been a friend of Simon. He may be the same "Lucius" whom Paul salutes in Rom. 16. 21. In this verse, Paul refers to Lucius as his kinsman and this term must be regarded as the same word in Acts 10. 24. where it means a very special friend. These possibilities are interesting but, unless we are certain, they remain pure speculation and are given here merely from the point of view of interest only. This type of identification can be carried too far and we can then say that the Lucius (Luke) of Rom. 16. 21. is the Luke of the Gospel and Acts. There is a possibility of course, that this is true, but it is highly improbable.

"Manaen..." - The Greek is "Herod's foster brother". Some margins give this rendering. The Hebrew is "Menahem" as we see from 2 Kings 15. 14. In his "Antiquities" chapter 15, section 10 paragraph 5, Josephus says that Manaen was the son of a prophet who had predicted that Herod would become king, this having been foretold when Herod was still a boy. When the prediction came true, Manaen received a special favour from Herod because of his father's accurate prophecy. He was brought up with Herod's sons and later became a Christian. Luke must have been aware of some connection between Manaen and Herod, because he mentions the name of the king. In Luke 8. 3. he mentions another of Herod's household who became a Christian, this being Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward. The Herod in this case was Herod Antipas the tetrarch.

"and Saul." Here he is mentioned last. Luke writes with great care because he does not give Saul a higher position until he has earned it. He held an undistinguished position at that time so remains for the present undistinguished.

Verse 2

"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

"they ministered..." The Greek word means "performed some public service, especially in religious worship". It also means to serve in this manner at one's own expense. This meaning is obvious in the following passages where the word occurs:- Rom. 15. 27; Heb. 10. 11. From Greek word "leitourgeo" we get the English "liturgy".

"and fasted,..." - Under the Law, on the day of Atonement, the people had to "afflict their souls" i.e. fast. Lev. 23. 32. This having been strictly observed for many centuries and carried forward into the Christian era, it is not surprising to find the early Christians fasting. Such Christians would have been of Jewish extraction. Many in their zeal fasted twice a week. Luke 18. 12. Some of the devout Pharisees fasted often (Matt. 9. 14.) but the same verse from Matthew shows us that the disciples of Jesus did not fast at all. The Christian practice of fasting was Judaizing and was not encouraged by such teachers as Paul. When Paul says that he "was in fastings oft" (2 Cor. 6. 5; and 2 Cor. 11. 27.) the context suggests that such fastings were enforced upon him. Apart from the 40 day fast in the wilderness, it is not recorded of Jesus that he fasted. Such a ritual was connected with the Law but was not one of the teachings of Jesus. In the verse before us, it is rightly connected with "ministering" but it in no way indicates that this was the proper thing to do in Christian worship.

"The Holy Spirit said,..." - the Power of God transmitted to the people in some way not disclosed here, that it was the Divine Will that Barnabas and Saul should be chosen for certain work. We can speculate as to how that message was communicated and we shall most likely be correct in our assumptions. Luke, however, did not think it something to be known how God gave His servants His message. The fact is that it was so, and we shall leave it at that, knowing that if God had wanted us to know, He would have told us. But Luke does not waste words so he must have had some good reason for telling us that it was the Power of God working through some undisclosed channel which separated Barnabas and Saul. We could ascertain the reason by reading ahead to find out. At this stage, we must know that God's Power is mentioned here as being the cause behind the preaching of His Servants. Maybe we are to read how this Power came into conflict with some other and weaker "power". We shall comment upon this when we come to it.

"Separate me Barnabas and Saul..." - The Greek word appears in the LXX in Exod. 19. 12 and verse 23. where Mt. Sinai was "set apart" as a mountain that may not be touched. See also Lev. 20. 25. where Israel was separated from unclean beasts. The separation of the first born for the Lord was on similar lines to this separation. (Exod. 13. 12.) The separation of the Levites is given in Num. 8. 11. The separation of the High Priest and his sons is given in Exod. 29. verses 24. 26 and 27. The separation of God's people is mentioned by Isaiah in Isa. 52. 11. Coming so close after verse 1 which mentions the five men, we realize that there must be something very special for the two men Barnabas and Saul who were among the five. The point is that the five are mentioned as an important group of "ministers" for the Lord. Now two of those men are called for further separation. This must mean that they are about to be called out to apostleship which would give them a higher rank above others. Paul later, in writing to the Romans, refers to his separation as an apostle. (See Rom. 1. 1.) Paul also goes a lot further by saying that he was called by God before his birth. (Gal. 1. 15.)

"for the work..." - this work, undisclosed as yet, was to be something unusual and important. As we shall see, it was work which could carry them far and wide in preaching the gospel.

"I have called them." God has called THEM as opposed to the others. They were to be separated from the five and from the ecclesia for a special work for the Lord. God chose His servants well for these were two men extraordinarily well fitted for the work they were about to do.

## Verse 3

"And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."

The verse is written in characteristic style - "Having fasted and having prayed and having laid their hands on them, they sent them away."

"fasted.." - here again we find the pre-Christian ritual which was given under the Law and enlarged upon through tradition.

"prayed.." - having heard that such separation as they were about to give effect to was the Will of God, they naturally would turn to God in prayer. Apart from this, the early Christians were a prayerful people from whom we can take an important lesson. Paul was very much aware of the power of prayer for he enjoins us to "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5. 17.) and in verse 18, he says, "in everything give thanks:.."

"laid their hands on them.." - We find a similar sequence of praying and laying hands upon in Acts 6. 6. This was a form of giving one's blessing to a work about to be done. This positively had nothing to do with the giving of the Holy Spirit as both Barnabas and Saul had received this Divine Gift. See Notes to Acts 6..6.

"they sent them away". The Greek is "release" or "let go away". This means that the ecclesia released Barnabas and Saul from all offices they held at Antioch and from all Ecclesial obligations which they had. They were then quite free to go. In this way, the members of the ecclesia showed their obedience to the word of God and were quite prepared to lose the services of their most outstanding brethren. There is a suggestion here that the ecclesia gave them a farewell service by praying and thanking God for having called two of their number and asking God to give them his Guidance and Care.

Some commentators state that by laying hands upon Barnabas and Saul, the other members of the ecclesias ordained them to their new service. This cannot be as ecclesial members are unable to ordain others to a higher rank than they possess. Furthermore, it was God who did the calling and the separating so the brethren had no part in this except to do as they were told and release the two men for other work.

PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY.

## Verse 4

"So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus."

We now come to the reason why Luke mentioned in verse 2 why two men were chosen by the Holy Spirit. They had the important task of preaching to the Gentiles.

"they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit.." - Most authors would have written "they left for Seleucia." That would have indicated the deliberate action of men leaving one place and going to another. Luke, however, makes it clear that the preaching journey was the Lord's work which Luke had mentioned in verse 2. Therefore the travellers were going because God willed it so and not because of man's intention.

"departed..." - Bullinger defines the meaning of this Greek word as "to come or go down, to descend." (Lexicon page 215). The city of Antioch was not on the sea coast so a journey from there to a port would have to be "down".

"Seleucia;.." - This city was founded in B.C. 301 by Seleucus who was one of Alexander's lesser Generals. It was after the battle of Ipsus that he founded the port to serve the new western capital of Antioch. This was the beginning of the Seleucid Dynasty, many of whose kings bore the name of Seleucus or Antiochus. The dynasty lasted for about 250 years and during this period, the mixed population was hellenized so that they could develop into a nation of power. The first Seleucus was also known as Nikator.

In Daniel 8. 22. the prophet states "Now that being broken..." the power of Alexander the Great came to an end through his untimely death - "whereas four stood up for it" - the kingdom was divided into four heads, each set up by a general of Alexander's army. The Third Head according to Dr. Thomas, "Exposition of Daniel" page 12, comprised the kingdom of the north east taking in Asia, Babylon and its provinces, extending as far as the Indus river beyond the Euphrates. This was the Macedo-Babylonish Kingdom of the Seleucidae. Several cities called Antioch were founded and named after the father of Seleucus and the city of Laodicea was named after his mother, Laodice.

Returning to our subject, the city of Seleucis was on the coast, 16 miles from Antioch, and about four miles north of the point where the river Orontes enters the sea. It served a busy and populous hinterland, so was a city of considerable commercial importance, giving entrepot facilities to many ships coming from and going to the Syrian and Palestine ports down to Egypt in the south. To the north west, the ships sailed along the Asian coast and on to Europe and the Roman world. Nearby and to the west was the island of Cyprus. It was on one of these trading ships going to Cyprus that Paul and Barnabas made their first missionary journey.

"from thence they sailed to Cyprus." The verb "they sailed" would be more correct if rendered "they sailed away". The Afrikaans Bible correctly states "weggevaar". The Greek "apoleo" is found only in Acts. See 13. 4; 14. 26; 20. 15; 27. 1.

"to Cyprus" - this island may have been chosen because of the association Barnabas had with the island. It may also be associated with Mark who was 'sister's son to Barnabas" (Col. 4. 10.) Therefore, having two men from Cyprus, it is understandable that they would go to a place where they were known.

verse 5

"and when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister."

"at Salamis,..." - the modern name for this city is Famagusta, having formerly been called Constantia after Constantine, and before that, Salamis. It was a city of great importance as far back as the 6th. century B.C. It was the centre of government for the eastern half of the island during the time of the visit. It was destroyed by an earthquake during the reign of Constantine (died A.D. 337) and rebuilt by his son, Constantius and named after his father. During the period of Roman occupation, the island was populated by a very large number of Jews. This was due, no doubt, to the fact that Herod had sent many Jews there to work on the copper mines. An influx of a large number of workers would attract merchants and so a prosperous community evolved. After the murder of Stephen, the Word of God was preached there. (Acts. 11. 19/20.)

"in the synagogues..." - see notes to Acts 6. 9.

"of the Jews:..." - whereas the synagogue is a place closely and inseparably associated with Jews, it is extraordinary to find Luke qualifying his statement about the synagogue by saying "the synagogues of the Jews." The statement gives rise to the question, "Who else had synagogues that these should be described as belonging to Jews?" The meaning of the word "synagogue" is simply a place of public assembly but by usage it was confined to assemblies of Jews for religious purposes. The Gentiles had places of assembly but they were not called synagogues. It would appear that in view of the rapid growth of Christianity amongst the Jews, some synagogues may have been taken over by Jewish converts to the Christian faith. Therefore Luke was careful to show that Barnabas and Saul did not go to Christians but went to the Jews and taught them in their own synagogues.

"they had also John..." - this was John Mark who went with them. See "FURTHER NOTES ON MARK" against Acts 12. 12. See also note under "to Cyprus" in the previous verse.

"to their minister". Gk. "as their attendant". This does not mean that he looked after them spiritually as a church leader. This would be the modern sense in our language. It means that he was their attendant and cared for their normal needs while they preached. Some have attempted to determine the nature of the work which Mark did but in view of the fact that we are not told, we can make guesses without being sure of any of them. It is best that we just accept that in whatever work he did, Mark was useful to both Saul and Barnabas.

## Verse 6

"And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-Jesus:"

"they had gone through..." - Luke's words are a little more definite than the translation indicates. He wrote, "Having gone through and whole the island to Paphos..." That is to say they made a very comprehensive tour of the whole island. As the preaching routine was in those days, they must have preached in all the small towns and villages as they came to them on every road. See Acts 8. 25. for the work of the apostles after the incident with Simon Magus. See verse 40 of that chapter for the work of Philip after he had baptised the eunuch. See also Acts 8. verse 4. where the work of the scattered Christians is briefly described.

"unto..." - again emphasising the extent of the preaching. Throughout the whole isle even unto (as far as) Paphos.

"Paphos..." - There were two places of this name in ancient Cyprus. The Old Paphos was founded by the Phoenicians and was of great antiquity. Only a vestige remains. It was associated with the worship of the goddess Aphrodite and the city was popular because of this. It was severely damaged over the centuries by many earthquakes and was finally abandoned in favour of the New Paphos. The few remains of this city are to be found near the modern Ktima on the west coast. The Romans annexed the island in B.C. 58 and the new Paphos grew up at that time. It was established as the ruling centre by the Romans. Here it was that Paul was to have a similar experience to that of Peter in Acts 8. 18/24.

"a certain sorcerer..." - Gk. "magus" See notes on Simon Magus in Acts 8. 9.

"a false prophet..." - this qualification shows that he was combining a pseudo-religious character to his work.

"a Jew..." - as opposed to the other magi, Simon Magus who was a Gentile.

Luke here has used the triple description which is so characteristic of his style. "sorcerer"; "false prophet" and "Jew". We shall come across another in the course of our studies in Acts 14. 8. where we read of (1) a man impotent in his feet; (2) being cripple from his mother's womb and (3) had never walked. The triplet character of the description impresses us so that we take notice of what Luke has to say.

There were many such men in those days who drew attention to themselves (and earned a living by it) and toured throughout the realm. Some were philosophers who later received university posts but many were charlatans who combined juggling and magic to attract attention. This man obviously, combined a kind of religious worship with his displays much in the same way as their modern counterparts, the faith healers, conduct what goes for a religious service to get their hearers in the right frame of mind. Some of such philosophers would become attached to rulers who would be interested by their pseudo-science and religious doctrines. We are soon to find that this sorcerer was with the ruler of the country.

"Bar-Jesus." Lit. Son of Joshua. The prefix "Bar" means "son of" and is found attached to a number of names. See Barabbas' - "son of a father" (Matt. 27. 16/17 etc.) Bar-jona "son of a dove" or "son of Jonah" (Matt. 16.17.)



Barnabas "son of consolation" Acts 4. 36; Barsabas and Barsabbas (R.V.) Acts 1. 23. Bartholomew Matt. 10. 3. Bartimaeus Mark 10. 46. The name Bar-Jesus is the Aramaic form of Bar-Joshua.

## Verse 7

"Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God."

"was with..." - from the custom of the times, this could mean that he was resident with the deputy. This was a very common occurrence and was carried on in early English history by the presence at Court of a Court Jester. Such a practice has long since fallen away but a remnant survives in the modern custom of the "Command Performance". Also there is the "Mayor's Chaplain".

"the deputy of the country.." - Found in Acts 13.7, 8. 12 and 19. 38. and nowhere else. Luke is correct in describing his office as that of "proconsul". The Roman writer Pliny describes a man named "Sergius Paulus" who was interested in science in its many forms and in natural history. The deputy therefore, was just the type of man to have encouraged an imposter like Bar-Jesus and would permit him to take a place as part of the governor's suite.

The emperor Augustus had divided the realm into two classes, namely, senatorial and imperial. The senatorial was governed by pro-consuls and the imperial by propraetors or Consular Legates. Since Cyprus was formerly an Imperial province, it was considered that Luke had blundered in describing the office of the ruler as a proconsul. It has been discovered, however, that the island, prior to these events, had been transferred from one class to another, so it was actually under the control of a proconsul as Luke states. This is confirmed by the existence of a Cypriot coin in which a man named Proclus, the successor of Sergius Paulus, is described with the title given by Luke. The date of the transfer was B.C. 22 which brings it before the date of Saul's visit.

"a prudent man;.." ← the word occurs in Matt. 11. 25; Luke 10. 21; in the verse we are studying and in 1 Cor. 1. 19. In the Matthew reference, Jesus thanks God that He has hidden his Word from the wise and prudent. Luke 10. 21. records the same remark by Jesus and in Corinthians, Paul quotes a prophecy where it is written that God will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. In all these we find that it refers to the way the apostasy think. It is thoughtful and reflective but is not in accordance with the things of the "Name".

"desired to hear..." - there being many philosophers travelling from one place to another and being popular wherever they went, the Deputy would be keen to hear what these new travellers had to say. Therefore he would send a message to them inviting them to come to him.

"the word..." - Gk. "the LOGOS"

"of God" - the Divine Plan and Purpose.

## Verse 8

"But Elymas the sorcerer ( for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith."

"Elymas..." - the name is very similar to an Arabic word meaning "wise" but in spite of what some commentators say, it is doubtful if this had anything to do with the choice of name. It is probably something from the Cypriot dialect and was chosen rather than to use the name meaning "son of Jesus". This would be most unpopular amongst the believers of those days. As the words in brackets indicate, this was a name given "by interpretation" therefore it is incorrect to attempt to translate a word that has already been translated, unless the word in the Cypriot dialect is known. In the absence of this information, we must be content to leave the name as it is.

The danger of such a man as Elymas can be imagined when one considers how close he could get to the ruling authority. It may be that Luke writes with prophetic insight concerning Elymas because the fact that Saul and Barnabas went to see Sergius Paulus and preach to him is of great importance to us, the readers of Luke's work. Yet Luke, having introduced the deputy, says nothing about what was said to him by the evangelists. Luke pays much more attention to Paul's encounter with the sorcerer. To Luke, this was the most important thing to come from the entire visit to Cyprus so he leaves the story of the rest of the endeavour there to our imagination and deals intimately with this meeting. Would it not be that Luke could see into the future by the gift that was in him and foresee the growth of an apostacy that would attempt, and to a great extent succeed, to control both church and state? In later years Paul was to show his understanding of such things when he wrote to the Thessalonians of "him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders," ( 2 Thess. 2. 9. )

"withstood them..." - the scene was a tense one. Here was a meeting between truth and error; light and darkness; falsehood and true worship. The gospel was opposed to the clever distortions of an apostacy which invented beliefs to suit their own ends. Here the true evangelists were opposed to those who taught falsehoods under the cloak of religion. The same battle is being fought each day wherever the Truth is taught. The situation is that "magic" in the shape of false doctrines are more popular than the plain humble truth of God's Word.

"seeking..." - the position held at court by Elymas was at stake. This could severely harm his reputation and livelihood. His thought was not for the truth of any doctrine which he had to expound but was centred purely on that of self interest. The word used here means "endeavoured" with the idea of trying to achieve an end.

"to turn away the deputy..." - the Greek verb is a strong one which means "to turn throughout"; "to distort"; "turn away"; "seduce"; "pervert". One can now imagine the unfair means used by Elymas to influence Sergius Paulus against Saul.

"from the faith." - the endeavour of Elymas was to turn the deputy away from the Truth as it is in Jesus.

Verse 9

"Then Saul (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Spirit, set his eyes on him,"

"Saul..." - here we leave "Saul" for all time and pick up the story of Paul, the apostle. Luke is careful to introduce the new name of Paul at the correct time. Hitherto Saul had been a chosen servant of God and had served his apprenticeship in Antioch and later at Jerusalem. Then, having returned to Antioch, he was selected by Divine Revelation and rose to a position which the growing church could not give him but which they could only applaud. He was ordained by God to be an apostle of the Divine Plan and Purpose. But he did not reveal this Plan and Purpose until he was confronted with the apostacy personified in this agent of evil, the man Bar-Jesus, alias Elymas. Therefore, when the encounter started, Luke changes from Saul, who now disappears as a personality, to PAUL, the great apostle to the Gentiles.

It cannot be that Luke changes the name by which he refers to Paul because of the fact that they were speaking in front of a prominent Gentile. Paul was far too stalwart a Christian to humble himself before the apostacy. In his past life, Paul had been a well-to-do man, and was well-educated and well-connected. He was a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. (ACTS 23. 6.) He was most likely, a member of the Sanhedrin at one time, particularly when Stephen was martyred. He was a power to be reckoned with but as a servant of God, he was nothing. No true servant of God seeks to be anything of importance in this life. This being the case, it is not stretching things too far to suppose that Paul welcomed the change to his Roman name, not only to help him in his work amongst the Gentiles, but also to adopt the meaning of the name which is "LITTLE". So Saul the big man, becomes Paul the little.

"filled with the Holy Spirit..." - as with all God's servants who received the Holy Spirit, they did not receive it to use any time they so wished. It operated often when they prayed first, and it also operated when suddenly, they were filled with the Holy Spirit as though it were God's will that it should be so. Here Luke shows us that Paul did not call upon the power of the Holy Spirit to help him. God operated upon him by causing him to act as he did as a result of the Divine Power operating in him.

"set his eyes upon him..." - see note to Acts 1. 10.

Verse 10

"And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?"

"Full of subtilty..." - "full" means that Elymas was composed of such an undersirable trait. "subtilty" is used to mean "bait" hence used figuratively for "deceit" and "guile" or something which leads a victim to destruction.

"all mischief..." - means "recklessness" and "unscrupulousness" ( in doing evil).

It is important that we note the Hebrew style of setting one point against another. This is poetical in form. Whereas Elymas was considered to be WISE and CLEVER, he is now described by Paul as being "deceitful". Whereas he was considered to be a good adviser to a ruler, Paul describes him as being "unscrupulous". Note the further comparisons which are made.

"child of the devil" - in contrast to his name of "son of the Saviour" he is now called "child of the devil". The word "devil" comes from the Greek "diabolos" which did not have the meaning in Paul's day which it has now. It was not used in the sense of an immortal agent of evil but as a vile and undesirable characteristic. Note that there were desirable characteristics which were also ascribed to a diabolos, as Socrates ascribed his genius to a "diabolos" which he had. Paul told Elymas that he was not, as his name would indicate, the son of Jesus, or the son of a Joshua, but he was the son of an evil diabolos which was deceitful, and unscrupulous.

"enemy of all righteousness..." - instead of being a prophet of the God he pretended to worship, he was an enemy of all righteousness. The accusation is not that he is the enemy of righteousness but that he is the enemy of ALL righteousness. This is another way of saying that there is nothing good about him.

"wilt thou not cease to pervert...?" - the statement is put in the form of a question. This is more direct and powerful than a straightforward a statement because it links the latter part of the sentence with a statement from Hosea 14. 9. Paul's trust here, strikes deeply. (1) by referring to the Scriptures, he points to the fact that Elymas had been quoting Scripture and distorting the Word of God to support his false teaching. (2) He had done so consistently in the past and would do so again, therefore the ruler could not very well entertain a repentant Elymas. (3) His ways had been crooked, but the Lord's Ways were straight.

"the right ways of the Lord". - Hosea said, "the ways of the Lord are right..." and Paul makes the obvious cross reference that Elymas' ways were crooked. Hosea's statement ends with "transgressors shall fall therein."

The comparisons which Paul made were:-

- (1) Elymas claimed to be Wise and clever. Paul showed him to be full of subtilty and mischief.
- (2) Elymas had a name meaning "son of Jesus, the Saviour" - Paul showed him to be the son of the devil.
- (3) Elymas claimed to be a prophet. Paul showed him to be an enemy of righteousness.

Thus once again, Luke uses a triple application. See note to verse 6.

Finally, by pointing to the quotation from Hosea, Paul showed that Elymas was trying to make crooked the paths of the Lord which were straight, (right).

#### Verse 11

"And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand."

"And now,..." - a phrase which is used to mark the end of the preamble and to introduce the main action. See Acts 3. 17; 7. 34; 10. 5. 20. 25; 26. 6. The finality of the matter is shown here that wherease he had tried to prevent the Word of God being preached, the end of his evil ways had now come.

"behold,..." - to introduce the element of surprise which is to follow immediately.

"the hand of the Lord.." - the power of God in mercy or in judgment. See Exod. 9. 3, 15; Judges 2. 15; 1 Sam. 5. 6, 9, 11; 2 Sam. 24. 14; 2 Chron. 30. 12; See also Acts 4. 28, 30; 5. 31; 7. 25; 11. 21; 13. 11; The hand of God was, in a moment, to be used against Elymas in judgment but in mercy. He could so easily have suffered the punishment of Ananias and Sapphira. He was spared from death but made blind as if to show evidence that in his faith, there was no light at all.

"thou shalt be blind,..." - Paul had had a similar experience before his conversion. Would Elymas have the same readiness to belief as did Paul? The punishment which was severe, was akin to his deliberate act in shutting his eyes to the Truth as Paul expounded it to Sergius Paulus. Now he was blind against his will.

"not seeing the sun..." - a complete blindness which prevented him from recognising light from darkness. Both would appear the same to him. He was spiritually blind before and unable to discern spiritual light when it shone in his presence, now, in a physical way, he could distinguish neither. Light nor darkness.

"For a season." The blindness would not be permanent. Paul apparently does not tell him what will bring an end to his blindness, or if he did, Luke does not record it. We may assume that he would see again once he recognised and acknowledged the hand of the Most High God. We should like to think so, but in the absence of special information, we cannot say what the conditions were for the restoration of sight. (See Luke 4. 13. for the only other occurrence of this phrase.) Note that there are indications that Paul never had his sight fully restored to him. The fact that he never wrote his own epistles, but signed them, seems to indicate inferior sight. Also the statement of Gal. 4. 15. may contain a reference to the desire of others to help him with his poor sight. The phrase being used in Luke 4.13. in connection with the temptation of Jesus, shows that possibly, the loss of sight would remain for as long as it pleased God to afflict him. In the same way, the Temptation of Jesus lasted as long as God would allow it.

"immediately there fell on him.." - indicates the suddenness with which he was struck with blindness. It also shows that the affliction "fell" which is to say it came from above.

"mist.." - Gk. a mist which shrouds objects from view.

"darkness.." - coming after the word "mist" shows the gradual, although rapid, change from blindness to complete darkness. Luke's description of the onset of the affliction is very vivid.

"went about seeking.." - lit. "going about sought..."

"some to lead him by the hand." These seven words come from one Greek word meaning "hand-guides."

## Verse 12

"Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord."

"Then..." - After all this had happened.

"when he saw what was done..." - lit. "seeing the proconsul that having been done,..." This has reference to the sudden onset of blindness.

"believed" - he must have believed in what he had heard from the teaching of Paul. Although Elymas tried to prevent Sergius Paulus from learning of the Truth, he would not interrupt Paul while he was speaking but would await his opportunity to state what he maintained was the Truth. Thus, Sergius Paulus would have heard both Paul and the sorcerer. Now he believed what Paul had taught him.

"being astonished at the teaching of the Lord." Literally this is exactly as in the Greek original. The "teaching" at which he was astonished would not necessarily mean the doctrine of the Lord. His astonishment arose as a result of the Lord's method of teaching with such wonders as he had just seen. The word "astonished" is found in Matt. 7. 28; 13. 54; 22. 33; Mark 1. 22; 6. 2; 7. 37; 10. 26; 11. 18; Luke 4. 32; and in the verse before us. In all those verses, the astonishment does not arise as a result of the truth taught but because of the manner of its teaching. The same must apply here and so connect the doctrine he had been taught with the miracle he had witnessed.

There has been much speculation as to whether either Sergius Paulus or Elymas believed and were baptised. The fact that Sergius believed does not mean that he accepted Christianity as this would require his resignation from the position of proconsul. There is no record of his having done this. He therefore remained as a ruler in a State which upheld the worship of idols. Elymas disappears from the Acts and from history. Luke is not concerned with what happened to them. He is more concerned with the appearance of a subtle apostasy which sought to influence the State and he devotes space to the record of how it was defeated in this instance. The lesson for us is to hold fast to that which is good and turn away from everything that is false.

## Verse 13

"Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem."

Luke abruptly drops the story of the campaign in Cyprus and tells of their sudden departure for the mainland. One big change we should note is that Luke no longer writes of Barnabas and Paul but mentions Paul only.

"Paul and his company..." - lit. "those about the Paul..." This includes Paul as well as his companions. Barnabas is still with them and it would appear that he was regarded as the leader of the party by being mentioned first, because the campaign was being held in his home country. Now that they were about to leave, this importance fell away and Paul is mentioned and Barnabas is not mentioned at all. That Barnabas would still continue with the preaching campaign in other lands, says much for his humility and character.

"loosed..." - This word is translated as "loosed" in Acts 16. 11; and 27. 21; and it is a nautical term. It is also used in Acts 21. 1; and 27. 2 and 4; where it is translated as "launched". In Luke 8. 22. it appears as "launched forth" and as "sailed" in Acts 20. 3 and 13; In Acts 21. 2. the translators put "set forth"; and "departed" in Acts 27. 12. and 28. 10/11. The Greek word "anago" means "to lead up, conduct or bring up" and it is used in this sense in Acts 9. 39. and 12. 4. When used as a nautical term, the meaning is "to lead a ship out to sea, or to put to sea." The word is here used as a passive participle with the meaning "having put to sea " or simply "having sailed".

"from Paphos they came to Perga..." - the journey from port to port named here would be in a north westerly direction.

Perga was the ancient name for the modern city of Murtana. With the city of Side, they were the two greatest cities of ancient Pamphylia. It was 7 to 8 miles from the north of the river Cestrus. From the nature of its architecture which is Seleucid in style, it must have been built during the 3rd. century B.C. The local goddess was the Greek Artemis, the short-clad huntress but in some of the figures of her, she is similar to the Ephesian Diana. The city was served by the port of Attalia which we read of in Acts 14. 25. the modern name of the port being Adalia or Antalya.

"John departing from them..." - John is, of course, John Mark as stated in the notes to verse 5. The verb "departing" is stronger in meaning than is indicated here. It means "desertion" and is used in Matt. 7. 23. where the sense is "depart from me, ye that work iniquity". In Luke 9. 39. the sense is that of an undesirable spirit departing. The separation of Mark and Paul is referred to again in Acts 15. 39. where the word "departed" is used again. In all these references, the sense is an unfavourable one.

Luke now hints at a quarrel within the party and whereas Barnabas, on a later occasion was to side with Mark, (Acts 15. 39.) he does not appear to do so on this occasion for there is no record of his leaving the team. The quarrel and separation came at the same time as Paul supercedes Barnabas as the leader of the evangelical party. This suggests that Mark was hurt because Barnabas had suddenly been replaced as leader by Paul who, when they left Antioch, was the junior partner. Maybe it was because Mark could not stand the rigours of a preaching campaign or maybe he found he was not suited to the work. There is a suggestion that in this part of his career, Mark was not a devout worker and this would certainly receive some form of censure from such a dedicated man as was Paul. Later in his life, Mark appeared to turn over a new leaf and become the worker which Paul desired for we find Paul writing his very last epistle and saying, "Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry." (2 Tim. 4. 11.) This verse and verse 10 give us an insight into the character of three men, Luke, Demas and Mark for Demas had been with Paul as a willing worker. (Col. 4. 14. Phil. 24.) but later turned away (verse 10). Mark who had been unprofitable in the beginning, improved later and became the profitable servant which Paul desired to have. Luke the faithful friend, never changed once he had put his hand to the plough for he earns this tribute from Paul at the end of his life, "Only Luke is with me" (2 Tim. 4. 11.) We come to the conclusion that the cause of the quarrel was that Mark was unfitted at that period of his life for the work of an evangelist and this brought a censure from Paul. This hurt him so he left and returned to Jerusalem. Paul continued as "Paul" and Mark returned as "John".

#### Verse 14

"But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down."

"They..." - in an emphatic form of "These.." thus drawing a distinction between Mark who had returned to Jerusalem and THESE (Paul and Barnabas) who continued with the work.

"departed..." - Gk. "passed through.." showing that no preaching was done and none was attempted at Perga. No reason is given so we must assume that their plans were changed by the sudden departure of Mark. Most commentators suggest that Paul experienced a recurrence of his malady while at Perga and that the work ceased for a while. It is hard to see how Paul could have suffered an attack of some infirmity while at Perga when we are told plainly that "they passed through."

Some commentators put together the following bits of information:-

Gal. 2. 1. states that 14 years later, Paul went to Jerusalem.

2 Cor. 12. 2. states that 14 years previously, Paul met a man who showed him a vision. It is thought that this man was Agabus, the prophet. Verse 7 of this chapter tells of "the thorn in the flesh" which buffeted Paul. This is supposed to time the first onset of this malady at the time of the visit of Paul to Perga.

In writing to the Galatians, Paul said, "... you know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first; and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus." (Gal. 4.13/14. R.S.V.) This was written because Paul and Barnabas did not stop at Perga but passed through to Galatia. It is thought that Paul may have suffered from Ophthalmia and that the Galatians were sympathetic towards him. Thus he wrote, "For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me." (verse 15.) Prof. Wm. M. Ramsay ("ST. PAUL THE TRAVELLER AND ROMAN CITIZEN") suggests that Paul may have had a very bad attack of malaria. We can never be sure of what it was but there is a very strong indication that the party did not stop but went right through. There is also a strong indication that they changed their plans in so doing because Luke says "they came to Perga in Pamphylia" (vs. 13) when there was not another Perga so it would be quite unnecessary to say where it was. The fact that Pamphylia was mentioned in connection with Perga shows that "they came to Perga of the Pamphylia which they intended to visit" and it was here that John deserted the party. Thereafter they left Perga and went to Pisidian Antioch, and Paul was very ill at the time.

"went into the synagogue..." - a synagogue, being a meeting place for public worship, could well have been a private house. See notes to Acts 6. 9.

"on the sabbath day.." - lit. "on the day of the sabbaths". This would be the best time to get the largest hearing because many Jews would go to the synagogue at this time.

"sat down." By custom, they stood up to read and sat down to teach. See Luke 4. 16. "stood up for to read" and verse 20 where, having finished reading, "he sat down". Then in verse 21, it is recorded that he taught them. On this occasion, however, the visitors did not appear to take up the most important position, because it is recorded that the rulers did the reading and spoke to them afterwards. When Paul got an opportunity to speak, "he stood up" (see verse 16.) The words "sat down" in this verse, simply means that they went in as worshippers and sat down to listen. They would sit down on the floor as Paul had once sat at the feet of Gamaliel when he was taught. (Acts 22.3.)

"Antioch in Pisidia.." - Gk. "Antioch of the Pisidia". This was the first city into which they came during their visit to Galatia. It lay in Phrygia but was on the border of Pisidia. Pamphylia was on the coast with Pisidia north of it. Then to the north of Pisidia, was Phrygia being part of Galatia. Antioch was another of the cities founded by Seleucus and named in honour of his father, Antiochus the Great. It was 2,600 feet above sea level and was the civil and military centre for that part of Galatia. The emperor Augustus gave it colony status and called it Colonia Caesarea. The city, 100 miles from the sea, was an important one and had a mixed population which was Latin in administration, Greek in civilisation, Phrygian in population and there were a large number of Jews. Paul and Barnabas passed through again on their way back. (Acts 14. 24.)

Verse 15

"And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on."

"reading of the law and the prophets..." - obviously two readings were taken, one from the Pentateuch and the other from the prophets, the latter would include the historical books.

"the rulers of the synagogue..." - The Romans permitted the Jews to worship according to their custom and recognised them as a nation. This helped the Jews to organise themselves according to their interpretation of the "Law", but making no distinction between the religious and secular. The men they appointed as magistrates were known as Rulers or Elders (Presbyters). To these men was added one individual who was known as the Ruler of the Synagogue. He had to preside over public worship. (See Mark 5. 38. Luke 8. 49; 13. 14; Acts 18. 8.) Any Israelite of good standing could be called upon to preach, pray or read, the choice resting with the ruler of the synagogue.

"sent unto them..." - the rulers would not go themselves but would send messengers to speak to them and invite them. From this we gather that they were not in the chief seats where one would expect to see the Pharisees. (Matt. 23. 6.) They probably sat at the entrance. This indicates a great deal of humility on the part of Paul who must have sat in the best seats before his conversion. The man sent to them would probably be one of the servants of the synagogue (the minister. See Luke 4. 20.)

"Ye men and brethren..." - disregard the italics and read, "Men, brethren..." See notes to Acts 1. 16.

"if ye have any word..." Gk. "if is a word in you..." that is, if there is in your minds a word of exhortation which you can give us..."

"say on." Imperative "say you" or simply "speak!"

Verse 16

"Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience."

"Paul stood up..." - He appears now to be the chief speaker. This is recognised in Acts 14. 12.

"beckoning with his hand..." - the same as Acts 12. 17. where Paul beckoned with his hand to call for silence while he spoke. There must have been talking in the synagogue then as there is now. A modern Jewish service is often bedlam for noise.

#### PAUL'S EXHORTATION.

"Men of Israel..." - See Peter's opening salutation in Acts 2. 22; 3. 12; and the opening salutation of Gamaliel in Acts 5. 35. This limited the address to the covenant people, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

"ye that fear God..." - the proselytes who had been converted to the Jewish faith.

"give audience." - Lit. "listen!"

Verse 17

"The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with a high arm brought he them out of it."

The speech is in three parts, namely:-

#### 1. Verses 17/25.

Short reviews of historical characters. What God did for His people. Leading up to Jesus through John the Baptist.

#### 2. Verses 26/37

The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth. How God raised him from the dead.

#### 3. Verses 38/41

What Jesus means to all men. Forgiveness comes which the Law could not give. This leads to justification by Faith.

Stephen started with the call to come out of Chaldea. Paul starts with the call to come out of Egypt.

This speech and the speech of Stephen both deal with the history of Israel but Stephen is concerned with the Messiah, Moses and the Tabernacle while Paul is concerned with the major events which led up to the coming of the Messiah. Stephen shows that Moses is the mediator whereas Paul emphasises the kingly descent of Jesus.



"this people of Israel..." - Gk. "the people of Israel.." Some commentators omit "of Israel" from the text.

"chose.." - middle voice, therefore "picked out for himself." Note that God did the choosing.

"exalted the people..." - metaphorically the meaning is "exalted them to a dignity above other nations because they were the people of God." Note that God did the exalting.

"with an high arm..." - the "arm" is used metaphorically as a means whereby God selects and protects His people. See Deut. 4. 34. Isa. 53. 1. and the quotation of this in John 12. 38. See Exod. 6. 6/8. for the sevenfold promise contained therein, as under:-

Verse 6	I will bring you out...
	I will rid you out of their bondage...
	I will redeem you...
7	I will take you to me...
	I will be to you a God...
8	I will bring you in unto the land...
	I will give it to you...

"brought he them out of it.." Note that God brought them out.

#### Verse 18

"And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness."

"forty years..." - some maintain it was 38 years. Paul is not emphatic. He says "about the time of forty years" with obvious reference to the duration of the actual journeying.

"suffered he their manners." - This is the translation of the R.V. but the R.S.V. gives "he bore with them.." This agrees with the Afrikaans "het hy hulle (in die woestyn) verdra". The change of a single letter in the verb gives the marginal rendering - "bore them or fed them as a nurse beareth or feedeth her children". The idea of a nursing father is taken from Deut. 1. 31. Paul makes further reference to this idea of nursing in 1 Thess. 2. 7.

#### Verse 19

"And wher he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he divided their land by lot."

"He had destroyed.." - lit. "having destroyed..." Note that God did the destroying. Deut. 31. 3.

"seven nations..." - Hittites; Gergashites; Amorites; Canaanites; Perizzites; Hivites; Jebusites. See Deut. 7. 1.

"in the land of Canaan.." - the seven nations were tribes in the land.

"he divided their land.." - Greek "to give by lot to each" that is to say, God gave them their complete inheritance. Note that God did the "dividing" or the "giving by lot".

#### Verse 20

"And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet."

The problem of the period of 450 years is explained by the spurious insertion of a confusing clause. After "he divided their land by lot" of verse 19, omit the words of verse 20 from "and after that" - "to the word "judges". This makes verse 19 continue "he divided their land by lot about the space of 450 years, until Samuel the prophet." That makes the period cover the years from the division of the land under Joshua to the death of Samuel. For the division of the land see Joshua chapter 12 et seq.

"until Samuel the prophet." - Samuel was a judge all his life. See 1 Sam. 7. 15. The reference here is given to introduce this important figure in history because he supplied the link between the judges which Paul had just mentioned, and the kings whom Paul is about to mention. Peter also used Samuel as a figure in point of time. See Acts 3. 24.

## Verse 21

"and afterwards they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years."

"afterwards..." - Gk. "And then..."

"they desired..." - they asked for. In the Middle Voice showing that they asked for their own benefit. See Acts 3. 14; 7. 46; and 9. 2.

"God gave unto them..." - Once again note that it was God who gave. He gave in displeasure but granted their request after warning them what would happen.

"Cis..." - Heb. "Kish".

"tribe of Benjamin..." - See introductory notes to chapter 9 second page, second last paragraph.

"forty years". The duration of Saul's reign is not mentioned in Scripture but Josephus states that he reigned 18 years up to the death of Samuel and 22 years after his death.

## Verse 22

"and when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after my own heart, which shall fulfil my will."

"He had removed him..." - God did the removing. The record states that Saul died and this is true but it was God who took away his life.

"he raised up..." - once again God acts by raising up David. He was raised from a lowly position to a high one.

"a man after my own heart.." - see 1 Sam. 13. 14. Although Paul stated that God said this, there is no record in Scripture that God did say the words Paul now ascribes to him. Adding to 1 Sam. 13. 14. the words of Psa. 89. 20. ("I have found David my servant") we find a summary of God's words spoken on different occasions.

"shall fulfil my will." - lit. "shall fulfil ALL my wills." showing that there is more than just one will. David would do all the things God wanted him to do.

## Verse 23

"Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:"

"This.." - the word is emphatic and makes Jesus the "son of David". Also important is the fact that Jesus was the Son of God through God saying to David of the son He promised him, "I will be his father, and he shall be my son." (2 Sam. 7. 14.)

"man's seed..." - this is David's seed and must have reference to 2 Sam. 7. 12/16. and 1 Chron. 17. 11/14.

"according to his promise..." - All commentators are agreed that the promise referred to here is that given in 2 Sam. 7. 12/16. In spite of this unanimity, we cannot disregard the fact that the "promise" mentioned in this verse, related to the SAVIOUR, Jesus. The promise of 2 Sam. 7. 12/16. however, relates to the "son of God" and to a future king who would have his throne established in David's presence. (vs 16.) It also referred to the building of a "house". For a description of this house see Acts 15. 14; 1 Pet. 2. 5. and Ephes. 2. 19/22.

This is a spiritual "household of faith" comprising the saints in Christ Jesus. This "house" would grow as a result of the "son of God" and the "son of God" would have to be brought under the power of death. This last provision is shown by 2 Sam. 7. 14. the latter half of which could be translated in this way - "... in his suffering for iniquity, I shall chasten him with the rod due to men (the children of Adam)". This future King was symbolised in the type established by Solomon who is the subject of verse 15, but the substance of the promise is CHRIST, the KING who, before ascending his throne, would be brought under the power of death.

This now brings us to a consideration of Gen. 3. 15. which reads, "And I will put enmity between thee ( the serpent) and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head (Jesus, the seed of the woman - Mary, would have to die) and thou (sin and death) shalt bruise his heel". That it was to be a bruise which is temporary, shows that Jesus would not die for all time but would be raised. Returning to the promise to David, we find David a lot overwhelmed by the promise but showing a wonderful understanding of the Scriptures. He said, "... is this the manner of man, O Lord GOD." ( verse 19). The LXX translation has "is this the law of man". The word for "law" is "nomos" which was the established name for law as decreed by a lawgiving authority, law in this sense being that which has to be obeyed. The law first given to Adam was addressed to the serpent - "thou shalt bruise his heel". A consideration of these passages suggests that David suddenly became aware that in this promise of the "son of God" who is yet to establish David's throne in a "great while to come" (vs 19) was the Saviour who would gain a victory over death when "he shall bruise thy head". There were three promises given by God and they are

Gen. 3. 15. "the seed of the woman" (Jesus) the Saviour who would die but be raised again (when the bruise is healed).

Gen. 22. 17. a Messiah, a future King and Saviour in whom all families would be blessed.

2 Sam. 7. 16/22. a future King who would be called the Son of God.

From the foregoing, we can now understand the suggestion that the Saviour which God promised and mentioned by Paul in his speech which we are now studying, comes from Gen. 3. 15. and not from 2 Sam. 7. 16/22. as the commentators agree.

"raised unto..." - if Jesus was "raised" he could not have "come down" from a heavenly pre-existence. This has reference to the promise of Deut. 18. 18. Gk. "egeiro" meaning to raise up (from the dead) (see Acts 3. 15.) Thus Paul ties up the promise of Gen. 3. 15. with the raising after the bruising of "his heel".

"unto Israel..." - the promise was to David as King of Israel. Jesus came to Israel and not to the other nations. This agrees with the statement by Jesus in John 4. 22. "...salvation is of the Jews." Paul is speaking to those whom he addressed as "Men of Israel..." for he had not yet turned to the Gentiles - see verse 46. See also Rom. 1. 16.

"a Saviour Jesus". Matt. 1. 21. Luke 1. 31. The name JESUS is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew JOSHUA meaning "Yahweh Saves". The connection of the name with the promise made unto David joins the prophetic Name of God, (stating that Yahweh will save through Jesus,) with the "Son of God" promised to David.

#### Verse 24

"When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel."

"John had first preached..." - John the Baptist was the fore-runner of Jesus. John was the greatest of the prophets (Luke 7. 28.) and came to prepare the way for a greater prophet. He was also the last of the prophets of the Mosaic era (Luke 16. 16.) John gave all acknowledgement to the seniority of Jesus. (Luke 3. 16.) (John 1. 26/27. John 3. 30.)

"his coming..." - Gk. "eisodus" means "entrance" as opposed to "exodus". See 1 Thess. 1. 9; 2. 1; Heb. 10. 19; 2 Pet. 1. 11.

"baptism of repentance..." - Baptism had been practised in Mosaic times but it had become a ritual and had lost any significance it should have had. Now John prepared the way by making the entry into the Household of Faith a serious undertaking and an awareness of the forsaking of former sinful ways.

"all the people of Israel." - If ALL the people of Israel were preached to by John, then all the tribes must have been there. So all Israel was given a chance for repentance.

Verse 25

"And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose."

"... John fulfilled his course..." - lit. "John was fulfilling his race.." i.e. during the time he was running his race. Paul uses this analogy of the Olympic Games to illustrate his point. (Acts 20. 24; 2 Tim. 4.7.) Both Paul and John were "runners" in such an analogy. John was the fore-runner and Paul was the swift messenger to the Gentiles.

"Whom think ye that I am?" - Whom do ye suspect or suppose me to be?" A further question seems to be inferred here - "The Messiah?" with the obvious answer "No!" and then follows "I am not he."

"there cometh one after me..." - See Matt. 3. 11; Mark 1. 7; Luke 3.16.

"shoes of his feet..." - This seems to be a tautology because where would one expect to find shoes but on the feet? The Greek however, is "underbinding" which could be in several places. Here it is accurately defined as being the underbinding on the feet.

"to unloose." - the most menial task. Thus John shows the enormous disparity between Jesus and himself.

Verse 26

"Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent."

"Men...brethren..." - Paul shows his close connection with his listeners.

"children of the stock of Abraham..." - lit. "sons of the race of Abraham." This expression stems from verse 17 where Paul tells how God called his "sons" out of Egypt as He was many years later, to call His Son Jesus out of Egypt. He passes over the giving of the Law which was so important to them, and shows how God destroyed the seven nations who opposed Him. Then he tells how God raised up a King and removed him to instal David as king. Paul makes much of the fact that David was a man who pleased God as opposed to Saul - and Israel - who did not. To David, the Promise was made and God did eventually raise up David's "seed" Jesus. Paul underlines the promise and does not mention the Law. When writing to the Galatians, Paul was to draw the same careful distinction. See Gal. 4. 21/31. One of the Promises had been made to Abraham and his multitudinous seed so Paul now reminds his listeners that the promises were made for them as well. This meant that Jesus was raised up for their salvation.

"and whosoever among you feareth God.." - the proselytes from the Gentiles. See verse 16.

"to you is the word..." - to you is this LOGOS (sent). All this is in the Plan and Purpose of God and is sent to you all.

"of this salvation." - as explained above, the history of Israel is one of the bringing up of a "son" by educating and admonishing him. The birth was in Egypt; the youthful errors appeared in the wilderness; the entrance into the inheritance came when the Jordan was crossed; and all throughout the course they were guided by the Law. All this happened to the "sons of God". But Jesus also was a "Son of God" who came out of Egypt; his youth was spent - as far as we know - in giving attention "to my Father's business"; his baptism

followed but all through his life he was guided by His Father. The means of education was that God provided His Law; He gave Judges; He sent prophets; he set up Saul and also David; finally He raised up the prophet like unto Moses. It was in Jesus that all this history was to be summarised. His would be the kingdom; he would ascend the throne of his father David; he would be the great judge; he would be the divine prophet; he would be the anointed one. Thus the stages were:- Abraham the progenitor to whom the Promises were made; Moses was the law-giver; Samuel was the prophet; David was the king; John was the forerunner and Jesus was the Saviour. It all has its end in Jesus.

## Verse 27

"For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him."

".. they that dwell at Jerusalem..." - the inhabitants of Jerusalem were more actively engaged in condemning Jesus than those who lived in other areas.

"and their rulers..." - the high priest and the Sanhedrin.

"because they knew him not..." - because they did not recognise him for the person he was. See Peter's words in Acts 3. 17.

"nor yet the voices of the prophets..." - this is a clumsy sentence and makes little sense as it stands. Alternative renderings are:-

R.V. "... because they knew him not, nor the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him".

R.S.V. "... because they did not recognise him nor understand the utterances of the prophets which are read every sabbath, fulfilled these by condemning him".

The sense is that they condemned him because they did not recognise him for the person he was and by condemning him in this way, they fulfilled the voices of the prophets who had prophesied of his death and these prophets were read every sabbath. The fact that the prophets were read every sabbath does not excuse the condemnation of Jesus. On the contrary, it deplores it because having read the prophets every sabbath, they should have recognised the Messiah when he came.

## Verse 28

"And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain."

"..though they found no cause of death..." - Such was their blind determination to destroy him that they had no regard for justice. They condemned an innocent man in this way.

"yet desired..." - it was their desire that he should be killed. All the arguments of law were set aside because there was nothing by which the Law could operate to have him killed. Therefore, the law had to be set aside and their desire had to be answered.

"Pilate..." - the trial was before the high priest and the Sanhedrin. Yet they turned to a Gentile Governor for the final permission to destroy him. In the first place they turned to a ruler of the hated Romans. In the second place, they asked permission of a Gentile unbeliever.

This was the substance of Peter's arguments against the Jews. (Acts 3. 13 et seq.)

The crushing accusations now being made by Paul were softened by his admission in verse 27 that they "knew him not" which is to say they did it all in ignorance. Paul acknowledged this ignorance again in 1 Cor. 2. 8.

"that he should be slain." - This appeared to be the only effective way of eliminating Jesus who had become an embarrassment to the Sanhedrin. They could have asked for banishment or imprisonment but neither of these punishments would have ensured that he would not be back in Jerusalem again after a time had elapsed. He had to be destroyed to be effectively eliminated from the scene of his activities.

## Verse 29

"And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre."

"fulfilled all that was written of him,.." - All that happened to Jesus on the day of his death, had been foretold by the prophets.

"they took him down..." - "they" refers to the high priest and Sanhedrin. Actually it was Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus who attended to the removal from the tree and the burial. It is thought that inasmuch as both men were members of the Sanhedrin (Luke 23. 50. and John 3. 1.) the whole body of rulers is responsible for both acts, the crucifixion and the burial. In other words, when the Sanhedrin members had crucified him, the Sanhedrin members took him down and buried him. See Deut. 20. 23.

## Verse 30

"But God raised him from the dead."

This contrast between the acts of men and the act of God is similar to the contrast made by Peter and recorded in Acts 3. 15. See also Peter's words in Acts 10. 39/40.

## Verse 31

"And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people."

Stating that Jesus had been raised from the dead is one thing, proving it is another. Both Peter and Paul, having reached this stage in their speeches, realised the need for proof. Peter had been an eye-witness and the Jews to whom he spoke had been the executioners. In Paul's case, it was different. He had not been an eye-witness of the risen Lord before his ascension and he did not want to make the case more difficult by describing his experience when Jesus appeared unto him. Therefore, he had to refer to the many witnesses who had seen the risen Lord.

"them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem,..." These would not only be the twelve but the other disciples who were not counted amongst that special group of men.

"who are his witnesses..." - the tense is important here. They ARE his witnesses. Not they WERE his witnesses. The point is that some of his disciples were still alive and bore testimony to his resurrection.

"unto the people." - The chosen race, the Jews. Not to the Gentiles as yet. That was something yet to come.

## Verse 32

"And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers,"

This sentence is incomplete and is finished in verse 33.

"glad tidings..." - the gospel.

"the promise..." - this was the promise of a resurrection. This had been promised to Abraham when he showed that he was prepared to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. Luke 20. 36/37.

## Verse 33

"God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee."

"fulfilled the same unto us their children..." - the fulfilment of the prophecy was done in our day, says Paul. Therefore it was fulfilled unto us. We are the children of the fathers, either by descent from Abraham or by our belief in such things and our signification of the belief by our baptism. See Gal. 3. 27/29.

"he hath raised up Jesus..." - the resurrection of Jesus relates to the "promise" mentioned in the previous verse.

"again;.." - There were two raisings. The first was the actual birth of Jesus who then became the Son of God. The second raising was when he was resurrected to an exalted position of Sonship. Many years later, Paul wrote,

Rom. 1. 4. "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

In this statement, Paul recognises three declarations of the Son of God, one being with power, the second being according to the spirit of holiness and the third, by resurrection from the dead. The first of these was a witness to the fact that Jesus was the Son of God because of the works which he did. He claimed that these were his Father's works. The second was that spirit of holiness which distinguished Jesus above his fellows. His defence in John 8 draws a clear distinction between Jesus and his fellowmen. "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" (John 8. 46.) The third takes us back to the day when Jesus cleansed the temple and he was accused of saying that he would destroy this temple and raise it in three days. He spake of the temple of his body. (John 2. 19.) When he was raised from the dead, he established his authority to cleanse his Father's house. At other times in Bible history, people had been raised from the dead. See Elijah's raising of the dead and Jesus raising Lazarus. When Jesus was raised, there was no one standing by operating through the power of God. "Him hath God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, for it was not possible that he should be holden of it." (Acts 2. 24.)

The resurrection of Jesus was proof that he was the Son of God and that is what Paul is now trying to prove. Peter had the task of this proof on the day of Pentecost and used the same argument that Paul now uses.

"the second psalm..." - the opening verses of this Psalm are quoted by the apostles in Acts 4. 25. They show that it applies to the time of the death and resurrection of Jesus when the heathen (the Romans) raged against God and His Anointed. God would "laugh" at their efforts when He would raise His Son from the dead. Here would be a manifestation of God and His Plan and Purpose as it centres in Jesus. Verse 7 of this Psalm is quoted in Heb. 1. 5. where it is shown that because of the wonderful things that happened to him, Jesus is undoubtedly the Son of God. Again it would appear that it was on the day of his resurrection that Jesus became the "begotten Son of God" but this is not what Paul is trying to prove. It is the Sonship of Jesus which matters. In a long speech he has shown how Israel was the "son" of God. Now he shows that Jesus is the Son of God by the more wonderful things that happened to him. He quotes the Hebrew Scriptures to prove his point.

## Verse 34

"And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David."

"And concerning..." - Now because God has raised Jesus from the dead...

"now no more to return to corruption..." - and because he has been raised from the dead and given immortality, he will no more return to the state of the dead where there is corruption..."

"he said on this wise..." - "he spoke in this way..."

"I will give you the sure mercies of David." - This is a quotation from Isaiah 55. 3. The meaning is "I will fulfil for you the sacred promises made to David." The Diaglott gives, "I will give to you the holy things of David the faithful". The Afrikaans is "Ek sal aan julle gee die heilige weldade van Dawid wat betroubaar is". (I shall give to you the holy blessings of David who is faithful".) This refers to the promise of 2 Sam. 7. 12/16. and 1 Chron. 17. 11/14.

The Jews connected this Promise with their Messiah so in using it at this time, Paul showed that the resurrection of Jesus was in part fulfilment of that Promise. He was David's greater Son who is to sit upon the throne of his father David. This was promised to Mary by Gabriel. Luke 1. 30/33.

Paul has now shown that Jesus is the Son of God; he has been raised from the dead; his resurrection is the greatest proof that he is the Son of God; he has been given immortality so that he will never return to the grave which is a state of corruption; because of these things, the promise of God to David concerning his greater son must apply to Jesus and this being the case, Jesus is the long looked for Messiah.

Paul now turns to a proof that Jesus is immortal.

Verse 35

"Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."

The promise unto David was an eternal one so if Jesus was the Messiah, he would have to live eternally to receive the kingdom which had been promised unto him. This requires a proof that he was now alive and had immortality.

The Psalm quoted is Psa. 16. 10. Peter had quoted the same Psalm at greater length, as is recorded in Acts 2. 25/28.

The use of the title "Holy One" is important to Paul's argument because he has just made reference to the "Holy things" of David. These "Holy things or Blessings" promised the coming of the Messiah and having shown that this pointed to the "Son of God", Paul adds to the identification by referring to the "Holy One" who did not see corruption.

"Thou shalt not suffer..." - "Thou" meaning God, would not permit His Holy One to reach a stage of corruption. The initiative of raising His Holy One rested with God, therefore God must have raised him. This connects with the previous argument that Jesus was the Son of God because God raised him from the dead.

Verse 36

"For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption:"

Paul now shows that the verse from Psalm 16 could not apply to David therefore it must apply to Jesus.

"For David, after he had served his own generation..." - Paul is speaking at Antioch. Peter spoke at Jerusalem. The local conditions were so different that even although both men used the same argument, they had to take a different line at this point. Peter could well have had the sepulchre of David in view as he spoke and made the best dramatic use of it. Pointing to the sepulchre, he could have stated that David was dead and buried and that his sepulchre is with us to this day, as his hearers could see for themselves. Paul however, did not have the advantage of a nearby sepulchre so had to make reference to the great service that David rendered to his people, and to God. He served his own generation and, at that time, obeyed the Will of God.



"fell on sleep,..." - he died, with a suggestion that he died peacefully as the record in 1 Kings 2. 1/10. indicates.

"he was laid unto his fathers..." - he was buried with his ancestors.

"and saw corruption." Some commentators suggest that this refers to his body. It does, but in no way indicates that he had a soul which went to heaven. His body was laid in the grave and, being corruptible in nature, decayed and turned back to dust.

Thus Peter and David both deny that Psa. 16. 10. refers to David. Both use it as a proof that Jesus was raised from the dead.

#### Verse 37

"But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption."

"But he...." - with obvious reference to Jesus. See verse 30. and vs. 33.

"whom God raised again..." - contrast David being "laid unto his fathers..." with Jesus being raised. The verb is "raised up" and appears in Acts 3. 15; 4. 10; 5. 30; 10. 40; and again in Acts 13. 30.

"saw no corruption." - did not experience corruption.

This being the case, Psa. 16. 10. can in no way apply to David.

#### Verse 38

"Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins:"

Paul now makes his proclamation. He has completed his proof that Jesus was raised from the dead and he is now the mediator sitting at the right hand of God.

"Be it known unto you therefore.." - because Jesus is alive, there is no other Saviour.

"That through this man..." - he alone is the mediator and the Saviour. It is important to note at this stage, when Jesus is IN HEAVEN, Paul refers to him as a MAN. He is an immortal man and not a God. Compare 1 Tim. 2. 5. The use of the word "through" indicates the mediatorship.

"is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." Having regard to the full statement of "through this man... forgiveness of sins." there is a proclamation (1) through Jesus - (2) forgiveness of sins - (3) is preached.

If the threefold statement is regarded as a proclamation, then there is an invitation to come to Jesus to receive what is proclaimed.

#### Verse 39

"And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

"by him" - means "in him.." Being "in Christ" is essential to salvation.

"all that believe.." - "belief" is merely a mental approach. Something is taught and one believes that it is the truth. This is insufficient to justify the believer because belief must precipitate further action. The required action is a signification of one's belief by being baptised INTO Christ.

"are justified from all things,.." - the word "justify" means to "present righteous". It does not relate to one's sins which can be forgiven but relates to one's sinful flesh which makes a person unacceptable in the sight of God.

With the righteousness of Jesus upon the believer, the unacceptable condition is changed to one where the believer is acceptable. All these attributes are inseparable and must go together - (1) belief, (2) baptism arising out of that belief, (3) putting on Christ, (4) being acceptable.

"ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." The Law could and did forgive sins because the element of sacrifice provided a covering for sins in the same way that the coat of skin in the Garden of Eden provided a covering for nakedness which was the symbol of sin. (For only one of many examples of forgiveness under the Law see Lev. 5. 10.)

Nevertheless, as it was in the days of Adam, so it must be now. Adam's coat of skin covered his nakedness but did not take away his sinful flesh. This being the case, "as in Adam all die". When one is baptised into Christ, one puts on Christ and, although sinful flesh is still retained, one is justified - made righteous - and is therefore acceptable before God and may be given immortality at the Judgment Seat. The Law of Moses could bring temporary forgiveness but could never provide that covering for sins which presented the sacrificer in an acceptable manner. That is to say, the sacrificer could never be "justified".

#### Verse 40

"Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets;"

This is an uncompleted sentence which comes to completion in the next verse. A warning is given here and coming at this stage, is in harmony with Scriptural method of making a promise or proclamation first and then following it with a warning. See Deut. 28 where a proclamation of plenty is made as a reward of obedience and this is followed by dire warnings for disobedience. See also the proclamation of Gen. 3. 16 followed by the warning of verse 17.

"beware..." - "Take heed..." It carries a sense of "look" or "give careful thought to". This is a favourite expression of Paul who used the same in 1 Cor. 3. 10; 8. 9; 10. 12; Gal. 5. 10; Ephes. 5. 15; Phil. 3. 2. Col. 2. 8; 4. 17; Heb. 3. 12; 12. 25. The translations are "beware", "take heed" and "see."

"Therefore..." - because of what has happened to Jesus, lest ye be taken to task for it..."

"come upon you..." - fall upon you suddenly from above.

"spoken of in the prophets;" - referred to and quoted in the next verse.

#### Verse 41

"Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you."

The quotation is from Hab. 1. 5. This passage from Habakkuk was given directly as a warning of the Babylonian invasion which came to pass long before Paul's day, yet he quotes it as something to happen again if the Jews do not repent.

The effect of the quotation by Paul is to warn the Jews that if they did not repent, God would bring a punishment upon them similar to that brought upon the fathers by the Babylonians because they turned away from God. This invasion would be such that if it had happened in the past, they would hardly have believed it. Yet, it would be accomplished in their day. The prophecy came true in the destruction of A.D. 70.

#### Verse 42

"And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath."

In the R.V. and R.S.V. the words "Jews", "synagogue" and "Gentiles" are omitted. Most of the translations consulted omit them.

"..when the Jews were gone out..." - should be "when Paul and Barnabas had gone out..."

"the Gentiles besought..." - should be "the people besought.."

"these words..." - from Gk. "rhema", the "word of instruction".

"might be preached..." - lit. "to be spoken..."

"the next sabbath." - lit. "the sabbath between." The speech was made on a sabbath (see verse 14) so there was no sabbath falling between this occasion and the next sabbath. Two points in time cannot be ascertained from this passage so it is convenient to translate "next sabbath". Rackham suggests it means "during the following week." (footnote page 218)

#### Verse 43

"Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God."

"the congregation was broken up..." - the word for "congregation" in Greek is exactly that translated elsewhere as "synagogue" and refers to the gathering of people and not to the building we now know as a synagogue. It was this gathering of worshippers which was broken up and not the synagogue which was broken up.

"broken up..." - "dismissed..." Verse 42 states that Paul and Barnabas had gone out (see notes) so they must have withdrawn from the assembly when they had finished speaking.

"the Jews and religious proselytes..." - again both are referred to. This time the reference is different from those given in verses 16 and 26. See notes to these verses.

"who, speaking to them,..." - it is not certain what the subject of this clause is. Either it is "Paul and Barnabas" or it is "the Jews and religious proselytes..." Either the two evangelists urged the Jews and proselytes to continue in their pleasing response to the favour that God had brought to them in the preaching of His word, or the people had been so taken with the preaching of the two evangelists that they urged them to continue to preach such wonderful things. Most likely it was the people who did the urging because they had asked for the addresses to continue at a later date and now urged Paul and Barnabas to continue preaching such wonderful things.

#### Verse 44

"And the next sabbath day..." - lit. "the coming, (ensuing or following) sabbath..." without the word "day".

"almost the whole city..." - hyperbole. Means a great multitude.

"came...together..." - assembled. Same Greek word as in Acts 4. 26.

"word of God." - Greek "LOGOS of the Theos" i.e. the gospel or Divine Plan and Purpose.

#### Verse 45

"But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming."

"..when the Jews saw the multitudes..." - there would be a large number of Romans, Greeks and others there. The Jewish pride of race together with their ingrained aloofness and unwillingness to share the Promises with the despised Gentiles, would arouse strong resentment.

"they were filled with envy..." - the Greek is "zelos" meaning zeal. This is used in a good sense meaning emulation of a superior, or zeal for the cause of another. In a bad sense, which is used here, it means jealousy and indignation.

"spake against those things.." - the verb "spake against" is from the same one word in Greek as that translated "contradicting" in this verse.

"...blaspheming." - reviling, saying evil things about God and His Word. It is suggested by commentators that the Jews referred to the fact that Jesus, having been crucified, was cursed because he met his death by being hanged from a tree. This is supposition. Whatever was said was something embarrassing and disappointing to Paul and Barnabas.

#### Verse 46

"Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

"waxed bold..." - Gk. "speaking freely..." without any thought for the feelings of their listeners who, by this time, had shown that they were unworthy of such consideration.

"It was necessary..." - this has reference to the Divine Plan and Purpose of preaching such things first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. See Rom. 1.16.

"the word of God..." - "the LOGOS of the Theos..."

"spoken to you..." - from the history outlined by Paul, it was obvious that they had been the people of God.

"put it from you..." - Gk. "thrust it away from you..." indicating a forceful rejection. The same verb appears in Acts 7. 27 and 39. relative to Moses being thrust aside by his fellow countrymen.

"judge yourselves..." - They did not actually judge themselves in this way but by their conduct, they brought this judgment upon themselves.

"lo,..." - like the word "behold", indicates something unusual to follow.

"we turn to the Gentiles." - Lit. "we are turning.." This does not mean that Paul and Barnabas would no longer preach to the Jews but that, in turning to the Gentiles, they had in mind the people of Antioch. This same turning to the Gentiles would take place wherever it should be thought necessary to do so. The point to note is that the door was not irrevocably shut to the Jews by Paul. He preach to Jews many times after this incident. See Acts 18. 6. where Paul tells the Jews of Athensthat he is turning to the Gentiles, meaning the Gentiles of Corinth. Again in Acts 19. 9/10. Paul preached to both Jew and Gentile in Ephesus. Later on at Rome, Paul told the Jews there that the gospel is now to be preached to the Gentiles. Acts 28. 28. Those commentators who see in Paul's statement a critical point in Jewish history have erred. There was no definite cutting away from Jews and going to Gentiles. The Gospel was to be preached to all nations in all the world.

#### Verse 47

"For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth."

"...so hath the Lord commanded us..." - an introduction to a quotation from the word of God which Paul is about to quote. This shows that the word translated here as "Lord" must have reference to God and not to Jesus who is the subject of the prophecy.

"I have set thee...." - a quotation from Isa. 49. 6. See also Isa. 42. 6. Simeon also quoted Isa. 49. 6. in Luke 2. 31/32. This psalm of praise is called "Nunc Dimitis".

## Verse 48

"And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."

"when the Gentiles heard..." - the Gentiles now heard as was prophesied in the prophecy just quoted.

"they were glad..." - this made the preaching the GLAD TIDINGS because what had previously been confined to Jews and to none other, was now preached unto the world and men could now come into the covenants of promise.

"glorified..." - gave praise and honour to...

"the word of the Lord..." - the LOGOS of the Lord. This was the Divine Plan and Purpose as revealed by the prophet Isaiah.

"as many as were ordained..." - this raises the question as to what pre-destination was all about. God knows the end from the beginning and knew who would come into His Covenants of Promise but that did not eliminate others from having the same chance. The predestination concerned the "body of Christ" which would come into being because it was God's Plan that it would be so. The coming into being of a body of persons who, in the age to come, will show forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light, (1 Pet. 2. 9.) is not to be left to chance. God calls and men answer. Either they answer "Yes" or they answer "No.", in each case exercising their own free will. Many are called but few are chosen. (Matt. 20. 16. and 22. 14.) The people here exercised their own free will in making their choice and were "elected" (chosen) to hold the high calling in Christ.

"eternal life..." - "aionian life".

## Verse 49

"And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region."

"the word of the Lord..." - the LOGOS of God.

"was published..." - in the active mood it means to carry through a place or country. In the passive it means to be circulated.

"throughout..." - lit. "through" meaning from one end to the other.

"the region." - the country without regard to political boundaries. It was the country of the Galatians.

## Verse 50:

"But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts."

"stirred up..." - "urged on" or "incited". This is the only use of this word in Scripture.

"devout..." - a description usually applied to Gentile converts who worshipped the One God of Israel, having been taught by Jews. See vs 43.

"honourable..." - Gk. "elegant in figure or bearing; decent, becoming". The word is applied to those held in high esteem. See the word "comely" in 1 Cor. 12. 24. See "honourable" in Mark 15. 43.

"women..." - a large number of women turned from heathenism to the worship of God as taught by the Jews. It appears to be characteristic of mankind that women turn to religion more readily than men. As it is today, so it was in those days.

"and the chief men of the city..." - the councillors or leading citizens. Some commentators suggest that such men were the husbands of the women who had been stirred up but in the sense of the passage, it is the Jews who did the inciting and not the wives.

It is important to note that it was always the Jews who gave opposition to the spreading of the Gospel. For the most part, the heathen authorities at this time did not oppose the evangelists. It was certain individuals who opposed Paul but they were not the rulers of the country nor the city.

"raised..." - Gk. "epegeiro" meaning to rouse up or excite.

"persecution..." - no details are given as to what form the persecution took but in the meaning of the word - "pursuit" - it is certain that it took a violent form. In listing his troubles which beset him during his preaching, Paul included "forty stripes save one", "beaten with rods", "in perils by my own countrymen", "in perils by the heathen", and "in perils in the city". See 2 Cor. 11. 24/25.

"expelled..." - the context suggests a violent expulsion and this is probably what happened. It would be inconsistent to treat the apostles with violence and then put them quietly out of the city. The same word is used in Acts 9. 40. where Peter "put out" certain people. He would not have been violent on that occasion showing that in the use of this word, violence is not always indicated.

"their coasts." - borders, boundaries, frontiers. Can refer to the boundaries of a city. See Matt. 2. 16. "all the coasts of Bethlehem"; Matt. 8. 34. for "coasts of the country of the Gergesenes;" Matt. 15. 39. "coasts of Magdala". See also Matt. 19. 1; Mark 5. 17; 7. 31; (twice) 10. 1.

Verse 51

"But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came to Iconium."

"shook the dust off..." - a symbolical act indicating a complete break away, so complete that they would not take even a grain of dust with them. This was commanded by Jesus. See Matt. 10. 14; Mark 6. 11; Luke 9. 5; and in particular note Luke 10. 11. Shaking the raiment free of dust is a similar act. See Acts 18. 6.

It is difficult to say how the habit arose apart from the commandment of the Lord Jesus. Reference is sometimes made to Josh. 5. 15. where Joshua was told by an angel to "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place where thou standest is holy." The eastern habit was to wear shoes for going out, not for protection so much as to prevent defilement from anything on the ground. Therefore any defilement remaining on the shoe could not come into the presence of God. A similar instruction was given to Moses. See Exod. 3. 5. Perhaps the rejection the apostles suffered which made the Jews unworthy of everlasting life (vs.46) was considered to be a spiritual defilement as it was if persisted in. Nevertheless, in the absence of any passage connecting the taking off of shoes and the dusting off of feet, no decision can be arrived at except to say that this act was commanded by the Lord.

"Iconium." - This was an ancient city in Phrygia near the border of Lycaonia. Paul was yet to endure persecutions here as well. He wrote to Timothy about this and his notes can be read in 2 Tim. 3. 11. The city is also mentioned in Acts 14. 1; 14. 19, 21; 16. 2. and is always mentioned with Antioch where Paul was in the previous verse, and Lystra, three cities which are quite close together.

## Verse 52

"And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Spirit."

Being filled with (1) joy and (2) the Holy Spirit appears to be necessary because the persecution which they had just suffered, was designed to fill them with sorrow and make them lose enthusiasm for the work of God. The effect was the opposite of that intended for the disciples were more enthusiastic than ever the more they were persecuted. They would be strengthened by the Holy Spirit. Paul suggests this in 1 Thess. 1. 6. where he says, "having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit."

The disciples must have received violent persecution as the apostles did. Like the apostles, they were undaunted and it would appear that they were filled with a joy which was inspired by the Holy Spirit.

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CHAPTER 14

The missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas now changes from Pisidian Antioch to Iconium.

Verse 1

"And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed."

"they went both together..." - "they" means Paul and Barnabas, They went together means that they went both at one and the same time.

"into the synagogue..." - this being the one place where Jew and devout Gentile could meet together.

"so spake..." - spoke in such a manner that their hearers were profoundly impressed. Luke describes not that they spoke but the manner in which they spoke.

"the Greeks!.." - not Jewish Greeks or Grecian Jews but Grecian Gentiles.

"believed." Believed in the Word of the Lord. (Acts 13.49.)

Verse 2

"But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren."

"unbelieving Jews..." - "unbelieving" in the sense that Paul used it means disobedient and "disobedient" in Paul's usage means those who will not believe. The Gospel was not only God's Word of Salvation, it was a commandment from God to every man to repent. (Acts 17. 30.) Therefore if any did not obey the gospel, they were unbelieving as well as disobedient. The tense here is imperfect showing a continuing disobedience.

"stirred up..." - see Acts 13. 50. and notes thereon.

"evil affected.." - This is the only place where this translation appears. See Acts 7. 6. for "entreat evil" and Acts 7. 19. for "evil entreated". Acts 12. 1. gives "vex" and Acts 18. 10. gives "hurt". the meaning is to do spitual harm.

"against the brethren." - this refers to the new converts and not to the apostles. Here once again, the Jews were in opposition to the new converts through jealousy. See Acts 13. 45. which describes the Jews as being "full of envy." The jealousy was aroused by the new converts claiming to be "the seed of Abraham" by their belief and baptism. (Gal. 3. 27/29.) The Jews would not share the promises with the Gentiles. This state of affairs would not arise now because Christians and Jews do not believe in the Abrahamic Promise.

Verse 3

"Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands."

The late Wm. A. Ramsay (St. Paul the traveller and Roman Citizen", page 107 et seq.,) draws attention to the apparent error in Luke's record by an account of the great persecution which arose as a result of that preaching. Then in verse 3 the character of the story undergoes an astonishing change where as a sequel of the Jewish action, the apostles remain a long time

preaching boldly and with marked success. The critics also seize upon this apparent discrepancy to regard the "Acts" as a patchwork and not the inspired Word of God.

We must realise however, that Luke is recording a history of a preaching campaign which lasted some time and he condenses the story considerably. This being the case, one must have regard to the time lag between verses 2 and 3. The commentators point out that verses 1, 2, 4 and 5 are similar in theme whereas verse 3 seems to be the odd one out. Nevertheless, Luke is recording the acts of Paul and Barnabas and is not particularly concerned with the opposition their preaching received. Therefore we submit that all verses are correct and that the history which Luke records here is reliable. Verse 3 is to be regarded as true in spite of the opposition mentioned in the other verses.

"Long time..." - lit. "sufficient time". Being unconcerned with the acts of the opposition, Luke does not give any hint as to the duration of the happenings of this verse, except to say that sufficient time was given for the work mentioned to be done.

"therefore..." - the participle here is connected with verse 1 and indicates that because of the readiness to believe of the multitude, the apostles spent sufficient time speaking boldly.

"abode!..." - the Greek means to consume or wear away time. See Acts 16. 12. See also verse 28 of this chapter.

"boldly..." - Gk. "to speak with fearless candour". They had no fear in preaching in the sight and hearing of those who opposed them.

"in the Lord..." - this expression is related to the speaking boldly, which they did, trusting in the Lord to sustain them.

"the word of his grace..." - the LOGOS of his favour. It was in the Plan and Purpose of God to bestow His favour upon certain people called to be His servants. The following expressions appear in the Acts:-

The word of God	Acts 4. 31; 6. 2; 8. 14; 11. 1; 12. 24; 13. 5. 7. 44, 46; 17. 13; 18. 11; 19. 20;
The word of the Lord	Acts 8. 25; 13. 49; 15. 35/36; 19. 10;
The word of the gospel	Acts 15. 7.
The words of the Lord Jesus	Acts 20. 35
The word of this salvation	Acts 13. 26.
The word of his grace	Acts 14. 3; 20. 32.

"granted..." - gave without forcing the recipient to take. That is "freely gave".

"signs and wonders." - see notes to Acts 2. 22; 2. 43; 4. 30; 5. 12; 6. 8; 7. 36; The phrase is to occur again in Acts 15. 12.

"to be done by their hands." - God permitted His power to operate through His servants to show the Divine approval of those things which were being taught.

#### Verse 4

"But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles."

This verse now continues the theme of verse 2 showing that Luke must have added verse 3 as a parenthesis. The persecution which he records caused the apostles to go eventually to Lystra and Derbe (verse 6) so Luke, in his characteristic style, is preparing his readers for that stage in the preaching journey.

"the multitude..." - a great number of people without reference to its character.

"Divided..." - The sentence in Greek is "was divided and the multitude of the city and these indeed were with the Jews..." The Greek is "schizo" from which the English "schizophrenic" (split personality) is derived, also "schism".

"part held with the Jews..." - the unbelieving Jews.

"part with the apostles." - the apostles and the disciples who were with them.

The division was between the unbelieving Jews on the one part, supported by unbelieving Jews and Gentiles, and the believing Jews on the other, supported by the believing Jews and Gentiles.

This was the character of preaching the gospel and it continued as such throughout Paul's preaching life. See Acts 28. 24.

#### Verse 5

"And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them,"

The verse is completed at the end of verse 7.

"assault..." - Gk. "a violent impulse". In Jas. 3. 4. it appears as "listeth" referring to an internal impulse. This appears to be the sense here because in the verse we are studying, no actual assault was made. It was just that the impulse to attack was known to the apostles and disciples.

"with their rulers..." - refers to the heads of families who would become the heads of the Jewish community. This was the character of the patriarchal system.

"use them despitefully..." - Gk. "to use wanton insult" "to act with insult".

"to stone them." - The Jews would act very correctly according to their interpretation of the Law so that if they heard Jesus preached that he was the Son of God, they may regard this as blasphemy and consider themselves entitled to go to this brutal extreme.

#### Verse 6

"They were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about:"

"ware of it..." - Gk. "to know in conjunction with another or with others." The word is the same as used in Acts 5. 2. and translated as "privy". The meaning here is that all the apostles and disciples were aware of what was in the mind of the people. They knew of the inward impulse to persecute them. This suggests that the secret impulse was a secret plot to do away with the preachers.

"fled..." - this was not headlong flight. There was no panic amongst them as verse 3 shows. The flight was in obedience to the Lord's commands given in Matt. Lo. 23. which reads, "... when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another:.." Martyrdom is one thing but deliberate martyrdom is just plain suicide and would render the martyr a "sounding brass or tinkling cymbal." 1 Cor. 13. 1/3.

"Lystra..." - This was a city about 18 miles from Iconium and to the S.S.W. of it. The city was founded in B.C. 6 by the Romans to control the mountain tribes who, by their brigandage, disturbed the use of the road through Galatia. The inhabitants of the city would be the Romans who would represent the upper classes together with the Greeks, and the Lycaonians who would be largely uneducated and who spoke the Lycaonian language which Paul and Barnabas did not understand.

"Derbe..." - this city was east of Lystra and south of Iconium. It was discovered in 1956 and is situated about 60 miles Lystra. Gaius who was one of Paul's fellow travellers, came from Derbe. (Acts 20. 4.)

"Lycaonia..." - this was a region which included Lystra and Derbe. It lay between Phrygia, Cappadocia and Cilicia.

"the region that lieth round about:" - the region that lay round about Lystra and Derbe within the province of Lycaonia.

#### Verse 7

"And there they preached the gospel."

The tense is "were preaching..." indicating a continuous effort.

"gospel" - Gk. "Evangelium" meaning "the Glad Tidings of the Kingdom of God". See Acts 5. 42; 8. 4; 8. 12; 25, 35, 40; 10. 36; 11. 20;

#### Verse 8

"And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked:"

The miracle which is about to be recorded, is similar to that performed by Peter and John and recorded in Acts 3. 1/11.

"a certain man..." - The Greek word does not indicate anyone certain. It means "anyone..." without being particular as to the identity. The name of the person about to be cured is unimportant to the story.

"impotent in his feet..." - lit. "unable in his feet..." i.e. was unable to make use of them.

"being" - omit. It is not in the original Greek.

"a cripple from his mother's womb..." - See Acts 3. 2.

"who had never walked." - Lit. "who had never walked about." The repetition is given to emphasize the incurable nature of the man's affliction. (1) he was impotent; (2) a cripple; (3) he had never walked about.

#### Verse 9

"The same heard Paul speak: who steadfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed,"

The sentence here is incomplete and ends with the next verse.

"The same..." - lit. "This man..."

"...Paul speak..." - lit. "Paul speaking..." i.e. the man heard Paul while he was speaking. The word "speaking" refers to his preaching and not to just talking.

"steadfastly beholding him..." - see notes to 1. 10.

"perceiving that he had faith..." - The sense here is that Paul read his mind. This could not be unless Paul was guided by the Holy Spirit.

## Verse 10

"Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked."

"Said with a loud voice..." - see John 11. 43. where Jesus gave a command with a similar voice.

"Stand upright..." - medically, the standing upright would signify a complete cure.

"leaped and walked." - See Acts 3. 8. The "leaping" was continuous - "leaping..."

## Verse 11

"And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men."

".. the people..." - lit. "the crowds..."

"lifted up their voices..." - the indication here is of a sudden shout which is not an uncommon thing amongst Eastern crowds. See Acts 4. 24; 7. 57; 8. 7.

".. the speech of Lycaonia..." - It is suggested by commentators that neither Paul nor Barnabas understood the vernacular of the Lycaonians because they are not reported to have objected when likened to gods and when given the names of Mercurius and Jupiter respectively. Yet when the priest came upon the scene, Paul and Barnabas immediately took action. This opinion is not well founded because Paul and Barnabas did not object to the names nor to the statement that the gods were come down in the likeness of men, but rightly objected when they were about to be worshipped. It cannot be inferred from this that they did not understand the language. The Holy Spirit working within them would make them understand. This is evident from their sudden outburst recorded in verses 15, 16 and 17. What language did they speak then? It is inferred that they spoke Greek whereas the people spoke in the vernacular. This, however, is not evident from the text. All spoke the same language.

"in the likeness of men." - There is a myth that in Phrygia, not far away from the present scene, Jupiter and Mercury had visited a man named Philemon and his wife, Baucis without disclosing their identity. The couple entertained them so well that they were given special honours from the gods. The superstitious people could very well think that this myth was to be re-enacted in real life.

## Verse 12

"And they called Barnabas Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker."

"..Mercurius..." - This was Mercury, the messenger of the gods to the Romans, the Greek name being Hermes. Being the messenger and the interpreter, he would do all the speaking so it was natural that Paul should be given his name.

"Jupiter..." - The Greek name was "Zeus". This was the chief of all the gods. Barnabas with his quiet dignity would earn this name.

## Verse 13

"Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people."

"..the priest of Jupiter..." - in the pagan system of worship, there were many priests. This may have been the high priest but, at the same time, he may not. He must nevertheless have been of some importance as he was the priest of Jupiter and Jupiter was the chief of all the gods. In some texts the word translated as "priest" here, is given in the plural, thus indicating that a number of priests would have been there.

"which was before their city..." - was it the priest of Jupiter who was "before their city"? Some insert "whose temple" in place of "which" giving "the priests of Jupiter whose temple was before the city." It is thought that the god Jupiter (Zeus in Greek) would be in his temple and it was more important to mention the god rather than its temple. From this, it is thought that the many cities scattered about the Roman Empire had temples before them but outside the cities. Some texts have "Zeus Propolis" meaning "Zeus before-the-city".

"oxen..." - the sacrifice of a bull is of very ancient origin. It was common in Babylon and spread from there to India where the cow is a sacred animal.

"garlands..." - these were rings of flowers and sometimes of wool. They were put on the oxen as they were brought to the place of sacrifice. This is also a very ancient practice and was spread abroad from Babylon. It has also gone to India and is a favourite practice by Indians who wish to honour any visitor. They put garlands of flowers upon them.

"unto the gates..." - It is not clear to which gates they were taken. Some consider that the gates mentioned here were the city gates. Others think that the temple gates are intended while it is also likely to have been the gates of the lodging where Paul and Barnabas were staying. (See Acts 10. 17. and 12. 13.) The word translated as "gate" however, is in the plural so it seems to point to the temple.

The Greek word for "gate" is "pylon" and a house would not have more than one "pylon". The word for "gates" in Acts 9. 24. The answer to the problem seems to be given by the position of the lame man when he was healed. He is very likely to have sat at the temple gate to ask alms of all those who entered. By so doing, he would ensure that the largest number of people saw him. This is very similar to the action of the lame man whom Peter healed and who sat at the gate which is called Beautiful". (Acts 3. 2.) The pagan priests would like to offer their sacrifice, not within the temple but outside where the cripple had sat and where he had been cured. There would be no problem then in regard to getting oxen and garlands. All these would be ready for the normal service which was given in the temple.

"would have done sacrifice..." - the meaning of these words in English is "they would have done sacrifice if they had not been prevented as is to be explained in the next verses". This, however, is not the meaning of the Greek text. This is "they intended to do sacrifice". The intention follows upon the error of identifying Paul and Barnabas as gods.

"with the people." They intended to do sacrifice to those whom they supposed to be gods and this honour was to be shared with the "crowds". The Greek word translated as "people" is "ochlos". The R.V. has "multitudes", the R.S.V. "people" and the Afrikaans Bybel has "skare" - crowd or multitude."

## Verse 14.

"Which, when the apostles Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,"

"the apostles..." - this title is not confined to the Twelve for it is here applied to Paul and Barnabas. The meaning of the word is "one sent" and Paul and Barnabas had been sent by the ecclesia in Syrian Antioch. In addition, Paul had been sent by the Lord Jesus and by God. (Gal. 1. 1.)

"heard of" - they were not there to see it done so it is obvious that the priests did not bring their oxen and garlands to the door of their lodging. The news of the intention must have been brought to the apostles.

"rent their clothes..." - an Eastern custom to signify distress, grief and abhorrence of impiety and blasphemy. See Matt. 26. 65. and Mark 14. 63/64. for the attitude of the high priest at his wrong assumption that Jesus had spoken blasphemy.

"ran in..." - Gk. "rushed out".

"among the people..." - Gk. "into the crowd..."

"crying out," - this must be read in conjunction with the opening words of the next verse - "And saying,.." That is to say, the sentence is "crying out and saying" giving the meaning that they made a noise by shouting out the words which appear in verse 15.

## Verse 15

"And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein:"

"Sirs,.." - Gk. "men" used in the sense of "Gentlemen/".

"We also are men..." - the use of the word "also" is used to draw a comparison between Paul and Barnabas and the "gentlemen" and to show that there is no basic difference. The word "men" is not the same as "Sirs" but is "anthropoi" meaning "mortal men".

"like passions..." - Gk. "homoiopathes" from which the English "homoeopathy" is derived and means "of like nature, affections and feelings". RV margin "nature" R.S.V. "of like nature with you".

"preach unto you..." - lit. "ebangelising you" or proclaiming the glad tidings to you.

"vanities..." - things which are useless in regard to their results. Things which achieve nothing.

"the living God..." - as opposed to their god of stone.

It is important to note Paul's tact and opportunism. He opens in a polite way with "Sirs" and then humbles himself and Barnabas in their sight by stating emphatically that there is no difference between them, the people, and Paul and his companion. They are both of a similar nature. Then he takes the opportunity to evangelise them by preaching the gospel. In this, he starts with the Creator and His creative works. This they could believe. He had come to tell the people about this God.

It is now easier to assess the opinions which have been expressed by some commentators that Paul and Barnabas did not understand the Lycaonian language because they did nothing to counter the words of praise expressed in verse 11. Paul did nothing to counter these words at that stage because he knew he would preach to them on a later occasion. The present dilemma however, was different. Here Paul and Barnabas were being worshipped so they took immediate steps to prevent this. If they spoke to the people in the manner now reported, what language did they speak? Could all the people understand a different language which the apostles were now speaking? It does not make sense. Surely Paul and Barnabas would speak in the language of the people so that they could all understand. This means that they did understand the Lycaonian language and spoke it when it was very necessary to do so.

## Verse 16

"Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways."

"suffered..." - it is not that God permitted but that He did not hinder.

"all nations..." - Gk. the plural of "ethnos" meaning all the Gentiles. That is, all those nations who were not Israel.

"walk in their own ways." - Compare with Gen. 5. 22 and 24, which describe Enoch as walking with God. Also Gen. 6. 9, which states that Noah "walked with God". In the verse before us, the nations do not walk with God but walk according to their own ways.

Verse 17

"Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."

Paul has a difficult task. If there is a God in heaven, why did He permit generation upon generation to come and go yet never reveal Himself to them? Why is it that God revealed Himself to the nation of Israel and to no other? (It would not be correct to argue that God had revealed Himself to the nation of Israel to the exclusion of all others because there was no nation of Israel when God revealed Himself to Abraham. Nevertheless, He encouraged the development of Israel as a nation.) Paul argues that God permitted the nations to go their own way but at no time during that period, did He leave Himself without witnesses. These witnesses were to be found in nature which Paul now describes.

"Nevertheless..." - in spite of having permitted the Gentiles to do as they pleased...

"he left not himself without witness..." - See Acts 17. 26/30; Rom. 1. 18/22; if man looked at nature, he could not have missed the evidence that there was a Controller.

"he did good..." - God did that which was good in contrast to the pagan gods who were jealous, angry, vicious and had to be bribed or induced to give their blessings.

"gave us rain..." - introduces the fruitful seasons of the next clause. Rain brings life and vigour. Drought brings famine and death.

"filling our hearts..." - the "heart" was not filled but in the Scriptural sense of the heart being the seat of the thoughts, the meaning is that our minds were filled. Enjoyment is experienced only in the mind.

For "rainfall and harvest" as a theme showing God's mercy, see Gen. 8. 22. For "food and gladness" see Pas. 4. 7; Eccles. 9. 7; Isa. 25. 6.

If men had paid attention to God's works which were all around them, God may well have visited them. Paul builds up this theme in Rom. 1. and shows that God gave them up to their own devices as a punishment for their rejection of the limited witness which God had given them. See Rom. 1. 17/22.

The errors of the pagans had been overlooked by God because of their ignorance of His laws. Thus God had been patient with them. This speech of Paul should be studied in conjunction with his speech from Mars Hill of Acts 17.

Paul shows how the nations should have understood that there was an invisible God. The seasons which bring the rains and the harvests show forth the mercy of God towards His creatures, filling them with "food and gladness". The Psalmist wrote on this theme and his wonderful tribute towards his Maker is given in Psalm 104. Particular attention should be given to verses 14 and 15 of this Psalm.

It is important to note that when the apostles taught HEATHENS, they started with showing who God was. This did not involve breaking down the belief in gods of wood and stone which the heathen worshipped but adopted the method of building up a belief in the God of heaven and earth. At no time did the apostles attack the pagan belief first and build up the Truth afterwards.



The method was always to prove the existence of the God of heaven first. Thereafter, they would develop the theme of the God of Israel which involved the promises made unto the Fathers. In our preaching we should do well to copy this method. The question as to whether or not the gods of wood and stone were worth worshipping, would be a problem for the pagan to work out for himself later. When he contrasted this with the teaching of the apostles, there would be no doubt as to which was the Truth.

## Verse 18

"And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them."

"scarce..." - See also Acts 27. 7. Also for "scarcely" see Rom. 5. 7. and 1 Pet. 4. 18. The meaning is "with labour, with pains; with difficulty". In English, "hardly" would give a good definition in one word.

"they had not done sacrifice..." - in Greek this is a negative infinitive reading "not to sacrifice". The Greek is in the present tense but the translation is in the pluperfect.

"unto them." - not to Paul and Barnabas but as unto Mercury and Jupiter.

## Verse 19

"And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead."

Here again we find that the greatest opposition to the preaching of Christianity was to come from the Jews and not from the Romans or the pagans of other nations. Opposition from the heathens was to arise at a much later date. See Acts 17. 17. for further acts of aggression by the Jews.

"the people..." Gk. "crowds". See notes to verse 13.

"having stoned Paul..." - Paul was the one stoned because he was the chief speaker. (verse 12) Barnabas apparently was not stoned. This shows the enmity of the Jews because Paul had made such a change of face from a vigorous upholder of Jewish tradition to an opponent of it.

It is not clear whether the Jews persuaded the people to stone Paul or to permit them to do the stoning. The evidence is in favour of the latter because it was a Jewish and not a pagan tradition to stone people. Therefore it appears that the Jews persuaded the people to permit them to stone Paul.

"drew him out of the city..." - Here is evidence that the Jews did the stoning for they would remove Paul out of the city, to remove any contamination which would come (in their mind) from a dead body.

"supposing he had been dead." This connects with their motive in taking the body out of the city to avoid contamination. Stephen was stoned outside the city. (Acts 7. 58.) Paul may have referred to this in 2 Cor. 11. 23. "in deaths oft".

## Verse 20

"Howbeit, as the disciples stood around him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe."

"howbeit..." - Gk. "but". See R.V. "But"; R.S.V. "but" and Afrikaans "Maar".

"stood round about him..." - "encircled him". If they had bent over him, it would indicate that they were trying to revive him. But the word is "stood" which follows as a result of "supposing he had been dead". Therefore they just stood, apparently lamenting his "death".

"he rose up..." - in the straightforward manner in which Luke tells the story, it would appear to be miraculous that a man, having been stunned by stoning, suddenly gets up and goes into the city. Luke however, records only essential facts and does not add the minor incidents which happened between his regaining consciousness, standing up, being helped by his companions, speaking to them, and finally entering the city. One would think that some of the stones must have hit him on the legs, thus making walking difficult. That he was able the next day to accomplish a thirty mile journey on foot, says much for his constitution and determination, but also leans to the idea that he was not hit on his legs. It also indicates that there must have been very few Jews there to do the stoning, unlike the case with Stephen where there were many. Early on in the stoning, a stone must have struck him on the head, knocking him out and putting a stop to further stoning. This undoubtedly, would save his life.

"came into the city..." - The facts before us show that some time must have elapsed between the stoning and the recovery. The disciples were standing over him without trying to revive him, showing that they could very likely have been planning his burial since they supposed him to be dead. The crowds of onlookers had moved away for there is no mention of them. The scene is a tragic one with the unconscious Paul and his perplexed companions. That he went into the city, shows that it must have been about nightfall, when most people would have dispersed to their homes.

"and the next day..." - showing little time for recovery from serious physical injury. The conclusion is that he did not suffer much in the way of physical damage.

"he departed..." - without taking any action for damages or other redress.

"with Barnabas..." - who luckily, not being the chief speaker, was not attacked. Luke may add this information to show the outworking of the Divine statement "...I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." (Acts 9. 16.) Therefore it is PAUL who suffers and not Barnabas.

"to Derbe." - this was a city of the Lycaonian plain, lying at the foot and to the north of the Taurus mountains, about 30 miles from Lystra. Nothing is known of its early history. "Gaius of Derbe" (Acts 20. 4.) appears to have been a convert from Derbe.

Verse 21

"And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch."

"when they had preached the gospel to that city,.." - lit. "having preached the glad tidings (evangelised)..."

"and had taught many..." - lit. "made many disciples..."

"they returned again..." - Derbe was the limit of their outward journey. Now they returned to their starting point which was Antioch.

Verse 22

"Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

This verse is a continuation of the previous one. Paul, Barnabas and their company returned to Antioch a long way round and could have taken a much shorter route through Cilicia. Their return journey made it possible for them to revisit the people to whom they had preached on the way out, and so make a very valuable follow-up. Those of us who preach in various places during our annual vacation, could well take an example here and preach again to the same places on our way back.

"confirming the souls..." - the word means "establishing" and "strengthening". See Acts 18. 23. Paul's epistles show his efforts in this way. The "confirming" was done by encouraging and exhorting them. That Luke uses the word "psuchaston" from "psuche" meaning the "breath" that is in man, shows that that which was "confirmed", was the spirit of man as opposed to his body. In other words, they turned the hearts of the people to God.

"exhorting them to continue..." - see Acts 13. 43. where we find, "persuaded them to continue...". This is part of the "confirming" and shows how it was done.

"through much tribulation..." - Gk. "through many afflictions..." which is more powerful than the English. The term "affliction" connotes the idea of physical violence and this could be expected from the Jews. The word "many" denotes a wide variety of such afflictions. See Paul's reference to "tribulation" and "afflictions" in Rom. 5. 3; 8. 35; 12. 12; 2 Cor. 1. 4; 2 Thess. 1. 4. for "tribulation" and 2 Cor. 2. 4; 4. 17; 8. 2; Phil. 1. 16; 4. 14; 1 Thess. 1. 6; 3. 7; for "affliction" and 2 Cor. 6. 4; Col. 1. 24; 1 Thess. 3. 3; 2 Tim. 1. 8; 3. 11; 4. 5; for "afflictions".

Such tribulations and/or afflictions were because of the Will of God. It was easy enough for God to prevent them, but He permitted them as a kind of trial for His elect.

"enter into the kingdom of God". This was and still is the prize of every true Christian Believer. The "kingdom of God" is not the prize for that is to be given to Jesus. The prize is the "entrance" into that Kingdom. Such an "entrance" leads the believer into his "inheritance". See 1 Cor. 6. 9, 10; 15. 50; Gal. 5. 21; Ephes. 5. 5.

Verse 23

"And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed."

"ordained..." - this was not an election after a vote had been taken amongst the new converts. It would be a formal appointment in accordance with the practice of those days which was to stretch out the hand towards the person elected. It is in no sense the same as a modern election by a church.

"elders..." - Gk. "presbyters" an assembly of aged persons. Paul would not appoint men according to age without having regard to their knowledge, personality and preaching ability. The word here means "teaching elders" and not administrative elders.

"in every church..." - in every ecclesia.

"and had prayed..." - see Acts 6. 6; and 13. 3.

"and fastings..." - it was the custom in early ordinations. Fasting was a common practice in O.T. days but fell largely into neglect in N. T. times. It was used however, at times of appointments such as we have in this verse. See Acts 13. 2 and 3. Other fasts in N.T. times seems to be voluntary ones and not compulsory fasts as was the case under the Law of Moses. See 2 Cor. 6. 5; 11. 27.

"they commended them to the Lord..." - "put them in trust."

"on whom they believed..." - their belief in the Lord went further than an assurance that Jesus was the Messiah and the Son of God. They believed in his power to save so that if they lost their lives, they would find them in terms of the Lord's words recorded in Matt. 16. 25/26. Paul therefore, put them in this trust. Such a faith was linked with the tribulations through which they would have to go.

The ecclesias had now been put on a firm basis. Not only had they been given a knowledge of the Truth but they had been organised into bodies of believers who would stand together when trouble came their way. They could join together for the purpose of worship. If suffering was to come their way, they could, at the very least, be confident of sharing the glory with Christ. See Rom. 8. 17; 2 Thess. 1. verse 3 to the end of the chapter; 2 Tim. 2. 12.

## Verse 24

"And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia."

"Pisidia..." - this was a whole province north of Pamphylia.

"Pamphylia". - This province is south of Pisidia (wherein is Pisidian Antioch) and abuts the Mediterranean Sea.

## Verse 25

"and when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia."

"the word..." - The Logos.

"Attalia." A city of Pamphylia which is at the mouth of the river Catarrhactes. It is a sea port which introduces us to the action of the next verse. The modern name is "Antalya".

## Verse 26

"And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled."

The verb "sailed" in this context means "sailed away" and indicates a long journey.

Luke closes his narrative of Paul's first missionary journey with an observation that they had fulfilled the work which the Lord God had called upon them to do.

## Verse 27

"And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles."

"gathered the church together,..." - lit. "assembled the ecclesia". The verb "assembled" denotes gathering a number together, but the word "ecclesia" denotes ONE. This is as it should be for all the brethren and sisters are "one in Christ Jesus". (Gal. 3. 28.) The translation consistently puts "church" but Luke always writes "ecclesia".

"all that God had done with them..." - they gave acknowledgment to God for the word done, thus regarding themselves as His servants for His work.

"he had opened a door of faith..." - Paul and Barnabas had not opened the door of faith. It was God who had opened it.

"door of faith"... - this is the door which is kept by the good shepherd. See John 10. 9/18. Jesus was that door.

"unto the Gentiles." - see the words of Jesus, "Other sheep have I which are not of this fold:..." (John 10. 16.) This refers to the Gentiles.

The further words of Jesus connect all believers in the one ecclesia or Household of Faith. He said, "...them (the other sheep) also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."

## Verse 28

"And there they abode long time with the disciples."

"And there..." - the word "there" is omitted by the R.V., R.S.V., Emphatic Diagott, Afrikaans version and others.

"long time..." - literal Greek "a time not a little". R.V. "no little time" which is also given in the R.S.V.

"the disciples". The word means those who listen to the words of another and follow him. The disciples referred to in this passage were the new converts who, being pupils, were in need of guidance. A dynamic change was overtaking the ecclesias wherever they may be. Opposition from the Jews was becoming more active and, in the course of time, the Gentiles too would join in the "witch hunting" and would persecute the Christians. The new converts needed all the strengthening Paul and others could give them. A further danger was the gradual infiltration into the church of false doctrines which started in a mild way in the form of Judaising but which were to grow into something very serious.

In his narrative, Luke anticipates this for we now turn to chapter 15 which records how the problem of false doctrines was dealt with. The details which Luke has just given, show how strength was built up and prepare us for the dissension when it arose.



## THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

### Chapter 15.

#### DISSENSION IN THE BROTHERHOOD.

Luke now introduces his readers to a serious crisis in the fast growing Christian movement. The dissension in the brotherhood at that time stemmed from a deep-rooted source which was fundamentally Jewish in origin. For close on 1,500 years the people of Israel had been indoctrinated in the Law of Moses until it became something of great importance to them, and clouded their whole thinking of spiritual things. The blindness of Israel to the spirit of circumcision was evident in the days of Moses for the people had, by that time, begun to regard it as a rite to be performed and did not look to the lesson underlying it. God had given Abraham the covenant of circumcision when He had called Abraham to come out of the land of the Chaldees. God promised him that He would be a God unto him and to his seed in their generations and Abraham for his part, was to circumcise himself as a token of this covenant. It symbolised the fact that he had cut himself off from his people and had come to a foreign land, to be the father of a people of God. Therefore, circumcision was given as a reminder of God's covenant with Abraham and the need for cutting oneself off from the lust of the flesh and from other people who were not in the same covenant of promise.

The people of Israel soon regarded circumcision as a mark of identity but did not remember the covenant and did not cut themselves off from the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes and the pride of life. Moses had to impress upon them the need for circumcisi \_ their hearts and his warning is recorded in Deut. 10. 16. This principle was established again in Deut. 30.6. Notwithstanding the fact that circumcision was given to Abraham 430 years before the giving of the Law, it became a ritual as powerful and important as anything given under the Law.

The Law was followed for about 1,500 years and although it was not kept as Moses had shown the people, it nevertheless became a very important law of ritual to Israel. The mediator of the Law, namely Moses, was given an importance that elevated him to a higher position in the respect of Israel than any other man in their history. Such was the importance of Moses and the Law to Israel, that the Jews based their accusations against Jesus on the fact that he had threatened to destroy the temple in three days. (Matt. 26. 61.) By destroying the temple, Jesus would, apparently, destroy the place where part of the Law was observed and bring Moses into discredit. Stephen was also involved in a similar accusation. (Acts 6. 11.)

The rapid growth of Christianity brought another problem. For centuries the Jews had been characterised by an aloofness which made them a peculiar people. They were very proud that they were the people of Yahweh. To them the Promises had been made and the Law given. To them the prophets of Israel had been sent. It was unthinkable to a Jew that he should share the Promises with Gentile people who, in his eyes, were "dogs". There was a type of Jew who did what was known as "proselyting" with a view to getting Gentiles into the House of Israel but, at the same time, there was a conservative number who objected to Gentiles joining the people of Israel in their worship. The "conservatives" could accept Jesus as their Saviour and Messiah but it was difficult for them to allow Gentiles to come into the Covenants of Promise with Abraham. Just as Judaism had been a closed religion to Gentiles, so Christianity should be kept exclusively for those who were the natural descendants of Abraham and should be closed to all Gentiles.

The passage of time brought a further complication and this was very serious indeed to the many Jews who constituted the Household of Faith in parts where Gentiles were joining them. More converts came from the Gentiles than from the Jews so that a stage was reached where an ecclesia consisted of more Gentiles than people of Jewish origin. The Jews gradually found themselves to be in the minority and were joined in worship with a people who once had been the hated Gentiles.

Against the aloofness of the conservative Jews, was contrasted the desire of Gentiles such as Cornelius for a religion which had an element of Truth in it. As a contrast to the pagan worship of many gods which could be carved out of stone or other suitable material, coupled with its superstition, corruption and undesirable sexual practices, Judaism presented a constructive religion with its worship of the Great Invisible God of Israel, Creator of heaven and earth, and it gave a hope to the worshipper through the Promises. Devout seekers after truth were attracted to it. The basic beliefs of Israel were not fundamentally changed with the coming of Christianity because Christianity remained a religion of Israel. The big differences were that the bondage of the Law had given place to the liberty in Christ Jesus, and the long looked for Messiah had now come and had made an atonement for sin which the Law could not give. The bondage of the Law had fallen away in Christ and so had all its many ramifications. Christ was now the altar and the mediator; he was the high priest; he was the sacrifice; he was the incense, the ark of the covenant and the Mercy Seat. But the great hope of Israel was still the same. The voices of the prophets of Israel had not been stilled. The kingdom of God had yet to be established on earth, ruled over by the Messiah at his second coming. The tabernacle of David was yet to be restored. The seal of the covenant with Abraham, namely, the rite of circumcision was now circumcision of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter.

The attitude of the Gentile to the Jewish Faith had been one of devotion to God. This is shown by the character of Cornelius. Gentiles found little difficulty in surrendering their belief in a multiplicity of gods such as Mercury, Venus, Jupiter, and so on (for the Romans) or Hermes, Aphrodite and Zeus (for the Greeks). They found it difficult but not impossible to accept abstention from certain meats such as swine's flesh. They could give up their objects of worship in their temples and the sabbath observance was not a hardship. Circumcision, however, was a big stumbling block. This was not a problem for an infant but for a grown man, it was not only dangerous, but it was exceedingly painful. As a result of this, a class of worshipper appeared who was a proselyte of the second degree. He could not go to full worship with the Jews but he could worship separately because of his uncircumcision. Again, Cornelius is an example of this type.

Another point for consideration is the immorality of the Gentiles. Looseness of morals and carelessness in dress, led to a familiarity of sex to such an extent that in one lamentable instance, a Christian was accused of incest. (1 Cor. 5. 1.) Such was the complacency amongst the people concerning a crime of this nature, that disfellowship did not automatically follow. On the contrary, the members of the ecclesia at Corinth were rather proud of the man's achievement. (1 Cor. 5. 2.) Such immorality was unthinkable under the Law and would offend Jewish principles very severely.

In the face of the fore-going, the conservative Jews saw a breaking down of barriers in the New Faith in Christ Jesus. When the Seven were appointed, (Acts 6. 5.) one of them was a proselyte named Nicolas. It was hard for converted Jews to accept as a senior a Gentile. This was followed by Stephen's speech in which he showed that the Law was vanishing away in Christ Jesus. After that, Philip baptised Samaritans and after that, the Ethiopian eunuch was baptised and joined the ecclesia. Under the Law, because of his mutilation, he would have been banned from the congregation. Then Cornelius and his friends were baptised and after that, a central ecclesia was founded at Antioch where many Gentiles joined the Faith. Thus barriers were destroyed for all were one in Christ Jesus.

The isolationism of Judaism found its way into the Christian Ecclesias but, at the same time, a liberal element was there in the person of such men as Paul, Barnabas and their companions. Therefore, there were conflicts within the ecclesias and, from the opposition from the unconverted Jews and the Priests, there were conflicts without. The time had to come when, in modern parlance, a "show-down" was inevitable. The apostles at Jerusalem had to deal with the objections which had arisen concerning Peter's visit to Cornelius and their baptism, but this was dealt with satisfactorily. (Acts 11. 1/18.) It was proper, therefore, that the present crisis should be brought to the apostles for their consideration.



To summarise the situation, the problems were as follows:-

A. From the point of view of the Jews who were not Christians:-

- (a) Jews were being converted from Judaism to Christianity and the worship at the temple was disregarded by such converts.
- (b) The Law of Moses was no longer held in high esteem by the converted Jews.
- (c) Efforts were being made to woo converts away from Judaism to the New Faith.
- (d) The authority of the priests was flouted.
- (e) With the number of Gentiles joining Christianity, the number of Jews was gradually becoming less.

B. From the point of view of the Jews who were Christians:-

(a) The Conservatives:

- (i) They accepted Jesus as the Messiah but felt that circumcision should still be practised.
- (ii) The New Faith, still being an Israelitish Hope of Salvation, should be confined to Israel and not to Gentiles.
- (iii) The large number of Gentile converts made the Ecclesia Gentile in character.

(b) The Liberals:

- ((i) Circumcision should be a matter of individual conviction.
- (ii) Others said circumcision was unnecessary.
- (iii) All men should be given a chance to join the Household of Faith.

C. From the point of view of the Gentile converts:-

- (a) They could accept the worship of ONE GOD IN ISRAEL.
- (b) They could give up idols.
- (c) They brought loose morals into the Faith.
- (d) They objected to circumcision.

The extremists on both sides were comparatively few but they were active. Between the two extremes were a large number of converts who did not care one way or another but who could be guided by personalities.

The method of those who hated the apostle Paul was to discredit him in the eyes of his converts. They accused him of being a "men-pleaser" and, in case this was insufficient, they stated that he was not a true apostle but had been sent either by Peter or the council at Jerusalem.

The method of the conservatives was to insist that "except ye be circumcised, ye cannot be saved". They were the Judaisers and such still exist to this day where sabbath observance is insisted upon.

Paul dealt with the problem by writing to the Galatians. His epistle to them is worthy of careful study in the light of the fore-going description of the crisis. It will be noted that he proves his apostleship; he denies being a man-pleaser and he shows how he confronted Peter over the question of circumcision. Then he goes on to describe the liberty of Faith as opposed to the bondage of the Law.

The Ecclesias dealt with the problem by taking it to Jerusalem where a Council was set up to settle the question for all time. Why Paul does not refer the Galatians to the letter which was written is not a study for the present undertaking but it can be argued that he wrote the letter independently before the matter came before the council. Luke describes the problem and how it was dealt with in his 15th. chapter to which we shall now turn.

## Verse 1

"And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved."

"certain men..." - these men were very likely the same as those described by Paul in Gal. 2. 12. These men had come to Peter from James, the Lord's brother who was as staunch a worshipper as any Christian. James, being a Jew, had been circumcised.

"from Judea..." - thus giving them an appearance of authority, coming from the country of the mother ecclesia.

"taught the brethren..." - the verb is in the imperfect tense showing that there had been a continuous teaching. "the brethren" in this reference means the converted Gentiles.

"circumcision..." - coupled here with the words "after the manner of Moses" makes it go further than just circumcision. This drew attention to the importance of the Law.

Alexander ("Acts of the Apostles" Part 2 page 71) suggests that the people known as the "Ebionites" originated at this time. They were an ultra-Jewish party within the Christian Church who used only the Gospel of Matthew on account of it being written by a Hebrew in Hebraic style ("kingdom of heaven" instead of "kingdom of God"). They rejected Paul and his epistles and adhered strictly to circumcision. Whereas the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ was unknown in the days of Paul, it crept into the Christian faith and was rightly rejected by the Ebionites in later years. They kept the sabbath as well as the first day of the week and were divided in their belief in the virgin birth. As the centuries went by, false doctrine entered the faith of the Ebionites. They were absorbed by Islam in the 7th. century.

The introduction of "circumcision" in the church at Antioch by these men created a great deal of confusion. The new converts from Gentilism did not have sufficient Biblical knowledge to debate the point with the Judaisers.

## Verse 2

"When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question."

"When therefore..." - as a result of this error of teaching.

"dissension..." - Bullinger defines the meaning as "a setting up, erection; hence an upstand, uproar; of a popular commotion, insurrection; in a private sense, controversy with the idea of violence". See Acts 23. 7 and 10.

"disputation..." - a joint enquiry.

"determined..." - decided after giving consideration to the matter.

"Paul and Barnabas..." - an obvious choice as these men had had so much influence in the ecclesia at Antioch.

"certain other of them..." - most likely part of the travelling company who, together with Paul and Barnabas, had done missionary work. It is possible that Titus was amongst these. (Gal. 2. 1.)

"to Jerusalem..." - to the apostles who were held in high esteem and were men of great authority. The suggestion here from the narrative is that whatever the apostles decided would be accepted by the ecclesia at Antioch.

"unto the apostles..." - those who elected to remain at Jerusalem after the persecution which arose following the death of Stephen. (Acts 8. 1.)

"and elders..." - of whom James, the Lord's brother was one.

## Verse 3

"And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren."

"being brought on their way..." - this was a custom in those days for such people to be accompanied on a journey. They would then be brought to a certain place and left to continue on their own. The point of separation was probably Seleucia which is the port for Antioch. This constituted a sort of official send-off. See Acts 20. 38; 21. 5; Rom. 15. 24; 1 Cor. 16. 6; 1 Cor. 16. 11; 2 Cor. 1. 16; Titus 3. 13; 3 John 6.

"by the ecclesia..." - by the ecclesia i.e. a body of believers.

"Phenice..." - the territory of modern Lebanon.

"Samaria..." - The country of the Samaritans where Philip preached and baptised. The province is mentioned here and not the city.

"declaring..." - giving a full account. Not merely telling but giving all details.

"conversion..." - lit. a turning round or turning about. By interpretation, a turning from the worship of idols to the worship of the living God.

"all the brethren." To all the new converts in Phenice and Samaria who would experience the joy that others had turned to the Faith. Such joy on hearing of conversion is a characteristic of the Household of Faith even in modern times. It is not a joy which is experienced by other denominations.

## Verse 4

"And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them."

"They were received..." - Gk. "received with joy". They were joyfully welcomed. See Luke 8. 40.

"of the church..." - by the ecclesia. The whole ecclesia welcomed them. This was not the Council which was appointed later.

"declared..." - a different word from that employed in verse 3. Here it means "reported officially".

It is to be noted that Paul declares that he "went up by revelation" (Gal. 2. 2.) Here in Acts 15, nothing is said of "revelation". It simply states that he was sent up by the ecclesia at Antioch. There is no inconsistency here for it is explained by the fact that the Ecclesia sent them, but the sending was inspired or willed by God. A similar occurrence is found in Acts 13. 3. which states that Barnabas and Saul were sent by the ecclesia at Antioch and verse 4 states that the sending was "by the Holy Spirit".

"all things..." - Gk. "what things..."

"God had done..." - acknowledgement that God worked through them. They could have done nothing without His help.

## Verse 5

"But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses."

"certain of the sect of the Pharisees..." - opposition from such men who had been well taught in the Law, would follow the declaration of the things that God had done with them as explained in verse 4. At this time, Paul gave his account as he explains in his letter to the Galatians. (Gal. 2. 2.)

These Pharisees were still Jews at heart. The determination of the Pharisees is shown by the fact that they put spies amongst the Christians with a view to undermining the Christian Faith in regard to circumcision. (Gal. 2. 4.) But Paul did not yield to such for one moment. (Gal. 2. 5.) The Pharisees appeared to be men of importance but such an air of importance meant nothing to Paul. (Gal. 2. 6.) They did not add to Paul's declaration of the gospel but limited their remarks to the alleged need for circumcision.

"it is needful..." - "it is necessary..."

"to circumcise them..." - the presence of Titus who was a Greek, (Gal. 2. 3.) would horrify many of such Pharisees as he would be uncircumcised.

"keep the Law of Moses." - this was the ultimate desire of these Judaisers. They might be prepared to accept Jesus as the Messiah but they could not give up the Law which had meant so much to them.

#### Verse 6

"And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter."

"came together..." - a meeting was convened.

"matter." - Gk. "LOGOS". The apostles and elders held a meeting to consider what answer was to be given to their question, taking the answer from the "Word of God", the LOGOS.

#### Verse 7

"And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe."

"much disputing..." - the debate must have been fairly even as they could not come to a solution.

"Peter rose up..." - this is the last appearance of Peter in the Acts although he does appear in this dispute to a greater extent than Luke shows here. See Gal. chapter 2. It is to be noted that James is the head of the Jerusalem ecclesia and not Peter.

"a good while ago..." - as far as Peter was concerned, this must have been the occasion of the vision of unclean beasts which he was given.

"God made choice..." - Peter now makes it clear that the question which they were disputing had already been decided long ago when God showed Peter very clearly that the Gospel had to be taught to the Gentiles. Peter had long ago given the Jerusalem ecclesia a full explanation of this. (Acts 11. 1/18.)

"should hear..." - should hear with understanding.

"the word..." - the LOGOS. - but not "should hear the Law". God did not impose conditions such as these men require.

#### Verse 8

"And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as he did unto us;"

"knoweth the hearts..." - a compound word in Greek also found in Acts 1. 24. The thoughts in those days were considered to originate in the heart. Therefore, "to know the heart" was to know what the thoughts were. In Greek, the literal meaning is "the heart knowing God".

∴ "bare them witness..." - lit. "testified to them..." that is, knowing the hearts, gave evidence that the thoughts were correct by giving them the Holy Spirit.

"even as he did unto us". - Making no difference between Jew and Greek (Gentile). There was no discrimination.

The verse is incomplete as it stands and is continued in the next verse.

#### Verse 9

"And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith."

There had always been a distinction between Israel and the Gentiles. Now all that difference was done away with.

"purifying their hearts by faith". - Under the Law, the first purification came by circumcision and then by the ceremony of purification prescribed by the Law. (See Numbers chapter 19 for the law concerning the red heifer and the water of purification.) The Law having been done away with in Christ, now no longer applied. Justification now came by FAITH just as Abraham was justified by Faith.

#### Verse 10

"Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"

"Now..." - used with significance here. In the previous verse, Peter has just made it clear that one's heart is now purified by faith and no longer by circumcision nor the law. NOW, faith was the supreme test. Therefore, these things having come about NOW, why should they NOW put God to the test?

"tempt ye God..." apply a test for further proof. Ananias and Sapphira had lost their lives through tempting the Holy Spirit by applying a test as to whether it was operative enough to ascertain whether they were genuine or not, (to see how much they could get away with) now the Christians were tempting God (if that were possible) by doubting His ability to know the "heart". They felt that their outward show of piety and obedience was necessary.

"to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples..." - the "yoke" is referred to in Gal. 5. 1. This is the "yoke of bondage" that was the Law. They had been liberated from that Law by Christ, therefore why seek to be under it again. "the disciples" does not refer to the apostles but to the new Christian converts.

"which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear". - The fathers had shown themselves able to bear the burden of the Law and its ritual. They often tried to carry additional burdens under the law in the hope of making themselves more acceptable. But the great burden referred to here, which neither the fathers nor the apostles could bear, was the whole law as James points out. (Jas. 2. 10.) To offend in one point was to offend in all. Carrying out the ritual of the Law was burdensome but could be obeyed. The motive behind the observance of the law was not always correct because their hearts were not right with God.

#### Verse 11

"But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they."

"but..." - as opposed to the burden of the law which we are unable to bear...

"we believe..." - we expect. This is our expectation.

"through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ..." - it is the great hope and expectation of the true Christian Believer that through his Faith, the grace of God will operate. See Ephes. 2. 8. "For by grace are ye saved through faith;"

"even as they." See Ephes. 3. 6. "That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel."

This concludes Luke's precis of Peter's speech. Peter must have said much more but Luke gives enough to show not only the theme of his speech but also the character of Peter. See his impulsive statement in verse 10. Luke's account fits Paul's letter to the Galatians to show the following pattern:-

Gal. 2. 1/2. The visit to Jerusalem.  
 Acts 15. 4/5. Their reception by the ecclesia and the statement of the question.  
 Gal. 2. 4. The extent of the opposition and the unfair tactics adopted.  
 Gal. 2. 6/10. ) The preliminary discussions between the apostles.  
 Acts 15. 6 )  
 Acts 15. 7/11. Peter's address to the people.

Verse 12

"Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them."

"multitude..." - Gk. great number, throng, crowd. There must have been very many people there.

"kept silent..." Gk. one word meaning "was silent". They had nothing to say after hearing Peter. The theory of the Judaists had now been called into question by one who was considered to be a leader amongst the Apostles.

"gave audience..." "listened..." The tense is in the imperfect so the sense is "listened continuously..."

"Barnabas and Paul..." - Luke suddenly changes his order of names. See verse 2 referring to a dissension where, no doubt, Paul did most of the talking is mentioned first. See Acts 14. 14. where Barnabas is mentioned first because the passage refers to both Paul and Barnabas "hearing". Where it is not clear as to who did the talking, Barnabas should be mentioned first because he introduced Paul and was an apostle before him. Seniority is not involved here. It is merely courtesy. See verse 25.

"declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought..." - Barnabas and Paul take advantage of the silence referred to, to make their position quite clear. They may have told about Cornelius but it is more than likely that Peter would have told the people of this. Other Gentiles had been brought into the covenants of promise by their Belief and baptism without being required to abide by the law of Moses nor to circumcise. Regarding miracles and signs, see Acts 14. 3. The healing of the man of Acts 14. 8/10. is an example of this.

"God had wrought..." - see Acts 14. 27. Acknowledgement that God did the miracles and signs. They had no power within themselves to do these things.

"by them." - See verse 4.

Verse 13

"And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me:"

An incomplete verse which is concluded in the next verse.

James answers here and the question which he answers is that raised by Peter then by Barnabas and Paul, namely, "through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved..." (Acts 15. v. 11.) James was the chairman of the meeting so when the top speakers had said what they wanted to say, it was proper for him to summarise the matter.

"after they had held their peace..." - does not refer to the crowd keeping quiet but to Peter, Barnabas and Paul not having anything further to say. That was the signal for James to summarise.

"James..." - James the Lord's brother. (Gal. 1. 19.) His great humility prevented him from giving himself any high position because of his relationship to the Lord Jesus. (Jas. 1. 1. where he refers to himself as "the servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ".)

"Men, brethren..." - as in all other cases, the word "and" is not stated.

Verse 14

"Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name."

"Simeon..." - the original Hebrew form of the name Symeon or Simeon which in Greek, is "Simon". In this passage, the Simon referred to is Peter.

"at the first..." - this must refer to the spreading of the Gospel amongst the Gentiles in this new era. The indication was given to the apostles by Jesus in Acts 1. 8. where Jesus told them that they would be his witnesses to "the uttermost parts of the earth". Then, later, God gave a vision to Peter of the sheet of unclean beasts. At the first however, could also refer in a way to God visiting Ur and calling out Abram to be part of a people for His Name.

"a people..." - Gk. "laos" from which we get the English "laity". This has a special meaning of "a people assembled". Contrast this with "demos" meaning "people" in the sense of a group having a constitution which governs them. Such people are free, one from the other. The word here refers to a special group of people.

"for His Name". This is the prophetic name of "YAHWEH" which was the name given at the burning bush. "Eyah asher eyah" - "I will be who I will be."

Verse 15

"And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,"

An incomplete verse which introduces the subject of verses 16 and 17.

"agree..." - this verb is used in Matt. 18. 19; 20. 2 and 13; implies co-operation one with the other.

"as it is written..." - quoting Scripture.

Verse 16

"After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:"

James quotes Amos 9. 11/12. but in the LXX version. This will become apparent in the next verse.

Verse 1 of Amos chapter 9 starts with a prophecy wherein God says that He will smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake:.. If we regard this in relation to the Divine instructions to the people of Israel before the Passover, we shall remember that sprinkling the blood on the lintel and posts would save the first-born from death. Now there would be no saving sprinkling for the wicked. No matter what the people may do, they will not escape the judgments of God. At this time, God will sift the house of Israel among the nations, that is to say, He will take them out of the nations to save them. In that day, the tabernacle of David will be raised. The name "David" means "Beloved of God" and should often be translated this way instead of just giving the name. If this is done in this verse, it immediately becomes Messianic.

"I will return..." - not given in the verses by Amos.

"build again..." - Amos does not say this. His words are "I will raise up..." This however, is not inconsistent with Scriptural teaching. (Acts 1. 11.) It is close to the Septuagint version.

#### Verse 17

"That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things."

"the residue of men..." - Amos wrote "the remnant of Edom..." but with the change of one letter, "Edom" is changed to "Adam". The people upon whom God's Name was called was Israel but in the words of Amos, the "remnant of Edom" represents a particular Gentile nation which was an enemy to Israel. The meaning here, shows that Jew and Gentile will rejoice in the return of the Lord when he returns to build again the tabernacle. Such a joyous occasion is not reserved for the residue of "men" in the persons of Israel, but for the remnant of "Edom" representative of the Gentile nations who at that time, were uncircumcised. Those of the Gentiles who had been brought into the Covenant of Promise were circumcised of heart, which is indicative of the fact that they are no longer under the yoke of the law. James allows the alteration of the words of Amos to stand and adds, "and all the Gentiles..." describing such as "upon whom my name is called."

"saith the Lord, who doeth all these things". - showing that this is the plan and purpose of God which no one can alter.

#### Verse 18

"Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world".

There is some doubt as to whether or not this verse is genuine. The R.V. has "Saith the Lord, who maketh these things known from the beginning of the world." The R.S.V. says, "says the Lord, who has made these things known from old". The Diaglott says, "says the Lord, who does these things which were known from the age." In Afrikaans, "Aan God is al sy werke van ewigheid af bekend". ("To God are all his works known from the ages.")

"beginning of the world..." - see Ephes. 3. 9.

In regard to Paul's point of view which is not expressed here but is inferred, see this clearly pointed out in Rom. 15. 8/13.

#### Verse 19

"Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:"

"...my sentence is..." - I judge in this way... This was a common form in Greek assemblies of expressing one's opinion. There is no arrogance in this statement. It is not a final decision.

"we trouble not..." - the verb here means to disturb in addition to something else. That is to say, do not let us put stumbling blocks in the way.

"which from among the Gentiles, are turned to God." - present participle meaning "are turning to God". Those people who are turning from false worship to the true worship.

#### Verse 20

"But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood."



"We write unto them..." - write by means of a letter. That is address it personally to a group of people. The verb comes from the same word as is derived the word "epistle". The verb occurs again in Acts 21. 25; and Heb. 13. 22. The meaning is to send instructions by a messenger but this is done by letter which is carried by some person known to the writer who is charged with its safe delivery.

James now deals with a problem which existed between Jew and Gentile as well as between the converted Jew and the converted Gentile. This concerned, amongst other things, certain food laws. The Jews had been brought up to regard certain meats as unclean whereas the Gentiles had no restrictions in regard to what they may eat. Their choice was dictated solely by taste. If the two races were to worship in harmony, a change would have to come about. The Gentiles were not to be upset by the requirement of circumcision because this had fallen away in Christ, neither were the Jews to enforce their food laws upon the Gentiles. At the same time, the Jews were to consider the feelings of Jewish converts by refraining from certain low standards in regard to food laws which would offend the Jews. It had been a requirement under the Law that meat may not be eaten if the blood had not been properly drained from it. (Lev. 17. 10/16.) The Gentiles were not particular about draining the blood from meat.

"pollutions of idols..." - this refers to the things associated with worship of idols. It could be any flesh which was left after a sacrifice to idols. The Gentiles used to feed on this. Often such meat was sold in the market. The eating of such food was not in itself sinful as Paul points out, (1 Cor. 10. 19/33.) provided it was not known that it had been offered as a sacrifice, but if it is known that it was so offered, then it should be avoided for conscience sake.

"fornication..." - this goes further than improper conduct between male and female. It is related to worship and the Gentiles had some abominable practices which were difficult to stamp out. Their priestesses were mainly prostitutes and women, not being priestesses, were expected to prostitute themselves in an unmentionable way. This should not be done by any who have turned from idols to the living God. Under this heading would come marriage within the degree forbidden by the law of Moses.

"things strangled..." - this appears to indicate choking the life out of an animal. It usually applies to meat which has not been bld properly by killing it without shedding the blood. Whatever way it comes about amounts to the same thing, namely, flesh with the blood still in it.

"blood". - the next prohibition is blood itself which was prohibited by God for food. (Gen. 9. 4.) It was a Gentile custom to eat blood and since this conflicted with the Law and would offend those who had been brought up to observe the law, it had to be avoided as food.

It will be seen that all prohibitions were connected in some way with worship.

Verse 21

"For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day."

This verse makes sense in itself but the commentators have difficulty in fitting the sense of it into the continuity of Luke's story of James' speech. The point is not that the law would not be forgotten, because it is read every sabbath in the synagogues. That is of no importance to the propagation of the Truth in Christ Jesus through whom the law was to fall away. It is more to the point that because the law is read every sabbath in the synagogues, it would always be noticeable by the Jews if the new ecclesias did things which offend. Therefore, if converts are to come from Jewry, surely the best thing to do would be to give none offence in anything. This is not meeting anyone half way in preaching the Christian Faith. The tenets of the new faith would still be strongly held, but certain prescribed features of Gentile worship would not be followed.

This involved abstinence from any thing which savoured of pagan worship; marrying within the forbidden limits of marriage according to the law; foesh from which the blood had not been drained and partaking of blood. See what Paul has to say in 1 Cor. 8. 13.

1 Cor. 8. 13. "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

#### Verse 22

"Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren."

"the apostles and elders,.. " - this constituted the Council at Jerusalem. "with the whole church.." involves the whole ecclesia as well.

"send chosen men..." - this would be better than asking Paul and Barnabas to return with a message or a letter. There would be an air of authority about the sending of the personal representatives of the Council.

"to Antioch..." - to where the trouble first started.

"Judas surnamed Barsabas;.." - nothing further is known of him. The man mentioned in Acts 1. 23. having the same surname and called Joseph, may have been his brother.

"Silas,.. " - this is an abbreviated form of Silvanus. Having completed his work at Antioch (vvs. 30/35) he went with Paul instead of Barnabas on his second missionary journey. (vs. 40.) When Paul left Berea to go to the sea, Silas stayed on there with Timothy. (Acts 17. 14.) Verse 15 tells us that when Paul had got to Athens, Silas was sent for. Acts 18. 5. finds Silas and Timothy with Paul at Corinth, they having come from Macedonia. In 1 Peter 5. 12. we learn that Peter dictated his first epistle to Silvanus.

"chief among the brethren." - They must have been elders.

#### Verse 23

"And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia:"

The point covered by this verse is a delicate one. Sending letters was the customary way of communicating points of view from one person to another. The apostles had a difficult task because they had to convey to the brethren the decision that circumcision was no longer operative under the laws of Christ. They also had to put a burden on the Gentiles. The letter achieves the desired end and it is a masterpiece of tact and diplomacy.

"the Gentiles..." - they addressed the letters to the Gentiles only. There would be no point in telling the Jewish converts that circumcision was no longer necessary because they had already been circumcised. There would be no point in telling them to abstain from the four points because they did already abstain from such things.

"Antioch and Syria and Cilicia." - the letter was not sent everywhere but only to the three ecclesias named. The Antioch here was Syrian Antioch. See Gal. 1. 21.

The letter had to take care that none were offended by its message. To state that circumcision and the law were no longer applicable would offend the Jews. To lay too heavy a burden on the Gentiles would cause them offence.

## Verse 24

"Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment:"

"Forasmuch as..." - "whereas..."

"certain..." - not "certain" in the sense that they were beyond all doubt. The people referred to are an unspecified number and unnamed.

"went out from us..." - those who upset the ecclesia with Judaizing ideas had, originally come from Jerusalem and had gone to Antioch and Cilicia. The "us" here means those of the council at Jerusalem.

"troubled..." cause you some disturbance of mind, you not knowing what the true position was.

"with words..." - with words indeed, and not with doctrines that were worth listening to.

"subverting..." - turning upside down. To dismantle or take to pieces. This is the only occurrence of this verb in Scripture. The Judaizers were so emphatic that they would try to persuade their listeners that if they were uncircumcised, they would lose all hope of salvation.

"Ye must be circumcised and keep the law..." - note that two facets of religion were involved (1) circumcision and (2) the law (of ritual). This is important because it shows that those who demand sabbath keeping nowadays are also insisting that the ritual law be observed. Paul would have none of this.

"to whom we gave no such commandment." - It is denied that they gave such instructions. Note the tact and diplomacy which does not, at this stage, say that circumcision and observance of the law are not essential but that they gave no such commandment concerning them. This dispenses with their importance without actually condemning such doctrines.

## Verse 25

"It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,"

This sentence which was begun in verse 24 has not yet come to an end.

"It seemed good..." - It pleased. The same as in verse 22.

"being assembled with one accord..." - "come together with one heart and mind." See notes to Acts 1. 14. This implies a previous disagreement amongst the brethren... The apostles would not have disagreed on this. There is a unanimity of mind and purpose indicated by this expression. See Acts 2. 1 and 46; 4. 24; 5. 12; 7. 57; 8. 6; 12. 20; 15. 25; 18. 12; 19. 29.

"to send chosen men..." - note that the decision is as yet unstated. Chosen men - Judas and Silas (verse 22) were sent in addition to Paul and Barnabas to show that Paul and Barnabas did not control the decision of the council.

"beloved..." - the use of this term concerning Paul and Barnabas would give an indication that the council upheld their views in regard to the subjects in dispute.

## Verse 26

"Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The sentence begun in verse 24, now comes to an end.

To hazard one's life for another is brave but often quite unnecessary. But, if one hazards one's life for the Lord Jesus Christ, this is different and receives here the approbation of the council. It is now broadly hinted that the missionary work of Paul and Barnabas received the approval of the council.

## Verse 27

"We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth."

"We have sent..." - the verb here is not the same as that used in verse 25. It means here "we have apostlelised..." that is to say, it is derived from the same root as the title "apostle".

"Judas and Silas..." - not Paul and Barnabas so that these two, who had opposed the Judaisers, would not be accused of bringing a false message.

## Verse 28

"For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:"

"seemed good..." - see verses 22 and 25. The use here shows that it is not a matter of just appearing to be good but that it is a positive declaration. The reference to the Holy Spirit, being genuine of course, lends considerable weight to their argument.

"lay upon you..." - "ask you to bear a little burden..." The sentence is incomplete and is continued into the next verse.

## Verse 29

"That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well."

To understand this verse, we must imagine we are back in these days of Paul and Barnabas and that, like the council at Jerusalem, we have this question to decide. The point to note is that through the false doctrine which some had endeavoured to bring in to the ecclesias, a great disharmony between Jew and Gentile converts had come about. Let us look at the points of view of both sides.

THE GENTILES: (a) Circumcision to an infant is an operation which is painful for a moment but quickly heals. For a full grown man, however, it could be a very painful and dangerous surgical operation, particularly in view of the crude surgery practised in those days. Therefore, the Gentile males took strong exception to circumcision. Cornelius was one who was not circumcised but who was quite content to worship at a distance.

(b) The acceptance of ONE GOD in place of the multiplicity of gods of the pagans was not a serious difficulty to the Gentile. In fact, it made sense to him and was readily accepted.

(c) The studied omission to use the objects of worship in pagan temples, was not a difficulty.

(d) The keeping of the sabbath would be acceptable and welcome to a Gentile.

THE JEWS: (a) As they looked at the Christians, they could not partake of "meats" (food) offered to idols because such a thing was forbidden under the law. They were forbidden from having anything to do with the worship of the Gentiles.

- (b) Keeping away from blood was easy to a Jew but difficult for a Gentile. The Jews knew the provisions of the law so would find no difficulty (Leviticus chapter 17.) but the Gentile would have to give up something which he liked.
- (c) "Things strangled" does not refer to animals which had been throttled to death. It means that the flesh had not been properly drained of blood at the time of slaying. The Jews went to extremes in getting rid of blood, so the Gentile habit of not draining a carcass of blood would offend the Jews but not the Gentiles.
- (d) Fornication was rife and was not looked down upon as it is in cultured circles nowadays. The dreadful case of incest mentioned by Paul in 1 Cor. 5. 1. was bad enough to earn a very serious rebuke but Paul's main concern was that the Corinthian believers held the perpetrator in some regard for his achievement in this way. They should have been horrified. This shows to what extent immorality was practised by the Gentiles.

Having regard to the fore-going, we see that the Jew had more reason to be offended than had the Gentile. He had a code of worship and a code of morals which the Gentiles did not have. Therefore, the Jew was always suffering offence from his association with the Gentiles. The Gentile on the other hand, did not suffer one way or another unless circumcision was insisted upon and unless his traditional ways were interfered with. Paul, Barnabas and the council at Jerusalem were deeply concerned with keeping ecclesial harmony and used this means to overcome a very delicate situation which had arisen as a result of the Judaisers.

The argument of the letter now turns to calling upon the Jews to leave out circumcision as a Christian doctrine and to refrain from demanding ritual observance of the Law. This would put a burden upon the Jew and would please the Gentiles. At the same time, the Gentiles were asked not to buy at the market place any food, meat or otherwise, which had been offered to idols as this caused the Jews offence. They had to abstain from blood so as not to cause offence to their Jewish brethren in Christ. They had to drain their meat carefully, not that this was anything of real importance but just that by so doing, they would not offend the Jewish converts. Finally, they had to watch their morals and not indulge in fornication which was offensive to anyone who was in any way acquainted with the Laws of God. If they did these things, then there would be ecclesial peace.

The cancellation of circumcision and the Law as important things in religious life would be a severe blow to the Jews but it would bring contentment to the Gentile believers. The abstention from meats or foods offered to idols, and from blood and the proper draining of blood from a carcass about to be eaten, plus the banishment of fornication would be a severe blow to the Gentiles but it would give contentment to the Jews. Both sides would have to give a little and take a little. Therefore, the Jews would be content to regard circumcision and the law as having no part in Christian life if only the Gentiles had to sacrifice something too. Abstention from meats had no importance in itself and eating meat offered to idols was not a sin provided one did not eat in acknowledgment of the pagan god. See what Paul has to say in 1 Cor. 8. Note carefully the sentiment expressed in the last verse. (1 Cor. 8. 17.)

"You will do well." - Gk. "You will prosper". As they were going, with their disputes concerning circumcision and the law on one side, and meats, blood, idols, and fornication on the other, they were destroying themselves. If they could drop all these things and get down to true Christian living, they could only prosper.

#### Verse 30

"So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle:"

The beginning of this verse lays the scene in Jerusalem before the council who had written the letter and given charge to Judas and Silas to go with Paul and Barnabas and deliver the letter. The latter half happens some time later when the party had reached Antioch and were about to read the letter.

"they were dismissed..." - Lit. "They indeed therefore being dismissed." They were given leave to go and bidden farewell.

"gathered..." - assembled. To gather means to go out and collect one with the other. The sense here does not indicate this. It merely states that the people were assembled from which we assume that word was sent round to all to assemble at their meeting place, which they did and were thus assembled.

"the multitude..." - again "plethos" meaning a crowd or vast number (of brethren and sisters).

"delivered the epistle:" - handed the letter over to the elders.

#### Verse 31

"Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation."

This clause brings to an end the sentence which was started in the previous verse.

"when they had read..." - lit. "having read..." The reading here is a collective one because in the rejoicing which followed, all the ecclesia rejoiced together. Therefore they must have "read" together by listening to it being read.

"they rejoiced..." - there was a sudden and spontaneous outburst of rejoicing at the message of the letter.

"the consolation." - the exhortation, referring to the four abstinences given at the end of the letter.

#### Verse 32

"And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them."

This verse refers to Judas and Silas giving effect to their mission to convey to the ecclesia at Antioch the message by word of mouth. (verse 27).

"being prophets..." - being teachers as were the prophets of Israel.

"many words..." - Here again the word LOGOS is used. The exhortation must have been based upon the Divine Plan and Purpose.

"confirmed them." - The ecclesia had suffered a severe setback with the dissimulation and had been weakened. Now with the decision which was fair to both sides, having regard to the four prohibitions, the ecclesia rejoiced together and must have been strengthened.

#### Verse 33

"And after they had tarried there a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles."

"tarried there a space.." - "having spent some time..."

"let go..." - they were dismissed...

"in peace..." - the Hebrew words of parting were "go in peace" or "peace be with you". Here Luke uses the word to indicate that they returned with peace, having brought peace to the ecclesia.

"to the apostles." - Some manuscripts have "to those who sent them."

## Verse 34

"Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still."

Following upon verse 32/33, this appears to be inconsistent. Nevertheless, if there were more than Judas and Silas in their party, it would be correct to say that "they" returned, nevertheless Silas preferred to stay at Antioch. Many of the older MSS omit this verse in view of this apparent inconsistency. It is thought that it was introduced later to prepare the way for verse 40 which tells how Paul chose Silas to accompany him on his second missionary journey. Textual evidence is not always reliable but it must be admitted that whether the verse is genuine or not, Silas did stay on at Antioch. In support of the view that the verse is spurious and a later introduction, it must be remarked that the "NUMERIC ENGLISH N.T. TESTAMENT" can find no evidence to support its inclusion so omits it.

## Verse 35

"Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also."

"continued..." - the Greek verb "diatribo" means to "wear away by rubbing". In regard to time, it means "to pass the time away. In other passages it is translated as "abode". Acts 12. 19; 14. 3, 28; 16. 12; 20. 6; In Acts 25. 6. the translation is "tarried" and in verse 14 it is "had been there many days." The sense seems to be "occupied the time".

"in Antioch..." - this ecclesia gradually taking over the importance that once belonged to Jerusalem.

"teaching..." - Bible lectures within the ecclesia.

"preaching..." - lectures outside the ecclesia.

"with many others also". - a preaching team had developed and were helping Paul and Barnabas.

## Verse 36

"And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do."

Luke uses this verse to introduce the quarrel which was about to ensue between Paul and Barnabas. Note that Paul took the initiative in suggesting the next missionary journey. Luke is tying up his story well. He has just told us that Paul and Barnabas were helped by other preachers so the proposed journey would not mean that Paul and Barnabas were deserting a struggling ecclesia. He introduces the new turn in his narrative by stating "some days after" thereby showing that Paul would choose a convenient time to go and would not leave the ecclesia uncared for.

It is typical of Paul that he should want to visit the friends which had been made during his first missionary journey. His epistles and his many expressions of love and concern for his readers shows his love of his fellowmen.

## Verse 37

"And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark".

This is how Luke introduces the quarrel which was now to take place. He gives no indication whatsoever as to whether he thought Paul or Barnabas were right or wrong. The addition of the surname helps to establish the identity beyond all doubt but it also shows us that from the point of view of Barnabas, there was a family connection there. Nevertheless, it is still not stated who was right and who was wrong.

"determined..." - in English, this is a strong term. A better translation would be "Barnabas intended..." or "Barnabas wished..."

## Verse 38

"But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work."

"Thought not good..." - this is the negative form of an expression translated elsewhere as "thought worthy" or "counted worthy" see Luke 7. 7; 2 Thess. 1. 11; 1 Tim. 5. 17; Heb. 3. 3. and 10. 29. It means that in Paul's view, Mark was unworthy to be taken.

Paul must have felt that it was too early after Mark's defection to take him on this occasion. Paul took his evangelical work very seriously and would have little sympathy with one who left the party at an awkward time when Paul was ill.

Barnabas on the other hand, appeared to live according to his name - "the son of consolation". He may have thought that Mark had learnt his lesson and that he would do well to accompany such outstanding workers in the Truth.

This is not the first time Paul and Barnabas had quarrelled. They disagreed over the question of circumcision when Barnabas had been carried away by the persuasion of the Judaisers. (Gal. 2. 13.)

## Verse 39

"And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus."

"contention..." - Gk. "paroxusmos" from which we get the English word "paroxysm". It carries a meaning of sharpness of feeling with a suggestion of intense anger.

"departed asunder..." - indicates "violent division" and "forcible separation". They must have turned upon their heels and parted without a word of "Good-bye" between them.

"Barnabas took Mark..." - as we should expect since he was his uncle. Col. 4. 10.

"sailed unto Cyprus." -- Again as we should expect since Cyprus was his "home country". (Acts 4. 36.)

## Verse 40

"And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God."

"chose..." - the English word does not convey the fuller Greek meaning of choosing and substituting.

"Silas..." - if verse 34 is spurious, then Silas could have been summoned from Jerusalem to fill the position of assistant to Paul.

"and departed..." - the separation of two such men is to be regretted but at the same time, the division released them in such a manner that two preaching teams went forth instead of one. The year was probably about A.D. 48. and it was necessary at that time that the Truth should be spread far and wide with all speed. A.D. 70 was not far off.

Like all good "brethren in Christ..." they may have their quarrels but they do not bear malice and do not harbour a grudge. Paul and Barnabas forgot the quarrel between them and remained firm friends. See 1 Cor. 9. 6; Col. 4. 10; 2 Tim. 4. 11; and Philem. 24.



## Verse 41

"And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches."

It is as well to look up these districts on the map. Paul went to the cities and consolidated his former teaching.

Paul and Barnabas were not to meet again as far as is recorded in Scripture. They may have met but they did not work together again. Barnabas disappears from Acts at this stage and goes with Mark. It is sad that two such men should part but Paul was prepared to sacrifice all things for Christ. See his remarks in Phil. 3. 7/8. In the narrative we know as "The Book of the Acts", Paul is about to team up with a man of as fine a character as will be found anywhere in any story. This meeting is dealt with in the next chapter and the person concerned is none other than the writer of the story himself, the beloved physician Luke.



# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

## Chapter 16

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### THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

Paul's new travelling companion was Silas. His choice was not haphazard but was a good one because he came from Jerusalem and would carry an air of authority because of this. Furthermore, there is evidence from a consideration of Acts 16. 37. that Silas was a Roman citizen. Since Paul was also a Roman citizen, this privilege would stand them in good stead, particularly when dealing with minor people in senior positions, like jailers. We shall see the effect of this when we come to verse 37 and 38 of this chapter.

#### Verse 1

"Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed: but his father was a Greek:"

"Derbe and Lystra:.." - Paul went by land this time and not by sea as hitherto when he went first to Cyprus and from there by sea to the mainland. He would take the opportunity of preaching the Word of God wherever he could find people who would listen. This is confirmed in Acts 15. 41. For comments on those two cities see the notes to Acts 14. 6. They are mentioned here in reverse order to 14. 61. because they were approached in this order on this occasion.

"behold,..." - again, as in all cases, what follows is the unexpected. In this case it was the meeting of Timothy, half Greek and half Jew who was to become such a good friend to Paul.

"Timotheus,..." - the name means "of value to God". This is the Latin form of the name, the Greek being Timotheos and the English "Timothy". He was a native of Lystra and was probably converted to the Faith during Paul's first visit there. By the time the second visit took place, his mother, Eunice and his grandmother Lois had also turned to the Faith. The reference in 2 Tim. 1. 5. refers to their "faith" and not their conversion to the Faith. That is to say, Timothy came from a devout family of worshippers on his mother's side. He was highly esteemed throughout the country at Lystra and Iconium. He was to join Paul for a while in his work and in so doing, took the place of Mark. He was a witness of the persecutions Paul suffered at Lystra - read Acts 14. 19/20. with 2 Tim. 3. 10/11.

"a certain woman..." - the word "certain" is not in the reliable MSS so should be omitted. The woman is Eunice, the daughter of Lois, who was married to a Greek who now, as it appears, was dead.

#### Verse 2

"Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium."

This completes the sentence started in verse 1 and describes Timothy and not his father as may be thought from the English text. Note that Timothy was well reported throughout Derbe and Iconium and that Paul had come to Derbe and Lystra. Iconium is mentioned here because it is nearer than Derbe, to Lystra.

#### Verse 3

"Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek."

"would...have.." - wished to have.. Paul's wish in this case, may have been based upon a broad knowledge of the Jews and the Gentiles with whom he would come in contact. In this, we see the reason why Luke is careful to stress Timothy's ancestry, coming as he did from a line of faithful Jewish women, and

and that his father was a Greek. Having such a companion would be helpful because the Faith he had to teach, was to be given to all people, both Jew and Gentile. In Timothy was a man who combined both nations. The Law forbade marriage between Jew and Gentile (Deut. 7. 3. ) but on his mother's side, Timothy could quote as an excuse, the marriage between Esther and Ahasuerus. There was one drawback regarding Timothy, but Paul soon overcame this. He circumcised Timothy not as a surrender of principle, but as an act of conciliation towards the Jews. The Jews would all know that Timothy was uncircumcised so this act by Paul would be understood as being an act to consider their feelings.

If this act is compared with that of Titus who was not circumcised (Gal. 2. 3.) the position will be understood. Titus was not circumcised by Paul because at that time the Judaisers maintained that circumcision was necessary to salvation. To have circumcised Titus would have been tantamount to yielding to this claim. With Timothy, there was no such doctrine put forward so the Jews and others would know precisely that the act was made through expediency.

#### Verse 4

"And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem."

"went through..." - passed through"

"the cities..." - where they had preached before, namely Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Derbe and Lystra.

"decrees" - Gk. "dogma" from which we get the English word. Means "that which appears to be true..." also "an opinion expressed with authority".

These were the decisions of the council at Jerusalem. See the explanation given towards the end of the verse.

#### Verse 5

"And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily".

"churches..." - "ecclesias..."

"established..." - were made strong. Their faith was consolidated and their knowledge was increased.

"increased in number..." - this refers to the increase in the number of believers although Luke is writing about "ecclesias".

With this verse, an important stage in Luke's narrative is reached. Paul has delivered the message from the apostles and elders and is now about to embark upon the most important part of his life's work. The Second Missionary journey is not really a journey but is more in the nature of a campaign which was spread over a number of years. In fact, it lasted for five years. A sojourn of several months at a place would hardly fit the description of a "journey". After an introduction of 4 verses, Luke brings us to verse 10 wherein he introduces himself for the first time.

### THE CAMPAIGN BEGINS.

#### Verse 6

"Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia,..."

An incomplete verse which is continued into verse 7.

Now "they had gone throughout..." - not the same as "went through" of verse 4. It means "Journey through"

"throughout Phrygia..." - Leaving Lystra and Iconium, they turned north

and journeyed through the province of Phrygia and then through Galatia. To the east of Phrygia, lay the province of Asia with its capital of Ephesus. For notes on "Asia" see Acts 2. verse 9.

"Forbidden of the Holy Spirit..." - how this came is not stated. It could have come through an angel, a vision, a dream. In the absence of any could have come through an angel, a vision, a dream. In the absence of any information from Luke, we must just accept that the Divine Wish was communicated to them and it was obeyed.

"(forbidden) - to preach the word..." - here again, the "Word" is LOGOS, the Plan and Purpose of God.

"in Asia." We must not regard Asia of those days as a continent. It was a province in which was situated the famous city of Ephesus with its high Greek culture. Paul was not fitted at that time, to oppose Greek culture of that nature. His training had to come in the other provinces.

#### Verse 7

"After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not."

"Bithynia..." - this was the northern province abutting the Black Sea. This is not to say that Paul and his companions went as far as the Black Sea, because they were not permitted to enter the province.

#### Verse 8

"And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas."

"passing by..." - means what it says. They did not preach there.

"Mysia..." - This province was contiguous with Bithynia but lay to the west of it, south of the Black Sea and had, as its northern boundary, the sea of Marmora.

"Troas." - A sea port on the coast of Mysia on the Aegean side.

#### Verse 9

"And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us."

"a vision appeared to Paul in the night;.." - that it was a vision in the night suggests that it was a dream. Having received T.O warnings from God not to preach in Asia nor in Bithynia, they could do either of two things. (1) They could go back to Antioch and start again on another journey in another direction; or (2) they could cross the sea to a place of their choice. God gave them the decision by means of the vision in the night. That the vision "appeared" to Paul would more than likely mean that Paul saw an angel.

"There stood..." - the verb is "had been standing, beseeching..." which combines "There stood..." with "prayed..."

"a man of Macedonia,.." - how Paul knew it was a man of Macedonia is not stated. If it had been a dream, his accent may have betrayed him or, as happens in dreams, one automatically "knows" without being able to give any logical reason therefor. On the other hand, if it had been a visitation by an angel, Paul would have been shown a vision and given an explanation.

Some commentators think the "man of Macedonia" was Luke himself but in the absence of knowing that Luke was a "man of Macedonia" this cannot be accepted.

"Come over..." - lit. "having passed over into Macedonia, help thou us".

"help us." - that is, "help us to get salvation."

"us". - the people of Macedonia.

Verse 10

"And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called on us for to preach the gospel unto them."

"immediately..." - having received two prohibitions, and having obeyed them, Paul now acted immediately to the commandment from the vision.

"endeavoured..." - lit. "we sought to go into..." i.e. they looked for suitable transport."

"WE..." & all commentators are agreed that this betrays for the first time, the presence of Luke. This is the first use he makes of the plural personal pronoun. It is difficult to say when Luke joined Paul because he is careful not to mention himself by name at any time. It is no proof of course, that because he uses "we" that he is now for the first time with the party. It merely indicates that he discloses his presence with them.

Luke could very well have joined them at Paphos during the first missionary journey. He could have been called to Paul's bedside when he was ill, and left all to go with him from then on.

"assuredly gathering..." - the product of one Greek word meaning "inferring" or "concluding". This may have arisen as a result of some discussion between them.

"called on us..." - "called to us..."

"preach the gospel..." - Gk. one word meaning "announce glad tidings" or "evangelise".

Verse 11

"Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis;"

"Therefore loosing from Troas..." - lit. "Having sailed therefore from the Troas..." See notes to Acts 13. 13.

"came with a straight course..." - a straight course is never, if ever, achieved by sailing ships which are dependent on the wind which blows from several quarters. Luke has a wide nautical knowledge and uses it in this instance. It means to "sail before the wind" which is to say, the wind was behind them. The return journey from Philippi was to take five days later on. (Acts 20. 6.)

"Samothracia..." - This is an island in the northern portion of the Aegean Sea. It rises from the sea to a height of 5240 feet and is a very imposing sight as it is approached. Its mountainous character and its almost complete lack of a suitable harbour for trade, prevented it from having great political importance. In ancient times it was noted for its worship of three gods known as "Cabeiri" or "Cabiri". The island is noted for a wonderful statue of a woman with a long skirt blown by the wind. It is hard if not impossible to fault this statue for technical detail of a windblown skirt. It was erected in B.C. 305 and now stands in the Louvre in Paris. It is called "Winged Victory" or "Victory of Samothrace."

As an interesting side issue to this study, Samothrace was at one time the home of an exporter of wine from Samothrace to Athens. One year he was blown off course by an unusual wind and continued until he reached the coast of Spain. In a little cockleshell of a boat, it was an astonishing journey for

that time in history. He delivered his wine to the inhabitants and promised to come back again the next year. True to his word, he did and the people were so impressed, that they struck a medal in his honour, having a crest of a double curve in the shape of the letter "S" to indicate the return journey. To show that he had done it twice, they put two lines across the "S" making "S" plus "=", "S". This afterwards became a coin and was known as a "Thaler". In the centuries which followed, the double lines through an "S" were retained until the time came when its significance had long since been forgotten. The name changed too and became known as a "Dollar". Thus a man from Samothrace whose name has long since been forgotten, gave to the American people, the design and sign of their standard coin.

"Neapolis..." - from the Greek "Neo-" meaning "New" and "polis" meaning "city", thus making the name "Neapolis" for the new city. There were many such names through the Greek empire before the days of Roman domination. One such arose in Italy but through the centuries the name became corrupted from Neapolis to Naples. The people of Naples are called "Neapolitans" - the people of the new city. The "Neapolis" of this verse was a seaport for the city of Philippi and was about 30 miles distant from Samothrace.

The Greek sailors of the days of Paul always liked to anchor at night. Therefore they would sail to the lee of the wind near the island and complete the journey the next day. That is why Luke mentions such places, because they were used as places at which to anchor for the night.

#### Verse 12

"And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days."

"Philippi..." - The city was founded upon the ruins of other cities by Philip of Macedonia and called by his name. This was in the fourth century B.C. It was on the highway between Neapolis and Thessalonica. It was to the ecclesia at Philippi that Paul wrote his epistle to the Philippians. It became a Roman colony in B.C. 42.

"which is the chief city..." - Gk. "which is the first city..." A great deal of discussion has ensued about the meaning of this phrase. It could mean that Philippi was the first city of any importance to be reached in Macedonia, Neapolis being regarded as belonging to Thrace and not to Macedonia. On the other hand it could mean that it was the first "colony/city" of Macedonia, a colony being given a higher status by the Romans. Philippi may have been given this status because it was the scene of the victory when Octavian and Mark Anthony defeated Brutus and Cassius in B.C. 42. Thirdly, it would mean that it enjoyed a first political importance in that part of Macedonia. It rivalled Amphipolis which was the real capital of Macedonia. In Luke's simply told story, it most likely means that it was the first city of any importance they came across after crossing over from Troas.

"and a colony:.." - it was given "colony" status which meant that it enjoyed "Jus Italicum", this being immunity from a ground tax on provincial lands. Its magistrates carried titles borrowed from Rome and its coins (of which none are known to exist) laws and official language were all in Latin. The people were proud of their citizenship and Paul, in his epistle addressed to them, reminds them of a more important "citizenship" which is in heaven. See Phil. 1. 27; and 3. 20. where "citizenship" is translated as "conversation".

"certain days." - It is suggested by Walker that they were in the city waiting for the sabbath so that they could preach.

#### Verse 13

"and on the sabbath (margin: sabbath day) we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither."

"we went out of the city..." - there were few Jews there so there was no synagogue available where they could preach. Nevertheless they must have sought out the Jews and gone outside the city for the purpose of worship.

"by a river side,.." - if they Jews did not have a place of worship, they preferred to be near water where they could perform the ablutions required by the Law of Moses.

"where prayer was wont to be made..." - as explained, this would be near water.

"we sat down..." - it was usual when coming into a "place of prayer", to sit down. See Acts 13. 14.

"spoke unto the women..." - this has been explained as being due to the fact that there were no male Jews there or that the men came late. The truth of the matter could be that the men were engaged in prayer or in preliminary worship leading up to the proper worship, so only a group of women were available to talk to. (A quorum of ten men is necessary to constitute proper worship by Jews.) If there was a lack of a quorum, then the women could gather together and this is the most likely explanation. The river was, no doubt, the Gangites on which Philippi was situated.

#### Verse 14

"And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul."

"woman named Lydia,.." - she came from Thyatira which was in the province of Asia. At one time in the past, Thyatira had been in the kingdom of Lydia so she took her name from that. The district was famed for its manufacture of purple dye and it appears that Lydia had come to Philippi to trade in that dye. The city of Thyatira had a guild of dyers who specialised in that work. In Rev. 2 18/29. we find one of the letters to the seven ecclesias, this one to Thyatira.

"which worshipped God..." - she was a worshipper of God without knowing of Jesus Christ. She must have been a proselyte, or perhaps, a Jewess by birth. See Acts 13. 43.

"heard us:.." - imperfect tense indicates continually hearing us.

"whose heart the Lord opened,.." - Walker lists the following:-

Opening the ears	Mark 7. 34/35.
" the eyes.	Luke 24. 31.
" the Scriptures.	Luke 24. 32. Acts 17. 3.
" the understandin.	Luke 24. 45.
" the heart.	Acts 16. 14.

With the exception of the reference from Mark, all these are written by Luke. Very important in this connection, is the fact that when the story of the Acts was taking place, God "opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles." Acts 14. 27.

"she attended..." - she applied her mind to the things spoken of by Paul. This is so essential that it is worthy of special mention. No one comes to an understanding of the Divine Plan and Purpose without giving careful attention to the Word of God

#### Verse 15

"And when she was baptised, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us."



"When she was baptised..." - the reference is to the time when she was baptised which could have been some time afterwards. Points to the note are that she had a desire to worship God. She was a worshipper before she met Paul, showing that there was a desire in her heart to turn unto the Lord.

The next thing about here is that she attended to the words which Paul spoke. That is to say, she made an effort to understand the Scriptures and in doing so, she acquired knowledge. Having acquired that knowledge and believing in it, she signified her belief and acceptance by submitting to baptism. This is the way of every true Christian Believer.

"her household..." - a definite answer cannot be given as to what constitutes a "household". In Greek the word is "oikos" meaning a house with particular reference to its inmates. This could include servants and it is very likely that Lydia was a successful business woman and had more than one servant. She would not have invited the whole travelling party to stay with her if she did not have a large house and she could not have had a large house unless she had the means to afford it, and to keep the servants necessary to run it. One thing can be stated definitely and that is that this verse cannot be quoted as proof that children - small ones, and infants - must be baptised. There is no proof of this neither is there proof that there were not such children. It shows however, that Lydia was the head of the household and since the Bible is particular when speaking about women, to state whether they are married or widowed, we can be reasonably sure that Lydia had not been married otherwise she would have been described as a "widow". Being described as a "woman" the indication is that she was a single person. This being the case, she had servants but not children. It was the custom at that time that the head of the house set the religious pattern for his family. Lydia being single, would then have the power to set the religious pattern for her household. The facts before us make this very reasonable but in the absence of complete proof, one cannot be dogmatic about this.

"If ye have judged me to be faithful..." - lit. "if ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord..." and they must have so judged her by admitting her to baptism.

"my house..." - as stated above, Lydia showed signs of being wealthy Verse 40 shows that the first meeting place at Philippi was at her house. She was hospitable and showed it by inviting the travellers to stay with her. The liberality given to Paul and mentioned in Phil. 4. 15. no doubt started at her home.

"she constrained us. - The only other occurrence of this word is found in Luke 24. 29. where those who accompanied the risen Lord on the way to Emaus, brought pressure to bear upon him to stay with them. Likewise, Paul and his companions must have shown polite reluctance to stay with her and accept her hospitality, but she would have none of their arguments and brought pressure to bear upon them so they stayed.

Verse 16

"And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying:"

"It came to pass..." - this indicates a passage of time before what is about to be related actually happened. Some have thought that this followed immediately upon the baptism of Lydia. Luke is selecting incidents from history to teach a series of lessons and is careful in this instance, to show the passage of time by "It came to pass..."

"as we went to prayer..." - one day when they were going down to the river, where, according to the information of verse 13, "prayer was wont to be made..."

"a certain damsel..." - a young woman. The term is usually applied to a slave girl. Rhoda was one of these. Acts 12. 13.

"possessed with a spirit of divination..." - the margin has a reference to "Python". "Python" was the name of a great dragon at Delphi. It was killed by Appollo who was given the title of "Pythius" and was supposed to inherit its power to act as an oracle or prophet. Plutarch says that such "Pythons" were ventriloquists" who had the power to cause an illusion of origin of voice. All this is akin to "demon worship".

"her masters..." - this supplies proof that she was a slave working for some priests.

"soothsaying." - telling fortunes.

#### Verse 17

"The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation."

"The same..." - thos woman

"Paul and us,..." - Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke.

That the slave girl called out something which seems to be in support of that which was taught by Paul, lends confusion to this verse. In those days, the belief in one god was quite popular and everywhere there was a desire for salvation. The pagan gods were given the title of "saviou" so when we read that the slave girl called out such things, we realise that she was doing nothing more than advertising the gods of her masters, thereby detracting from the God Of Israel and the Saviour the Lord Jesus, whom Paul preached.

#### Verse 18

"And this she did many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour."

"being grieved,..." - he was worn out from the constant repetition and had lost patience. He became indignant.

"said to the spirit..." - this is Luke's record. He was a doctor and would be interested in her mental condition. Modern medical science knows that there was no evil spirit in the girl but the medical fraternity of Paul's day did not know this. Therefore they wrote in accordance with the belief of the times.

"the same hour." - what is meant here is "instantaneous."

#### Verse 19

"And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers,"

This verse is the beginning of a sentence which comes to its end at the end of verse 21, and should be read with this in mind.

"when her masters saw..." - they did not actually see but perceived by her subsequent silence what had happened to her.

"the hope of their gains.." - this should be in the singular, "their gain". Hitherto, any punishment meted out to the evangelists by pagans was at the instance of Jews and not because the pagans objected to their religion being assailed. In this case which we are now studying, the repercussions came about because a gain had been lost. The question of the True Religion did not enter into their objection, although they did subsequently make mention of it. Their prime motive however, is anger at the loss of gain.

"was gone,..." - lit. "gone out" as the "spirit" was supposed to have gone out.

"they caught Paul and Silas,.. " - Timothy and Luke attracted no attention because of the minor role they played. Their silence and subordination did not bring them into prominence before the masters of the slave.

"the market place..." - in ancient cities, this was either in the middle of the city or at the gate. Here it was that people met to do business or to hear the law. It was called "agora" and the Romans called it the "forum". It was a kind of civic centre where there were colonnades and shops and markets.

"the rulers." - This would be the group of magistrates who would control matters in a Greek city. They would be the men at the agora who dispensed justice at that time. They would most likely, be at the town hall.

#### Verse 20

"And brought them to the magistrates, saying These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city,"

"brought them to the magistrates..." - brought them before the two men who were called "duumvirs" or "duoviri" (the "two men"). What happened was that they brought the men before the authorities mentioned in verse 19 but in this verse, the information is more specific and states which of the authorities it was to whom they were brought. The margin of the R.V. gives "preators" but this is not correct. Places like Philippi did not enjoy such a high ranking status.

"being Jews,.. " - spoken in contempt of the Jewish people.

"exceedingly trouble..." - this is a compound word in Greek meaning "to throw into thorough disorder". A similar expression is used in Acts 15. 24. and 17. 8 and 13. where the use is milder in form.

"our city". Used in personification of "the people of our city".

#### Verse 21

"And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans."

"teach customs,.. " - the word "teach" used here is the same as that used in verse 17 and translated as "shew". The "customs" were the institutions of religion as practiced by the pagans. This refers to the rites of worship. See Acts 6. 14.

"not lawful" - there was no legislation attached to this. The meaning is that it was not proper because the teaching of a religion other than that which was generally accepted throughout the city, would cause difficulty because of army service. The people who followed this new Faith would not copy the ritual of the pagan state worship.

"neither to observe..." - this refers to active participation from which the pagans would be barred.

"being Romans." - In the Roman way, a Jew could live as a Jew and a pagan could live as a pagan. The trouble started when Jews or others tried to break down the pagan faith because this meant subversion against the State and against the person of the emperor. Any disloyalty to Rome and its emperor would soon have the people in an uproar.

#### Verse 22

"And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them."

"The multitude..." - the common people, having been aroused by the suggestion of a threat to Rome and its emperor, now behave according to the pattern of mob law and mob hysteria.

"rose up together..." - mob hysteria spreads very rapidly, giving the appearance of affecting everybody at the same time.

"rent off their clothes,..." - the sense of the English translation is that the magistrates rent off their own clothes. This is not the case. The fact is that the magistrates tore the clothes off Paul and Silas so that they were stripped naked preparatory to being whipped. This would shame the evangelists very much indeed because to be stripped in public was a great disgrace.

"and commanded to beat them". - "commanded to beat them with rods."

No chance was given to the two men to reply to the charges which were laid against them. Paul, in writing his first epistle to the Thessalonians, mentions the disgraceful treatment he was given (1 Thess 2.2.)

#### Verse 23

"And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:"

"And when they had laid..." - lit. "Having laid..."

"many stripes..." - "they", the magistrates, did not do this work but commanded their officers to do it. See verse 22. See also 2 Cor. 11. 23.

"cast them into prison,..." - lit. "committed them to prison, i.e. without physical violence. See Acts 8. 3. Paul now suffers what he gave others.

"jailor..." - he was probably the governor of the prison and a centurion. The instructions to keep his safely would mean that he would not leave them in the outer prison but would take them to the inner prison. See how securely Peter was imprisoned in Acts chapter 12.

#### Verse 24

"Who having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks."

"having received such a charge,..." - Luke now prepares us for the conversion of the jailor within a few hours. Putting the prisoners into the inner prison and fastening their feet in the stocks was not necessarily the work of a cruel and heartless man. He was merely obeying the instructions of the Magistrates. Luke does not intend us to get any harsh thoughts about the jailor otherwise how are we to accept the fact of his sudden baptism later on? Here Luke shows further evidence of his skill as a writer.

"thrust..." - the same Greek word as that translated "cast..." in the previous verse.

"inner prison..." - one is tempted to think of this as being a dungeon in the depths of the prison, with little light. This is not indicated by the script but is simply a prison further away from the main entrance.

"the stocks." This instrument differed widely. Some were used as a punishment where the limbs were stretched. Others just were instruments for securing the prisoner by making his detention certain. The tomb of Jesus was also securely fastened.

#### Verse 25

"And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them."

"prayed, and sang..." - the two verbs are separated by a comma but it is most likely that the singing was done by chant, and the chant was offered in the form of a prayer, both being done simultaneously. See Acts 12. 5. where

Peter prayed without ceasing.

"the prisoners heard them." Gk. "the prisoners listened to them". If one should wonder why Luke added this little piece of information, there is little to go on unless on regards it as being a statement inserted to draw the situation in such terms as to discount any knowledge of what was suddenly about to happen. Paul and Silas were singing chants of praise to God and the prisoners were listening to them, hearing perhaps, for the first time, something about the God of Israel. Their minds were on spiritual things when suddenly.....

#### Verse 26

"And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately the doors were opened, and everyone's hands were loosed."

"...earthquake..." - from Gk. "seismos" from which we get English "seismic", "seismology". It means a shaking, a shock, a movement to and fro, with the idea of concussion attached to it. See Matt. 24. 7; 27. 54; 28. 2; Mark 13. 8; Luke 21. 11; Acts 16. 26; Rev. 6. 12; 8.5; 11. 13 (twice) 11. 19; and 16. 18. (twice). It is also used of a tempest in Matt. 8. 24.

"the foundations of the prison were shaken..." - it is thought that the effect of this was to loosen the catches, bolts and bars on the doors, the sockets of the chains which bound the prisoners, thus making it possible for the prisoners to escape. This would not explain how the "prisoners" hands were loosed."

"immediately..." - all at the same time, not one after the other.

"everyone's hands were loosed." - this was due to Divine Power and not to the effect of the earthquake. A sudden shock, no matter how severe, could not loosen the chains on their hands and feet. See Acts 12. 7.

#### Verse 27

"And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled."

"keeper of the prison..." - from one Greek word meaning "jailor".

"awaking out of his sleep..." - Lit. "out of sleep and having arisen the jailor..."

"he drew out his sword..." - lit. "having drawn a sword..."

"would have killed himself..." - lit. "was about himself to kill..." There was a strong possibility that the jailor would have been killed if his prisoners had escaped. See Acts 12. 19. On the other hand, it was considered a noble thing to do under such circumstances, for the jailor to kill himself. He would have been much praised as a hero if he had done so. It is unlikely that this motive applied in this instance, because of the subsequent humility and belief of the jailor.

"supposing that the prisoners had fled." - this shows that the motive was one of avoided a cruel punishment ending in death for having permitted the prisoners to escape. In such circumstances, they should have been killed.

That the jailor was awakened out of sleep while the prisoners were awake is explained by the fact that the jailor's house was near the jail, (verse 34.) so he would not be near enough to be kept awake by the chanting of Paul and Silas. Luke cuts his narrative short here from the "awakening" to the "drawing of the sword" without explaining that the Jailor, having been awakened, rushed over from his house to the jail, and, having found the prisoners loose, would have killed himself so drew his sword to do so. The fore-going explanation can be inferred from the script and does not need to be told.

## Verse 28

"But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here."

"cried with a loud voice,.. " - the Greek here is, literally, "Cried out and with a voice loud..."

"Do thyself no harm:.." - the word translated as "harm" here means harm which includes every form of evil, moral or physical.

"we are all here." - Paul, with Silas, had been put in the inner jail, yet knew that all the other prisoners were there, although it must have been dark. There has been much speculation as to how he knew that all were there and some commentators have suggested that he knew because of the power of the Holy Spirit working upon him. This may be true but it would be usual under such circumstances, for all to have called out "are you alright?" so that with this individual checking, Paul would know that all were there. It seems to be carrying commentaries too far when such points as this are debated. If there is a value in the statement it is that whereas ALL were saved from this dangerous earthquake which seemed to have been very severe, only ONE turned to God. This is characteristic of mankind and once again shows the Divine teaching that only a comparatively few will be saved from all ages.

## Verse 29

"Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,"

"he called for a light,.. " - as indicated above, it was dark. He would "demand" a light and his attendants would obey.

"sprang in..." - it is thought that the phrase "sprang in" shows that Paul and Silas were in a dungeon. The verb however, means "rushed in" as one should expect him to do in view of his anxiety about the safety of his prisoners.

"came trembling..." - Diag. "having become terrified..." R.V. "trembling for fear..." K.S.V. "trembling with fear..." In view of what had happened, his fear is not surprising.

## Verse 30

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

"And brought them out..." - Lit. "having led them out..." or "having conducted them out..." They may have had to be helped out because of their wounds from the "many stripes" of verse 23.

"Sirs,.." - a term of respect. Contrast with the brutal treatment they had been given a few hours previously. There is no Greek word for "Sirs". The word means "Lords," "masters". In Eastern culture and courtesy, it would be used to show humility to the person addressed and to show respect to him, or them.

"what must I do..." - similar to "what shall we do?" of Acts 2. 37. See notes for that verse. The sense here is "What is it necessary for me to do..?" There was obviously a great need but the jailor did not know what it was.

"to be saved?" - lit. "that I may be saved?" The whole question is "what is it necessary for me to do in order that I may be saved". The saving here is personal and not collective for all who were there, although it would apply to them all. The jailor at that moment, was concerned with his own salvation.

## Verse 31

"And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

The reply which Paul gave to the question and which is recorded here, differs from that given by Peter in answer to a similar question. Acts 2. 38. Peter called for "baptism" whereas Paul calls for "belief". The two must go together as Jesus demanded. Mark. 16. 16. Baptism took place in both instances thus showing that there is no inconsistency in what was said by both men.

"thou shalt be saved..." - saved from his present state of being spiritually dead. Salvation in the Kingdom of God is not promised here. This is subject to the operation of the grace of God and is not a sine qua non of baptism, although baptism is an essential and indispensable preliminary. See Ephes 2. 5. and verse 8.

"and thy house". His house, if they believed and were baptised too, would be saved in a similar way through their belief and baptism. Not by the belief and baptism of the jailor but by their own belief and baptism. This applies only to those who can believe, thereby eliminating infants and small children who have not yet reached the age of discretion and understanding.

## Verse 32

"And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house".

"they spake unto him..." - they taught him.

"the word of the Lord..." - the LOGOS - the Plan and Purpose of God.

"to all that were in his house". - His wife, grown up children and servants. Paul and Silas would not talk to infants about the Divine Plan and Purpose so there is nothing here to support the practice of infant sprinkling.

## Verse 33

"And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptised, he and all his, straightaway."

"he took them..." - the same verb is used in Acts 15. 39. where Barnabas "took" Mark with him. The same sense is meant here.

"washed their stripes..." lit. "he washed from them the stripes..." which means he washed the blood from the stripes. See comments to verse 30 under "brought them out".

"was baptised..." - the jailor washed away their blood, a symbol of death, and they "washed" him in water of baptism, thus washing away from him the symbol of death. He was now assured of a resurrection.

Some commentators ask where the water of baptism could come from, and point out that it was still dark. The answer is, of course, that it came from the place where the jailor would draw his water, a cistern, a well, a stream or anything which would supply enough water for a complete immersion which is what the word Baptism requires. When Luke mentions baptism, he expects his readers to understand what he writes. He does not have to explain the obvious. If he said, "they partook of food" he does not need to tell us what that food was.

"straightaway". - The jailor first washed their bodies and then, without delay, was washed himself.

"he and his..." - again we have an instance where the master of a house orders his servants what to do and they do it.

## Verse 34

"And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."

"when he had brought them into his house..." - "having led them up into his house..." This indicates two things:- (1) his house or lodgings was UP so he could have led them upstairs from the jail precincts below; (2) he had been outside for the baptism and then had come from the place where the water was, and then led them into the house.

"he set meat before them,.." - Gk. "he set a table" The RV has a marginal reference against "meat" reading "a table". This is more to the script for it indicates more than just having a meal of food after so spiritual a ritual as baptism. The "table" which was set before them was more likely to be a "table of the Lord" where a memorial feast was celebrated. This would be more in keeping with the character of Paul and Silas.

"rejoiced..." - the verb is used here and carries a meaning of "exult". The noun is used in Acts 2. 46. and translated "gladness". The word "rejoiced" occurring in Acts 2. 26. comes from a different verb altogether. The word "was glad" in relation to the "tongue" (in Acts 2. 26.) is from the same Greek verb as we find in Acts 16. 34. For other uses of this verb, see Luke 1. 47; 1 Pet. 1. 8; Rev. 19. 7; but Matt. 5. 12. gives the verb in the Middle Voice, as does John 5. 35; and in the verse now being studied. Also 1 Pet. 1. 6; 4. 13; Luke 10. 21; John 8. 56.

The verse indicates that the jailer and his household rejoiced but we can be sure that Paul and Silas rejoiced too, forgetting in their exultation that a short while before, their stripes were washed and they had been severely beaten.

"believing in God..." - lit. "having believed in God..." The use of this expression shows that because they believed in God, they rejoiced.

## Verse 35

"And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, let those men go."

"when it was day..." - Gk. "Day and having come..." or, "day having come..." This shows the stirring events just recorded, from the earth-quake onwards, must all have taken place during a period of darkness.

"the magistrates..." - the commanders, duumviri or praetors.

the serjeants..." Lit. "rodholders" or "lictors". These were the ministerial officers of the colonial rulers and carried rods with which they gave cruel punishment.

"those men..." - no names mentioned, thereby indicating utmost contempt for the prisoners. Luke's use of this expression is seen in a moment when Paul was to show that they, the prisoners, were worthy of every consideration. Thus Luke shows his skill in choosing carefully his words so that one thought leads naturally and conveniently to the next.

## Verse 36

"And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The Magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace."

The rulers felt that the rods and the night of imprisonment had taught the prisoners the lesson they needed and the rulers thought they would have no more trouble with them. Therefore getting rid of them now was simply done by telling them to go.



"told..." - announced - as one would pass on an order by making an announcement. See the following verses for the use of this word:- Acts 4. 23; 5. 22 and 25; 11. 13; (he shewed us) 12. 14 and 17; 15. 27. In all these the sense is to make an announcement.

"Let go..." - this term is used for a judicial discharge. See Acts 3. 13; 4. 21 and 23; 5. 40.

"now therefore..." - because of this, (take the opportunity of getting away and go)

"go in peace." - an expression meaning "go with peace" being a parting wish from those who have been left behind. This would come from the jailor and his household.

### Verse 37

"But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay, verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out."

There has been some misunderstanding of the motive behind Paul's demand. Alexander ("The Acts of the Apostles") has suggested that Paul deliberately allowed himself to be beaten so that he could leave Philippi with an infant "church" which would now be respected by the rulers. It is hardly likely however, that Paul would work all this out during the emotional outburst with which he was confronted.

There has also been some criticism at what is called "Paul's belligerent attitude in demanding that the rulers should come and fetch them out. It is felt that he was standing upon his dignity in the sight of others. This would be contrary to his character. It must be remembered however, that Paul and his companions had been very severely treated in public the previous day. They had been beaten without a trial in spite of the fact that they were Roman citizens. If Roman citizenship couldn't save them, then it would be foolish to send them on to the streets again without adequate protection. If they were recognised, then what was to stop the people attacking them again and this time, giving them a worse beating than they had before? If they could be fetched out under guard then they could get to the border of the city and get away unharmed. Paul's statement was not one of dignity, indignation, belligerence or pride but merely a sensible precaution for their own safety.

"said unto them..." - the "them" were the men who had brought the message from the rulers therefore they must have been present when the jailor passed on the message to Paul and Silas.

"beaten us..." - the verb here is used in hyperbole. It means "they have skinned us..." or "they have flayed us". This idiom has been carried over into the English language where the expression "they flayed us" is used. Then, having removed the skin, it is tanned into leather, hence the expression, "we were tanned".

Paul's statement covers four points. Luke sets these out as under:-

1. They flayed us. Hyperbole used to show what a terrible beating they received.
2. "openly"... - in public before all the people. They should have been brought to trial before the rulers.
3. "uncondemned..." there having been no trial, they could not have received a legal sentence for any crime.
4. "being Romans,..." both Paul and Silas had that great privilege in those days of being able to say, "CIVIS ROMANUS SUM" - "I am a Roman citizen. This privilege was not given to anyone born as a subject of the Roman

power. Apart from other privileges, officially recognised Roman citizenship entitled them to immunity from imprisonment unless brought to trial before a properly constituted body of jurists. Being able to exclaim "Civis Romanus sum" was a wonderful defence in all sorts of situations. Roman citizens were spared from having to undergo degrading forms of punishment.

"have cast us into prison..." as reported in verses 23 and 24.

"now do they thrust us out..." - the reverse action of verses 23 and 24.

"privily..." - all that the people did to us was done in the sight of everyone. Now, having imprisoned us without being entitled to, they thrust us out privately.

"nay, verily:.." - No! They are not going to get away with it!

"let them come themselves..." - lit. "having come themselves..."

"and fetch us out." - "let the lead out" or "let them conduct out".

We now see Paul's argument. If all this has been done to us without regard to the privilege we have of being Roman citizens, what further hope have we if we are put on the streets without an escort. The people will attack us again. So, let them come and conduct us out so that we can get away in safety.

#### Verse 38

"And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard they were Romans."

"told..." - a different word from that given in verse 36. The meaning is "rehearsed" See Acts 14. 27; In Acts 15. 4. the translation is "declared".

"they feared..." - as well they might in view of the very serious offence of punishing a Roman without a trial, and for punishing them openly and in a degrading manner to bring ridicule and disrespect upon men who could say, "Civis Romanus sum". The rulers feared for their own safety because they were liable to be dismissed and punished. Our view regarding the reason for Paul's attitude seems to be correct as the next verse will show.

#### Verse 39

"And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city."

"they besought them,..." - lit. "they invited them" or "they exhorted them" to leave the city. They could not order them to leave as the men had not yet been formally charged of a crime nor had they been brought to trial. Until they had been formally charged, tried, found guilty and convicted, they were entitled to remain inside this Roman occupied city for as long as they chose. Furthermore, the rulers would be obliged to give them protection for as long as they stayed there. This put the rulers in an almost impossible position. They had acted the day before in a manner which pleased the people and they were now proved to be wrong in doing so. How could they now give them a free pass in the city and give them protection after they had almost killed them? Yet they had to ensure their safety otherwise they would get into serious trouble.

"and brought them out..." - lit. "having brought them out..." that is to say, having brought them out of the jailor's house,

"desired them..." - the Greek word means to ask but it carries the sense of asking a favour. Paul must have seen some humour in the proud rulers now asking him to do them the favour of leaving.

"to depart out of the city". - the motive was that they should depart and not come back. The Greek word is used in Luke 4. 42. in such a way as to mean "depart and not come back". See also Matt. 9. 31.

Verse 40

"And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed."

"they went out of the prison,..". - Luke is very exact here and is telling us that with true Roman dignity, Paul did not show any haste in getting out of the city. Up to this point, Luke tells us that they went out of the prison. This does not mean that they went out of the city.

"entered into the house of Lydia:..". - This was in response to her invitation as mentioned in verse 15.

From here on until their departure, Paul and Silas, with Timothy, did all they could to strengthen the brethren. No doubt they stayed in Lydia's house to which the brethren came.

They then spoke to them.

"they comforted them,..". - lit. "they exhorted them,..". This exhortation may have taken the form of that given in Phil. 1. 27/30. The many exhortations in the epistle to the Philippians suggest what Paul might have said to the brethren. See Phil. 2. 12/16; 3. 1/3; 3. 14/16; 4. 3/8.

"departed". - Paul left Philippi with Timothy and Silas. Luke, apparently, stayed behind, because the "we" sections of Acts does not appear again until Acts 20. 5. (for "us") and 20. 6. (for "we").

It is thought that Luke is referred to by Paul in Phil. 4. 3. as "true yokefellow". If this is so, then Luke's personality must be such that he built up a very kind and considerate ecclesia there. With Lydia's hospitality and Luke's love of his fellow men, the ecclesias became generous and helped Paul with a donation. See Phil. 4. 16.

The epistle to the Philippians makes pleasant reading and one may assume with some degree of confidence, that the believers were left much to themselves in view of Paul's statement to the rulers of that city. Even after the passage of time, the Philippians did not fall away from the Truth. Paul's letter to them gives no hint of a falling away. Epaphroditus of Phil. 2. 25; and 4. 18; is thought to be the jailor but this cannot be stated with certainty.



## THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

### Chapter 17

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Having completed their missionary work at Philippi, Paul and his companions move westward again by taking the road via Amphipolis and Appollonia to Thessalonica and Berea. This was to bring to an end their work in Macedonia, and to lead to Paul's visit to Athens. Wherever they went they met with the same opposition from Jews for it was during the early evangelical period that the Jews vigorously and actively opposed Christianity. Strong opposition from Gentiles was to come much later. Luke's record draws a distinction between the two types of Jews, the opposers of Christianity and those who were prepared to listen and search the Scriptures. The Commentator R.B. Rackham, points out that in ancient and independent Greece, there was a strong opposition between a large number of democrats and a comparatively few aristocrats. This opposition divided the whole country. In Luke's account, he also draws a distinction between the opposition from the democrats of Thessalonica and the aristocrats of Berea. Some commentators suggest that Luke was class conscious, having come from a well connected Macedonian family, and was critical of the people of these cities. This view is unfounded however, and it is more likely that Luke shows in this chapter his keen powers of observation and his deep understanding of human nature.

The modern name for THESSALONICA is Salonica (Saloniki) and in history, it took second place after Constantinople (modern Istanbul) as the most important city of Turkey in Europe. It is situated at the head of a gulf in the north west corner of the Aegean Sea. It is ideally situated for the conduct of trade, both by land and by sea. The ancients knew it as Therme and the gulf in which it stands was known as the Thermaic Gulf. About the year B.C. 315, Cassander, king of Macedon, rebuilt the city and named it after his wife, Thessalonica. When the Romans took charge of the city, it was made the capital of the province and the proconsul had his residence there. Ancient coins issued about the time of the Roman occupation show that the Romans allowed the city its freedom. This freedom enabled it at the time of Paul's visit, to have its own Macedonian constitution.

#### Verse 1

"Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Appollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews:"

"passed through..." - the Greek word is "diodeuo" and appears here and in Luke 8. 1. only. It indicates that the travellers passed through without stopping (except to sleep). The road they took would be the Egnatian way or "via Egnatia". The distance between these two cities was about 30 miles, the same as the distance from Philippi to Amphipolis.

"a synagogue of the Jews:" - lit. "the synagogue..." The presence of this synagogue would have suited Paul admirably. This was more than he had found in Philippi.

#### Verse 2

"And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures,"

"as his manner was,..." - his custom was to enter into the synagogue. Compare this with the Lord's custom as expressed by Luke in Luke 4. 16.

"three sabbath days..." - this meant that Paul stayed there for a minimum of two weeks.

"reasoned with them..." - this was a discussion in which both sides put their point of view.

"out of the scriptures,.. " - thus leading into the opening words of the next verse.

### Verse 3

"Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ."

"Opening and alleging..." - Opening means explaining, opening out so that all can be seen. See the use of the same word in Luke 24. 32. and verse 45. "Alleging" means "propounding" or "setting forth". For a similar use, see Matt. 13. 24 and 31. where the translation is "put forth". Such things were "put forth" in parables by way of elucidation.

"Christ must needs have suffered..." - this was the doctrine that confounded the Jews who found it impossible to accept. See 1 Cor. 1. 18. and note particularly verse 23. Even the disciples found this hard to believe. Matt. 16. 21/22. and Luke 24. 25/26. See also Luke 24. 45/48. for the clear explanation which Jesus gave to his disciples.

"and risen again..." - a great stumbling block to the Jews because anyone coming from a grave would have been in contact with death and therefore, ceremonially unclean. The "uncleanliness" could have been removed by presentation to the high priest and being cleansed according to the Law, but Jesus did not present himself to the high priest for cleansing after his resurrection.

It was necessary for Jesus to have risen to make it possible for us to rise too when Christ comes. Paul made this quite clear to the Thessalonians in 1 Thess. 4. 14. In view of this teaching, the resurrection of Jesus was of great importance to Paul.

"this Jesus...is Christ." - One of the most important doctrines of Christianity which teaches that the Messiah promised unto Abraham was Jesus of Nazareth.

### Verse 4

"And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few."

"some of them..." - some of those to whom Paul spoke in the synagogue. This would include both Jew and proselyte.

"consorted with..." - this is the only occurrence of the verb. It means "to cast in one's lot with..." They became disciples of the evangelists.

"devout Greeks..." - the uncircumcised Gentile believers, like Cornelius who had adopted Judaism but would not be circumcised. This would also include Gentiles (speaking Greek) who believed Christianity and not Judaism. Probably Aristarchus and Secundus. (Acts. 20. 4.)

"chief women..." - high born women of the city.

Paul was impressed by these followers and mentioned them in 1 Thess. 1. 5/10. In accordance with Jewish custom, the women are not named.

### Verse 5

"But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people."

"The Jews which believed not..." - once again the unbelieving Jews were to be the cause of much trouble to Paul and his companions.

The stirring events recorded in this verse took place some weeks after Paul's entry into the city. We have seen that if he visited the synagogue on three successive sabbaths, the very shortest time he could have been there, first and third sabbaths inclusive, would be 15 days. It could have been 16 days if allowance is made for entering the city before the sabbath and leaving it after the sabbath. The tumult follows immediately after the first record of any preaching but it must have followed at the earliest, the third sabbath after Paul's entry into the city.

"moved with envy..." - moved with jealousy. The unbelieving Jews would resent the popularity of the new speakers and the great interest shown by so many.

"certain..." - "some"

"lewd fellows..." - lit. "men of evil". Such people would be of low social standing and of undesirable moral character.

"of the baser sort..." - Gk. "agoraioi" from "agora" meaning market. Therefore "market men". The market place was the centre of activity within a city and would be the gathering place for undesirable characters of all sorts. Having nothing to do, they would be amenable to any stirring up motive by those who wished to precipitate a riot. See 2 Thess. 3. 10/13. The Thessalonians were prone to laziness.

"gathered a company..." - assembled a mob to do violence.

"set the city on an uproar..." - lit. "they disturbed the city" See Acts. 19. 29. for the uproar in Ephesus and Acts 21. 34. for the uproar in Jerusalem.

"assaulted..." - lit. "came upon it by surprise.."

"the house of Jason..." - perhaps Paul was lodged in Jason's house. Jason was a Greek name adopted by Hebrews in place of Joshua.

"to the people." - not to the rioting mob but to the constituted authority. In the United States of America, the State is referred to in legal matters as "the people". This sense is used here.

#### Verse 6

"And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, "These that have turned the world upsidedown are come hither also;"

"they found them not..." - lit. "Not finding them..." They would not find them because some new converts, having learnt of the intention to bring the evangelists to trial, must have hidden them.

"drew..." - lit. "to drag" often with violence and force. The same verb is used in Acts 8. 3. and Acts 14. 19.

"the rulers of the city..." - Gk. "politarches" (in English "politarchs".) Luke's use of this word is unusual since it is not used by any classical writer. Many critics have pointed to the use of this word to prove the alleged "inaccuracy" of Luke and, therefore, his unreliability. It was said that there was no such title in those days. However, a Roman triumphal arch was erected in the 1st Century after Christ on which the word POLITARCHI was engraved. It was destroyed in 1867 but the stone containing the word was saved and is now housed in the British Museum. Since that time, the word has been found elsewhere in Macedonia. This proves the accuracy of Luke's work.

"crying,.. " - to shout aloud, to bellow. They shouted in a state of uncontrolled excitement.

"turned the world upsidedown..." - Luke uses one word here meaning to unsettle, to stir to sedition, put in commotion. News of the trouble at

Philippi must have reached Thessalonica. The word has a meaning akin to "revolutionise" (See Alexander's commentary, page 138.)

"are come hither also". These who have done all this are also come to us.

The Romans were very touchy about anything which suggested, even to a slight degree, insurrection against Rome. Jason and others of his faith were now charged with harbouring under his roof, people who had stirred up insurrection elsewhere and were about to do the same here. The trouble with such men was that they preached a rival emperor, namely, Jesus Christ. This charged appears in the next verse.

#### Verse 7

"Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus."

"Received..." - taken under his protection.

"these all..." - Jason, and all his friends who were staying with him.

"contrary to the decrees..." - contrary to the laws of Caesar concerning treason.

"king..." - The Romans did not call Caesar a king but gave him a more military title which was "emperor". The Greeks called him a "basileus" which was the title they used for the Roman emperor.

The rulers of the city knew that their own status in the eyes of the Roman emperor depended upon their loyalty to him. Therefore they would be very anxious to put down any suggestion of insurrection.

Throughout the Roman world, there was a very low state of morality. Paul would have to give many a lesson in this connection, thus bringing further anger upon himself from the people. See his lesson to the Thessalonians.  
1 Thess. 4. 2/8.

#### Verse 8

"And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things."

"troubled..." - disturbed in mind. See Acts 15. 24.

"the people..." - the mob and not the city as an entity. See vs 5. in regard to the word "people."

"rulers of the city" - politarchs.

#### Verse 9

"And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go."

"had taken security..." - took bonds of security. This was a Latin law phrase.

"and of the other..." - Jason's friends - not Paul and his companions.

"let them go." - discharged them because there was no proof that they had done anything unlawful. The politarchs would be anxious that this incident should be forgotten as soon as possible rather than that a report should go to Rome and show that the rulers were incapable of keeping order.

#### Verse 10

"And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews."



"The brethren..." - the ecclesia at Thessalonica.

"Immediately..." - no time was lost in getting them away. No doubt this was done as soon as it was dark on the same day of the uproar.

This now brought the campaign at Thessalonica to an end. It had been very short but it was productive of an ecclesia there. Paul wanted to return but did not find occasion to do so. He wrote to the ecclesia telling them of his desire to visit them again. 1 Thess. 2. 18.

In resisting Paul and his friends, the Jews not only turned the Truth away from themselves, but also prevented it reaching the Gentiles. Paul was upset about this as we see from 1 Thess. 2. 14/16.

The Christians were to endure much affliction for their faith but Paul urged them to stand fast. (1 Thess. 3. 8.)

The coming of the KING AND PRIEST was too much for the people to accept so in case the Household of Faith should waver, Paul wrote to them explaining at the end of every chapter, the coming of the Lord. In case they should think that the coming was near at hand, Paul wrote his second epistle, telling them of a great apostacy which was to arise first. (2 Thess. 2. 3/12.)

As Paul had reasoned with them out of the scriptures at the beginning, so he exhorted them to "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good". (1 Thess. 5. 21.)

"Berea..." - in some spellings it is Bereoa. Having reached Berea 40 miles to the west of Thessalonica, the traveller would turn south towards Athens. Berea is also in Macedonia and was a colony in its own right. The modern name is like the ancient one, namely, Verria. Paul's great interest would be aroused because there was a synagogue there.

"went into..." - lit. "went away" signifying that the synagogue was out of town.

Verse 11

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

"were more noble..." - attempts have been made to show that the Jews of Berea were the aristocratic class while those of Thessalonica were the democrats. whereas there is no doubt that many from Berea were of noble birth, the sense of this verse is that the reception of the scriptures in Berea was much more candid and sincere than it was in Thessalonica. This reason is given in the next clause, "in that they received the word with all readiness of mind." The distinction drawn is one of "readiness of mind" and rejection.

"word..." - LOGOS, the Plan and Purpose of God.

"searched..." - lit. "daily examining..." The term means to sift as evidence. See the use made of this word in Acts 4. 9; and 12. 15. Here is an exhortation for all newcomers to the Faith and even for those long in the Covenants of Promise.

"these things..." - those things taught by Paul which is stated above to be the LOGOS.

Verse 12

"Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few."

"many of them believed;.." - as can be expected when a people received the LOGOS with such a kind reception and studied the scriptures to see whether what was said was true, many believed and, as a result of that belief, were baptised.

"honourable women..." - those of good disposition, bearing or repute. The point of their being mentioned as "honourable" seems to point to the fact that whereas the democrats were common people and highly immoral, these women held themselves aloof from all such behaviour. One does not need to be rich to be moral.

"and of men..." - the men too, were moral people and as such, considered to be honourable.

"not a few." This peculiar negative construction is also found at the end of verse 4.

### Verse 13

"But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came hither also, and stirred up the people."

Once again the Jews were active in preventing the LOGOS from being preached. The facts before us indicate that the Jews had a good spy system in operation so that wherever the LOGOS was preached, they would hear about it. They were well enough organised militarily to take a vigorous and hostile action against it.

"the word of God..." - the LOGOS. The frequent use of this word must show that the Gospel was meant and it in no way, refers to a reincarnated Jesus. The LOGOS was centred in Jesus but it does not give any hint of his pre-existence.

### Verse 14

"And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still."

"immediately..." - previous experience had shown them that if they were to survive, they had to take immediate action.

"sent away..." - not the same as in verse 10. Here it means to send out and away, far.

"as it were..." - a Greek idiom applying here a meaning that Paul was sent in such a direction that if he went any further, he would have to go by sea. It would appear that Paul went by sea although Luke does not say so. The complete absence of any intervening towns between Berea and Athens indicates that he did not go by land but by sea.

"Silas and Timotheus..." - both were left behind. Paul apparently was the draw card so it would be better that he got away and left others, not so well known, to build up the ecclesia at Berea.

"abode..." - means to stay for a while and not permanently.

### Verse 15

"And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed."

"they that conducted..." - Paul's unnamed travelling companions who would attend him on the journey.

"receiving a commandment..." - receiving instructions from Paul to go back to Berea to fetch Silas and Timotheus.

The historical record is incomplete at this stage. There is no record that Silas and Timothy came to Athens but it can be inferred. Timothy must have come because 1 Thess. 3. 1/2 reports that he was sent back to Thessalonica. If Timothy came, then it is inferred that Silas came too. We have to wait until Acts 18. 5. for information that they both joined Paul at Corinth.

ATHENS was one of the great cities of the habitable world at that time. It was the centre of learning and the home of classical literature, art and sculpture. Under Roman rule, it was included in the province of Achaia and Corinth was the capital. Of all the university cities in the Roman world, the university at Athens was the most prominent. Athens was connected with such great names as Plato, Socrates, Pericles, Demosthenes, Sophocles and Euripides. No city in the world can point to so many illustrious people as having been citizens of Athens or associated in some way with it.

Athens was not a port but was served by Piraeus which was not far from Athens in Paul's day but it is now so much part of Athens that the visitor cannot tell where one city starts and the other ends. The road from Piraeus to Athens was furnished here and there along its length by altars to the unknown gods of Grecian mythology. Athens was the stronghold of Grecian mythology.

The city is dominated by the acropolis on which stands the great Parthenon in honour of the goddess Athene after whom the city was named. To one side of it is, and on the slopes of the hill, is a theatre which Paul might have visited. Some short distance away from the hill is a market square, recently excavated which was called the Agora where people used to congregate and discuss things as described in verse 21. On the road to the Parthenon is a black rock with steps cut into the rock giving access to the top. This is known as Areopagus (or Mars Hill). We shall read more of this place when we come to it.

#### Verse 16

"Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry."

Athens does not appear to have been on Paul's programme for his journey. To him it was a stopping place where he waited for his friends who did not come - unless Timothy came only to be sent forthwith back to Thessalonica.

"his spirit was stirred in him,.." - the verb means to sharpen, or put an edge on, to whet. His evangelical spirit was sharpened, or set on edge, so that he had a desire to preach and show people their folly.

"wholly given to idolatry." - lit. "full of idols." The altars which were seen in profusion along the way from Piraeus to Athens are still to be found in the Greek mainland and in Peloponnesia. They are not altars for sacrificial purposes but are small shrines erected by the people at which they say a prayer or count their beads. This habit has lasted through many centuries and has been changed throughout that time from paganism to modern Christianity.

#### Verse 17

"Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him."

"disputed..." - the same word translated as "reasoned" in verse 2.

"the Jews,.." - those of Judaism who would listen to him.

"devout persons..." - proselytes who, having converted to Judaism, would still listen to a discourse on one God and His Plan and Purpose.

"and in the market place..." - not content with his talks in the synagogue, where he would meet with some opposition, Paul felt it was necessary to adopt the Socratic method of talking to people in the market square.

"with them that met with him". - lit. "with those he happened to meet".

Socrates had taught his dialectic manner of debate and it is from this word that we get the English "dialectic" and the translation here of "disputed" or "reasoned". The method is to teach by question and answer so that there is at all times a two way movement of conversation. The Greeks would quickly fall into this method of debate.

Verse 18

"Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection."

It was Epicurus, born BC 342 in Samos who gave rise to the philosophy of the EPICUREANS. In BC 307 he moved to Athens where he expounded his theories and gathered a following who remained faithful to him all their lives. He taught that human good or end of life was in the pleasure of each moment. Pleasure was an end and not a means to an entire life. Each pleasure was not to be satisfied as it arose but was to be reconciled in a systematic whole so that each would receive the amount of satisfaction which belonged to it. Before indulging in any instinct, we are to consider the consequence to ourselves and those who are intimately associated with us. By keeping every enjoyment under control, one could live a life of philosophical contentment. The ultimate aim of life was the enjoyment of tranquil pleasure. In their religion, they pointed to the gods who lived in a state of peace, contentment and tranquility. By bringing his instincts under control, man was forming his own character and developing it. This was in direct opposition to the theory of the Stoics who believed that one's character depended upon the position of the stars at the time of one's birth. Thus, Epicurus struck at the absurd superstition of astrology, a superstition which still exists to this day. The theories of Epicurus survive to this day, hidden under the cloak of Christianity so-called for his teachings called upon one to believe that the gods were above all human passions - (God is a God of love say the Christians, and this is so under all circumstances, even if man is disobedient). His philosophy demanded kindness and gentleness to man and beast, thus surviving in Christianity as an exaggerated application of the parable of the Good Samaritan. He required frugality and contentment, this surviving in the church in the confessional and the submission to the priesthood.

The STOICS had more in common with the Jews than the Epicureans. Their philosophy of never yield or submit was found in the long enduring character of the Jews who had endured captivity and oppression for centuries. The founder of Stoicism, Zeno, established his school of thought about BC 278. The Stoics who followed his teaching throughout the years which followed, were wide spread and Tarsus, the city of Paul, was well known as a city of Stoics. In contrast to the Epicureans who regarded the gods as being in a remote celestial sphere, the Stoics believed that the gods were everywhere present and that a spirit, a universal reason, prevailed space. This was the "anima mundi". They held a doctrine of predestination and believed in the survival of an entity which they called the "soul" and which was supposed to live on after death.

Rackham sums up the difference between the two by saying that the Stoic was the idealist, while the Epicurean was the utilitarian. The Stoic was the stern dogmatist, the unflinching man of duty and the Epicurean was the practical commonsense man of the world. The Stoic was deeply concerned with the doctrine of God and the soul while the Epicurean had the scepticism of the man of culture. His best comparison was made when he wrote that the Epicureans were the Sadducees of Hellenism and the Stoics were the Pharisees. (Rackham op. cit. pp 304/305.)

Stoicism appears under the cloak of Christianity and is recognisable in the doctrine of the immortality of the soul; the ideal of the wise man found in the unquestioned acceptance of the Pope ex cathedra.

Paul's Pharisaical background enabled him to understand much of the philosophy of the Stoics. His letters show that he was acquainted with their writers. Having been educated in Tarsus, a city renowned for Stoicism, he was now face to face with them in the city of their origin. But the Athens of Paul's day was hardly a shadow of its former self when it was the intellectual and cultural centre of the habitable world. Now, the people were largely an indolent mob who had little else to do than that which Luke tells us in verse 21.

"encountered..." Gk. "to meet with". This means that they met Paul in the street or square.

"babbling..." - The Greek word means a "seed picker", a bird which looks in the gutter and picks up scraps for food. Thus, the term is an insulting one, holding contempt for a low and worthless character who utters borrowed sayings.

"strange gods..." - the word "strange" here does not have the meaning of "wonderful" or "singular" but refers to something which does not come from Athenian philosophers and so, must come from barbarians. This being the case, the inference is that Paul's teaching must be worthless.

"Jesus, and the resurrection." - In the way in which this is set out in Greek, it appears that the Epicureans and Stoics either in jest or in contempt, stated that Paul preached "Jesus and Anastasis", thus giving the character of a deity to the word "resurrection" which, in Greek, is ANASTASIS. The Epicureans regarded all foreign doctrine with levity and the Stoics regarded them with a superior gravity.

Verse 19

"And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?"

"took him..." - not with force but in a friendly manner. See the same translation from the same word in Acts 9. 27.

"Areopagus..." - or "Mars Hill" from Ares, the god of War. This is a rocky prominence on the road below the summit of the hill upon which stands the Temple of the Virgin Goddess, Athene, the "Parthenon" from the Greek word meaning a virgin. The top of this rocky prominence was the scene of the highest court in the city. Sixteen steps carved out of the rock exist to this day and give easy access to the flat top. Strictly speaking, "Areopagus" was the name given to the Council which met there, all of the members being elderly magistrates. Their rulings were regarded as being of high authority.

It is surprising that Paul should have been taken to this place which has little accommodation for listeners. One would have thought that he would have been taken to the Agora where the wise men were wont to meet and to listen to theories, philosophies and discussions. Some think that Paul was taken there in contempt or in ridicule. There is a possibility that this meeting did not take place on the top of what is now pointed out as "Mar's Hill" in Athens, but was held in the city market place (agora). The Areopagus had transferred its activities there at a later date, but before the arrival of Paul.

Bringing Paul before the Areopagus was in compliance with the custom of requiring such philosophers to pass a test before the august body of learned men.

"May we know..." - Gk. "Can we know..." This opening remark has led scholars to think that the trial was one of mockery because this phrase would not proceed a serious trial of character. Paul started at a disadvantage where his listeners held him in contempt before he started to explain. It is understandable that they would be contemptuous because they seriously believed in the ancient myth of a soul surviving the body after death. The doctrine of the resurrection is wholly incompatible with this myth.

## Verse 20

"For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean."

"strange..." - Gk. "as coming from another country". Being a foreign and therefore non-Athenian doctrine, condemned it as being of barbaric origin, and because of this, it must be wrong.

"what these things mean." - There is a difficult idiom here. Literally the sentence is "what may intend these things to be"?

## Verse 21

"(For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)"

Luke adds his character sketch of the people generally. Athens was not a Commercial nor industrial city so was given over to idleness, laziness and indolence. Luke does not hold them in high regard as he might have held the ancient philosophers who had made Athens what it was.

"strangers..." - tourists, visitors, temporary residents.

"spent their time in nothing else..." - the meaning seems to be that they had nothing else to do other than sit around and wait for some discussion to start.

"some new thing." - lit. some NEWER thing. The old things had been discussed to a point of exhaustion. Modern attitude can be compared when the daily newspaper does not appear because of holidays. One impatiently waits for the first issue to come.

## Verse 22

"Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars Hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious."

"Then Paul stood..." - Gk. "Having stood..."

"in the midst of Mars Hill..." - see margin "in the court of the Areopagites".

"Ye men of Athens..." - This was the customary opening salutation when addressing the council. Paul shows his knowledge of the custom and is very correct. There are many such salutations in the Acts. See 1. 16; 2. 14, 22, 29; 3. 12; 4. 8; 7. 2; and many others.

"ye are too superstitious." - Lit. "worshippers of demons you I perceive". The Greek is "deisidaimon" from "deido" to fear and "daimon" a demon or pagan god. In a polite and generous sense, which is what Paul used here, it would mean "you are more religious than is usual." One must be careful in coming to a "polite" conclusion however, as Bruce points out that it was forbidden to use complimentary exordia when addressing the Areopagus, in the hope of securing its goodwill." (op cit. Commentary page 355.) Paul could be polite without flattering.

## Verse 23

"For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you."

"As I passed by..." - lit. "passing through..."

"beheld..." - "beholding..." suggesting a beholding which went on for

some time. The inference is that Paul did not make a sudden observation but studied the devotions so as to be in a position to know what he was talking about. The meaning here becomes important when we come to the finding of the altar.

"devotions..." - lit. "objects of worship". Paul was not referring to the ritual of worship but to the objects worshipped, inclusive of the altars, images and temples.

"I found..." - the use of this verb suggests that Paul did something more than "see". The implication is that the altar to which he is referring was not in public view but was hidden away somewhere. He had made a discovery.

"an altar..." - lit. "I found also an altar..." That is to say, in addition to the objects of worship which I found, I found also an altar.

"with this inscription..." - Gk. "in which had been written..."

"TO THE UNKNOWN GOD..." - lit. "TO AN UNKNOWN GOD..." The change from "the unknown god" to "an unknown god" is obvious because to leave it as "the" would indicate that the god was known but his name was unknown. To use the indefinite article "an" shows that neither the god nor his name were known.

The gods of paganism were supposed to hurl thunderbolts, bring diseases, storms, earthquakes, famines, droughts and other unpleasant things. They did this in anger and many gods had to be appeased in some way, usually by sacrifice. If the appeasement was successful, then the correct method of appeasement had been applied and the correct god had been identified. If the affliction was stubborn and would not be removed, then, if all the gods had been tried without avail, a sacrifice was made to an unknown god hoping that the correct unknown god would be appeased.

"ye ignorantly worship..." - "what ye worship without knowing..." Paul now uses the Athenian confession of ignorance as his theme. For all their confidence in themselves as scholars, philosophers, teachers and learned men, they acknowledged that they did not know the god whom they worshipped. At least they acknowledged that there was a God, but they did not know who He was. They did not worship in this way, the God of Israel who at that time was unknown to them but Paul makes it appear as such with his clever twist. He might have said, "You worship amongst the many deities you have made for yourselves, one particular God whose name you do not know and of whom you have never heard. I am going to tell you about this Mighty Being."

Verse 24

"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;"

In the previous verse, Paul had said, "Him I declare unto you". Now the one whom they referred to as a "babbler" - a picker up of bits of knowledge and worthy of all contempt, was now declaring to them the God whom they knew nothing about. This God was a mighty God as they were now about to be told. He made the world and all things in it. In this, Paul denied the theory of the Epicureans who maintained that matter was eternal - that it was impossible to create something out of nothing - so they denied the story of creation.

"he is lord of heaven and earth,..." - The Epicureans regarded the gods as being remotely disassociated with the earth. The God whom Paul spoke about was not only associated with the earth but was also Lord of heaven and earth. This being the case, He was not subject to heaven and earth and Paul's further statement is also true.

"dwelleth not in temples made with hands." - God cannot be confined behind four walls as their deities were. See Isaiah 66. 1.

## Verse 25

"Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;"

"with men's hands,..." - "by men with their hands..." that is to say, men cannot praise God by building him shrines and beautiful temples.

"as though he needed anything,..." - there is nothing that we can give to God for all we have comes from Him. If we build Him a temple, the stone is made by him; such skill as we have has been given to us by Him. We can give nothing to God that He does not already possess. All we can give Him is obedience.

"he giveth to all life,..." - lit. "he giving to all Life etc.," That God is the source and continual sustainer of life is contrary to the teaching of the Epicureans.

## Verse 26

"and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;"

"hath made of one blood..." - the word "blood" is omitted in some MSS and is unreliable. The sentence then, is, that God hath made from one and the same origin, all men of the whole earth. All come from a common ancestor and all have the same God if only they would turn unto Him. This refers to spiritual things only for there were nations which God cursed. Paul is not preaching politics therefore any argument drawn from this statement trying to prove that racial segregation or superiority is wrong, has no place in Paul's discourse. The unity is one for all nations in a spiritual sense under the conditions laid down by God.

The Athenians considered that they sprung from their own soil and were as a result thereof, a superior race to all others. They were undoubtedly a superior people at one time in regard to their intellect and culture, and they had been part of a race of people which ruled the whole political earth for many years, but from the point of view of God and His Plan and Purpose, they were no better than any other for if they turned to Him, they would be acceptable to Him.

"hath determined the times before appointed.." - long before the nations had come into existence, God had determined where they would live and He had determined their rise and fall.

"the bounds of their habitation." - God has guided the destiny of nations and has given them land in which to live. (Deut. 32. 8.)

The more modern scholars appear to have been caught up in the doctrines of destruction which are sweeping the earth and causing the break down of standards in so many ways. They see in this verse, support for the destruction of the supposed evil of what is called "imperialism" and "colonialism". Both these have brought extraordinary prosperity to African people and the same people are now suffering great hardship now that the influence of imperialism and colonialism has been removed. Yet, vast numbers of people have been convinced that imperialism and colonialism are evil things. The same evil influence in the world has struck against racial superiority when it should be obvious to all that God has given great skill to people of Europe and has prospered them. God has given great skill to people of Asia and yet He has not prospered them. God has given little in the way of skill and initiative to the people of Africa, and now seems to be destroying them by the weapons of their own manufacture namely, anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism. The verse before us has NOTHING to do with politics. It solely concerns God as One to be worshipped by all who would come to Him, without regard to race, origin, country and culture.



"That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:"

It is essential when studying these verses, to understand that Paul is speaking about spiritual things. The reference in this verse to "they", means that Paul is still speaking of the nations of men of the previous verse, who will dwell on the face of the whole earth and that God has determined before, the time when this dwelling will take place. There is a type and anti-type here.

All men come from one common origin.	All men in the age to come, will have come from a common origin which is Jesus Christ.
All nations have their habitations given to them by God.	The "one nation" of the kingdom will have its boundaries given to it by God.
God determined beforehand the rise and fall of nations.	God determined beforehand the coming into the kingdom of the ONE NATION of the Kingdom of God.
All people should seek after God.	The redeemed will gain a place in the Kingdom because they have sought and found God.
God is not far from all who seek him.	God is not far from all who seek him.

The pagans should have known that there was a Supreme Being in Heaven. Many of their poets had stated this. Paul enlarges upon this in the next verse.

Verse 28

"For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring."

Paul's reference to seeking after God to find him, is directed against the Stoics who felt that God was everywhere. This is true enough but we must not suppose that we have found God when we see the wonders of His creation. This is God's handiwork but not God.

Also, the Stoics believed that God was in us, keeping us alive. It is better to say as Paul did, that IN HIM we live, move and have our being. Without God we do not exist. He not only maintains life but also maintains substance.

"of your own poets..." - the poet quoted here was Aratus of Cilicia who lived during the 3rd century before Christ. The words Paul quotes comes from this man's poem entitled "Phenomena, which had been translated into Latin by the famous Cicero and also Germanicus. The same thought is contained in a poem addressed to Jupiter (or Zeus) found in the old hymn of Cleanthes, the Stoic.

"we are also his offspring." - we are "sons of God" by our faith and baptism.

Paul has in mind ONE NATION here in the same way as Jesus said to the Jews, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." (Matt. 21. 43.) This nation to whom the Kingdom of God is to be given, is being formed during the Christian era. It will be redeemed out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. (Rev. 5. 9.) God will set the bounds of their habitation, namely, the whole earth and He will set the times appointed. The members of this nation which is to come, will also be "His offspring".

## Verse 29

"Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device."

"Forasmuch then..." - "Being then (the offspring etc.,)"

"ought not..." - "we are under no obligation to think..."

What Paul is saying is, that inasmuch as we are the offspring of God, we are fashioned according to His likeness. Therefore, we cannot imagine that the great Creator is like what we imagine him to be. We cannot fashion something from gold, silver and stone and say "This is like God". God is the Creator and not man. God created us; we did not create God so if we accept that the idols are worth worshipping, then we worship our own creation. How can man worship something which he made himself and that which can be built up or knocked down, as we wish?

## Verse 30

"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:"

"the times..." - the preceding ages during which men did not know of God.

"this ignorance..." - see Acts 14. 16. This ignorance is also referred to and acknowledged in the sign "To an unknown god" which gave rise to Paul's speech.

"winked at;.." - this is a poor translation. The expression means "overlooked..." Paul handles this problem with care and skill. The argument to be raised by the Gentiles would be much the same as the present day question of "What about the poor Eskimo? Are they not to be brought into the Plan of salvation?" They could well ask, why did God permit this ignorance to exist? If God is the parent, how could He leave His children to die in their ignorance? In the long history of the human race up to that time, there had been times of ignorance just as there is a time of ignorance during childhood. Another way of looking at the problem is to acknowledge that the times of ignorance were there because God permitted such times to occur. If the Gentiles were unaware of God and His laws, then where there is no law, sin is not imputed so there would be no punishment. There would be no reward and no punishment.

To develop the theme further, we must agree that God has not left Himself without witnesses. To the Gentiles who came in contact with the children of Israel, there was evidence that there was a God in heaven. The statutes and judgments were evidence that there was a God in heaven. See Deut. 4. 5/8. The Greek poets acknowledged the existence of God.

Now that the "growing up" period has come to an end, God now requires and commands, all men everywhere to repent and turn to Him. It is the same with children even now. When they are young, they are not expected to know God nor His Plan of Salvation, but when they grow up and reach a stage of understanding and responsibility, they are commanded to turn to God.

The "turning to God" is not a matter of choice for individuals. It is a Divine Commandment for all men everywhere. The word "repent" means to turn from idols and serve the living God.

## Verse 31

"Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

The verse we are about to study supplies the reason why God commands all men everywhere to repent. If God has appointed a DAY OF REWARD for obedience, He has also appointed a time for punishment for refusal to obey. There is now a time of REWARD and PUNISHMENT which man can choose.

"he hath appointed a day..." - this is one of the most serious statements in Scripture. God has appointed a day of reckoning and this day is also a day of glorious promise and reward. The word "appointed" means "established" which is to say, it is definitely fixed and will not be moved. God's Plan concerning this day is sure. (Rom. 2. 4/11; 2 Cor. 5. 10/11;)

"in the which..." - an obsolete form which is not used in English nowadays and has no counterpart in Greek, "in which" is sufficient.

"he will judge the world..." - see notes to Acts 10. 42. in regard to Jesus being appointed of God to be the Judge. "the world" refers to the habitable world of people but in effect, refers to "people".

"in righteousness..." - this is our safeguard. God will do that which is right so if we are punished, it will be no more than that which we deserve.

"by that man..." - lit. "by a man..." This man has not yet been revealed to his listeners so Paul does not name him at this stage. But note that Paul refers to him as a MAN and not as a God. Yet Jesus is now in heaven at the right hand of God. For all that he is still a man although an immortalised one. See also 1 Tim. 2. 5. for reference to Jesus as a man, although he is in heaven.

"he hath given assurance unto all men..." - see margin, for "he hath offered faith..." This faith is made possible by the evidence of God's Power in raising him from the dead.

"he hath raised him from the dead." See Acts 13. 34. for a similar statement. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul which was taught in Athens and other places, and which was developed in Athens, receives a severe shaking from the doctrine of the resurrection which Paul introduces here. If there is a soul which survives the body after death, there is no need for the resurrection. Paul now counters one of the most popular of the pagan doctrines.

Paul's argument comes to an end here. Luke's account must be a very short precis of what Paul actually said but there is no reason to believe that he continued beyond this point. His construction has been:-

1. The pagan's confession of ignorance of God.
2. God is the creator and not the created. Therefore, we do not know what He is like.
3. Man cannot create God in his mind and then build a temple, an idol, an image and say this is god.
4. God gives breath to all creatures.
5. All men have a common ancestor, namely, Adam.
6. God has a Plan for mankind and has planned a kingdom on earth.
7. This kingdom is to be given to them that search after God.
8. God is not far from everyone of us for we live and move through His power.
9. Greek poets have acknowledged the existence of God.
10. God exercised forbearance in regard to the former ignorance of Himself but now commands all men, everywhere to repent.
11. The great reason for His commands is that He has appointed a day in which He will judge the people by a Judge whom He will appoint.
12. This MAN who is to be the future judge of all mankind, has been raised from the dead as God's assurance unto all men that His Plan and Purpose will be fulfilled.

No doubt Paul, had he continued, would have taught them about Jesus. He has brought them to this point where Jesus has been introduced but left unnamed. Note that Paul has set out his beliefs with courtesy and tact. He has gently rapped over the knuckles the Epicureans and Stoics. He has appealed to reason which is something the Athenian would appreciate more than others. He has shown to the men the GOD of Israel by means of logic which would appeal to the logical Athenians. He has used their methods and spoken of their doctrines. He leaves Jesus unnamed waiting to hear what their reaction would be. The point about the resurrection should not have shocked them for it was the one doctrine which induced them to invite Paul to address them. See verses 18/19.

The "assurance" given unto all men is that because Jesus was raised, those who are associated with Jesus in accordance with Divine Commandments (belief and baptism) will be raised too. See 1 Thess. 4. 14.

### Verse 32

"And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter."

"when they heard of the resurrection,.. " - they had heard of it before in verse 18 but had not had it explained to them. Now, the explanation had been given and it confounded their opinion which they had held since the days of Plato, that the body dies and turns back to dust, but the "soul" lives on. Such a doctrine is quite incompatible with the resurrection preached by Paul. The men were unwilling to surrender their belief in a soul but being unable to prove it, jeered at the teaching of Paul.

Another point to confuse them was that the resurrection is to take place on a DAY APPOINTED by God. If people are dying every moment of each day, and souls are supposed to be going to heaven at the death of the body, then there must be a constant stream of souls making their way heavenwards. How then can salvation be delayed for many years or centuries while waiting for the appointed day. In the view of the Areopagites, Paul must be wrong. There cannot be a day appointed and there cannot be a resurrection of a body which turns back to dust. The turning back to dust is common to all creatures no matter whether they are fish, birds, insects or vertebrates. In the Greeks' opinion, only man was different. This would also be the argument of many people to-day as well. They would argue that people die in a different way from animals, birds and fish, and they would hold to this opinion in spite of Eccles. 3. 19/21. Now that the absurdity of their belief in an immortal soul was shown to them, they would not yield. Cherished doctrines die a reluctant death, if they ever die at all. Rather than surrender to Paul's logic, they mocked. The tense is imperfect indicating continuous mocking.

Mocking is a device of the defeated to stay in the "fight". Luke's accurately record of how the Areopagites reacted, is typical of people of all ages. They will not readily surrender a pet theory no matter how wrong it may be proved to be.

"others said,.. " - in the Greek, the word order is "these indeed mocked, those but said,.. " The difference is not between "some" and "others" but "these" and "those". This shows that there were two sides in the matter. Either they believed Paul or they didn't.

"We will hear thee again of this (matter)". - This willingness to hear again applied to the whole address and not just to the statement concerning resurrection. Some commentators consider this statement to be a courteous way in which to dismiss the assembly. This is not quite true for some did attend to what Paul had said. Those who listened again were very few and this has always been characteristic of the True Christian Faith. Only a few are prepared to see the Light and to act upon it. For the most part, Gentiles are unbelievers by nature. Paul sensed this as we see from 1 Cor. 1. 23.

### Verse 33

"So Paul departed from among them."

One point to note is that "Paul departed" which is to say he went of his own volition. He was not cast out from among them. This disproves any idea that he had been put on trial before them.

There is tragedy in the way Luke records Paul's departure from among them. Here wise men had heard the gospel by the great apostle to the Gentiles and they had rejected. They allowed him to go unhindered and uninvited to address them further. Salvation had come within easy reach to all of them yet they had

allowed it to pass them by. Paul at least, had tried for their sakes.

Verse 34

"Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them."

"Howbeit..." - "But..."

"certain men..." - "some men..." See notes to Acts 5. 1. concerning the use of the word "certain".

"clave unto..." - lit. "cleaving unto him..." The verb is used here in the Middle Voice showing that they "clave" unto him for their own benefit. The meaning is "to adhere to" or "join" with vigour. See the following verses for the use of the verb - Luke 10. 11; 15. 15. "joined"; Acts 5. 13; 8. 29; 9. 26; 10. 28. "keep company"; Rom. 12. 9; 1 Cor. 6. 16/17;

"believed:.." - "believing" always follows "hearing" and the next stage not mentioned here is "baptism". They would believe not only that which he had spoken to the Areopagites but also that which he must have added, namely, the things concerning Jesus of Nazareth.

"Dionysius the Areopagite" - this is the only time he is mentioned in Scripture and there must be a reason for it. The end of the verse tells us that "others" also reached a state of belief and fellowship (cleaving unto) with Paul. Why then, does Luke mention him here? The reason is to show the two types from the highest to the lowest; from the intelligentsia to the low class, thereby showing that God's Word is for all people, no matter what is their station in life. The two extremes are:-

Dionysius who takes the part of Nicodemus, the Pharisee who came to Jesus by night and clave unto him later on. Dionysius was, like Nicodemus, a councillor and highly placed amongst the people. Being an Areopagite would give him a position of great importance and rank him amongst the intelligentsia of the city.

Damaris was a woman and no self-respecting woman and no woman of any culture at all would be seen in the streets listening to a man like Paul or anyone else. She could not have heard Paul in a synagogue because there was no synagogue mentioned at Athens. She would not have been admitted to an austere council such as the Areopagites as a visitor. She must have been a consort of men and, while walking about the streets, must have heard Paul preach. Thus God shows His LOGOS is accepted by all people irrespective of morals, learning, culture, station in life and education.

Paul's visit to Athens now comes to an end. His achievements in this city were not large. He stayed only a short time - probably only three weeks - so did not have long in which to build up an ecclesia. There is no record of an ecclesia having been formed. Paul did not at a later date, write an epistle to Athens. The city had not been on his programme from the beginning of his journey so he must have used it as a stopping place on his travels, and siezed upon his opportunities to preach as they occurred. He now moved on to Corinth where he was to do a very great work indeed.



## THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

### Chapter 18

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Luke pays little attention to Paul's missionary work at Corinth for he covers the whole period in seventeen verses. Perhaps it was the infidelity of the ecclesia there that caused Luke to lose some of his interest. Of the eighteen names connected with Corinth, Luke mentions only three. Yet Paul thought enough of Corinth to spend some time there and he used it as a base from which to write his epistles to the Romans and the Thessalonians.

Corinth (Korinthos) was the capital city of the Roman province of Achaia and was in the southern portion of Greece on the isthmus of Peloponnesia. whereas Athens was the centre of culture and education, having the greatest university in the world at that time, Corinth laid claim to fame and importance by being the commercial capital and the seat of government. The Governor had his residence there. It was on the great trade route between the east and the west. It lay at a point near the narrow isthmus which joins Peloponnesia to the mainland so it had easy access to two harbours namely, Cenchreae on the east and Lechaemum on the west. In this way it united the Aegean Sea with the Adriatic Sea. Not far from the city is a high mountain (1800' above sea level) which made it visible from a long way out to sea and from which a guard could be set to warn of approaching danger. Thus it had protection from attack from east and west. Having two harbours and not having a productive soil, the people of Corinth were forced to turn to a life of commerce by sea which they did to considerable benefit for themselves. There was no Corinth canal then as there is now, but the ships were small enough in those days to permit of hauling them overland from one sea to the other. Where the ships were too large to be transported in this way, the passengers came by one ship to one port and then, having made the trip overland to the other port, continued on their journey in another ship. Merchandise was also treated in this way, thus bringing revenue to the city for these entrepot facilities.

In the days of Nero (A.D. 66/67,) an attempt was made to cut a canal through the isthmus but the work received considerable opposition from those who thought that such a project was an interference with the divine will. Corinth was destroyed by the Romans in B.C. 146 and later, In B.C. 46, was made a Roman colony with the name of COLONIA LAUS JULIA CORINTHUS. The nature of the activity of the people of Corinth attracted people from all over so that a cosmopolitan population was present when Paul made his visit there. We shall read in verse 4 of this chapter that there was a synagogue there when Paul went there. The presence of Jews was a hindrance in many ways because of the vigorous opposition they brought against Paul and his teaching.

Corinth was notorious for its immorality. The lamentable incest of 1 Cor. 5. 1. is one of what could well have been many such instances. Paul's concern was not so much for the incest itself as for the congratulations and admiration given by the brethren and sisters to the perpetrator of such a crime. See verse 2. The sins of Rom. 1. 26 and 27 were part of Corinthian life and must have been a source of great distress and anxiety to Paul. The long stay in the city and the many problems he must have had to face, gave much stimulus to his work and his two letters to the ecclesia show the variety of problems he had to deal with.

Verse 1

"After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;"

"After these things..." - It must refer to Paul's adventures in Athens. There is no indication that "these things" are limited to what happened according to Acts 17. 34. The successes mentioned in that verse would tend to make Paul stay a little longer. The use of the word "depart" suggests that Paul may have been asked by the Areopagites to leave. See Philemon 15 for the use of the word "depart" - These are the only two uses translated in this way.

"came to Corinth..." - Paul intended to wait for Silas and Timothy in Athens but apparently something happened which made him leave Athens alone and come to Corinth by himself. Here again we get the idea that Paul left Athens because he was told to go. See Acts 17. 16.

## Verse 2

"And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them."

"And found..." - lit. "having found..." It is uncertain whether Paul found Aquila by accident or by searching for him.

"Aquila..." - a Roman name for a Jew. Coming from Rome, one would expect him to have a Roman name. The name means "eagle".

"born in Pontus..." - a native of Pontus.

"lately..." - this is the only occurrence of this word in the N.T. It means "recently" (as one would expect).

"Priscilla;.." - This name is a diminutive of Prisca. This name Prisca appears with that of her husband Aquila, in 2 Tim. 4. 19. The couple are mentioned in the N.T. (apart from this verse which we are studying) six times, namely, Acts 18. 18 and 26; Rom. 16. 3; 1 Cor. 16. 19; 2 Tim. 4. 19; In all of these, except Acts 18. 26. Priscilla is mentioned first, indicating that she had the greater personality.

"Claudius..." - it is recorded that Claudius told all Jews at Rome to depart from the city because they were constantly making a disturbance about one whom they called "Chrestus". This may have been the Jewish doctrine of a Messiah who would be king of all the earth. This naturally would upset the Romans.

"and came unto them." - Paul came to them and not that they came to him. They must have been Christians because there is no indication anywhere that they believed and were baptised. They must have been Christians before they left Rome. The Emperor Claudius is mentioned in Acts 11. 28.

Paul was to stay with Aquila and Priscilla and it may have been through their influence that he determined within himself to go to Rome. (Acts 19. 21; Rom. 1. 11. and 15.)

## Verse 3

"And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers."

"the same craft..." - it would be to their advantage to live under the same roof because of the same trade. Jewish families used to make their sons learn a trade, regardless of their social standing.

"wrought..." - past tense of "work" therefore "worked". Paul did not want to be a burden to anyone so worked for his living. See Acts 20. 34; 1 Thess. 2. 9; 2 Thess. 3. 8. See also 1 Cor. 4. 12; 1 Cor. 9. 15; 2 Cor. 11. 9; and 12. 14.

"tentmakers." - There is a connection between this word and "leather dressers". It is practically certain that Paul would not have learnt the trade of a leather dresser because this would have meant his coming into contact with skins of dead animals. As a strict Pharisee, he would not have put himself in this unenviable position. Although tents were made of skins, they were also made of hair and goats' hair can be obtained from living animals.

To draw a comparison between Peter and Paul, Peter was a fisherman and became a fisher of men. Paul was a tentmaker and became a builder of tabernacles for the Gentiles.



## Verse 4

"And he reasoned in the synagogues every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks."

In spite of the opposition he received from Jews, Paul preached unto them wherever he went. We find this in Acts 13. 5; 13. 14; 14. 1; 17. 1; 17. 10; and 17. 17.

"reasoned..." - as in Acts 17. 2. and verse 17. (disputed).

"every sabbath,.." - not because he kept the sabbath, but because he was sure on this day, to be able to speak to the largest number.

"Greeks." - those Gentiles of whatever nation who spoke Greek and attended the services at the synagogue.

## Verse 5

"And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ."

"Silas and Timotheus..." - it is suggested that their presence caused Paul to be pressed in the spirit but this is not indicated by the script. Silas and Timotheus had arrived and come upon Paul to find him in a certain frame of mind.

"pressed in the spirit..." - he was being influenced by the Holy Spirit as to what work he should do. Timothy had come from Thessalonica and had brought good news. This was a stimulus to Paul. (1 Thess. 3. 6; The gift of money from the Philippians also affected him. (Phil. 4. 15.) with all this, the power of the Holy Spirit acted upon him, to urge him to greater efforts.

"testified to the Jews..." - lit. "testifying..." indicating a continuous act of testifying.

"Jesus was Christ." - the word "was" is in italics and therefore, not in the original. There is no need for the verb "was" because the original is "testifying to the Jews the anointed Jesus. In other words, what Luke is saying is that Paul preached that the messiah (Christ) promised unto Abraham and his (singular) seed was Jesus of Nazareth. This is a very important teaching as it connects the promise made unto Abraham - the basic Bible doctrine - with Jesus, the Saviour.

## Verse 6

"And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles."

"they opposed..." - lit. "they resisting..." Rom. 13. 2; Jas. 4. 6; Jas. 5. 6; 1 Pet. 5. 5.

"and blasphemed..." - lit. "and blaspheming..." that is teaching false doctrines. It also means "reviling" and saying impious things about God.

"shook his raiment..." - lit. "having shaken the mantles..."

"your blood..." - idiom meaning "the blame for your destruction..." Anything that they did which resulted in any hurt to themselves would be their fault. They could blame only themselves. See a similar expression in Josh. 2. 19; 2 Sam. 1. 16; 1 Kings 2. 37; Matt. 27. 25; By their rejection of Paul's teaching, the Jews would have to bear the responsibility.

"I am clean..." - See Acts 20. 26. It means that his conscience was clear. He had not been slack in preaching to them Jesus of Nazareth. Now that they rejected the teaching, it was their fault that Paul turned away from them.

"I will go unto the Gentiles." - this means a separation between Paul and the Jews. This has been the pattern of his preaching to them wherever he has been. See 13. 46. for his separation from the Jews at Antioch. (Pisidian) A further separation was to come into effect at Ephesus. See Acts 19. 9. A point to note is that whenever Paul told the Jews that he was going to the Gentiles, his statement applied only to the Jews of the city where he made the statement and did not apply to Jewry everywhere. A great work lay ahead of him as he turned to the Gentiles.

## Verse 7

"And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue."

"departed thence..." - the verb means "removed from there". See Matt. 17. 20. for the translation of "remove" twice.

It is suggested by certain commentators that Paul "removed" from the house of Aquila but there is no motive for doing so. The problem of finding out where he removed from is solved if we study the preceding verses. Verse 4 tells us that Paul reasoned with the Jews every sabbath in the synagogue. Verse 5 tells us that Paul testified that Jesus was the Christ, so taking our cue from the preceding verse, we arrive at the conclusion that he testified in the synagogue. When the Jews opposed him and blasphemed, they would do so in the synagogue. Therefore when Paul decided to remove from them, he must have left the synagogue.

"entered into a certain man's house,.." - The end of this verse states that this house was either alongside the synagogue or on the other side of the street.

"named Justus,.." - the translation is a bad one because from the word order, it would appear that the house was named Justus. It is understood of course, that the name applies to the owner of the house. In the original Greek, the sentence is "having removed thence, he went into a house of one by name Justus,..."

The older MSS give the name as "Titius Justus". Either form is Roman, indicating that the man was a Roman but he could also have been a Jew who called himself by his Roman name. He does not appear again in Scripture, unless we accept Bishop Ramsay's opinion that his praenomen was "Gaius". This could identify him with "Gaius mine host" of Rom. 16. 23. He may also be the Gaius of 1 Cor. 1. 14. whom Paul baptised himself, being one of the few whom Paul baptised.

"whose house joined hard to the synagogue." - The proximity to the synagogue would give Paul an opportunity of attracting Jews for a discussion.

## Verse 8

"And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptised."

"Crispus,..." - this is a Roman name but definitely applies to a Jew because this man was the ruler of the synagogue. It would have been possible for him to have been a proselyte. Crispus was another of the few men baptised by Paul's hand. (1 Cor. 1. 14.) His close association with Gaius in this way, lends support to Ramsay's theory that Justus was Gaius.

"the chief ruler of the synagogue..." - this translation comes from one Greek word meaning "synagogue ruler". There is nothing in the original Greek to indicate that he was the chief ruler. He must have been a member of the local council of synagogue rulers. In the Greek the article is supplied giving THE synagogue ruler, thus indicating that he might have been an important one. The rulers were important enough to warrant separate mention apart from the elders.

This was the case in the following references - Acts 4. 5, 8 and 23; 5. 21; 6. 12; 23. 14; 24. 1; 25. 15.

"believed on..." - Gk. "believed in..."

"with all his house;..." - with all his servants and family. This does not state that all the family including babies were baptised but simply that all in his house, his family and his servants were baptised. If there had been any babies then they would not have followed the routine mentioned here namely, they heard, they believed and they were baptised. Babies would not hear and they would not believe so, naturally, they would not be baptised. In the verse before us, the three principles must go together, which are, HEARING, BELIEVING and BEING BAPTISED.

"many of the Corinthians..." - as the verse reads, it would suggest that the Corinthians, having heard that Crispus and his household had been baptised, they too, heard, believed and were baptised. This is not correctly the case. The fact is that they heard the gospel and then believed that.

Verse 9

"Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace:"

The situation in so far as Paul was concerned was that he had angered the militant Jews by his preaching, causing them to blaspheme (which was to say wicked things about Jesus). He then left them and went to a house alongside the synagogue or across the road. He was therefore still within sight of the Jews and therefore in a dangerous position. To make matters more delicate for himself, he had baptised Crispus. The defection of this man was bad enough but for Paul to baptise him and all his house was even worse. The Jews could have turned upon him in no time. Now we see why Luke mentioned about Crispus and his baptism. He was using it as an introduction to this delicate position in which Paul found himself. It also supplies a reason why Luke added a note to the effect that Paul had moved in next door.

The Lord gave Paul the assurance he needed. All commentators think that the vision was given by the Lord Jesus instead of the Lord God. They quote Acts 9. 7. as proof but in that reference, Jesus had appeared unto Paul. Here it is not stated that Jesus appeared unto Paul. In any case, it was God's Plan and Purpose which was developing. There was no Plan and Purpose of Jesus for any plan and purpose that he might have would be his Father's Plan and Purpose. On this basis, the reference to "the Lord" is a reference to God.

Verse 10

"For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city."

This vision like others (Acts 23. 11; 27. 23;) came at a critical period in Paul's life. If God assured him that what he was doing was God's Plan and that he, Paul, had nothing to fear, then Paul, being the type of man he was, would turn to the task at hand with increased vigour and confidence.

"set on thee..." - Gk. "attack thee..."

"to hurt thee..." - hurt even unto death.

"for I have much people..." - a call to renewed efforts similar to the Divine encouragement given to the prophet Elijah when he too, had been in great danger. See 1 Kings 19. 1/18. If God had people in this city which would turn to Him, then nothing would prevent their conversion. Paul had nothing to fear.

## Verse 11

"And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them."

"he continued..." - margin "sat". Gk. in the Middle Voice as used here he sat down for his own benefit. By interpretation, he abode there.

"a year and six months..." - in the next verse, Gallio is mentioned. This enables a date to be arrived at concerning this time. It is estimated that Paul's 1½ years was during the period of the autumn of A.D. 50 to the spring of A.D. 52.

In this verse it is recorded of Paul that he commenced the first of his two important sojourns in cities, the first being in Corinth and the other in Ephesus. It can now be seen why the Holy Spirit did not permit Paul to go to Asia when he wanted to the first time. (Acts 16. 6.) He was not ready for such a task. He yet had to win his spurs in Thessalonica and Philippi as well as Athens where he faced the intelligentsia of the Grecian world. Armed and fortified with this experience, coupled with the vision just mentioned, he was now well equipped to commence the great work he was about to do.

"the word of God.." - Gk. LOGOS of God.

With this phrase "the LOGOS of God, Luke passes over the work of one year and six months in Corinth. Paul's two epistles to the Corinthians give much detail as to the problems he had to deal with.

In those days, Corinth was a city in Peloponnesia as it is now, but the Province of which it was a part was ACHAIA. This included a portion of the mainland to the north. From his epistles to the Corinthians we see that there was the tendency as there has been in all ages, for factions to grow within the ecclesias. Some were even proud to be able to say that they had been baptised of Paul, some of Apollos and others of Cephas (Peter). Such divisions, whatever their cause, were a trial to Paul. (1 Cor. 1. 10/16.) The high calling to which we are called was an important point in Paul's mind. (1 Cor. 1. 26.) The Grecian tendency to debate led to brethren going to law the one against the other, and permitting the children of darkness to judge a matter between brethren. It were better that True Christian Believers should permit themselves to be defrauded rather than be judged by others. (1 Cor. 6. 1/7.) The sanctity of the marriage state was an important principle to Paul. (1 Cor. 6. 15/20.) This led to a discussion of the problem concerning the believer married to an unbeliever. Paul's words in 1 Cor. 7. 8/16. are the standard answer to all such problems. His exhortation on "idolatry" given in chapter 10 has been heard on the Sunday morning platform through the ages and still gives an important lesson to all of us. His commentary on the breaking of bread is indispensable to all True Believers. (1 Cor. 11.) These chapters give a good idea as to the nature of the problems confronting Paul throughout his ministry in Corinth. The ecclesias were well organised as we see from Paul's list of offices given in 1 Cor. 12. 28.

## Verse 12

"And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat,"

"Gallio..." - his real name was Marcus Annaeus Novatus but when a man named Lucius Junius Gallio, he adopted the name of Lucius Junius Annaeus Gallio. He was born in Spain, and was the son of Marcus Annaeus Seneca, a noted rhetorician. He was a brother of Seneca the Stoic who was the tutor of Nero. The poet Lucan was his nephew. Having come from a remarkable family and having been given many opportunities for advancement, he reached the highest office in the land, that of proconsul (translated in the A.V. as "deputy".) He was very popular and was known for his kindness and amiable disposition.

"the Jews made insurrection..." - the amiable character of Gallio may have been a reason for the uprising by the Jews. The phrase "made insurrection" appears only here and means "to set upon in a hostile manner."

"with one accord..." - means a concerted action but with pre-meditation. It was the result of a carefully worked out plan.

"brought him..." - "presented him to..." but not necessarily with violence.

"the judgment seat." - They chose their opportunity carefully while Gallio was sitting at the seat of judgment. They would come upon him suddenly to impress him with the violence and fury of their charge against Paul.

Luke's choice of facts in this verse shows his outstanding skill as a story-teller. His economy of words does not interfere with the tremendous amount of detail he can give in a short sentence. He mentioned that Gallio was "proconsul at the time." Normally that bit of information was quite unnecessary but on this occasion it was important. The high rank of Gallio would make any judgment he might give, a precedent to be followed by consuls in other parts of the Empire. Therefore, if he had been a brutal man, he would have listened to the Jews and might have banished Paul or sentenced him to imprisonment for a long period of time. The future of Christianity amongst the Gentiles depended upon what sort of man Gallio was. Being an amiable person, he did not take the drastic steps others might have taken. Thus the preaching of Christianity was to continue. Luke notes the fact that Gallio was the judge, thus giving a tacit reason for his friendly judgment.

#### Verse 13

"Saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law."

This is a continuation of the previous verse, and completes the sentence. The charge made is similar to that given in Acts 16. 21. and was not well drawn. Gallio was a heathen and a Roman. There was a possibility that the Romans had become impatient with the Jews by this time so they could not expect a sympathetic hearing. Their sudden rushing upon him was for effect and to build up a case which they might have known was a weak one.

"to worship God..." - this phrase is used here as if it meant that to worship God was to worship Him under the Law.

"contrary to the law." The accusation was not that they were teaching a false worship but that the correct God was being worshipped yet in the wrong manner. This was not a good charge at all as Gallio almost immediately and impatiently points out. The Jews were permitted to make proselytes and nothing was said against them if they did. They would appear to be unreasonable in this instance by denying the privilege to others who taught the same God anyway. The way their charge was stated made it a matter of what was right and what was wrong in regard to the worship of the God of Israel. On this question Gallio was incompetent to judge. The least he could do was to throw the charge back at them and tell them to work out their own problems of the law and worship for themselves.

#### Verse 14

"And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you:"

"...when Paul was now about to open his mouth..." - lit. "Paul being about to open the mouth..." This indicates that inasmuch as Paul did not get any chance to speak, Gallio could see too plainly the weakness of the Jews' case.

"if it were a matter of wrong..." - the "wrong" here is injury done to others,

"or wicked lewdness..." - the word "lewdness" appears only here and means "moral delinquency". It is allied to the word translated as "mischief" in Acts 13. 10.

Had the charge against Paul involved either of the two crimes mentioned, Gallio would have to deal with them. Such crimes would harm the safety of the State and the people. But they did not involve these crimes, therefore Gallio showed a little justified impatience.

"O ye Jews,.. " - here Gallio shows impatience.

"reason would that I should bear with you." - had the charge involved the crimes just mentioned, then it would have been reasonable and imperative for me to have dealt with them.

#### Verse 15

"but if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters."

"words and names..." - this quarrel did not concern any point of Roman Law. This was a question of words and names - the God who was worshipped. The word "words" is in the singular in the Greek indicating that the Jews were turning to a word rather than taking action according to their own law.

"and of your law,.. " - this was far outside the compass of Roman Law.

"look ye to it;.." - lit. "see you to it.." Judge for yourselves.

Gallio very wisely did not pass judgment on matters which did not concern him nor the Law he was paid to administer. The effect of his words was to dismiss with contempt the application of the Jews for action against Paul.

#### Verse 16

"And he drove them from the judgment seat."

A lot can be inferred from this statement. The Gentiles had no love for the Jews and would be glad of any opportunity to humiliate and rebuff them. We can also imagine that after hearing the statement by Gallio given in verse 15, the Jews would argue the point with him and would voice their protest. In their defiance and anger, they would not accept the ruling and would demand a further hearing. Gallio wasted no time and gave instructions for them to be forcibly evicted from the precincts of the court.

This short verse by Luke suggests further action by the Gentiles against the Jews.

#### Verse 17

"Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things."

"all the greeks../" - there is some doubt as to whether it was the Greeks or the Jews who set upon Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue. If the former, then it is understandable that having heard Gallio's judgment, (or lack of it) some Greeks would seize upon an opportunity to level some scores against the Jews. If the latter, then the Jews may have turned upon their local leader for having instigated the uprising against Paul and having brought them into contempt. Some have suggested that Sosthenes may have become a Christian convert as did Crispus (verse 8) so the Jews would turn upon him in revenge. Support for this opinion is found in 1 Cor. 1. 1. where Sosthenes is referred to as a "brother".

Whoever he was, Sosthenes would not be the RULER of the synagogue but would be a member of the ruling body. (See note to verse 8).

"beat him..." - the tense is imperfect indicating continuous beating.

"before the judgment seat." - Such an act of punishing someone in front of the judgment seat would not be allowed in these days when a Court is held indoors. In Paul's day, the judgment seat was a raised platform before the praetorium in front of the open court. The open court would have been big so that the incident could have occurred some distance away from Gallio.

"Gallio cared for none of those things." - this statement by Luke concerning Gallio's apparent indifference towards the beating administered to Sosthenes has caused Gallio to become a model for all those who are indifferent to religion. Making Gallio a type of callous religious indifference is unfair in view of the fact that his caring for none of "these things" refers to the treatment of Sosthenes and has little reference if any, to religion and, in particular, a religion of which he knew nothing. His character of amiability is not compatible with his supposed indifference to religion. The point Luke appears to make is that Gallio saw what was going on between the Jews and one of their number but he did nothing to stop it. His indifference would appear to be one of not caring what the Jews did amongst themselves. In this he would show typical Gentile dislike for the Jewish people.

Luke never wastes words so he must have had a motive in mentioning the fact that Gallio did nothing to stop the persecution of Sosthenes. From what follows, it appears that Luke wished to give a reason for the fact that Paul saw there was no threat to him and that he was free to stay on at Corinth if he so wished. Gallio was not partial towards the Jews and would not help them in anything they wish to do to Paul.

Verse 18

"And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow."

"..Paul after this tarried..." - lit. "Paul yet having remained days many, to the brethren having bid farewell, sailed out..." The translation in English is a bit free here.

"the brethren..." - those who had become converted to Christianity at Corinth.

"sailed thence.." - lit. as above "sailed out.." meaning "sailed away".

"into Syria,.." He went to the province of Syria because Antioch was there.

"with him Priscilla and Aquilla.." - these two are never mentioned separately.

"having shorn his head..." - this perplexing question as to whether it was Aquilla or Paul who shaved his head has never been settled except to the satisfaction of some commentators. The better the commentator, the more open and undecided they leave the problem. Grammatically, the shaved head applies to Aquilla but the emphasis of the passage is undoubtedly turned towards Paul. On the other hand, Paul showed himself to be indifferent to the terms of the Law so if the Law required the shaving of the head in the case of a vow, he would be the first one to avoid it. In the passage before us, Aquilla is mentioned after Priscilla to come close to the verb as if to indicate that he shaved his head. As much as one would like to accept this point, it is also a fact that Aquilla is mentioned second after Priscilla in Rom. 16. 3; and 2 Tim. 4. 19. although in both these passages, "Priscilla and Aquilla" are the object of the sentence and not the subject.

Commentators seem to favour the opinion that Paul observed the Nazarite law of Numbers 6. 13/21. by shaving his head because of a vow. Reference to the Nazarite Law however, shows that the head was shaved AFTER the days of separation are over when the vow is no longer operative. Luke's statement shows that the vow was current at the time ("for he had a vow") not ("for he had had a vow"). It is obvious that the vow, whatever it was, was not a Nazarite vow. Nor does it appear to be motivated by anything contained in the Law so all reference to Paul's many observances of the Law are pointless. Such observances are given in Acts 26. 6. for "the days of unleavened bread", Acts 20. 16. for Paul's anxiety to get to Jerusalem by Pentecost - but the motive here may be to get there in time to meet the great crowds and not to be there in time for the ceremonies of the Jews. Acts 27. 9. briefly mentions the time of the fast. Acts 21. 26. for Paul purifying himself. There are also such passages as 1 Cor. 9. 20. where Paul states that "I became a Jew that I might gain the Jews;.."

It was a custom amongst the Jews to shave the head when delivered from great danger, it being indicated that they acknowledged the saving hand of God and showed the world that they did so acknowledge Him, and that they were now determined by their vow, to show their gratitude. If Paul "became a Jew that he might gain the Jews" and followed their custom of shaving his head, he would do so to show them that he attributed his deliverance from their motive of violence to God and not to Gallio, the Roman law or anything else. This being the case, he would by this means, bring home to them the evil of their contemplated act of violence towards him and show them that God was on his side. This hypothesis would account for the remark by Luke that "Gallio cared for none of these things" of verse 17. Luke would now point out that Gallio's dismissal of the riotous assembly was not the means of saving Paul's life. It was God who saved him and Paul acknowledged this fact openly to the Jews in the way and manner in which would impress them the most. He would then vow to remember God's mercy to him in saving him from the Jews and death.

Whereas we do not consider that the shaving of the head here was in pursuance of any Mosaic Law, it is necessary to point out that whereas Paul followed the Law in several ways as indicated above, he never violated a matter of principle. When it came to circumcision, it was a matter of principle and this brought out all Paul's determination to show that the Law was no longer operative. When he followed the Law in ritual observance, there was never any principle at stake.

The Greek original translated as "shorn" is really "cut short". As a matter of interest, when one sees a Zulu with his head clean shaven, it is certain without exception, that he has had a bereavement in his family. This tradition is so old, none of them know why they do it except to say it is "mteto" meaning "custom".

"Cenchreae..." - The eastern port serving the city of Corinth. There was a separate ecclesia there. See Rom. 16. 1. Paul mentions sister Phebe as having helped him when he was there. Perhaps he had had a recurrence of his infirmity while he was there and she had nursed him. Rom. 16. 1/4. make interesting reading for speculation in this matter.

Verse 19

"And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews."

Modern Ephesus is no longer a sea port. Throughout the intervening centuries since the time of Paul, several earthquakes have raised the land to such an extent that the sea has now receded. The docks are left high and dry. In Paul's day it was the centre of the worship of Diana of the Ephesians and the temple there was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. The site of the temple has been excavated and is to be found on the road from modern Ephesus to ancient Ephesus. During the days of Paul, Ephesus, with Alexandria and Antioch, was one of the three great centres for the preaching of Christianity.



In what is now Asia Minor, Ephesus with Smyrna, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Pergamos and Laodicea made up the Seven Ecclesias. Jesus used John for the writing of the famous letters of Revelation chapters 2 and 3, to these ecclesias.

The port of the city was built on the river Cayster and lay about 3 miles from the sea. Four great roads served as great traffic routes from Ephesus and the hinterland. The journey to Caesarea via Ephesus would seem to be a big diversion as it would be shorter and more direct to go via the island of Rhodes or the island of Crete. That mariners preferred to call at Ephesus first showed that the traffic was such as to make the journey worth while. It would also make Ephesus an entre-pot port where travellers would have to change ships if they wished to continue the journey from Ephesus.

"and left them there..." - Paul left Priscilla and Aquilla there while he went to the synagogue.

"entered into the synagogue..." - Paul appears to be fearless where the Jews were concerned. In every place to which he came, he entered the synagogues and "reasoned with" the Jews. He never lost interest in preaching to the people of Israel after the flesh.

Verse 20

"When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not;"

This incomplete statement suggests something which may be connected with Paul shaving his head. Here we have the unusual event where the Jews, having heard Paul preach, asked him to stay longer. Normally they would oppose him with great vigour and do all sorts of things to embarrass and hamper his preaching. Now they desired him to stay a little while longer. While there is no proof of this, it does seem likely that the Jews were impressed by Paul's willingness to observe Jewish custom by shaving his head. Maybe it was this incident that induced Luke to tell us how Paul shaved his head.

Verse 21

"But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus."

"bade farewell..." - the same Greek verb as is translated "took his leave" in verse 18.

"I must..." - lit. "it behoves me..."

"by all means..." - coll. "by hook or by crook..."

"this feast..." - which feast it was is not stated. It would appear to be the Passover although many commentators think it was Pentecost. If it were the Passover, then Paul's haste is explained because the seas were considered to be closed to shipping in view of storms and contrary winds at this time of the year. See Acts 27. verses 4, 7 and 9.

"that cometh in Jerusalem.." - All Jewish feasts which had been established by the Law were held all over Judea. The feasts at Jerusalem were of greater importance because the temple was there and all Jewish feasts under the Law were connected with the temple.

"I will return..." - as in Matt. 2. 12; Luke 10. 6; Heb. 11. 15;

"if God will." - as used in 1 Cor. 4. 19; Heb. 6. 3; Jas. 4. 15.

"sailed.." - see note to Acts 13. 13. for the word "loosed".

## Verse 22

"And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch."

Luke has no commentary on the sea journey except to indicate that it finished safely by the arrival at Caesarea.

"gone up..." - he went up to Jerusalem from the sea coast.

"saluted the church..." - greeted the ecclesia which was the first and the mother church.

"he went down..." - he went down from the height of Mount Zion to the lower level on Antioch in Syria. This brought him back to where he started.

It is strange why Luke does not record what he did at Jerusalem apart from greeting the ecclesia. He had been so keen to get to Jerusalem that he would not tarry at Ephesus in spite of the great interest shown by the Jews. Now he gets to Jerusalem and Luke merely records that he greeted the members of the Faith there and then went down to Antioch. The reason is that Luke gave an explanation as to why Paul did not stay on at Ephesus but hurried away. The fact that he wanted to get to Jerusalem to be there in time for the Passover (or Pentecost) so that he could address the great crowds, is not important to Luke's story so he omits it. He brought Paul back so as to end the story of his second missionary journey and now brings him to Antioch in preparation for the start of his third and last missionary journey.

This is the last mention of Antioch by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles. As we shall see in the next verse, Paul spent some time there but Luke is silent as to what he did. We can guess that he preached, he related his experiences to others of the ecclesia, he made plans for his next journey and he taught others how to be evangelists.

#### THE THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY.

## Verse 23

"And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples."

"he departed..." - Lit. "came out" or "went forth".

"Galatia and Phrygia..." - these were the interior provinces of Asia Minor. Luke covers a journey of about 1500 miles in a few words.

"country..." - the word means "region."

"the Galatic region" was a part of Lycaonia which was included in the Roman province of Galatia. It covered Derbe and Lystra which Paul visited. We read about this in Acts 14. 6, 8 and 21; 16. 1 and 2.

"the Phrygian region..." was in the province of Galatia and took in the cities of Iconium and Pisidian Antioch. It is hardly likely that Paul would have gone about 300 miles further north to visit Northern Galatia. He would be more likely to go by a more direct route to Ephesus.

"in order..." - Luke uses this expression in Luke 1. 8. and in this verse as "working in order". In Luke 1. 3. he uses it in connection with "writing in order" and in Acts 11. 4; we find it used with "speaking in order".

## Verse 24

"And a certain Jew named apollo, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus."

"Apollonios..." - short for "Apollonius"

"born at Alexandria..." - leading to the assumption that he had been brought up in Alexandria which was a city of learning and philosophy. See notes to Acts 6. 9. for further information about Alexandria. (The Septuagint was translated here.)

"an eloquent man..." - he used his eloquence to teach others as we see from verses 27 and 28. The word "eloquent" should be "learned".

"mighty in the scriptures..." - his knowledge however, was not as full as it would appear for he had to learn from Aquila and Priscilla the doctrine of baptism. See verses 25 and 26.

## Verse 25

"This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John."

"instructed..." - the meaning is "taught" but especially by word of mouth or by preaching. That is to say, Apollonios had not studied by reading.

"in the way of the Lord;..." - see John 14. 6. "I am the way, the truth and the life".

"fervent in spirit..." - lit. "boiling in spirit..." The only other use of this word is found in Rom. 12. 11.

"he spake..." - imperfect tense indicating "continued to speak..."

"taught diligently..." - lit. "taught accurately..." From this description of Apollonios, we learn that what he knew, he knew accurately but he did not know the finer points concerning baptism.

"knowing only the baptism of John." - There is no record in the Acts of an ecclesia having been formed in Alexandria and there is no record of an apostle having gone there for evangelical purposes. John the Baptist did a great work during his ministry and the effect of his teaching carried as far as Alexandria. Nevertheless, John's baptism was an incomplete baptism because Jesus had not died and candidates could not be "buried with him in baptism". Until he died, Jesus had not established the "name" into which aspiring Christians could be baptised. It was only after Pentecost that the complete baptism could be taught. (Acts 2. 38.)

## Verse 26

"And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquilla and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly."

"he began to speak boldly..." - having known only the baptism of John, he must have given the teaching of John who called for a baptism unto repentance and not a baptism into the "name". He would preach of a Messiah who was to come.

"when Aquilla and Priscilla had heard;..." - these two must have been present in the synagogue to have heard him.

"expounded the way of God more perfectly." - the adverb here means "accurately". His knowledge was correct up to a point but it did not go far enough. Acts 19. 4. suggests the imperfection of his knowledge.

## Verse 27

"And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace:"

"...Achaia..." - he would want to go to what is now Peloponnesia in which Corinth is the major city.

"the brethren wrote,..." - if the brethren who were at Ephesus wrote to the ecclesia at Corinth, urging them to accept Apollos, then we can be sure that Apollos accepted what he had been taught by Aquilla and Priscilla, and followed that acceptance with baptism into the "name of Jesus of Nazareth".

There is an exhortation for us in this story. Aquilla and Priscilla heard Apollos speak and were impressed by his Old Testament knowledge. But he showed a big gap in his knowledge when it came to the full teaching of Jesus and baptism into his Name. Many brethren to-day, would have denounced him in public for his incomplete knowledge and in doing so would have lost a friend, Aquilla and Priscilla however, took him in hand and gained a friend.

"who, when he was come,..." - lit. "who, having arrived,..."

"helped..." - Gk. "sumballo" which is a rare word meaning to aid by conferring a benefit. This means that Apollos, in helping them, benefited them through his knowledge and his speaking ability. He also baptised some converts. (1 Cor. 1. 12.) Later on, Paul was to be impressed by the zeal and value of Apollos and desired that he should go again to Corinth. (1 Cor. 16. 12.) Apollos was a great success in Corinth as we see from 1 Cor. 3. 5/6. See 1 Cor. 4. 6. for further evidence of Paul's regard for him. See also Titus 3. 13.

"them which had believed through grace." - these are the believers who had heard the word preached by those who had received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Such people would have received training in the whole Truth of the word of God.

## Verse 28

"For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publickly, shewing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ."

"mightily..." - lit. "with power." This could refer to the power of his voice, the power of his reasoning, the power of his knowledge, the power of his reasoning ability or the power of his personality. Possibly it was a combination of all these attributes.

"convinced the Jews..." - the meaning in English is confusing here. The Afrikaans version reads "want hy het die Jode kragtig in die openbaar weerle..." giving "for he mightily confuted the Jews..." which is the meaning in the Greek. He destroyed all their counter arguments and showed them beyond their ability to gainsay that Jesus was indeed the Messiah they were looking for.

"publickly..." - to the discomfort of those who argued against him.

"by the scriptures..." - we now see why Luke in verse 24 stated that Apollos was "mighty in the scriptures." His great knowledge now helped him.

"Jesus was Christ." This is one of the great themes of the New Testament. See Matt. 1. 1; 16. 16; John 4. 25; 4. 42; 6. 69; 11. 27.

Luke now has introduced his readers to that great NT character, Apollos who became such a great preacher and who was of such value to Paul and the early ecclesias. To find out the reasons for many of Luke's sudden short stories, the reader and student must read on until the purpose emerges.

Chapter 19 records the story of the twelve men whom Paul met when he came to Ephesus which Apollos had left. These twelve men, like Apollos, knew only of John's baptism and, we can assume, knew little or nothing of the Jesus of the post-John the Baptist era. Whereas it cannot be proved that they were disciples of Apollos, it seems very likely that they were. This would appear to give the answer why Luke included this story in his narrative.

Luke's object might have been to

- (a) show how great teachers arose who would take over from Paul when he was no longer on the scene;
- (b) describe how the preachers developed;
- (c) show that any baptism other than the true baptism was of no avail to the person who subsequently learns the whole Truth of the Word of God. Such a person is not baptised into the NAME and must be re-baptised. This condemns christening or a baptism into a faith that is incomplete or false.

Luke deals with this problem in his next chapter but we should note that Apollos was a great man and his disciples were twelve in number. Not only did he humble himself on hearing the whole Truth from Aquilla and Priscilla, but so did his disciples. All of them submitted to a fuller baptism into the true Name of Jesus of Nazareth.



## THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

### CHAPTER 19

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Luke is now about to record the happenings at Ephesus. This city was mighty in many respects, not the least of which was the Temple of Artemis (to the Greeks) and Diana (to the Romans). It was one of the Seven Wonders of the World and represented the highest form of Greek sculptural art. The worship of the goddess brought great prosperity to the city because vast crowds would come from all over the habitable world to consult the Oracle and to worship at the shrine within the temple. Whereas there can be little doubt that prostitution was permitted within the environs of the temple since this was the case with much of pagan ritual, there were also exorcists who practiced a form of faith healing, and there were magicians like Barjesus of Acts chapter 13 who crossed Paul's path at Cyprus. As we shall see, there were artisans like Demetrius who saw in Paul's preaching, a menace to the continuance of their business.

The attractions of a place like Ephesus issued a challenge to Paul which he was prepared to meet. In his letter to the Ephesians, he draws attention to the "prince of the power of the air" which he associates with the course of this world and the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience. This summarised the opposite camp which he found at Ephesus and which held the people of darkness in such a vice-like grip. He pointed out that the true temple which the Lord pitched was the body of believers and that this spiritual temple was built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone. (Ephes. 2. 19/21.)

Against the sleight of hand of the magicians, Paul warned the flock and his words are recorded in Ephes. 4. 14. The people who follow such charlatans have the understanding darkened through the ignorance that is in them. (Ephes. 4. 18.) Such people have followed the licentious ways of the pagan apostasy. (vs. 19).

When the silversmith Demetrius tried to stir up the people against Paul, he did so from selfish motives because he could see that if the True Christian Religion were to prevail, the need for such as he and his craft would fall away. The True Worshipper did not need artefacts to remind him that there was a God in heaven and that Jesus was his Saviour. He knew such things in his heart and was constantly exercised in his mind about his Faith. Paul reminded the faithful believers that their battle was not against flesh and blood such as he. By destroying the craftsmen would make way for others to arise. The only way was to get at the false religion and having destroyed that, the false practices would fall away. Therefore Paul wrote "...we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies (high places)."

It is possible that Paul was disturbed about the multiplicity of gods and goddesses worshipped so wrote to the Ephesian believers pointing out that there was only One God and Father of all, One Lord, One Faith and one baptism. The pagan baptism would not help the believer in the Truth. The immense problems which confronted Paul at Corinth and Ephesus were of such magnitude and such variety that it would require a mature evangelist to deal with them. If we regard the problem in this way, we shall understand why the Holy Spirit did not permit Paul to continue in Asia but turned him to Macedonia instead. In his later years, after a wealth of preaching experience had been gathered and had contributed to the mature character that was Paul's, he turned to this cosmopolitan city, well equipped to deal with every type of opposition.

The foregoing introduction has been written to show the tremendous tasks confronting Paul in his work at Ephesus. That he was Divinely helped is evident by the appearance of Apollos who, with his knowledge and preaching ability, was a type of John the Baptist and prepared Paul's way much as Stephen had prepared the way amongst the Jews. To meet the trickery, God permitted Paul to distribute handkerchiefs which apparently carried healing powers.

## Verse 1

"And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,"

This verse is incomplete as it stands and must be read with verse 2.

"Apollos was at Corinth..." - although their paths were to cross later, Paul and Apollos did not meet on this occasion because Apollos had gone to Corinth before Paul reached Ephesus from which place Apollos had departed. See Acts 18. 27.

"Paul having passed through the upper coasts..." - Paul's earlier plan to visit Asia from which he was prevented by the Holy Spirit, now came into effect. To get there he had to pass from Galatia and Phrygia where Luke's narrative left him in Acts 18. 23. Luke does not give details as to the route he took but dismisses the journey with "having passed through the upper coasts" from which it can be assumed that he returned by the northern route through Galatia. From Pisidian Antioch there were two routes, one being via Colossae and Laodicea and the other, on the high ground following the river Cayster. The latter would be more preferable during a hot summer so it is more likely that Paul took this route.

"came to Ephesus:.." - thus fulfilling his promise given in Acts 18. 21.

"disciples,.." - Most commentators maintain that the disciples here were the disciples of Christ and not the disciples of John the Baptist nor of Apollos because the title is used absolutely. This meaning is not generally given to the title in the Acts for we have come across the word in other chapters where the meaning is confined obviously to followers of the Christian religion but not necessarily of Christ personally. From the context it is easy to see that such disciples were ill informed as to the meaning of true baptism, and that they were as ill informed as was Apollos. This being the case they must have been trained by Apollos and must have been his disciples.

## Verse 2

"He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Spirit."

"Have ye received..." - Luke does not state how Paul came to ask this question. The preliminary remarks would have no bearing on the outcome and it is not Luke's purpose to give a reason for every irrelevant detail. It is sufficient in the teaching of this section to know that these men were not informed as to the True Baptism. The outcome of such ignorance is one of the important details when teaching Christianity. One cannot rely upon a previous baptism no matter how convincing it appeared to be at the time.

"the Holy Spirit..." - meaning the power which such a gift would bring.

"since ye believed?.." - since they had been introduced to the Divine Plan and Purpose and had accepted it as being the Truth of the Word of God.

"We have not so much as heard..." - this puts them in the same state as Apollos when Aquilla and Priscilla found him. The similarity in the lack of knowledge between Apollos and the twelve disciples is too close to disregard the possibility that the twelve were disciples of Apollos.



## Verse 3

"And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptised? And they said, Unto John's baptism."

The question here arises out of Paul's amazement that they had never heard of the Holy Spirit. It was not always the case that people who were baptised received the power of the Holy Spirit because this was given only on certain occasions. There was also the problem as to why they had never heard people speak about the Holy Spirit because had not the Lord instructed that believers were to be baptised into the "name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit..." (Matt. 28. 19.) Could they have received a complete baptism indicative of the fulfilment of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus?

"Unto John's baptism." - This explained their ignorance. This was the trouble with Apollos (Acts 18. 25.) and links them with him. John's baptism was one of baptism unto repentance and not an association with the Lord Jesus in his death. It was not associating with the analogous sacrificial animal. John's baptism was a baptism of initiation into something greater but was incomplete. They would understand John's teaching of him who was to come who would baptise them with the Holy Spirit so they must have known much of Jesus the Saviour. Their deficiency was that they did not know of the Messiahship of Jesus and did not understand the absolute necessity of being associated with him in his death. Their baptism was one of washing away of sins whereas the true baptism included this but brought a covenant relationship with the Messiah which John's baptism did not give.

The True Evangelists of to-day will often find that those who hearken are prepared to accept the Truth of the Word of God in its simplicity but they are adamant that their former baptism was sufficient for the purpose of bringing them into covenant relationship with God. Many consider that christening which is not baptism at all, is sufficient for the purpose. This is very dangerous thinking and leaves the searchers after Truth without a way of escape from the parlous condition in which they are found before they come to an understanding. Surely with such a precious salvation at stake, one would submit to a proper baptism such as these disciples did and as Apollos did. The atonement of Jesus is without effect upon those who are not buried with him by baptism and resurrected with him by coming out of the water of baptism. A symbolical "resurrection" from christening is impossible and must show the folly of this wicked rite.

## Verse 4

"Then said Paul, John verily baptised with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is on Christ Jesus."

The teaching in this verse shows that the baptism of John the Baptist was one of repentance and his teaching directed the attention of the believer to him who was to come after him. This implies that John's teaching was incomplete in itself and that it was an introduction to the teaching of Jesus. The completion lay in the coming one.

The teaching is extended to include a belief in "Christ Jesus" which is another way of saying "The Anointed Saviour". This involves a belief in the "Christ" character of Jesus which means that he was the seed promised to Abraham and that as such, he was anointed to be king of all the earth. It is unfortunate that many people who submit to baptism do not believe in Jesus in this way although they are quite prepared to refer to him by these titles. The reason is that they do not understand the truth as it is in Jesus.

## Verse 5

"When they heard this, they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus."

"When they heard this,..." - lit. "And hearing..." The grammar of this statement has led to a distortion of what Luke intended to convey, having regard to the teaching of Scripture concerning baptism. It is often read like this by those who deny the need for rebaptism - "When they (the people mentioned in verse 4 to whom John the Baptist spoke) heard John speak about baptism, they were baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus."

This view cannot be entertained by the Bible student for several reasons and the first of these is that John did not at any time, baptise into the NAME of the Lord Jesus because Jesus had not established by his death, that NAME which is known as "the saving Name", by some believers. The situation is that "The law and the prophets were until John (the Baptist): since that time the kingdom of God is preached..." (Luke 16. 16.) Before the coming of John, the True Believer believed in the Promises made unto Abraham and David. This gave him the great Hope of Israel. He was guided in his behaviour by the Law of Moses. All this came to finality when Jesus taught because he fulfilled the analogy of the Law and was the singular seed promised unto Abraham as well as the son of God promised unto David. See Matt. 5. 17. for "I come not to destroy but to fulfil the law..." and Matt. 16. 15. for Peter's statement of Faith upon which Jesus said he would build his church (ecclesia). This left the believer the necessity of being baptised unto repentance because such repentance was essential in view of the Law having been fulfilled in Jesus. He still had to believe in the Great Hope of Israel according to the Promises, but he had to signify that belief by his baptism. The law having fallen away, there was no mediator in the priesthood; there was no means of approaching unto God by the altar because Jesus now became the altar; there was no prayer through incense as Jesus was our incense. But Jesus was not the perfect mediator until he had died. There was no proper atonement until he had made a sacrifice first for himself and then for the sins of the people. (Heb. 9. 7.) When he had done this, he established the Name so that people could believe and he baptised, thus becoming part of the Divine Name." (Acts 15. 14.)

The value of John's Baptism was that it was an interim measure to tide the believers over until Jesus should die, be raised again, and thus establish the Name into which the True Believers could be baptised. The fact that the disciples were not rebaptised is no proof whatsoever that rebaptism is unnecessary because in washing their feet, Jesus symbolically baptised them and the effect was that their former sins were forgiven. As Jesus said, "Now are ye clean every whit..." (John 13. 10.) The fact that no record is given by Luke that Apollos was rebaptised is no proof either for it can be assumed that he was otherwise Paul would not have accepted him in the way he did. If Aquilla and Priscilla corrected his lack of complete knowledge, they would certainly have put him right about rebaptism.

#### Verse 6

"And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied."

"when Paul had laid his hands upon them..." - lit. "And having placed to them the Paul the hands..." (Diag.)

"the Holy Spirit came upon them..." - the effect of this is known but we have to search for the reason why they should have received the Holy Spirit at this stage in the closing period of apostolic times when the Holy Spirit was about to be withdrawn. The introduction to this chapter has shown the tremendous difficulties which confronted Paul at Ephesus. Any evangelist having to war against the spiritual wickedness in high places at Ephesus would have waged a losing battle because Christianity in its true form cannot supply faith healing (or so-called Divine healing); it cannot produce the magical effects which ventriloquists, conjurors and magicians could produce. It was based upon the logic of the Divine Plan and Purpose and required Faith in belief rather than acceptance by the eyes of what was seen. The giving of the Holy Spirit which would give the recipients any one of the nine gifts, would be a great help in the work they had to do.

"they spake with tongues..." - Ephesus was a cosmopolitan city and the many nations who were represented there would require the gift of tongues if all were to hear the Divine message of salvation. This is the last mention of speaking with tongues in the Acts.

"and prophesied." - they spoke the Word of God by inspiration. It does not mean that they foretold the future.

#### Verse 7

"And all the men were about twelve."

The number of men is unimportant but Luke considers it necessary to point out that the men involved in this incident were not many, being at the most, twelve. That does not make them twelve so no analogy can be drawn with the number of the disciples of Jesus. All one can say is that Paul was the type of Christ, Apollos was a type of John the Baptist (mentioned here for the last time in the New Testament) and the men about twelve were the anti-type of the followers of Jesus.

This extraordinary incident now draws to its close. Commentators are at a loss to explain why Luke should have thought it necessary to break into his narrative and record this incident which started in Acts 18. 24. and ends at Acts 19. 7.

We explain this by showing that Paul was starting his third and last missionary journey. His work from now on was about to undergo a complete change in that he would no longer travel from here to there, staying at one centre for a while or until driven out by the Jews. He was to stay at Ephesus for a long time for him and a great work was to be done here. This was Asia, one of the important provinces of Rome and the area in which were to be found the Seven Churches (Ecclesias) to which the Lord wrote his Seven Letters which are to be found in Revelation chapters 1 and 2. When Luke recorded the early chapters of the Acts, he introduced Stephen, the fore-runner of Peter. When Luke started on Part 2 of the Acts, Luke recorded the story of Herod and his death after receiving the acclamation of the people. In the case of Peter, Stephen was to show the tasks to be faced when preaching to the Jews and he precipitated the scattering of the preachers so that the gospel would be preached over a wide area. In the case of Part 2, the difficulty with Herod showed the difficulties to be faced concerning the Gentiles to whom Paul was about to preach. In introducing Part 3, Luke now gives an account which showed how the preaching team was geared up in Truth to face the difficulties which lay ahead. There should be no mystery about Luke's introduction of this story if we remember that whenever he introduces something which is unusual, the reason is always found in the verses and chapters which follow.

#### Verse 8

"And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God."

"he went into the synagogue..." - this was Paul's usual presentation of the Truth whenever he visited a new centre. He never failed to give the Jews a chance and seemed to have an affection for them, which affection and desire he expressed in Rom. 10. 1.

"spake boldly..." - spake freely.

"for the space of three months..." - this was a longer time than usual and can be explained by the fact that the Jews were more friendly disposed to him than had been others. Proof of this is to be found in Acts 18. 20.

"disputing..." - The Greek is to speak to, to discuss with and to dispute with. This indicates that Paul spoke to them on doctrinal matters and, not receiving full agreement, discussed the doctrinal points with them.

"persuading..." - here is an indication that he also exhorted them to

better Christian behaviour. So they received from Paul doctrine and exhortation in the Christian way of life.

"the things concerning the kingdom of God." - This was the gospel message which Paul was never to let go. He always was ready to preach the Glad Tidings of the Kingdom of God and all that this doctrine meant concerning the Promises and Jesus of Nazareth. In the last verse of the last chapter of the Acts we find him doing the same. (Acts 28. 31.)

Verse 9

"But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way, before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus."

"were hardened..." - "became obstinate in their unbelief."

"believed not..." - this verb indicates that they not only heard in unbelief but also that they refused to believe - they were stubborn about it. All this flows from the association of "were hardened" with "believed not".

"spake evil..." - the evil speaking is allied with "that way" so that they spoke evil against the Word of God and not necessarily against Paul and his companions. Therefore their sin, being blasphemy, was more evil than appears at first sight.

"that way..." See notes to Acts 9. 2.

"before the multitude..." - in the presence and hearing of the congregation which attended the synagogue where Paul taught and where he had to endure the opposition now recorded.

"he departed from them..." - no indication here that he was forced out. He went of his own accord as he had done at Corinth. See Acts 18. 6.

"separated the disciples..." - Paul caused the disciples to leave as well and form another body of worshippers.

"disputing daily..." - reasoning daily.

"in the school..." - Gk. "scholee" this being the only usage in the N.T. The meaning is "a lecture hall". It also means "leisure", "rest", "freedom from business". When this leisure is applied in study it carries the meaning of learned leisure. In the verse before us, it refers to the place of learned leisure. The English word "school" is a derivative.

"Tyrannus." - This is the only occurrence of the name in Scripture. He could have been a rabbi who ran a "Beth-Hamidrash" where the Law and the traditions were taught. Or he could have been a man like Justus who appeared in Acts 18. 7. Bruce finds a note of humour in his name when he wonders how he was given the name. Was it because of his character as a teacher? (Commentary page 388 footnote No. 18.)

From ancient literature there is evidence that public activity ceased in the cities of Ionia at the fifth hour (11 a.m.) and that the present habit of siesta was well known in Roman days. This leads students to believe that Paul would have the lecture hall when Tyrannus was not using it. This puts Paul's study periods at 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. During business hours when Tyrannus was using the hall, Paul would ply his trade as a tentmaker. (Acts 18. 3; 20. 34; 1 Cor. 4. 12.) In this way, he would work while others were working and work while others were resting. See his comments in 1 Thess. 2. 9. While one marvels at Paul's ceaseless toil, it is necessary also to commend those who came to study and to learn during their leisure period of the day.

"And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks."

"by the space of..." - the original Greek has simply "for". See verse 8. where the same paraphrase occurs.

"two years..." - this seems to disagree with Acts 20. 31. but in Greek reckoning, any period over two years would be regarded as being 3 years. To the two years of this verse must be added the three months of verse 8.

"all they which dwelt in Asia..." - all the people in the province of Asia and not in the continent of Asia as we now know it. That "all" heard the Word is permissible hyperbole, having regard to the custom of the times. Not all heard by coming to Ephesus so it is safe to assume that the Word was preached by being sent to all the new churches (ecclesias) in the province. It would be during this time that the seven ecclesias of Revelation chapters 2 and 3 would be formed. The ecclesia at Colosse would also be formed about this time.

"the word of the Lord Jesus..." - the LOGOS of the Lord Jesus." That is to say, the Plan and Purpose of God concerning Jesus. This information must be regarded in the light of the contents of verse 9. Paul preached continually a doctrine which was unpopular amongst a lot of people, particularly the Jews. From what we have learnt of Luke's narrative style, we must know that a situation is now building up where the opposition will break out against him with vigour. It will be interesting from now on to watch how Luke develops his theme.

Verse 11

"And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul:"

"special miracles..." - "special" has the meaning of "unusual" or "uncommon". This carries the meaning that the miracles were ones which do not often occur. "miracle" as translated here refers to a "power" or act which is the manifestation of a power. It is not the same word as translated "miracle" when applied to the miracles of Jesus. Such miracles were "signs" which is to say they had an allegorical meaning. These miracles were the result of the exercising of some manifestation of the power of God.

It was necessary in the pattern of things at this early stage in the preaching of Christianity, for some outward sign of the manifestation of God's power to be given. It was needed to combat the power wielded by charlatans who were magicians, ventriloquists and what would in modern days be called faith healers. All such people practice some sort of deception on gullible listeners who lend tremendous support and give tremendous loyalty to such men. Without Divine help, Christianity would have had an almost impossible task to survive. The manifestation of power recorded in this verse and verse 12 was astonishing enough to convince the loyal supporters of the charlatans.

Verse 12

"So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them."

"handkerchiefs..." - a sweat cloth; a napkin or a handkerchief. See Luke 19. 20; John 11. 44; John 20. 7. Such articles were in common use for wiping the face in a hot climate. Thus many would be used and many would receive the benefit of the "power".

"aprons..." - half girdles. The "half" was due to the fact that it went half round the body and not half way down or half way up. It would well be a workman's apron so the "power" would reach the working class person who was most likely to turn to the Truth.

"his body..." - this does not imply that Paul wore the garments which were affected. It denotes that contact was made between him and the article. There appears to be a parallel here between this "power" and the people wanting Peter's shadow to pass over them. Acts 5. 15. Both incidents have given rise to superstitions which are followed to this day. It was not Peter's shadow which cured people and, in the same way, it was not the touching of Paul's body that gave miraculous powers to the garments. If cures were effected in either case, they were effected through the Power of God. The element of faith must also be taken into account. Just as Jesus had cured a woman who touched him and in doing so, showed her great faith in his curing power, so cures may have been effected by such touching in the case of Paul. That garments had to touch him is merely incidental to the cure. Paul could have turned to those who touched him and cured them by a remark.

"evil spirits..." - "pneumata..." According to medical knowledge of those days, every bodily ill was supposed to be due to the indwelling of an evil spirit which had to be cast out. When a person was cured, it was said that the evil spirit had been cast out. Modern medical science knows that such ills are due to a malfunction of a certain organ or to germs, or to injury.

Luke, the medical practitioner distinguishes between ordinary and extraordinary diseases by calling the latter "evil spirits".

The success of the "power" thus exercised gave a stimulus to the evil practitioners of wizardry and chicanery. Their work became well organised and, to the extent of the credulity of those who heard, had some success. It grew in opposition to Christianity and was mentioned by Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians. See 2Thess. 2. 3/12. Thus Paul refers to the superstitions as "a strong delusion".

Verse 13

"Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, we adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth."

"vagabond Jews..." - "wandering Jews..." They travelled about from here to there, practicing their magic with incantations and spells for this was their way of earning their living. The modern faith healer practices his art in much the same way, that is, by using incantations. Their object is to whip up as much emotion as they can so as to get their "subjects" in the right emotional state to bring about a kind of self-hypnosis which leads to temporary cures. This is done by prayers, the right tone of voice, the use of fading lights, soft music and so on. Whatever they may call it now, it is a copy of the ancient art of incantation. Like the exorcists, they travel not only throughout the land, but from one country to another. Simon Magus was one of these. (Acts 8. 9.) A few of the modern exorcists claim to have a healing power which has descended to them from Solomon. Josephus states that the itinerant exorcists of his day laid claim to a power from Solomon. These were, and still are, a lot of followers of this ancient art of deception. It is akin to magic and the magical has always exercised a fascination for the human being.

"the name of the Lord Jesus..." - because many exorcists had heard Paul use the name of Jesus, they also used it. Modern faith healers use it too, Jesus was the son of God and inasmuch as many pagans knew the Jewish reluctance to pronounce the Divine Name, they used it to embarrass the Jews. Jesus is not and was not God but the use of the name of the Son of God would be sufficient for a Jew to suffer a religious hurt. The unbelieving Jew could not admit that Jesus was the son of the Unpronounceable Name. The Jewish exorcists would use it to attract believers, or pagans who had seen the success of Paul's healing work.

"adjure..." - a word commonly used by faith healers in ancient days. See Mark 5. 7. where the demented man, Legion, used the word. No doubt he had often heard it used on him by faith healers who tried to cure him. The Greek word translated as "adjure" is "horkizo" which means "to cause to swear by

an oath, thus putting the person who swears under an obligation". The word according to Vine ("Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words" page 30) the Greek word is connected with the Hebrew word for a "thigh". In ancient Hebrew custom, anyone taking an oath had to put their hand under the thigh of the person to whom they obligated themselves. See Gen. 24. 2, 9; 49. 29.

Verse 14

"And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew and chief of the priests, which did so."

"seven sons..." - the Bezan text omits the number "seven" but gives the sense that the number of the sons was about seven. The Diaglott has a hint of this in the translation, "And there were some Seven Sons..." The word "some" means "certain" as the Afrikaans Version has it "Dit was sekere sewe seuns..." ("There were certain seven sons...") The R.V., R.S.V. and Weymouth make no mention of this possibility.

"Sceva..." - from the Latin "Scaeva" which has been found in an inscription at Miletus. He was most likely a Jew and there is a possibility that he was descended from a "chief priestly" family. It is more likely that "chief of the priests" was a title conferred on him by himself. The Diaglott has "Jew chief priest" which could well be "Jewish chief priest". That he was a Jew would give him an importance above other exorcists because being able to speak Hebrew, he could pronounce "THE NAME". He did not use this NAME however, but ascribed his powers to "Jesus whom Paul preacheth" because this "Jesus whom Paul preacheth" was well-known amongst the people by this time. To Sceva this "Jesus whom Paul preacheth" was an exorcising spirit and nothing else, so he felt that if he could call upon the exorcising spirit to work for him, he would build up some of the reputation for effectiveness that Paul had. He was soon to learn a very severe lesson.

"which did so." - Related to "took upon them to call over to them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus,..." of the previous verse. This explains what Sceva and his sons did.

Verse 15

"And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?"

"the evil spirit said..." - there being no evil spirit, it could not say the words Luke reports of it here. If reference is made to Mark chapter 5 wherein is recorded the meeting between Jesus and Legion, the demented person, it will be found from a careful study of verses 1 to 18, that it was Legion himself who did the speaking and not the collection of so-called "devils". Any record of the devils speaking is merely a personification of Legion in the mental illness which caused his behaviour. In the same way, in the verse before us, the devil speaking is the man himself.

"Jesus I know,..." - This was not unusual for people who were out of their minds. The Pharisees had often told such people that when the Messiah came, he would destroy them because they were sinful people. Because of their sins, they were in the state of madness. Consequently when Jesus did come, they recognised him not from appearance, but from the reputation of him which had gone before him. That is why they are recorded as asking "Art thou come to destroy us?" See Matt. 8. 29; Mark 5. 7; Luke 8. 28; See also Matt. 3. 7. where John the Baptist asked the Pharisees and Sadducees "who hath warned YOU to escape the wrath to come?" They had often warned the mad men of the wrath to come. Now, who had warned them of the same? If this reasoning is true, then the man's immediate reaction to the exorcising of Sceva was to attack the one who he thought had come to torment him. His attack was from a motive of self-defence. The verb "know" is used twice in this verse with a different meaning on each occasion. "know" used in connection with Jesus, is to know by being influenced by the person known. This important meaning is used by Jesus in his forceful statement of Matt. 7. 23. The second "know" means simply "to have knowledge of".

"And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded."

"The man in whom the evil spirit was..." - note that the "evil spirit" which was supposed to have done the talking, now has no further part to play. It is the man who takes action. This shows that it was the man who did the speaking and who now takes action.

"leaped on..." - the sense is closer to "leapt at..." This is the only use of this word in Scripture.

"prevailed against..." - had dominion over them. He overcame any resistance which they offered. For the use of this word, see Matt. 20. 25; Mark 10. 42; 1 Pet. 5. 3.

"naked..." - clothes such as were worn in those days could be removed with little difficulty during a fight.

"wounded." - Greek. "so that naked and having been wounded..." they fled. They might have been heavily thrown to the ground during the scuffle and hurt. There is no sense of drawing blood here.

Verse 17

"and this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified."

The news of this remarkable incident spread rapidly over Ephesus. The invocation of Jesus by one who was a charlatan brought a very unexpected result and showed that the Name was not one to be trifled with nor lightly used. This was to have a profound effect on many of the exorcists and magicians.

To understand the impact of this calamity, one must realise that Ephesus was a centre of magic, spells, incantations and the like which go to make a really successful and popular faith healing session of our times. Bruce (Commentary page 391, quotes Shakespeare (Comedy of Errors Act 1 scene 2 lines 97 ff.) to show that Shakespeare was aware of the character of Ephesus.

"they say this town is full of cozenage, (cheating)  
 as, nimble jugglers that deceive the eye,  
 Dark-working sorcerors that change the mind,  
 Soul-killing witches that deform the body,  
 Disguised cheaters, prating mountebanks,  
 And many such-like liberties of sin."

One of the cheats and a well-known one apparently, being "a Jewish chief priest", had been disrobed and chased out of a house by an "evil spirit" because he had invoked the name of Jesus. The "Jesus that Paul preacheth" usually prevailed over every evil spirit but what happens when he is invoked by someone who does not believe in him? That is how the Grecian mind would work. One can anticipate that there was about to be a big reformation in their thinking from now on. This would affect both Jew and Greek.

"fear fell on them all..." - the fear at this time was not terror but a sense of awe which overtakes even the irreligious at times of stress.

"was magnified." - The "name" was extolled at the expense of Sceva and others like him whose power could not match that which worked in the deeds of Paul. The tense is imperfect showing that "it continued to be magnified." As the story of the incident passed from one to another, respect would grow for the religion that Paul preached.



## Verse 18

"And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds."

The power of the gospel had taken hold of the people when they saw this manifestation of the Power of God.

"many that believed..." - the form of the verb indicates "many that had believed..." indicating that many who had believed in the past were now spiritually awakened by the incident and understood God's anger with all forms of magic art whether it be magic, incantations, spells or faith healing.

"came..." - from the tense "continued to come..." That is to say, they did not all come at once or, having come, did not come again, but continued to make contact with Paul.

"confessed,..." - has the sense of acknowledging that the religion preached by Paul was the only true one.

"shewed their deeds." - the "deeds" referred to here deal with magic, sorcery, spells and incantations. These are all connected one way and another with the great deception by exorcists of the public. Just as the secrets of the magician can be bought these days by buying the books that have been written on the subject, so the spells of those days were committed to writing. When such people came to Paul, they brought with them their formulae for spells and incantations. Many of these spells are still preserved in museums in London, Paris and Leyden. They contain a series of words which are absolute drivel but which all had that characteristic desirable to the exorcists, of secrecy. Just as the Babylonian priesthood was a secret organisation, and the exorcists kept their spells secret, so the Roman Catholics attempted to preserve the Bible as a secret work to be interpreted only by their priests. Now all these secret formulae were brought to Paul.

## Verse 19

"Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver."

"curious arts..." - those studies which were enquired into such as how to make something with magical properties; how to find the elixir of life - that which will enable one to live for ever; how to turn lead into gold and so on. In this instance, the accent was on the magical. This art was not limited to the primitive laboratory but to the study where combinations of words would be experimented with in an attempt to find some "Open Sesame" to the magic art. These practices were famous in the days of which Luke writes and inscriptions known as "Ephesian Letters" were famous all over the habitable world. Apart from magic words, sentences, letters and so on, this also included charms, amulets and talismans which Luke now introduces in keeping with his character of preparing the reader ahead for what is to follow. We shall learn more of this when we read from verse 24 onwards. The Greek word used here is the same as that translated as "busybodies" in 1 Tim. 5. 13.

Since the days of Moses, secret things have belonged to God and anything man should know has been revealed to him in God's Word. See Deut. 29. 29. Other things such as a study of the subconscious mind have been expressly forbidden by God. (Lev. 19. 31; 20. 6; 20. 27; Deut. 18. 10/12.)

"books..." - Gk. "biblous" from which our word "Bible" is derived. These papers would contain the "Ephesian letters", formulae, spells, etc., all of which were used by exorcists (faith healers).

"burned them..." - the imperfect tense indicates "kept burning them". There is an important point to note here. Such papers and formulae were sold for huge sums of money because anyone who had them and could use them, was in a position to make a lot of money. The converts to Christianity must have bought such things for a high price but now they were not prepared to sell them and

get some of their money back. They were prepared to burn them so that they could not be sold, they could not recover any of their money, and the art which they described, could not be pursued as a result of selling such papers.

"counted..." - a verb peculiar to this verse meaning "reckoning item by item."

"found..." - reached a result of the reckoning of item by item.

"fifty thousand pieces of silver." - The country was ruled by the Romans but was predominantly Greek. Therefore Greek money would be considered. The drachma was approximately 24 to the £ so in Sterling, the value would be about £2,000. Taking into account the changed value of money, the value here must have been considerably more in current purchasing power.

#### Verse 20

"So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed."

"mightily..." - refers to the power and speed of its growth.

"grew..." - the word of God is always the same, so it did not grow in this case. But the growth here refers to the number of new adherents and the extent of the territory over which it spread. The tense is imperfect thus indicating "grew continually..."

"word of God..." - the LOGOS of God.

"prevailed..." - grew from strength to strength over all opposition.

This statement is a favourite of Luke. He has used it before to end a story or to introduce some storm of protest or some danger for the disciples which followed. See

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| Acts 6. 7. | Following the election of the seven. This was followed by the assassination of Stephen.          |
| 9. 31.     | The conversion of Saul; this is not followed by trouble.   |
| 12. 24.    | After the death of Herod. Paul starts on his first journey.                                      |
| 13. 49.    | After the speech at Antioch. The Jews became active against Paul and Barnabas and expelled them. |
| 16. 5.     | Paul at Derbe and Lystra. The journey continues.   |

#### Verse 21

"After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome."

"these things..." - the trouble with the exorcists.

"purposed..." - he determined on a course of action.

"in the spirit..." - in planning his course of action, he was guided by the Holy Spirit. This move was to be God's Will and not Paul's.

"when he had passed through..." - when he had made his preaching tour."

The plans considered at this time may have been communicated to the ecclesias at Corinth. See 2 Cor. 12. 14. and 13. 1. See also 2 Cor. 2. 1. The plan also appears to be mentioned in 1 Cor. 5/8. In regard to the latter reference where he states that he will remain at Ephesus until after Pentecost, this detail was changed through the opposition he experienced from the guild headed by Demetrius. In 2 Cor. 1. 16. he appears to change the route by going via Corinth first on his way to Macedonia.

"through Macedonia and Achaia..." - this detail does not include any visit to Corinth. He must have changed his mind about this later on.

"to go to Jerusalem..." - one of the objects was to take to Jerusalem the collections made by the brethren and sisters at Corinth. (1 Cor. 16. 1/9.) Collections for Jerusalem had also been made by other ecclesias as we read in Rom. 15. 25/26.

"After I have been there..." - this statement is linked with the one which follows.

"I must also see Rome." - combined with the statement "after I have been there..." it means that having come thus far, I cannot stop here but am obliged to go further even unto Rome. Although Paul was the great apostle to the Gentiles, he always looked for any opportunity to speak to Jews. There must have been a synagogue at Rome for him to be keen to go there. From Acts 2. 10. we know that there were strangers at Rome, who came to Jerusalem at Pentecost. These may have had some effect in Paul's decision which, although it was guided by the Holy Spirit, nevertheless was taken by Paul. From Acts 28. 17. we know that there was a body of Jews there when Paul eventually got to Rome.

Verse 22

"So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season."

"he sent into..." - lit. "having sent into..."

"Macedonia..." - Luke does not state which Ecclesias were visited but it can be assumed that it was the Thessalonians and the Philippians. Therefore the men were sent to Thessally and Philippi.

"two of them that ministered unto him..." - two of his assistants in preaching the gospel. Their ministrations would include looking after necessaries of life such as food and shelter.

"Timotheus" - without a doubt the Timothy of 1 and 2 Timothy. The journey he is about to take may be that promised in Phil. 2. 19.

"Erastus..." - one would like to identify this man with the Erastus of Rom. 16. 23. who is there described as being the chamberlain of Corinth. He may not always have held this position which would tend to keep him at Corinth and prevent him from going to other places. From 2 Tim. 4. 20. we read that Erastus was of Corinth but in the passage before us, Luke does not give any hint as to where he came from and what he did. Perhaps Luke felt it was not important that we should know who he was and we are content to leave it that way. The name means "Beloved".

"he stayed..." - he continued. The meaning implies movement indicating that Paul moved about preaching here and there extending his work.

"for a season." - Gk. "For a time..." In English it should be "for some time" without saying how long.

Verse 23

"And the same time there arose no small stir about that way."

"And the same time..." - while Paul was making plans for future travels and preaching activity and while he was organising the sending away of Timothy and Erastus, trouble was brewing in Ephesus.

"there arose..." - it came to pass.

"no small stir..." - Gk. "a tumult not small..."

"that way..." - see notes to Acts 9. 2.

## Verse 24

"For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen;"

"For..." - this connects the stir or tumult reported in the previous verse with Demetrius.

"Demetrius..." - this is the Latin form of a Greek name "Demeter" which is the Greek name of the goddess Ceres. The name occurs again in 3 John 12. and attempts have been made to connect the two, assuming that the one-time vigorous opponent of Paul later became a friend of John. If there was anything to be gained by proving that the two are one and the same, Luke would have told us so it is better to disregard such possibilities and concentrate on Luke's story.

"a silversmith..." - one of a body of men who formed a guild of craftsmen working with silver. They made images of the goddess from silver and the sale of these was a lucrative source of income. With the growth of Christianity a percentage of his sales fell away, thus affecting his livelihood.

"silver shrines..." - these were not temples for worship but medals of the goddess to be used in temples during worship. They could also be used for worship away from the temple. The modern counterpart of this form of idol worship is the crucifix, or models of the Madonna and child.

"Diana..." - this is the Roman name. The original is the Greek name and it is Artemis, a Greek goddess. Her image was enshrined in the Temple at Ephesus and is supposed to have been a meteorite which survived a hot searing entry through the earth's atmosphere. It has the shape of a woman and has many breasts which are supposed to depict the bounteous character of nature.

"no small gain..." - much employment from which gain can be assumed.

## Verse 25

"Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth."

"called together..." - lit. "whom having gathered together..."

"workmen of like occupation..." - thus distinguishing between men employed by Demetrius and other men employed in the same industry.

"craft..." - translated in verse 24 as "gain..." and referring to the employment which provided the gain.

"our wealth." - this is not the only point to be made but it is an important one.

## Verse 26

"Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands:"

Having drawn the workmen's attention to the loss of business and wealth, Demetrius now turns to the religious and (to him) secondary aspect.

"ye see..." - you know from seeing for yourselves.

"ye hear..." - you hear from others who have travelled abroad.

"Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia..." - all the people not only of this city but of the whole province of Asia.

"this Paul..." - note the contempt of "this Paul".

"hath persuaded..." - lit. "having persuaded..."

"and turned away..." - "has misled..." that is to say, diverted them from their former faith.

"they be no gods which are made with hands." - see Acts 17. 24/25.

Verse 27

"So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth."

"craft..." - part of a whole. It refers to their part of the world which would lose a great deal in importance by the growth of Christianity. For use of the word translated as Craft here but meaning "part" see Acts 2. 10; In Acts 5. 2. is the meaning of part referring to part of the whole but not part of the world.

"to be set at nought;.." - to come into a state of being revealed for the apostacy it is. Demetrius did not mean it in this way but said that it could be brought into disrepute by the allegations which Paul had made.

"the temple...should be despised..." - once again Demetrius puts first things first in his approach. First thing to him is the livelihood, the money and the gain or employment. Then follows the loss of prestige of the work they do with a consequent loss in money. Finally, almost as a secondary thought, the temple is likely to be set at nought. One can almost imagine that to Demetrius, the setting at nought of the temple is a loss to his business rather than a loss to his system of worship.

"her magnificence..." - The temple was of long standing as a shrine for the Greek goddess. It had originally been built on a grand scale but was destroyed by fire in BC 356. It was replaced by a building which took 220 years to build. It was 425 feet in length and 220 feet in breadth having 127 Ionic columns of sixty feet in height. Each column had been donated by a king. To finance the building of the temple, cities in Asia had to contribute. The statues of male and female were painted in natural colour so as to make them look real.

"should be destroyed..." - the statues and temple were eventually destroyed and the greatest work of human hands was lost for all time. Modern sculpture has nothing to compare with this. To Demetrius, such destruction would be a dishonour to the goddess.

"all Asia and the world..." - an exaggeration if everyone is taken into account. But when regarded from the point of view that the worship of Artemis was followed all over the world, then the statement was true.

A modern counterpart is to be found in the Roman Catholic church which has wealth and grandeur of a magnificence to be seen to be believed. All the very greatest of Middle Age artists combined to adorn this church whose worship of Mary is so akin to the worship of Artemis and St. Peters Basilica at Rome takes the part of the temple of Artemis in ancient Ephesus.

Verse 28

"and when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians."

"when they heard (these sayings)..." - lit. "having heard..." the translators have supplied "these sayings" so the words are in italics.

"they were full of wrath,.." - lit. "and having become full of wrath."

"cried out.." - the tense is imperfect, therefore they continued to cry out.

"Great is Diana of the Ephesians." - Lit. "Great Artemis of Ephesians." The verb "is" is not in the original.

## Verse 29

"And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre."

Mob law now took over, hence Luke's apt description by the use of the word "confusion". Having been whipped up into a state of excitement, a mob must do something to dissipate the nervous energy thus built up. Shakespeare was aware of this characteristic of mob law and showed his knowledge when he put into the mouth of Mark Antony who had raised the crowd to a great state of excitement and indignation, the words,

"Now let it work: mischief thou art afoot,  
Take thou what course thou wilt!" (Julius Caesar, Act 3. Sc. 2.  
Lines 265/266

"Gaius..." - Greek form of the name "Caius" which was a common name in the Empire at that time. He was one of the seven travellers of Acts 20. 4. In 1 Cor. 1. 14. a Gaius is named but this is not necessarily the same! The Gaius of Rom. 16. 23. was a resident of Corinth. No one can be sure of the identity of the Gaius of 3 John 1.

"Aristarchus..." - This is the first mention of him. He was a native of Thessalonica (Acts 20. 4; and a companion of Paul on his hazardous ship journey. (Acts 27. 2.) Col. 4. 10/11. show that he was a converted Jew. His last appearance in the N.T. is in Philemon 24.

"companions in travel..." - fellowtravellers. One Greek word.

"the theatre." - In recent years since World War 2, the theatre has been excavated and has the character of all such theatres of astonishing acoustics, having been built in a perfect circle. If the speaker stands on the centre spot, the people on the topmost row of seats, although a long way from the speaker, can hear the noise as the speaker draws his next breath. It can hold a large number of people. The wonderful acoustics are largely due to the fact that all sound coming from the centre spot, moves towards the circumference where the listeners sit, and follow the track of radii. Therefore there is no bounce and no echo.

## Verse 30

"And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not."

"When Paul would have entered..." - lit. "Paul wishing to enter..."

"the disciples..." - these having been caught in the forward rush of people. These would be the converts from Ephesus. They showed concern for his safety. Paul by this time had addressed so many large crowds, that one more, even if much incensed, was not something to be feared in his estimation.

## Verse 31

"And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the theatre."

"certain of the chief of Asia..." - "some Asiarchs..." They were neither magistrates nor priests but were men who were chosen each year to conduct the sacrificial services and the games held in honour of the goddess. They derived the name of their title from the province in which they were elected. Thus we get Cypriarchs, Syriarchs, Lydiarchs etc.,

"which were his friends..." - it is difficult to understand how officials charged with the conduct of the sacrificial services to Artemis could be friends of Paul. This pays tribute to the character of Paul who did not preach in secret and who came into contact with men of every walk of life, from the highest to the lowest.

"sent unto him..." - probably sent messengers to ask him not to expose himself to danger.

"desiring him..." - Bullinger describes the meaning of the word "desire" as "to use every kind of speaking to which is meant to produce a particular effect." Lexicon Page 218. No. 4.

### Verse 32

"Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together."

Luke's report here is accurate and clever. When Demetrius made his speech, he could not have addressed more than 100 people, unless he had an exceptionally loud voice. As the crowd rushed along to the theatre, many people would join them to see what the commotion was all about. Then when the shouting in praise of Artemis continued, they would join in the shouting, in full belief that Artemis was indeed great. Having reached the theatre and taken their seats, they would all be talking at once, probably asking each other what it was all about. As Luke says, some cried one thing, and some another. He states that the assembly was confused and adds,

"the more part knew not..." - most of the people did not know why they had come together.

Luke now shows that he knows the character of mob psychology. Any speaker now taking control of the unruly meeting could sway the mob's thinking along any channel which would seem to them to be reasonable. Any description of events following Demetrius' speech which differed much from what Luke now records would seem to be unreal. This is human character as it really is.

### Verse 33

"And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people."

"Alexander..." - since the days of Alexander the Great, the name has been very popular so there were many Alexanders to choose from. Whether this was the Alexander of 2 Tim. 4. 14. is impossible to say. Nor is it of much importance.

"multitude..." - from a small body of men addressed by Demetrius, it had now grown to a multitude.

"the Jews putting him forward..." - The Jews did this out of fear for their own safety. Since Paul was a Jew, repercussions might come upon them. It would be better to put forward a scapegoat and save themselves from harm. The charitable view is that Alexander was a good speaker and could have made an explanation of how Christians differed from Jews. It would appear from the next verse that there is some support for this view as the mob were defending themselves against Christians and not against Jews.

"beckoned with the hand..." - raised his hand to silence them.

"made his defence..." - "defence" here is not used in the modern sense of defence against physical attack but is similar to the "apology" made by Stephen which, in the true sense of the word, is "explanation".

## Verse 34

"But when they knew he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians."

"when they knew..." - lit, "knowing that..." They knew probably, from appearance or perhaps he was a well-known character.

"all with one voice..." - taking up the rhythm of the phrase would make it less strenuous for each person.

The cry "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians" was shouted out more as a defence of their belief that Artemis really was what they said, than as an exhibition of their zeal. The repetition of the Rosary by some these days is similar. They have been taught to repeat certain phrases and do so without being urged by their understanding or their zeal to say such things. No doubt they believe what is said but their belief does not induce them to say it. The repetition is done because it is considered to be the proper thing to do. Jesus warned his followers against "vain repetitions" as the heathens do. (Matt. 6. 7.)

## Verse 35

"And when the townclerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter?"

"the townclerk..." - the secretary of the city. Under Roman Law, Ephesus had been granted the rights of a free city with power to retain its own democratic municipal senate of leading citizens who managed the city. Visitors to the excavated city of Ephesus are shown the "townclerk's office" but it is doubtful whether this was indeed his office. Gk. means "a scribe".

"appeased..." - "quieted..." He did this by appearing in his robes of office.

"the people..." - once the people had quietened down, they were no longer a mob or rabble. They could listen to a speech in silence.

"Ye men of Ephesus..." - lit. "Ephesians!"

"what man....knoweth not..." - rhetorical form of interrogation.

"worshipper..." - "temple keeper..."

"the great goddess Diana..." - using the words shouted out by the mob. The word "goddess" does not appear in the original Greek but the translators and editors of this portion of Scripture have not used italics.

"the image..." - see notes to verse 24. This is a common superstition amongst primitive or pagan people. Pliny and other writers of this age stated that there was a wooden image of Diana at Ephesus and that it was old enough to have survived several restorations of the Temple. That there had been an actual image which came as a meteorite is highly doubtful.

The modern counterpart of the fallen image from heaven is to be found in the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ who is supposed to have existed in heaven before he was born and to have come down literally from heaven. There is no support for such a myth in Scripture although many passages are distorted in meaning to "prove" it.

Any religion which has to rely upon miraculous things or happenings of the nature of a fallen image has little to commend it. God does not manifest His Plan and Purpose to mankind in that manner.



The reference to the image having fallen from Jupiter shows clever and quick thinking on the part of the town clerk. He had heard of the criticism by Paul that God is not worshipped in temples made by hands. This would be a very hard statement to refute so he thought of the image superstition and showed that Paul's statement does not really matter because the image which was worshipped was in the temple and could be seen by all who entered the temple for worship. In this way, he restored their confidence in their goddess.

## Verse 36

"Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and do nothing rashly."

"these things cannot be spoken against..." - the things concerning the city of Ephesus. Thus the Town clerk restored their pride in their city. He also restored their pride in themselves as citizens of such an illustrious city. It was true enough that the things mentioned could not be spoken against. It was true that all the world knew of the importance of Ephesus as a guardian of the image of Artemis. All the world knew that the people of Ephesus worshipped the image which, men said, had fallen down from Jupiter. There is nothing wrong in all this. All the world did indeed know such things. Nevertheless, although the Town Clerk did not say so, the mere saying of these things does not make them true. The majority are not necessarily right in their beliefs. In fact, the evidence of history and the Bible story is that the majority are usually wrong and it is the minority that is right.

"ye ought to be quiet..." - "to be quiet" is the passive participle of the verb "appeased" at the beginning of verse 35. The Latin Vulgate uses the word "sedatos" from which is derived the English "sedate" which gives the idea of self-control.

"do nothing rashly." - Do not do anything hastily and without consideration of the consequences. If they were the people of an illustrious city which had the respect of the rest of the world, then they should behave in a manner suiting to citizens of such a city.

## Verse 37

"For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess."

"these men..." - Gaius and Aristarchus. See verse 29. The word "hither" should be omitted because it is not in the original. The R.V. has "hither" in italics; the R.S.V. has "here" and the Afrikaans version omits it altogether, saying "Want julle het hierdie manne gebring,..." (For you have brought these men...) The Afrikaans version is more powerful as it has reference to place and also to the manner of getting them there. This accentuates the rashness of which the Town clerk is complaining.

"robbers of churches..." - Gk. "temple robbers". Under pagan law, "temple robbery" (sacrilege) was forbidden by law and was a criminal offence. Blasphemy or the use of insulting language against the god or goddess, was also an indictable offence. The jewels and precious metals connected with the temple were considerable and were subject to the risk of being stolen. Also the wealthy people of the city used to deposit their wealth and treasures in the temple for safer keeping than was afforded by their homes. The Christian converts would not rob churches although there is a hint in Rom. 2. 22. that some had been guilty of this crime of sacrilege.

"blasphemers..." - using insulting language concerning the goddess. The two offences mentioned in this verse cover wrong-doing by deed and wrong-doing by word of mouth.

There is an exhortation here regarding the true Christian attitude to the unbelieving churches. One should not indict them severely unless one is sure of one's own impeccable behaviour. Resting on one's laurels is foolish as Paul

points out in his epistle to the Romans chapter 2 verses 17/23. One can achieve little by criticising others. It is better to show how correct is the proper behaviour by quoting Scripture and leave the faults of other churches to supply their own condemnation.

## Verse 38

"Therefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another."

"the craftsmen which are with him..." - not only those craftsmen who are with him personally at this meeting but also those who were on his side in this matter, whether they are here or not.

"matter..." - LOGOS, not the Divine Plan and Purpose but man's purpose in bringing the indictment,

"the law is open..." - see margin "the court days are kept". Such courts were held in the agora. See note to Acts 17. 19. under "Areopagus". See also Acts 16. 19. under "market place".

"deputies..." - "proconsuls..." Governors of an imperial province such as Asia. The use of the plural here is difficult to explain unless one assumes that proconsuls from other provinces then visiting Ephesus were called in to help. It may mean that there is an unbroken succession of proconsuls so that the city is never without a governor.

## Verse 39

"But if ye inquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly."

"other matters..." - What the Town clerk is pointing out is that if they required a decision on any other matter falling outside the jurisdiction of the ruler referred to, then it should be decided in a lawful assembly and not by riotous means.

"lawful assembly." - this is an important point in view of the statement of the next verse. An assembly was a meeting of properly elected persons to conduct a lawful meeting. The strict requirement of "lawful" was important because the Romans who were the ultimate rulers of the empire at that time, were extremely nervous about any gathering, riotous or other, which could in any way be regarded as being subversive and likely to be construed as being in opposition to Roman rule. The Romans had determined which were lawful and which were unlawful assemblies.

## Verse 40

"For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse."

The Town clerk now points out a further danger, namely, that not only the present assembly but the whole community (we) are likely to be called to account for what had happened. Assembling in large numbers had been forbidden by the Romans. In addition, the Romans had forbidden any form of uproar.

"there being no cause..." - there was no valid reason for their having assembled in that riotous manner.

"concourse." - The same word is used in Acts 23. 12. where certain Jews had BANDED themselves together for a seditious purpose against Paul.

Verse 41

"And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly."

"And when he had thus spoken..." - "And these having said..."

"he dismissed..." - Gk. "he let them go..."

This incident brought to a close Paul's missionary work at Ephesus. From here on, the historical record by Luke reports his journey to Macedonia. The Commentators close Paul's work at verse 20 of chapter 19 and consider the riot as an interlude between the finish of his work at Ephesus and the start of his journey to Macedonia. With this view we disagree because Paul had sent Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia in advance of his coming and during the interval while they were on their way he continued to go more deeply into Asia, preaching the gospel. (See notes to verse 22 under the heading "he stayed".) This being the case, Paul's work did not stop at verse 20 but continued right through until the riot just recorded precipitated his departure. The satisfactory conclusion to the riotous objection by Demetrius and his friends and associates to Paul and his work, brought a finishing touch to the missionary campaign which had lasted for two years.

In view of the fore-going, we consider that Paul's work in Asia and Ephesus in particular, came to an end at the last verse of chapter 19.

Some commentators consider that the riot at Ephesus which brought so much danger to Paul's life, was referred to by him in 1 Cor. 15. 32. where he asks, "If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not?..." If Paul had actually fought with the real beasts, he would not have survived. He must therefore, be expressing himself metaphorically.



## THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

### Chapter 20

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#### The Third Missionary Journey - continued

#### Paul's Missionary Tour of Macedonia and Greece.

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The verses which follow, record the journey through Macedonia and Achaia which forms part of Paul's main journey to Jerusalem. Paul is now putting into effect his intention to go back to Jerusalem which we read about in Acts 19. 21. He took this long way round because he had sent Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia (Acts 19. 22.) From there they were to go to Corinth, of which city Erastus was the treasurer. (Rom. 16. 23.) For the intention to send them to Corinth, see 1 Cor. 4. 17. and 16. 10. Paul's stay in Asia was cut short by the riot at Ephesus. He had had a very narrow escape indeed and was to refer to this in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians. See 2 Cor. 1. 8. The reason for Paul not visiting Corinth at this time may have been due to the urgency with which he left Asia. He may not have had time to wait for a suitable vessel but took the first available one which made a coastal journey to Troas. Having arrived at Troas, Paul found conditions for preaching were encouraging, for he wrote, "a door was opened unto me of the Lord," (2 Cor. 2. 12.) Nevertheless, things did not go smoothly for Paul because he was anxious about the ecclesia at Corinth and eagerly awaited the arrival of Titus for news of his friends. When Titus did not come, Paul was exceedingly unhappy. (2 Cor. 2. 13.) Having waited in vain for Titus, Paul left Troas for Macedonia. Eventually Titus came to Macedonia and great was Paul's joy. (2 Cor. 7. 6.)

During this trying time, Paul had one anxiety upon another because the Judaisers who had caused him so much trouble with the Galatians, went to Corinth and undermined Paul's authority there. The second epistle to the Corinthians from chapter 10 onwards shows Paul's agitation over this development and his humility when he acknowledges his shortcomings and weaknesses. (2 Cor. 11. 6.) Paul preached throughout the province and may have gone as far as Illyrioum. (See Rom. 15. 19.) Luke does not give details of Paul's journey on this tour but the details may be filled in from a study of the epistles, especially 2 Corinthians which is a kind of diary of events and stirring comments on his fears and anxieties. This information, as slender as it is, may help in our understanding of Luke's record to which we shall now turn.

#### Verse 1

"And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia."

"after the uproar was ceased,.. " - It is not definitely stated that the uproar precipitated Paul's departure, nor is it stated how long after the uproar Paul set sail. There is no indication of Paul having done any further preaching after the riot, so it can be safely inferred that he did not waste much time in being on his way to other fields.

"called unto him the disciples..." - Paul did not suddenly leave but planned his departure carefully, and called a meeting of the disciples.

"embraced them,.. " - did not put his arms around them but greeted them. (Afrikaans version has "gegroet" - "greeted") The greeting carries a sense of friendly welcome. There is another Greek usage which means "took leave of" or "bade farewell". Both meanings could apply here - greeting when they answered his call, and farewell when he left them.

"departed..." - lit. "went out". See Acts 16. 36 and 40.

"for to go into Macedonia." as he had planned before. See Acts 19. 22.

## Verse 2

"And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece,"

This verse which is incomplete, finds its end in verse 3.

"when he had gone over those parts..." - lit. "having gone through those parts." His journey through Macedonia would include Philippi, Berea and Thessalonica and appears from Rom. 15. 19. to have penetrated as far as Illyricum. Paul was collecting donations for the poor at Jerusalem and would go to as many ecclesias as he could. This unhappy time in Paul's life is mentioned in 2 Cor. 8. and at verse 16 we read that Titus volunteered to go to Corinth. The party of travellers sent "the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches;" this "brother" being thought to have been Luke. It is also supposed that Titus was Luke's brother. (See 2 Cor. 12. 18.)

"had given them much exhortation,..." - this is similar to verse 1 which records Paul giving an exhortation or greeting to the disciples by way of a farewell message.

"came into Greece," - thus his intention of Acts 19. 21. was fulfilled. "Greece" here means "Achaia" which was a Roman province, in which was Corinth.

## Verse 3

"And there abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia."

"three months..." - Walker considers that these months were December, January and February. (Page 432) It was at this time that Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans. (Rom. 16. 1/2.) and sent it by Phebe who attended the Cenchræa ecclesia. When Paul wrote this epistle, he recorded that Timothy and Luke sent greetings to the ecclesia at Rome (Rom. 16. 21.) and that he had for many years desired to go there. He planned to call at Rome on his way to Spain. (Rom. 15. 23/24.) These three months were during A.D. 56 to 57.

"laid wait for him,..." - lit. "being formed him a plot against by the Jews..." (Diag.) Luke does not record what the plot was nor how Paul came to know about it. He may well have been Divinely warned.

"as he was about to sail into Syria,..." - he had planned to sail to Syria where he would, no doubt, visit Antioch. Then he could fulfil his intention of going to Jerusalem. But having discovered the plan to destroy him, he suddenly changed his plans and decided to return by the longer route through Macedonia and thence via the coastal route, by-passing Ephesus. The plot could have been to throw him overboard at night. This would not have been difficult on a crowded ship.

## Verse 4

"And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus."

"accompanied..." - Gk. "followed..." That they "followed" shows that they were personal attendants and that Paul was the leader and director of the party.

"into..." - Gk. "as far as..." That is to say, they did not accompany him all the way to Jerusalem. Some mss. omit this word. Some did go all the way.

"Sopater..." - short for "Sosipater". He is mentioned in Rom. 16. 21.

"of Berea;..." - Berea is in Macedonia. See Acts 17. 10/12.

"Aristarchus..." - see note to Acts 19. 29.

"Secundus..." - this is his only appearance in Scripture and nothing is known of him. He might be one of four brothers, the first of whom is unknown. Since his name means "Second", the other brothers may be "Tertius" meaning "Third" (Rom. 16. 22.) and "Quartus" meaning "Fourth". (Rom. 16. 23.)

"Gaius..." - see note to Acts 19. 29.

"Timothy" - he came from Lystra.

"Tychicus..." - a faithful fellow-worker with Paul. He appears in Ephes. 6. 21; and in the subscription to this epistle. Col. 4. 7. as well as in the subscription to that epistle. 2 Tim. 4. 12; Titus 3. 12.

"Trophimus..." - He was with Paul in Jerusalem and was closely connected with the tumult there when the Jews considered that Paul had taken an Ephesian into the temple. In 2 Tim. 4. 20. we learn that he had been left at Miletus because he was sick. He and Tychicus came from Asia (probably from Ephesus - see Acts 21. 29.) and the indication is that they did not start from Corinth but joined the party in Asia. The next verse to this one we are studying is thought to refer to the two last names on the list of verse 4. Had it not been for the plot, they would most likely have been picked up at Ephesus. Instead they joined the party at Troas. (see next verse.)

No representative came from Achaia. Ramsay suggests that Paul was given the contribution to take to Jerusalem. All other travelers carried the contributions from the places named with them. No name is assigned to Corinth in Achaia. Some think that Titus may have been entrusted with the money but he is not mentioned in Acts. This may be due to Luke's humility and self-effacement if Titus was indeed his brother. See 2 Cor. 8. 6.

All these men carried a collection from their ecclesia. For collections for this great donation to Jerusalem, see 1 Cor. 16. 1/4; Rom. 15. 25/27.

Verse 5

"These going before tarried for us at Troas."

"These..." - some commentators think this refers to the seven travellers mentioned in verse 4. Others think it refers only to the last two named - Tychicus and Trophimus.

"for us..." - here is the re-entry of Luke into the narrative. This lends support to the thought that Luke and Titus waited here because Luke had previously been left at Macedonia. He would now find it much easier to wait at Troas than go to Asia to join the party there.

Verse 6

"And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days."

"We..." - At least Luke and Paul who had now got as far as Philippi where Luke joined him.

"sailed away..." - lit. "sailed out..." This compound verb is peculiar to the Acts. See 13. 4; 14. 26; 20. 15; 27. 1. The A.V. and R.S.V. have "sailed away" but the Diaglott has "sailed out" and the Afrikaans version says "uitgeseil" (sailed out).

"From Philippi..." - Paul's first visit to this city was recorded in Acts 16. 12.

"the days of unleavened bread..." - the days after the Passover, lasting a week. See Acts 12. 3. Paul stayed there probably because there would be a

concentration of Jews there to whom he could preach. It is also possible that Luke, whose city this was, was there as well with Paul while the others waited at Troas. Paul would not keep the Passover by giving it a Christian character. His words to the Corinthians are plain enough. (1 Cor. 5. 6/8.)

"in five days..." - At this time of the year (mid-April) the winds would be contrary which explains why they took five days as compared with the two days of a previous occasion, sailing the other way. (Acts 16. 11/12.)

"we abode seven days." - These details are typical of Luke and signify his joining the party. The time lag here would very likely be due to the delay in transshipment. The on-carrying vessel would not sail immediately they arrived.

#### THE INCIDENT AT TROAS.

#### Verse 7

"And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight."

"the first day of the week..." - this seems to have been the usual Sunday observance by Paul and the early Christians, for we find a further reference to it in 1 Cor. 16. 2. In these early days, the Christians followed the Jewish reckoning of starting their days at sunset. Therefore the sabbath, or seventh day of the week would end at sunset on Saturday, and the Christian body would then hold their service starting after sunset on Saturday. This would explain how Paul's speech lasted until midnight.

Bruce however, ("Commentary" page 408, footnote No. 25.) states that Luke is not referring to the Jewish way of counting but to the Roman method of taking days from midnight to midnight. He says that the usual Christian practice was to hold a service on Sunday evening and it appears that the meeting here was held at that time of the day. It is to be noted that later on in this verse, Luke says that the time intended for departure was "on the morrow". That would be break of day, so here is further evidence that the meeting was during the evening.

"to break bread..." - the commentators seem to be reluctant to admit that this refers to "breaking of bread". Many would much rather it was a meal. It was probably both because in those days, the early Christians used to meet at each others' houses, have a meal and then "break bread." (1 Cor. 11. 20/22.)

"Paul preached unto them..." - imperfect tense, therefore "continued to preach". This indicates that he gave a long lecture.

"on the morrow,..." - "on the next day..." which is Monday morning.

"continued his speech..." - "prolonged his speech..."

"until midnight." - It was not unusual for the early Christians to keep awake until all hours of the night. See Acts 16. 25. for Paul and Silas singing hymns at this hour. The word "midnight" occurs four times in the N.T. as under:-

Mark 13. 35.	-	Midnight watching;
Luke 11. 5.	-	Midnight entreating.
Acts 16. 25.	-	Midnight praying and praising.
Acts 20. 7.	-	Midnight preaching.

The "midnight" of Matt. 25. 6. is a parable and not an incident.

#### Verse 8

"And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together."



"many lights..." - Gk. "lamps..." This word includes torches, candles and lanterns. The English "lights" includes any source of artificial light without describing the source. Therefore in view of the wide Greek usage, the English "lights" is a good translation.

"upper chamber..." - This was the chief room in an ancient house of those days. It was the normal place in which to entertain large numbers. See Acts 1. 13; 9. 37, and 39.

There has been some discussion amongst commentators concerning the use of lights by Christians. They ask, Was it a copy of the Jewish practice of using lights? Did the Christians use lights so as to avoid any suspicion as to their meetings? Did the many lights cause the drowsiness of Eutychus? Does it explain why the fall was seen immediately? These questions are of no importance at all. Alexander feels that Luke mentioned the lights as an indication that he was an eye-witness of the remarkable miracle which was about to follow. There could be no argument that the lad was not dead. There were so many lights about that all could see what happened.

"they were gathered together." - some old MSS have "we were gathered together" indicating that Luke was there to see for himself.

#### Verse 9

"And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead."

"window..." - With 2 Cor. 11. 33. this word appears on only these two occasions. It would not be a glass window but would just be a slit in the wall to supply ventilation.

"Eutychus..." appears only here in Scripture. His name means "fortunate" "prosperous".

"fallen into a deep sleep..." - the present participle indicates a gradual falling into sleep as if the young man had been fighting against sleep and had finally been overcome.

"fell down from the third loft..." - The roof or the highest point in the house. There was the ground floor, the upper room and above that, the flat roof, just below which was the window vent at which he was sitting.

"was taken up dead." - This is Luke's account. Being a medical man, he would certify that the young man was dead. This is added to prevent any argument that he was not subsequently raised from the dead.

#### Verse 10

"and Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him."

"went down..." - lit. "having gone down..."

"fell on him..." - This is what Elijah did to the widow's son. See 1 Kings 17. 21. This is how Elisha dealt with the dead son of the Shunamite woman. 2 Kings 4. 34. Paul now joins the Bible elite with this act.

"embracing..." - a different word from that used in verse 1. It means simply to gather in the arms.

"Trouble not yourselves..." - lit. "Stop making a fuss!" R.V. "Make ye no ado!" R.S.V. "Do not be alarmed!" Afrikaans version, "Moenie so te kere gaan nie,.." (an idiomatic expression meaning "Don't make a fuss.") On a previous occasion, Jesus had put a stop to the weeping and wailing of the mourners

See Mark 5. 39. Peter also put the mourners out before he performed the miracle of raising Dorcas from the dead. (Acts 9. 40.)

"His life is in him." - cf. "the damsel is not dead but sleepeth" (Acts 5. 39.)

#### Verse 11

"When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed."

"When he therefore was come up again,.. " - the Greek text has "Having come up and having broken bread, and having tasted,.."

This portion of verse 11 shows that Paul had stayed with these people for the purpose of exhorting them, teaching them and joining them in the "breaking of bread" ceremony. This is in keeping with his exhortation in 1 Cor. 11. 23/29. and verse 25 which says "as oft as ye do it,.."

"talked a long while,.. " - he "conversed" showing that it was not a one man talk but a discussion in which all joined. "a long while" means "for a sufficient time" probably to answer all questions.

"break of day,.. " - "broad daylight,.. " That means that they didnt stop at daybreak but continued until the day was bright, the essence of the word means "brightness".

"so he departed." - "so he went out,.. " See verse 1 where the same word is used.

#### Verse 12

"And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted."

"they brought the young man,.. " - this statement is to be regarded in conjunction with "so he departed" of the previous verse. "He departed" means "he went out" not only of the room, or the house, but also of the city, his purpose being to join the ship. Before the ship sailed, "they brought the young man" for Paul to see.

"not a little,.. " - Greek figure of speech called "meiosos" or "litotes" which uses a negative form to accentuate a very positive meaning.

'comforted." - relieved from the great shock they had suffered.

This incident is now closed and Paul goes on his way. Luke has interrupted his narrative to give us this story and for a very good reason. The raising of the young man from the dead was an outstanding event and would be so in any age. The effect it had amongst enthusiastic believers, and they must have been enthusiastic to listen to and discuss with Paul all night until well into the next morning, was not to preach the gospel which they understood, being believers, but to prove beyond all doubt that Paul was indeed an apostle and that God was with him. This being the case, we have an explanation why Paul held a "breaking of bread" between the time of resurrection and the discussions which followed. The establishment of Paul as an apostle would lend great power to his preaching and wonderful authority to his voice. Therefore they discussed problems as Luke indicates. Once again Luke shows himself to be the careful writer, never wasting words and always giving us matter which is relevant to his theme, namely, the preaching of the Gospel. By mentioning this incident, Luke establishes the authority of Paul and his apostleship, and shows by the miracle, a sign of what Jesus will do when he returns to this earth.

#### Verse 13

"And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so he had appointed, minding himself to go afoot."

"we..." - Luke and the others carriers of donations for Jerusalem. Paul was not amongst these.

"went before to ship..." - "going before to the ship..." that is, "we went to the ship before Paul did..." (Paul having other things to do.)

"Assos..." - This little port was on the south west coast of Mysia in what is now "Turkey-in-Asia. It is south of Troas and about 20 miles from it. The road connecting Troas with Assos makes a shorter journey than going by sea because the land juts out into the Aegean to form a cape. Directly south of Assos is the island of Lesbos and in the south east corner of the island is the port of Mitylene.

"so had he appointed..." - lit. "for so it was having been arranged.." That is to say, Paul had so arranged or planned.

"minding..." - intending..."

"to go afoot." - to walk instead of to go by sea. This is the use of the verb which states "go by foot" as a distinct difference from going by sea. Why Paul preferred to go by land instead of by sea is not stated but it could be that he had outlying ecclesias to visit. See final note to verse 3.

#### Verse 14

"And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene."

"met..." - the Greek verb means "to join together". Other uses are "conferred" (Acts 4. 15); "encountered" (Acts 17. 18.); "helped" (Acts 18. 27.) The sense here is not that the meeting was fortuitous but that Paul met them by arrangement so that all were together when they met.

"Mitylene." - The capital of Lesbos, the island described in verse 13 under the sub-heading "Assos..."

#### Verse 15

"and we sailed thence, and came the next day over against Chios; and the next day we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogyllium; and the next day we came to Miletus."

"And we sailed thence..." - lit. "and thence having sailed away..." A different verb from that in verse 6 which has "sailed out". This is "sailed away."

"Chios..." - An island directly south of Lesbos and separated from the mainland by a narrow channel through which Paul sailed. The modern name is Scio.

"Samos..." - an island separated from the mainland by a channel. It is S.S.W. of Chios. The verb "arrived at..." in the Diag. is given as "touched at" but Ramsay states that there is classical precedents for translating as "we struck across the sea to Samos." In passing south from Chios to Samos, Paul would sail across the wide entrance into the bay where Ephesus was situated.

"tarried..." - lit. "having remained at..."

"Trogyllium;.." - not mentioned in the R.V. and R.S.V. It is supposed to have been a town on the coast S.W. off Ephesus. It is not given in the best maps. Bruce thinks that the place is genuine and that (quoting Ramsay) the ship could not get past the promontory because the wind had fallen, so they spent the night there. (See "Commentary" page 410.)

"Miletus..." - a Port on the mainland in Ionia near the Carian border, It is about 30 miles south of Ephesus and on the same latitude as the island of Patmos to the west.

## Verse 16

"For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost."

"had determined..." - the verb here implies more than a resolution. It indicates a decision reached after careful deliberation. See the use of the word in Acts 3. 13; 25. 25; 27. 1; 1 Cor. 2. 2; 2 Cor. 2. 1; Titus 3. 12; also Acts 15. 19, where the translation is "sentence" - that is, a decision after a deliberation.

"to sail by..." - "to sail past..." without calling in at Ephesus. The reason why Paul decided not to call at Ephesus is given later in this verse.

"because he would not spend the time in Asia:.." - The Diaglott gives a word for word translation thus:- "so that not it might be for him to spend time in the Asia..." A more correct interpretation than is given in the A.V. would be "so that he would not be forced against his will to spend time in Asia". The R.V. says "that he might not have to spend time in Asia.." and the R.S.V. also gives this paraphrase. The Afrikaans version giving "sodat hy nie in Asie tyd sou verloor nie,..." (so that he would not lose time in Asia) is probably what Paul had in mind but it does not accurately give the sense. The R.V. and R.S.V. version is better.

"for he hasted..." - the action is continuous. Lit. "he was hastening." The Greek word "speudo" from which we get the English "speed" and the Afrikaans "spoed" does not indicate a short time in getting from one place to another as with miles per hour, but indicates impatience and earnestly desiring. The use in the N.T. is found in Luke 2. 16; 19. 5; 19. 6; Acts 22. 18; 2 Pet. 3. 12; Not all these references indicate speed. Some show an earnest looking for. The sense here supports the Afrikaans translation of "not wanting to lose time", and shows what reason Paul had in mind. He knew well enough that if he went ashore at Ephesus, he would visit as many ecclesias as he could and may be induced to stay with some of them and so lose time and arrive at Jerusalem late for the day of Pentecost.

"day of Pentecost." - See note to Acts 2. 1.

## Verse 17

"And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church."

"he sent to Ephesus..." - the quickest route would have been to cross the bay by boat and walk from there to Ephesus, the total distance being about 35 miles. To go by land all the way would be very much further. The journey here suggested could have been completed in a day.

"the elders..." - the presbyters. These were the leading brethren. The commentators are disagreed as to where the presbyters were summoned from. Some say the whole district of Asia and others maintain just from the city of Ephesus, as there was no time to summon others from afar. Verse 25 indicates that the brethren who listened to Paul came from the whole province of Asia. It was necessary in view of Paul's urgency, that they should come to him rather than that he should go to them and be delayed. It would be unlike Paul to summon only the nearest brethren because he was so thorough in all that he did. There is little doubt that the brethren were summoned from the Asian ecclesias and that Paul waited until they were all there before making his speech.

## PAUL'S PARTING SPEECH TO THE ELDERS OF EPHEBUS.

## Verse 18

"And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,"

This verse is incomplete in itself because the opening address continues to the end of verse 21. The structure of the speech is as follows:-

- (1) Verses 18 - 21 Appeal to the elders' memory of Paul's faithful and continuous service to them.
- (2) Verses 22 - 27 a warning that his troubles had merely begun and that much tribulation awaited him. They would not see him again in this life.
- (3) Verses 28 - 31 An appeal to resist those who would introduce false doctrines into the ecclesia. This was a warning of the great apostacy which was to arise.
- (4) Verses 32 He commends them to God's care.
- (5) Verses 33 - 35 Paul appeals to them to follow his example. In verse 35 he concludes with a statement by Jesus which is not quoted elsewhere in Scripture.
- (6) Verse 36 His final prayer is mentioned but not recorded.
- (7) Verse 37 The tragic parting.

"Ye know,.. " - "You are witnesses to my work.." Paul here, makes reference to the malicious reports which had been circulated by his enemies about him. In other words, "You brethren have seen for yourselves what work I have done and how sincere I have been. Contrast this with what has been said of me by others who have not seen, or having seen, have distorted." Paul referred to this appeal to knowledge in other works. See 1 Thess. 2. 1; also verses 5 and 10; 3. 3; 4. 2; 2 Thess. 2. 5; 3. 7; Gal. 4. 13; 1 Cor. 3. 16; Phil. 4. 15;

"first day that I came into Asia,.. " - "first day that I entered into Asia..." See Acts 21. 2; 25. 1; for the use of the verb.

"I have been with you at all seasons," - Paul makes the point that they had been with him at all times since his first entry into Asia until he left, so that there was not a time when there were no witnesses to the manner of his work amongst them. This was proof enough that the reports about him were false. Paul had a prophetic vision of the effect of this opposition because it was to take another form in the years to come when false teachers would arise teaching things he, Paul, had not taught.

#### Verse 19

"Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:"

"Serving..." - Gk. "douleuo" meaning "serve as a bond slave". See Rom. 12. 11; Titus 3. 3. for "serving"; Gal. 4. 8; Ephes. 6. 7. for 1 Tim. 6. 2; for "service"; Rom. 14. 18; for "serveth"; Phil. 2. 22; for "served". John 8. 33; Acts 7. 7; Rom. 8. 15, 21; Gal. 4. 9, 24, 25; Gal. 5. 1; Heb. 2. 15; for "bondage".

In the fore-going uses of the word, the idea of "bondage in service" can be seen. It is an exhortation to all members of the Household of Faith to consider themselves under bondage unto Christ, not free to do their own will, but to be ready at all times to serve the Lord in His Work. Their spare time is not their own. If spare time is used in the Lord's Service, the bond slaves are giving no more than their reasonable service. See the parable given by the Master in Luke 17. 7/10. Relating all this to Paul and his work to which he now refers, he worked very hard indeed without regard for self yet in all that, he did no more than was his duty to do.

"humility of mind,.. " - Gk. "lowliness". Paul was very disturbed about the weakness of his bodily presence (2 Cor. 10. 10.) People coming into contact with the True Christian Believer are inclined to regard their humility

as servility, thus putting a burden upon the religious person. Paul received his great example from the humility of Christ and referred to it in his epistles. See 2 Cor. 10. 1; Phil. 2. 1/8; Ephes. 4. 2; See also Col. 2. 18, 23; 3. 12; (humbleness of mind). If, through one's humility, one is cast down, be sure that comfort will come from God. (2 Cor. 7. 6.) For "humbleness of mind" see also 1 Cor. 2. 3;

"And with many tears,.. " - most texts give just "tears" omitting the word "many". The R.V. and R.S.V. omit "many" and the Afrikaans, unreliable for once, has "baie tranen" (many tears).

Like all sincere, devout men, Paul could turn to tears quite easily. In verse 31 of this chapter, we find him shedding tears because of the danger to the Truth of the Word of God; he shed tears because of the tendency of the Corinthians to turn to false doctrines; (2 Cor. 2. 4.) and Phil. 3. 18. shows him shedding tears because some brethren were not walking as they should. From these references we find Paul very ready to shed tears when there was any departure from Truth and correct behaviour before God. If Paul could feel great sorrow when he learnt of any departure from truth and behaviour, we can be sure that the Lord will feel sorrow even more.

"and temptations,.. " - not temptations to sin but "trials" as the Greek word means, which led to a test of character. The idea is expressed in Jas. 1. 12; 1 Pet. 1. 6; 4. 12;

"the lying in wait of the Jews." - No detail is given as to the nature of these dangers and trials. Luke is recording the story of the spreading of Christianity amongst the Gentiles and is not writing a story giving the character of Paul. He has no intention of making a martyr out of Paul. All Luke does is record the fact that the Jews lay in wait for Paul to destroy him. See Acts 9. 24; 20. 3; 23. 30; See a reference to his dangerous existence as given in 1 Cor. 15. 30.

#### Verse 20

"And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house,"

"kept back nothing,.. " - the verb means "to draw back from timidity" and is often used thus in military operations. The verb also occurs in Gal. 2. 12; and Heb. 10. 38. Paul means that he kept back nothing from them which would in any way promote their spiritual well-being. He did not hold back anything as a poor soldier might withdraw his service.

"shewed you, and have taught you,.. " - two things which Paul did and which he claims he did not withhold from them. "shewed" - see Acts 19. 18. "told" Acts 16. 38; "declared" Acts 15. 4; "rehearsed" Acts 14. 27. In all these the sense is "to announce" or "proclaim the news". The second of these, namely, to teach, is found in Acts 4. 2; and verse 18; 5. 21. 25, 28 and 42; 11. 26; 15. 35; 18. 11, 25.

By expressing himself negatively in this manner, Paul is accentuating that which he did. "I kept back nothing" is a mild expression for "I gave you everything".

"publickly,.. " - in the synagogues where non-believers also heard.

"from house to house." Lit. "in houses" as opposed to "publickly".

Thus Paul claims to have given them everything he had to give and did so in the two proven methods, namely, in the synagogue and in private homes. The True Believers, in proclaiming the Gospel, have found no better methods than these two, the preaching of public lectures in their own halls and speaking to interested persons in their homes.

#### Verse 21

"Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

"Testifying..." - how the work of "testifying" was done, can be followed by referring to Acts 2. 40; 8. 25; 10. 42; 18. 5; 20. 23/24; 23. 11; 28. 23. Paul brought testimony from the Word of God to bear to show the Way of Salvation as it is in Christ Jesus.

"to the Jews,.." - in their synagogues.

"to the Greeks..." - in their homes. Both Jew and Greek, irrespective of race, were in need of Paul's message. Both were outside the covenants of promise, not having been baptised into Christ. The Jews could no longer rely upon fleshly descent from Abraham to bring them into the covenants of promise. What was necessary was a repentance from former misdeeds and a humble <sup>acceptance</sup> through baptism.

"repentance toward God..." - Paul's epistle to the Ephesians describes this more fully. He shows that the enmity between Jew and Greek had now been done away with by the sacrifice of Christ. Both could approach unto God through Jesus, the mediator. (Ephes. 2. 14/15.) Both were reconciled to God through the death of Jesus. (Ephes. 2. 16.) The Gentiles now could become fellow heirs with the Jews and share in the great covenants of promise by being in Christ. (Ephes. 3. 6. The "repentance" Paul spoke about required a different thought process and an abandonment of former ways. Such ways would be given up when passing through the water of baptism, for therein the old man of sin died. If all this were done, then those who were "strangers" (Ephes. 2. 12.) would be no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens. (verse 19.)

"faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." - Paul mentioned this "faith" in his epistle to the Ephesians in chapter 1 verses 12 to 23. This required a complete belief in that what God had promised, he was able also to perform. (Rom. 4. 21.) If the believer had implicit faith in the Divine Promises, he would mould his life accordingly and this would require a complete change in behaviour and in thoughts. One can never earn salvation but according to the measure of one's faith, so men and women would change their whole lives and conform to Divine precepts. No matter how much faith a person may have, if it is not manifested by a complete change of character of that person, it never becomes a true and living faith. If it is so accompanied, then it brings works and faith together in the same person. Faith induces works and works are induced by faith. Such faith implies implicit belief in that the Divine Promises concerning Jesus of Nazareth will be fulfilled.

#### Verse 22

"And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:"

Having completed his opening statement, Paul turns to the next theme, a warning of the troubles to come, this being tied up with a later warning of a great apostacy which was to destroy the True Faith in Ephesus, and reduce it to a trace in the rest of the world.

"And now..." - A common statement denoting the transition from one theme to another. See Acts 3. 17; 4. 29; 5. 38; 7. 34; 10. 5; 13. 11; 16. 37; 20. 32;

"behold,.." - introducing a surprise item to his listeners.

"I go bound in the spirit..." - lit. "having been bound I in the spirit to go to Jerusalem..." (Diag.) See Acts 19. 21. Paul felt that his going to Jerusalem was in God's Plan and Purpose and that nothing he could do could prevent his getting to Jerusalem. Just as he had on a former occasion been prevented by the Spirit (Power of God) from going to Asia, so now he was prevented again because it was in the Divine Purpose that he should go to Jerusalem.

"not knowing..." - what the Divine Purpose is in sending him to Jerusalem has not been revealed to him.

"the things that shall befall me there." - He must have had an idea that suffering would be his portion there. When Jesus went to Jerusalem for the last

time, he experienced suffering. Just as Jesus did not shirk from the Divine Will, so his servant and bond slave Paul, would not shirk either.

### Verse 23

"Save that the Holy Spirit witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me."

"save that..." - "Except that..."

"witnesseth in every city..." - lit. "spirit the holy every city witnesses to me..." (Diag.) As Paul went from city to city, he received knowledge by the Holy Spirit Power working in him that he could expect afflictions in Judea. This knowledge was most likely sent to try him. He was not found wanting in zeal and courage.

"saying..." - if an angel of God had spoken to him directly, no doubt that would have been recorded and Paul could not have said that the Holy Spirit spoke. That the Holy Spirit did speak would mean that he received the message by inward revelation.

"bonds..." - imprisonment.

"afflictions..." - Paul's attitude to these is described in 2 Cor. 12. 10.

Although Paul showed great courage in making this journey and was not only determined to go but hastened to get there, he was nevertheless very apprehensive about what was going to happen to him and asked the brethren in Rome to pray for him. See Rom. 15. 29/32.

"abide me..." - Margin has "wait for me".

### Verse 24

"But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

"none of these things move me..." - lit. "of no account I make..." In view of his concern regarding his personal safety which he mentioned to the believers at Rome, it would appear to be a contradiction for him to say that none of these things moved him. The prayers he asked for at Rome were not that he might simply be spared but that he might be spared so that he could come to them. (Rom. 15. 32.) His object then, in asking for prayers for his safety, was that he might continue in the Lord's work and go to Rome.

"neither count I my life dear unto myself..." - Paul shows his indifference in this statement. The word "dear" means "valuable". He put no value on his life except in so far as it was necessary for him so that he could do the Lord's work. He expressed this philosophy and attitude in Phil. 1. 21/24. He desired to live so that he could serve God and show many the way of salvation. Paul was not alone in this attitude towards the Lord's Work for we read of a similar indifference in Epaphroditus of Philippi. See Phil. 2. 25/30.

"so that I might finish my course..." - "so that..." is "provided that" Paul uses an illustration from the Olympic Games, using the figure of striving in a race to win a prize. To finish the course was an achievement. Paul used this figure when writing the following verses, 1 Cor. 9. 24/27; Phil. 3. 13/14; 2 Tim. 4. 7/8.

"with joy..." - the joy of victory and receiving a prize.

"the ministry..." - the service he has to render. The word is not to



be regarded as being the dignified office it is to-day with the Ministry. A minister in Paul's day was one who served God and was not regarded as a leader. The leader was Jesus, the minister was his servant and God was the Provider of the power and the promise of salvation.

"received of the Lord Jesus,..." - See Acts 9. 15; 26. 16/18; Paul again proves his apostleship and answers criticism in this connection. See his Epistle to the Galatians, chapter 1, verse. 1. also verses 11/12 of that chapter as well as verses 15/17.

"to testify..." - see note on the word "testifying" in verse 21 above.

"gospel of the grace of God." - the "grace of God" was the power of the Holy Spirit which was given to the apostles and early believers so that they could preach the gospel to a world riddled with paganism, magic, trickery, and a multiplicity of gods made by men's hands. This "grace" was given to Paul for the expressed purpose of enabling him to preach "the unsearchable riches of Christ". (Ephes. 3. 8.) The grace was given also, to enable the Gentiles to understand the mystery of the gospel which aforesaid was hidden but is now revealed "unto his holy apostles and prophets by the spirit". (Ephes. 3. 5. and verses 9 and 10.)

Verse 25

"And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the Kingdom of God, shall see my face no more."

"And now..." - see note to this under verse 22 above.

"behold,.." - introducing the element of surprise. They were to learn that they would never see him again as a preacher.

"I know that ye all..." - this statement leads commentators to believe that Paul was now addressing his remarks solely to those who were with him. Hitherto his remarks had been addressed to these men but concerned the ecclesias throughout Asia wherever they may be. Now Paul was narrowing his remarks to the men whom he had summoned and, inasmuch as he addresses them as "ye all, among whom I have gone preaching..." it is thought that there were more men here than just those representatives from Ephesus. If Paul had gone about preaching to them all, then there was a good representation of the Asian ecclesias. Another thought from this verse is that inasmuch as Paul did not know what lay in store for him, he could not say with certainty that he would never see them again. This must have been his firm conviction at the time and the indication is that he felt that his work on the Aegean coast had now come to an end and that God would henceforth send him to the other side of the Aegean, to what we should now call Europe. Failing this conviction, then the fact that they would not see Paul's face again must have been revealed to him in some manner which Luke chose not to disclose.

Some seek to show that Paul was speaking to "all". This being the case, he meant that "all" would not see his face again but that some might. There is no support for this view from the order of words in the Greek, which is, "that no longer will see the face of me you all". That, emphatically, is spoken to all and no twist of the sentence can find a meaning that some would see his face again. The meaning is that Paul's work in that part of the world had now come to an end.

Verse 26

"wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men."

"I take you to record..." - lit. "I testify.." see note to verse 21 above. Paul has used this phrase before and on each occasion, it carries the sense of "calling his listeners to witness on his behalf." The "witnessing" of Acts 26. 22/23. is interesting in this connection.

"This day..." - "this very day.." The statement is emphatic.

"I am pure from the blood of all..." - See Acts 18. 6. Paul appears to be quoting from Ezek. 3. 17/21; and 33. 1/9. Paul had done all he could for them so if they fell back into disbelief or to sinful ways, they would have themselves to blame. The word "men" should be omitted.

Verse 27

"For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

"I have not shunned..." - see note to verse 20 under heading "kept back nothing..."

"the whole counsel of God". - See note to Acts 2. 23. This refers to the entire Plan and Purpose of God which is often referred to as the LOGOS. This includes the Promises, the Saviour, the inheritance and the way of living. Paul made all this very clear to the people of Ephesus not only by his preaching but also by his writings. See his epistle to the Ephesians which is intimately engaged on this topic. Note in particular Ephes. 1. 11.

(3) Warning of the apostacy

Verse 28

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

This verse is a favourite amongst those who believe in the doctrine of the trinity of a triune god. Rackham regards the doctrine of the trinity as being taught implicitly here. All those who do not understand the manifestation of God must find difficulty with references to the Holy Spirit which they do not regard as the Divine Power of God. In this verse, confusion becomes worse confounded when Rackham can find reason for believing in the "blood of God". Such a theory is incredible coming from a man of Rackham's undoubted learning and it is astonishing how far away from the Truth he can get because of his belief in the Fourth Century apostate doctrine of the trinity. Paul gives his listeners a charge - to guard the flock which, by the power of the Holy Spirit given to the apostles and early Christians to enable them to teach, grew as a result of that preaching. This flock was the ecclesia of God, which God had purchased by the blood of His own Son. The original Greek word order is "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock in which you the spirit the holy placed overseers to feed the ecclesia of the Lord which he purchased through the blood of the own..." The sentence comes to an incomplete end leaving the reader to supply the ownership of the "blood". Rackham argues that it was the "blood of God" which is a blasphemous thought and one which brings the great and eternal Creator of heaven and earth, the Sustainer of the mighty Universe, down to the level of man.

In John 3. 16. we read that "...God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This means one thing and that was that God gave His only begotten Son as a sacrifice. That is emphatic. It cannot mean anything else. It cannot mean that God gave Himself in another form. It is precise in its choice of words and cannot be distorted. All students of the Bible must admit that God gave a Son who was not Himself although Jesus did manifest God in his speech and the miracles he performed. In Rev. 1. 1. we learn that the prophecy which follows was given by God to Jesus who gave it to an angel who gave it to John. Reading that statement again up to half way we find that God gave to Jesus. God did not give to himself something which he God, did not have. In Rev. 7. 14. we read of the price of the sacrifice of Jesus and that was "the blood of the lamb". In no place in Scripture is God ever referred to as a "lamb". Where Lambs are mentioned, they often are sacrifices made to God and in type they foreshadow the sacrifice of Jesus who was also called the "lamb of God".

From the fore-going, the conclusion is that the ecclesias of believers

were washed in the blood of the lamb when they were baptised, the act of being washed in this manner being the washing in the blood of the lamb. In other words, being buried with him by baptism into his death. (Rom. 6. 4.) See also 1 Peter 1. 18/19; Ephes. 1. 7; 2. 13;

Some who rightly object to the "blood of God" being inferred from this verse, state that the "church (ecclesia) of God" should be the "church of the Lord" meaning the "church of Christ". The phrase "church of God" appears many times in Scripture whereas the "church of Christ" is unknown except amongst mankind who supply the title to suit themselves. See 1 Cor. 1. 2; 10. 32; 11. 16; 22; 15. 9; 2 Cor. 1. 1. Gal. 1. 13; 1 Thess. 2. 14; 2 Thess. 1. 4. 1 Tim. 2. 5, 15;

#### Verse 29

"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock."

"For I know this..." - here is the reason why Paul enjoins them to "take heed" to the flock. Because of what was about to happen. One feels it is a pity that the commentators who would stoop to writing about the supposed "blood of God", did not read as far as this verse and take heed to Paul's warning of the coming of the great apostacy which would hold the whole world in its grip of false and often blasphemous doctrines, of which the trinity is possibly the worst.

"after my departing..." - the Greek original means "arrival" and not "departing". What Paul means is that "when I reach my home, a great apostacy will arise." This is more logical than stating that when I go, an apostacy will arise. The rising of the apostacy would be a gradual thing and not something immediate.

"shall grievous wolves enter in among you..." - Jesus also warned of the same when he gave his parable of the shepherd. (John 10. 12.) See also Matt. 7. 15; 10. 16; Luke 10. 3. Paul had already had experience of the Judaizers. In later years Peter was to warn of the same evil influence. See 2 Peter 2. 2.

"not sparing the flock." - Paul's experience with the Galatians may have been on his mind. (Gal. 3. 1/4.) Also Gal. 4. 9/11. See also 2 Peter 2. 12/22.

#### Verse 30

"Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."

Not only had they to guard against false teachers from other parts, but also be on the lookout for men who would arise amongst their own people. The Pastoral epistles of Paul are a sorry record of such apostacy which was now at the end of Paul's life, rampant in the world. It did not take long for false teachers to arise. See Hymenaeus and Alexander of 1 Tim. 1. 20; and Hymenaeus and Philetus of 2 Tim. 2. 17. In 2 Tim. 1. 15. we read of the defection of Phygellus and Hermogenes. See also the troubles mentioned in 1 Tim. 1. 3/7; 6. 3/10; 2 Tim. 3. 1/9; See also 1 John 2. 18/22; 4. 1/3;

"perverse things..." - see Acts 13. 8/10. for an example of such wickedness. The perverse things were perverted doctrines which had strayed far from the Truth. In writing to Timothy, Paul mentioned this danger to him. See 1 Tim. 4. 1/3. To the Romans Paul had a warning. (Rom. 16. 17/18.) See further warnings given by Paul in Col. 2. 8; 2 Tim. 3. 1/9; Titus 1. 10/11; 2 Tim. 4. 3/4; Gal. 1. 6/8.

#### Verse 31

"Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."

"Therefore..." - "because of these dangers..."

"watch,..." - "be awake, do not be spiritually asleep." (1 Thess. 5. 2/9)  
See also 1 Cor. 16. 13. In 1 Peter 5. 8. is a powerful warning to be vigilant because of the "adversary" who could do them a great deal of harm. The Greek word from which "adversary" is translated is Antidikos which means an opponent at law. The Jews were such opponents who, judging the Christians by the Law of Moses, attacked them quite openly.

Regarding the attitude of the world to the True Christian Believers, Paul wrote to the Corinthians to warn them of the contempt in which they would be held. (1 Cor. 4. 12/14.)

Jesus gave many warnings to his disciples to watch. Matt. 24. 42; 26. 41; Mark 13. 35; 14. 38; Luke 21. 36.

"by the space of..." - this expression should be in italics for it is not in the original.

"three years..." - see note to Acts 19. 10.

"ceased not..." - a normal hyperbole.

"night and day..." - another normal hyperbole.

"every one..." - all those who came into contact with him.

"with tears..." - see note to verse 19.

#### Verse 32

"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

"commend you to God..." - the verb is in the Middle Voice indicating that the commendation is for their advantage. The word means "to entrust as a deposit". See Acts 14. 23.

"the word of his grace..." - see verse 24 and note thereon. The "word" of grace is the written word of God given through His servants, the writers of scripture. This contained the Plan of salvation, the LOGOS, and the commandments of God and His Christ.

"to build up..." - The verb is the same as that used in 1 Cor. 3. 10. ("buildeth thereon"). The meaning in both is "edify". The verse from 1 Cor. 3. 10. referred to here links the "grace of God" with the "building up". The indwelling of the Word of God must bring about a change in a person and it is a change for the better. The old character is broken down while the new character modelled after Christ is built up. The Word of God having been written by the Power of the Holy Spirit working upon God's servants, is a manifestation of His Grace. The foundation is to be found in God's Word, that which was written by the apostles and prophets by the spirit. (Ephes. 2. 20; Col. 2. 6/7. and Jude 20.)

"an inheritance..." - this is the hope of the calling of the True Christian Believers. See Ephes. 1. 14. and 18; and the warning of Ephes. 5. 5. See also Acts 26. 18; Col. 1. 12; 3. 24; Heb. 9. 15; 1 Pet. 1. 4. An inheritance is given to "heirs" and the heirs in this connection are those who may, by their belief and baptism, regard themselves as "heirs according to the promises" made unto Abraham. See Gal. 3. 27/29.

"them which are sanctified." - those people who have been separated from the world and have become part of a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people as described in 1 Peter 2. 9. See also Acts 26. 18.

## Verse 33

"I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel."

In pointing to his disinterestedness in material things, Paul was giving them an exhortation in that true wealth was in things of the spirit and not in the worldly wealth which a man possesses. Alexander ("Acts of the Apostles" page 254) points out that "raiment" and "clothing" is referred to in Scripture as a kind of riches in the east where fashions seldom change and a son often inherits the clothes of his father. Hence the reference to "moth" in Matt. 6. 19/20, by Jesus. Samuel also pointed to his lack of interest in material things. (1 Sam. 12. 3.)

## Verse 34

"Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me."

"ye yourselves know..." - Paul again calls upon them to witness to the truth of what he says. See verse 18. 1 Thess. 2. 10; Phil. 4. 9.

"these hands..." - this statement could occur only to a person speaking and not to a writer. Walker ("The Acts of the apostles" page 451) says that Paul must have exhibited his hands which were well worn and hardened by toil. This is most unlikely. Paul was not telling them how hard he had worked nor of the nature of the work done, but merely indicating that he had worked to provide for himself all during his three years of ministry.

"them that were with me." - Paul helped to provide for his companions, thus showing that he considered their wants to be his own. Paul is telling his listeners that he has acted honestly in all ways throughout the period of his ministry. His sole motive was their spiritual welfare. He shows elsewhere that it is permissible for a preacher of the gospel to live on a stipend or donation, yet he never availed himself of this in case he might have been charged with dishonesty. (1 Cor. 9. 11/15; 2 Cor. 11. 9/10; 12. 13/15; 2 Thess. 3. 7/11; 1 Thess. 4. 11; 5. 12; 1 Cor. 4. 12; Ephes. 4. 28.

## Verse 35

"I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

"I have shewed you all things..." - He has shewn them by his speech how his behaviour, zeal and work have been an example to them. The same thing was said by Jesus. (John 13. 15.)

"so labouring..." - "work as I have done..." the meaning is "labouring toil"

"support the weak..." - 1 Thess. 5. 14; Gal. 6. 2; Rom. 15. 1; Ephes. 4. 28. This can also mean those who are weak in the faith. Rom. 14. 1. see also verse 12. 1 Cor. 8. 9/12; 11. 30;

"It is more blessed to give than to receive." - This saying of Jesus is not recorded in the New Testament but is one of the sayings which has been handed down through other channels, this verse being one of them. The Lord's teaching was consistent with this maxim, as is found in 2 Cor. 8. 9; Ephes. 5. 2; For words expressed by Jesus giving this teaching see Luke 6. 38;

"blessed..." - the same word used in the beatitudes.

Paul's speech as recorded in precis form by Luke has now come to an end. There can be no doubt in view of the affectionate parting which followed, that the brethren there assembled would have returned to their respective ecclesias resolved to continue the good work which Paul had done. Nevertheless,

the growth of the apostacy could not be prevented. Wolves did enter amongst them not sparing the flock and drew disciples away after them. In the course of time the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, which was to make the resurrection of the dead quite unnecessary, became a problem to Paul and he wrote about it. (2 Tim. 2. 18.) The doctrine of "satan" and the "devil" as being the originator of sin was unknown as a doctrine in Paul's day therefore he never mentions it. The pre-existence of Christ was another doctrine which was to take hold of the ecclesias and lead to many distortions of Scripture in an endeavour to "prove" it. The final and greatest blasphemy of all was the doctrine of the trinity which was forced upon an unwilling church by the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325, and which gave rise to the Nicene Creed. It was an unholy marriage of the doctrines of the pagans concerning their gods, the sun-god, and the moon goddess and the god of the morning star, and connecting them with the one God of Israel which Paul wrote about. (Rom. 15. 6; 1 Cor. 8. 6; 2 Cor. 1. 3; 11. 31; Gal. 1. 1; Ephes. 4. 6.)

The ecclesia at Ephesus received a final warning from Jesus and this is recorded in Rev. 2. 1/7. In verse 4 it is recorded that they had left their first love. Jesus warned them that unless they returned to their former beliefs, he would remove their candlestick out of its place. That their light and no longer exists is proof enough of the truth of Paul's prophecy concerning the growth of the apostacy. It was inevitable and inexorable. The Truth died out in Ephesus and was replaced by Roman Catholicism. Now it is given over to the faith of Islam.

#### Verse 36

"And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all."

"he kneeled down,.. " - lit. "he placed the knee..." without stating where he placed the knee. The same expression occurs in Acts 21. 5. Kneeling was not a customary attitude of prayer in those days. It belonged more to the pagan method of supplication. It was usual for Christians to stand in prayer.

"prayed with them all." - they all joined together in a communal prayer most likely offered by Paul.

#### Verse 37

"And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him,"

An incomplete sentence ending at the first full stop in the next verse.

"they all wept sore..." - lit. "Much and was weeping of all;.." In the east, men did not conceal deep emotion by stifling tears. The verb indicates a deep wailing.

"fell on Paul's neck,.. " - This refers to an affectionate embrace. See Luke 15. 20. where the father welcomed the prodigal son. Also in the O.T. there is the meeting of Esau and Jacob. (Gen. 33. 4.) See also the emotional incident when Joseph disclosed his identity to his brothers and embraced Benjamin. (Gen. 45. 14.)

"and kissed him." - In the east, kissing was a means of greeting and salutation. (Luke 7. 45; Exod. 4. 27; Gen. 29. 11.) The kiss was also a sign of reconciliation. (Gen. 33. 4; 45. 15; 2 Sam. 14. 33; The kiss was a sign of parting. (Ruth 1. 9; 1 Sam. 20. 41;) The kiss which Judas gave Jesus was a kiss of betrayal but it was also a parting kiss. He had turned against his Master and spiritually parted from him, but it was customary for a pupil to kiss his teacher as a way of greeting.

#### Verse 38

"Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship."

"sorrowing..." - full of grief. The Greek word indicates "pain of suffering".

"see..." - the verb indicates to gaze at with attention and to attentively consider. It is used of bodily sight when the object looked at is present. It also carries the idea of continually seeing. That they would not see Paul again in this manner, showed the brethren that they were definitely seeing him for the last time.

"accompanied..." - they conducted (escorted) him to the ship.

Paul was the last of the great evangelists. After him no one was to arise who had the same personality, education, courage, zeal, ability and knowledge that Paul had. This was the Divine Will as Paul explains in Ephes. 4. 11/16. God gave the people apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, all with a different degree of ability, knowledge and spirit gifts. The combined effort of all was to produce the N.T. "for the edifying of the body of Christ" (verse 12.) Once the full scriptures had come, there would be no need for the apostles with their gift of the Holy Spirit because the Scriptures were now complete and men could derive the whole Plan and Purpose of God from them. The point is, however, that men have to study the Scriptures and obey the Truth. A casual reading of scripture will not reveal the LOGOS to the seeker. There must be a diligent study. Paul put all this in other words in 1 Cor. 13. when he pointed out that the spirit gifts had helped to a knowledge of God's Word, nevertheless they saw through a glass darkly. When the Bible (that which was perfect) had come, then they would have the Word of God face to face.





## THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

### Chapter 21

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#### THE JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM CONTINUES.

##### Verse 1

"And it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the day following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara:"

"After we were gotten from them,.. " - The verb means that they were torn away from them. This indicates the sad parting one from another. The voice is passive showing that Paul was pulled away from those who had escorted him to the ship. The sailors must have become impatient as the tearful farewell was delaying the departure of the ship. Therefore, having called to him without response, they dragged him away and put him on board. This is inference but it is very likely what happened.

"had launched..." - set sail..

"came with a straight course..." - the wind being favourable, they did not need to tack but sailed on a straight course.

"Coos..." - an island 40 miles south of Miletus at the south west corner of what is now Asia Minor. This is one of the islands of the Dodecanese and was famous in ancient days for wine, silk and cotton. There was a shrine here to Aesculapius, the god of medicine to the Greeks. Hippocrates had his home here. The Romans regarded it as part of the province of Asia.

"Rhodes..." - The name means "roses", from "rhoda". The name Rhoda appears in Acts 12. 13/15. Rhodes was one of the most brilliant of the many brilliant cities of ancient Greece. The "Rhodes" referred to here is most probably the city at the extreme north eastern point of the island of Rhodes. It was founded in B.C. 408 by combining three cities, namely, Lindus, Camirus and Ialysus into one. One of the wonders of the ancient world, the Colossus at Rhodes, stood at the entrance to the harbour but fell during an earthquake in B.C. 224. It was 105 feet in height. Rhodes at one time controlled both provinces Caria and Lycia in what is now Asia Minor. To reduce her strength, Rome took this control away from Rhodæa by declaring Caria and Lycia independent in B.C. 166. During the civil war period of B.C. 47 to 43, Rhodes supported Caesar and suffered very severely as a result of this. The island which is 43 miles long and 20 miles at its widest point, was a natural stopping place for ships plying between Africa, Syria and Caesarea to the south and east, and the east and west coasts of the Aegean Sea, as well as Italy to the far west.

"Patara." - This city lies to the east of Rhodes on the Lycia coast. It was the harbour for a flourishing hinterland in the region of the Xanthos valley through which a river of the same name flowed.

"Myra." - This port lies further to the east of Patara and is mentioned in the Bezan text as having been a port of call during this journey. It is mentioned in Paul's journey to Rome. See Acts 27. 5.

##### Verse 2

"And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth".

"sailing over..." - lit. "passing over" or "crossing over". Luke shows his nautical knowledge here as in other phrases and statements. At this time of the year it would be possible to cross over fairly directly as he indicates. Ships coming the other way would find the winds contrary and would

have to tack along the southern coast of Asia Minor. Paul was fortunate and got a clear run through to the coast of Phenicia. The distance sailed would be about 400 miles.

"went aboard..." - the same verb is used here as appears in Acts 20. 18. where it is translated "came into (Asia)".

"set forth." - see note to Acts 13. 13. under heading "loosed". It is to be noted that they made a change of vessel here.

#### Verse 3

"Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden."

"when we had discovered Cyprus..." - lit. "Having come in view and the Cyprus..." That is to say, having sighted Cyprus at a distance...

"we left it on the left hand..." - lit. "and having left behind her on the left..." That is to say, by-passed Cyprus on the port beam... The navigator would use Cyprus as a navigational beacon so that, having passed it on the right by keeping it in view to the port side, they would by-pass the port of Paphos (Acts 13. 6.) and make a slight change of direction to get to Tyre.

"and sailed..." - imperfect tense, therefore "continued to sail..." The verb appears again in Acts 27. 2, 6, and 24.

"Syria..." - Here was Antioch but no mention is made of a visit to that city.

"and landed at Tyre..." - lit. "and were brought to Tyre..."

"unlade her burden." - lit. "for there was the ship unloading the freight." Note the continuous action of unloading.

#### Verse 4

"And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem."

"finding disciples..." - lit. "having found disciples..." This indicates that a search has been made for the disciples. They would know that disciples were there as an ecclesia had been formed some years previously. See Acts 11. 19. and 15. 3.

"tarried..." - same verb as translated "abide" in Acts 15. 34.

"seven days..." - a delay of one week which would give them ample opportunity to search out the disciples.

"who said to Paul..." - those who said were the disciples whom he had found. The tense is imperfect indicating "continued to say to Paul".

"through the spirit..." - they were moved by the spirit to do so.

"that he should not go up to Jerusalem." - The apparent contradictions between the words of the spirit here with the urging of the spirit telling him to go to Jerusalem, is explained by the fact that the words of the disciples here were warnings of the dangers which lay ahead and were not specific instructions to Paul not to go. If he was being put on trial, he was certainly able to prevail. Cf. Acts 19. 21.

#### Verse 5

"And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed."

"when we had accomplished those days..." - The verb here "accomplished" is the same as the verb "thoroughly furnished" of 2 Tim. 3. 17. In the latter quotation the meaning is "thoroughly fitted". From this comparison, we gather that the days of discharging cargo were used to the utmost limit by Paul and his helpers. No time nor opportunity was wasted.

"we departed and went our way..." - lit. "having gone out we went our way..."

"they all brought us on our way..." - they all escorted us. The tense is imperfect indicating "they escorting us..."

"till we were out of the city..." - omit "we were" see italics. They escorted them to a place outside the city which was on the sea shore.

"we kneeled down..." - lit. "having placed the knees on the shore..."

"and prayed." - Once again Luke does not say who led the gathering in prayer but the inference is that it would be Paul.

#### Verse 6

"and when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again."

"when we had taken leave one of another..." - lit. "having embraced each other..."

"we took ship..." - "we entered the ship..."

It was not unusual for Jews in those days to perform their devotions on the sea shore. We read of this in Acts 16. 13. (riverside) see note to this verse. That such devotions were public did not seem to disturb them.

"they returned home again." - they returned to their own. The word "home" is supplied by the translators without putting the word in italics as they should have done. The same word appears in John 19. 27. where John is said to have taken Mary, the mother of Jesus, into his own "home" with the word "home" in italics indicating that he took her to his own. That which "own" qualifies must be left to the sense of the passage and, in this instance, it appears to mean "homes".

#### Verse 7

"And when we had finished our course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day."

"had finished our course from Tyre..." - when we, the travellers who continued in the ship, had finished our entire journey, not only from Tyre, but also from Macedonia...

"we came to Ptolemais..." - "we arrived at..." Ptolemais has the modern name of Acre and is situated at the northern extremity of the bay of Acre. In Old Testament days, it was known as "Acco" (Judges 1. 31. "Accho"). It lies to the north of the present day port of Haifa. It is about 30 miles south of Tyre. It was named after Ptolemy I Philadelphus.

#### Verse 8

"And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him."

"the next day..." - "on the morrow..." as in Acts 10. 9, 23 and 24; 14. 20; 20. 7.

"of Paul's company..." - although this is probably true, it should be omitted as it is not in the original. The R.V., R.S.V. and Diaglott omit.

"departed and came unto Caesarea;.." - they did the 40 odd miles on foot.

"Caesarea." - see note to Acts 8. 40.

"Philip the evangelist..." - as here described "one of the seven of Acts 6. 5. and the evangelist who baptised the Ethiopian eunuch. See Acts 8. 5/40. Philip is the only man described in the N.T. as an evangelist. The title however, occurs in Ephes. 4. 11; and 2. Tim. 4. 5. He was probably given this title to distinguish him from Philip the apostle.

#### Verse 9

"And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy."

It is so characteristic of Luke to mention Philip's four daughters although it would appear that they play no part whatsoever in his story. This makes his record appear to be authentic because no other writer of Scripture would have noted the fact about the daughters.

"virgins..." - this has no reference to chastity but means the unmarried state. This is clearly explained by Paul in 1 Cor. 7. 34. where in the one verse, a woman is referred to as a virgin and as an unmarried woman. It is essential that this definition be understood to combat the impertinent Roman Catholic statement that the four daughters were the first nuns. There is nothing about these women to suggest that and nothing in Scripture to warrant "nuns" who are the Christianised adaption of the pagan priestesses.

"prophesy". - does not necessarily mean that the women foretold the future. The word is also used to indicate teaching, preaching, etc., See note to Acts 2. 17.

#### Verse 10

"And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus."

"many days..." - Gk. "more days". as in Acts 13. 31; 25. 14; 27. 20.

"came down..." he came from the mountainous region of Judea to the coastal region.

"Agabus." - see Acts 11. 27/28. See note to verse 28.

#### Verse 11

"And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Spirit, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles."

"when he was come unto us..." - lit. "having come unto us..." This means that he had come to them at the house of Philip.

"he took Paul's girdle..." - in accompanying his prophecy with a sign, he followed the usual practice of the prophets of Israel. See Jer. 13. 1/7; Ezek. 5. 1/4. The girdle was an essential garment to all active movement so that in using it, Agabus fore-shadowed the physical restrictions which would come upon Paul.

"So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind..." - the manner of the binding is significant here, and not who did the binding. By binding the hands and the feet, Agabus signified restriction of movement (feet) and restriction of work (hands).

"deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." - this is an important prophecy for hitherto, the Gentiles had been extraordinarily lenient with Paul. It was only at Ephesus that they caused some danger to him. Even on that occasion, they raised little objection to his preaching in so far as religion was concerned, but complained about the adverse effect his preaching was having upon their industry. Historically the opposition from Gentiles towards Christianity was to grow to an enormous extreme and many Christians were to be put to death. Here then is a hint of what was to follow with increasing severity.

"the Gentiles," - the nations, the pagans, the non-Jewish people. Nowadays, it is used to describe Christians with more truth than is realised, because modern Christianity is a Christianised adaption of a pagan religion.

#### Verse 12

"And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem."

"we..." - Luke, and the other travellers.

"they of that place,.." - Gk. "those of the place" comes from one Greek word. It means Philip, his four daughters and the brethren and sisters of the ecclesia which was there.

"besought him not to go up to Jerusalem." - Agabus had not prophesied death, nor had he warned Paul not to go. His prophecy was merely a fore-telling of what would happen to him if he went to Jerusalem. Paul's mind however, was still firmly made up.

#### Verse 13

"Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

"What mean ye to weep....?" - "What do you weeping...?" or "Why are you weeping? What do you hope to achieve?"

"to break mine heart?.." - "are you trying to break down my resistance? Their continual tears, coupled with the love Paul had for them, must have come near at times to breaking his resolution to go to Jerusalem.

"for the name of..." - "on behalf of..."

#### Verse 14

"And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done."

"he would not be persuaded..." - "not being persuaded..."

It is unfortunate that Luke does not tell us why Paul was so determined to go to Jerusalem although he states that he "purposed in the spirit" (Acts 19. 21.) He also received instructions from God through the power of the Holy Spirit working in him yet no reason is given. The lesson here seems

to be that having put one's head to the plough, one should not turn back whatever the temptations may be.

"we ceased,.. " - we were silent..." This silence was not because of instructions from Paul to be quiet but because they saw the futility of further persuasion.

"The will of the Lord be done." - Paul was to refer to this in his epistle to the Ephesians at chapter 5 verse 17. Note Paul's attitude of mind expressed by "if God will" in Acts 18, 21. The point to note here is that if all present acknowledged that it was God's Will, then the prophecies were warnings and not prohibitions. If it had been against God's Will, Paul would not have gone no matter how much he was determined to go.

Verse 15

"And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem."

"After these days..." - at the end of many days..."

"carriages..." - Alexander (op. cit. page 268) points out the individual meanings of "carriage" from "car", "luggage" from "lug" and "baggage" from "bag". The "carriages" were "carried". It has been suggested by Ramsay, that "carriages" here means "horses" because they had to get to Jerusalem which was 65 miles away and they did it in two days. That was faster than they could travel on foot. (The two days is taken from the Bezan text.) However they managed it, the text states that they made ready their baggage and started on the journey to Jerusalem as soon as they could.

#### PAUL AT JERUSALEM.

Verse 16

"There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge."

The commentators start this division of The Acts at verse 15. We have started at verse 16 because verse 15 records the fact that they "went up to Jerusalem" but does not record them getting there. Verse 16 infers the arrival at Jerusalem and the party lodging with their host, a man named Mnason. The sojourn at Jerusalem, therefore, starts with verse 16 and that is where we start this division.

The party of travellers now made their way to Jerusalem and were accompanied by some of the brethren from the ecclesia at Caesarea.

"and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus,.. " - there is some doubt about this translation. Was Mnason at Caesarea so that they could have brought him with them from Caesarea to Jerusalem? If so, was he, being a Cypriot, on his way from Cyprus to Jerusalem? If he had a home at Jerusalem, was he now returning from visiting his former home at Cyprus? These questions are left unanswered by Luke but arise out of the statement that he was brought with the disciples from Caesarea, and that he was from Cyprus. The R.V. puts the words "with them" in italics indicating that they were not in the original. The R.S.V. has "bringing us to the house of Mnason of Cyprus,.. " The Afrikaans Version has "en ons by 'n sekere Mnason van Ciprus gebring,.. " ("and brought us to a certain Mnason of Cyprus...") The Emphatic Diaglott has a word for word translation thus, "Went with us and also of the disciples from Caesarea with us leading with whom we might lodge to Mnason one a Cyprian an old disciple." Having regard to the alternate translations, it would appear to be more accurate to say that they brought with them disciples from Caesarea and led us to the house of Mnason, a man of Cyprus now living in Jerusalem, with whom we were due to lodge, he being an early disciple.

"Mnason..." - this is the only verse in Scripture in which his name appears. His name was a common one amongst the Greeks and he could have been a Greek speaking Jew, or a Greek convert. The slender evidence points to the former, because of the fact that he was an early disciple.

"and old disciple..." - the word "old" does not necessarily refer to age but to the fact that he had been a disciple long ago. He might have known Jesus but it would be safer to date him from the day of Pentecost of Acts chapter 2.

"with whom we should lodge." - arrangements had been made by some unknown person on an unrevealed occasion to accommodate the travellers. The house must have been a fairly large one and Mnason must have been a man of comfortable means. The distance from Caesarea to Jerusalem is about 65 miles and could not have been done on foot in a day. Therefore it appears that Mnason lived in a village on the way to Jerusalem and that the travellers spent the night there before moving on to Jerusalem the next day. That Mnason came from Cyprus suggests that he might have known Barnabas (Acts 4. 36.)

#### PAUL AT JERUSALEM.

#### Verse 17

"And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly."

"when we were come..." - "having arrived at..."

"the brethren received us..." - this was not an official welcome. It was just a glad reception by such brethren as were assembled at the place where they were going to stay.

#### Verse 18

"And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present."

Paul was still a free lance evangelist and could choose where he would go and whom he would see. He chose to go with the travellers to see James, one of the elders of the Jerusalem ecclesia. Luke was amongst the party of visitors as is seen from the word "us". This is the last time he appears in the narrative by indirect reference of the words "we" and "us" until he reappears in Acts 27. 1.

"James..." - In view of the importance to the Christian world of the ecclesia at Jerusalem, there is no doubt that the man appointed to be in charge would be an apostle. No other person would hold a rank authoritative enough for such work. James, the apostle, seems to have been the ideal man. He was James the son of Alphaeus, (Matt. 10. 3.) otherwise known as James the Less. (Mark 15. 40.) James the son of Zebedee was killed with the sword. (Acts 12. 2.)

"all the elders were present." - the elders were not necessarily apostles but an apostle could be an elder. See Acts 15. 2. where apostles are mentioned separately from Elders. See also 1 Peter 5. 1. where Peter claims to be "also an elder".

If all the elders were present, then this was an official welcome from the Jerusalem ecclesia. They would be gathered together at this time to receive the alms brought by the travellers from many ecclesias. It is not known how many constituted the council of elders.

#### Verse 19

"And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry."

"saluted..." - the Greek word means "embrace, salute or greet". It is unlikely that Paul would embrace them and more likely that he would greet them with polite phrases.

"declared..." - "expounded.." See Acts 10. 8. and note thereon.

"particularly..." - the Greek original means "one by one" indicating that Paul explained in great detail all that had occurred. He did not give a general survey of the work done but gave a comprehensive account of his campaigns.

"what things God had wrought..." - Paul attributed everything to God who had called Paul to His service and had directed his ways. If any increase had been given, it was God who had given it. (1 Cor. 3. 7.)

"among the Gentiles..." - "among the nations..."

"by his ministry." - by using Paul as His servant. Lit. "through the service of him".

Verse 20

"And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:"

"when they heard it,.." - "they" means James and the elders.

"they glorified God.." - as in Acts 11. 18; and 13. 48. The tense is imperfect therefore they continued to glorify God.

"Thou seest..." - "you see (by giving close attention to)" See note to Acts 20. 38. under heading of "see".

"brother,.." - denotes personal affection as well as official recognition by the council. It was the highest title one could receive at that time.

"how many thousands..." - typical Pauline hyperbole. No particular quantity is indicated here, but just means a large number. See Paul's use of this hyperbole in 1 Cor. 4. 15. They had not had anywhere near ten thousand instructors and Paul would not mean this. We should say, "You have had numberless instructors..." Also 1 Cor. 14. 19. where Paul expresses a preference for five words he could understand than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. Again, exact quantity is no part of his meaning. It is doubtful whether there were thousands of converts in Jerusalem at that time but even so, comparatively they would be very numerous.

"which believe..." - there were many Jews who did believe in Truth. There were many Judaisers and later many were to apostatise and become Ebionites. They would believe basic doctrines but would adapt other theories and religious practices into their number and, in the course of time, become something quite different to what they were at the beginning. If the Jews could have done this, then the newly converted Gentiles could have done the same. Thus it is that the pagans brought with them their heathen doctrines and these were given a Christian character. For instance, they brought a belief in a multiplicity of gods to the Christian who believed in the one God of Israel. The early Christians compromised in this and invented the doctrine of three gods in one or a triune god. Whereas the pagans worshipped the "queen of heaven" (Jer. 7. 18.) this being the moon goddess Astarte from which is derived Easter, so the early Christians adopted this into Christianity and worshipped the person they call the virgin Mary. The Jews were not alone in bringing abominable doctrines into their faith and calling it "Christianity". The fact that the Jews distorted religion from the days of Moses and later during the years of rising Christianity, is a warning to everyone that perhaps their religion is founded on distortions too and an examination should be made.



"and they are all zealous of the law." - lit. "all zealots of the law being." The Zealots were known as the "Canaanites or Cananaean. In Matthew 10. 4. we read of Simon the Canaanite and he is also mentioned in Luke 6. 15. and Acts 1. 13. as "Simon Zelotes" or Simon the Zealot. See also Mark 3. 18. The sect was founded in A.D. 6 or 7 by Judas of Gamala. They bitterly and vigorously resented and resisted the domination of Rome and opposed them at every opportunity. To a very large extent they were responsible for bringing the Romans against them in the siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, because the Romans tired of their continual opposition and were determined to get rid of them.

## Verse 21

"And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after their customs."

"are informed of thee..." - "they were instructed orally of thee..." The same verb occurs in Acts 18. 25. where it is translated as "instructed". Note the use of "of thee" which is "concerning thee" and not "by thee".

"thou teachest all the Jews,..." - The Jews mentioned here are described as being "among the Gentiles". That is to say, all the Jews who were scattered among the Gentile people.

"among..." - "throughout..." which is much wider in its application. The rumour was that wherever there are Jews, to be found amongst the Gentile people, Paul had been teaching or instructing them to...

"forsake Moses..." - the allegation here is that Paul did not encourage or insist upon the Jews obeying the Law. To a Jew, any such teacher would be slacking in his duty.

"they ought not to circumcise their children,..." - this was much worse than "forsaking Moses". Not insisting upon a strict observance of the Law was bad but to go against the law of circumcision was worse (even although this rite formed no part of the Law of Moses, having been given unto Abraham. (Gen. 17. 10.) But worse was to follow.

"not to walk after their customs." - This involved a ban against temple worship, sacrifice, washings, incense and such like, all of which formed part of the Law of Moses.

In speaking about such things, Paul did not say they were now unlawful. He maintained that they were not necessary to salvation. His views on circumcision is seen in Rom. 2. 28/29. When it came to the Law, Paul was more severe and taught that they should not live after the manner of the Jews in keeping the Law. He regarded himself as dead to the law and alive unto God. (Gal. 2. 19.)

## Verse 22

"What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come."

"What is it therefore?.." - "What is it then?.." This may be interpreted as being a question, "What really is your view on such matters?" In the absence of any answer being given, it is more likely that the question was, "What is to be done about it?".

"the multitude must needs come together:.." - this is omitted by the Diaglott as do the R.V. and R.S.V. If it is genuine, then it means that a multitude (not THE multitude) will call a meeting now that they know you are here.

"they will hear that thou art come." - The whole question is "What should be done about it now because the people will be sure to hear that thou art come to Jerusalem (thus inferring that they will want to find out exactly what your opinion is.)"

## Verse 23

"Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them;"

The last sentence in this verse is incomplete and comes to a finality in the next verse.

"Do---this that we say to thee..." - Here is our plan and we should like you to fall in with it. Note the use of "We.." James was the leader in the ecclesia but his word was not law amongst them. They went by ecclesial opinion and desire.

"We have four men..." - The precise meaning of this statement cannot be stated with certainty. Either they had four men just at that time who were all of one mind in regard to their vow, or there were a large number of men at that time who had taken a vow but they, the council had chosen four of them to take part in the proposed demonstration.

"a vow..." - It is not stated what the vow was but it can be inferred that it was a Nazarite vow because of the purification necessary. See Num. 6. 1/21. If Paul could endorse the observance of the ceremonial rites, then, perhaps, the Jews would be satisfied.

## Verse 24

"Them take and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself walkest orderly, and keepest the law."

"Them take..." - "take them with you in your company..."

"purify thyself with them..." - join them in the ceremony of purification.

"be at charges with them..." - pay for the cost of the sacrifices. The verb, translated as "spend" occurs in Mark 5. 26; Luke 15. 14; 2 Cor. 12. 15; and as "consumed"(waste) in Jas. 4. 3.

"that they may shave their heads..." - when their vow is over. See Num. 6. 18. Paul would not be obliged to shave his head. All that was required of him was that he would give public endorsement to this observation of the law of ritual.

It may seem extraordinary that Paul who made such a complete break away from the Law and his former way of life should turn back to the law in these very minor things in which no point of principle was involved. He explains that he did it to gain the Jews. See his explanation in 1 Cor. 9. 18/23. By paying for their sacrifices, Paul was doing that which had become customary amongst Jewry after Herod Agrippa in A.D. 41. had paid for sacrifices.

"all may know..." - all those who have heard things about you may know that what they heard is not true.

"thou walkest orderly.." - the verb "walk" here is a military term meaning "to hold or keep rank. To march in order rather than to march by obedience.

"keepest the law." - to obey the law without sacrificing principle. From his writings on the Law, it is certain that Paul would not sacrifice principle to keep the law.

## Verse 25

"As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication."

There was obviously one law for the Jews and another for the Gentile believers. The Jewish believer was allowed a minor observance of the law but the Gentile believer has to refrain from any observance of the law. The prohibitions mentioned here were explained in the notes to Acts 15. 20. The notes should be read again to learn the principle involved, that Gentiles had to surrender these things so as not to give the Jews offence.

Note: The word "we" appearing here refers to James and his colleagues on the council and does not refer to Luke and the travelling companions, or Luke and Paul as a pair.

## Verse 26

"Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them."

"Then Paul took the men..." - "Then Paul having taken the men..."

"entered into the temple..." - from what happened as a result of this entry. it is apparent that Paul went into the "court of Israelites" which is beyond the "middle wall of partition" (Ephes. 2. 14.) and in which Gentiles are forbidden to enter. If Paul had taken Trophimus with him he would have precipitated an outburst of resentment from the Jews. The Jews had a law which was respected by the Romans even when their own citizens were accused by the Jews, and which provided for a sentence of death upon any Gentile who entered the Court of Israelites. Notices were well displayed setting out this law so no Gentile could excuse himself for not seeing it. The notice read:-

"No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surrounds the temple and enclosure. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death."

"to signify..." - "to announce..." or lit. "announcing..." The ceremony he was about to perform had to receive the co-operation of the priest on duty at the time, so he would have to announce his intention to him, stating when it was to start and when to finish.

"accomplishment..." - the "fulfilment..." of the ceremony to be performed. This was at the end of the seven day period. (Num. 6. 13. et seq.)

"an offering..." - see Num. 6. 14/15.

## Verse 27

"And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him,"

The sentence given in this verse is incomplete and comes to an end at the conclusion of the next verse.

"the seven days..." - it is not known why there were seven days and it is futile to hazard a guess or guesses. The point is not important so it is best left alone.

"the Jews which were of Asia,..." - many of these would have come from Ephesus and would know of Paul well. The Jews of that part were vitile in their opposition to Paul and Christianity and would not be slow in opposing Paul now. (See Acts 19. 10; 20. 19.)

"stirred up..." - "stirred up into a state of excitement."

"laid hands on him." - they arrested him and in doing so, brought to an involuntary end Paul's freelance preaching. From now on his life enters a new phase and he was to be held captive for some time.

PAUL IMPRISONED AT JERUSALEM.

Verse 28

"Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place."

"Men of Israel..." - lit. "Israelites..."

"Help..." - the verb here is the same as that in Acts 16. 9. Walker draws a distinction between the two occasions by pointing out that in Acts 16. 9. it was an appeal to preach the gospel. Here it is an appeal to hinder it. (page 467.)

"teacheth all men everywhere..." - without any intention to do so, the people were paying tribute to the universal preaching of Paul.

"against the people, and the law, and this place,..." - this is very similar to the accusations made against Stephen. See Acts 6. 13.

"further brought Greeks also into the temple,..." - according to Jewish law, this would pollute the temple. In the eyes of a Jew there was nothing worse than polluting the temple and speaking against Moses.

"hath polluted..." - "hath desecrated..."

"holy place." - "consecrated place." A place set apart for Jews only.

It is very unlikely that Paul did "pollute" the "holy place" as he was accused of doing. Paul was so anxious to obtain the favour of the Jews that it is almost certain he would not do anything to offend them in this manner.

Verse 29

"(For they had seen with him before in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)"

"they had seen with him before..." - they had seen Trophimus in the city before they had seen Paul in the temple.

'an Ephesian..." - lit. "the Ephesian..." This is more specific and refers not to any Ephesian but to one particular Ephesian and that was Trophimus.

"they supposed..." - That they supposed that Paul had brought Trophimus into the temple exonerates them from any charge of having invented the story. All they did was decide without proof or enquiry, that Paul had actually taken Trophimus into the Temple past the middle wall of partition.

This hasty decision was to have far-reaching results. The effect was immediate upon a people who were ultra-sensitive about the sanctity of their temple.

Verse 30

"And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut."

"all the city..." - an acceptable hyperbole meaning the entire population. See Matt. 8. 34; 21. 10; Mark 1. 33; 6. 33; Luke 8. 1; and 4; Acts 13. 44.

"the people ran together:..." - those away from the "storm centre" would

hear a commotion and would go running to see what it was all about. Having reached the nucleus, they would be caught up in the mob hysteria and act as mobs usually do, without knowing much about what was going on. The Greek original says, "was a running together of the people,..". (Diag.)

"they took Paul,..". - lit. "having taken hold of the Paul..." The verb sometimes suggests violence but not always. In the context of what follows it seems to suggest a violent arrest.

"and drew him out..." - lit. "they were dragging him outside of the temple,..". If this act is combined with the expression "they took Paul", there can be no doubt that Paul was taken with violence. This was the same treatment as meted out to Stephen. (Acts 6. 12.)

"and forthwith the doors were shut." - lit. "and immediately were closed the gates." That is to say, the temple guards would shut the gates without delay. Several explanations have been offered as to why the temple gates were shut immediately. A list of the suggested reasons would make interesting reading but would be valueless in view of there being no proof. The most likely reason is the simplest which is that the guards, seeing a riot developing, shut the gates to prevent it from spreading inside the temple and letting a lot of unauthorised persons enter the prohibited area.

Verse 31 "

"And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar."

"As they went about to kill him,..". - lit. "Seeking and him to kill..."

"tidings..." - Bullinger defines the meaning as "report, information, light shed on anything by speech." (Lexicon page 803) This is the only occurrence of this word in the N.T.

"came unto..." - Gk. "went up to..." This is true of the ascent of the report from junior ranks up to the senior rank of the commander. It is also true of the way in which it went. The castle where the commander and the two centuries (one-third of a cohort) were stationed. The castle occupied higher ground than the temple and was built on a rock which jutted out of the ground thus giving it extra height and enabling it to overlook the temple. It had been built as a fortress by Herod the Great and named by him as Antonia after his friend and protector Anthony. The two centuries which were stationed there would have the task of keeping peace and quelling riots which would happen during festival days. The castle lay to the north of the temple.

"chief captain..." - "the chiliarch of the cohort". This made him a "leader of a thousand". In Latin, he would be known as the "tribune". This military title was used in the N.T. to denote the levitical guard of the temple. See Acts 4. 1; 5. 24 and 26; See also John 18. 3 and 12.

"band..." - cohort. This body of men was necessary to put down riots and insurrections which often happened. See Mark 15. 7; Luke 23. 19 and 25; Acts 5. 36/37; This explains why it was that Roman soldiers arrested Jesus and bound him. See John 18. 3 and 12.

"was in an uproar." - Gk. "was in confusion". See the same verb translated as "confounded" in Acts 2. 6.

Verse 32

"who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul."

"centurions..." - commanders of a hundred men. If he took centurions

(plural) he must have taken at least two. Since centurions commanded one hundred men each, the least number of soldiers he could have taken would be two hundred. This was a large number of armed men and shows that the riot must have been a very big one.

"ran down unto them,.. " - the squad went at the double and in a downward direction, from the castle to the temple area. The Jews in the temple area would very likely think this was an attack.

"unto them.." This phrase shows that they ran down to the men who were attacking and beating Paul. Having regard to verse 31, it is obvious the men who were beating Paul were about to kill him. The squad brought about a timely rescue from certain death. Paul should have been dragged out of the city and stoned to death but the mob had lost its reason in the excitement. This is characteristic of mob hysteria.

"they left beating.." - The word translated here as "left" means "paused" or "ceased". It is characteristic of mob psychology to submit to a sudden arrival of armed force and might.

#### Verse 33

"Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done."

"Then the chief commander came near..." - lit. "Then having approached the commander laid hold of him".

"commanded him to be bound with two chains..." - commanded that Paul should be tied by two "bonds" or "chains". This meant that he would be tied to two soldiers, one on each side. See Acts 12. 6.

"demanded who he was..." - "demanded" of the Jews near by and not of Paul. He evidently thought it was best to arrest first and conduct an enquiry afterwards. The Greek is "who he might be" - not "who he was" which denotes positive knowledge but "who he might be" which suggests uncertainty.

"what he had done." - The captain assumes that Paul has done something. There is a tie-up with this enquiry and the information to be given in verse 34 which tells us that the people were confused and did not know what it was about. The verb "demanded" is in the imperfect tense indicating repeated enquiry first of one person and then of another. Luke's record of the behaviour of a wild mob is very accurate from a point of view of mob psychology.

#### Verse 34

"And some cried one thing, some another: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle."

"cried..." - "shouted..." - the verb is in the imperfect tense thus indicating continuous shouting.

"some cried one thing, some another:.." - the Greek is "others were shouting some other thing..."

"he could not know..." - this is understandable in view of the state of mob hysteria which prevailed at the time. Those to whom he spoke would either be too excited to speak coherently or they knew nothing of what it was all about and had come to find out.

"to be carried..." - this does not mean that Paul was lifted off the ground deliberately but that he was brought or led to the Castle.

## Verse 35

"And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people."

"the stairs..." - these were to be found at the end of the pavement leading to the castle. Being on a different level, there were stairs to the higher position.

"so it was,.." - "thus it happened,.." implying that what happened was not by design but just happened as a result of mob violence.

"he was borne of the soldiers.." - "he was carried by the soldiers." If they had not helped him, he must surely have been crushed in the press. To make things very difficult for Paul, he had been tied to two soldiers and so did not have complete freedom of movement.

"violence..." - this word occurs only in The Acts at 5. 26; 24. 7; 27. 41; and in this verse. It means a violent or unjust exertion of strength or power.

"of the people." - "of the crowd."

## Verse 36

"For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him."

"the multitude..." - Gk. "plethos.." meaning "fulness, a great number a throng." This refers to size and not to character.

"the people..." - Gk. "laos", means "the mass of people, the mob, the people collectively."

"crying..." - Gk. "krazo" which is an onomatopoeic word taken from the cry of a raven. "To cry out.." The word is used to denote an inarticulate cry of pain, or fear. This indicates that the people who were doing the shouting, were shouting without much thought being given to what they were shouting about.

"Away with him..." - A similar cry used against Jesus. See Luke 23. 18. John 19. 15.

## Verse 37

"And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek?"

"Canst thou speak Greek?" - There is an element of surprise in this question. The chiliarch had thought that Paul was an Egyptian who had greatly deceived the people sometime previously and now the people had caught him and would deal with them. This is all explained in the next verse. Instead of the chiliarch's fears proving correct, he suddenly hears his prisoner speak to him in faultless Greek which was the language of the cultured and well educated ones.

## Verse 38

"Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?"

Josephus ("Wars ii. 13. 5.") gives an interesting account of an Egyptian who, posing as a prophet, got together 30,000 men and led them to the Mount of Olives where they prepared to attack Jerusalem. Felix however, forestalled him and put his army to flight, killing many and taking a large number prisoner. The Egyptian then escaped leaving his friends to face whatever consequences may follow. The chiliarch thought that his erstwhile friends had caught him and

that Paul was the Egyptian. When he heard him speak faultless Greek, he was astonished.

"four thousand men that were murderers." - Lit. "four thousand men of the sicarii". The "sicarii" was a short stabbing knife which assassins carried under their cloaks and infested Judea in the days of great opposition to Rome. It is obvious that the chiliarch had spoken to the Egyptian and knew that he could not speak Greek. Hence his surprise.

Verse 39

"But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city of Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people."

"I am a man which..." - lit. "I a man indeed am a Jew of Tarsus.." He was a municipal voter in Tarsus and a citizen of the Empire. (Acts 16. 38.)

"no mean city..." - "not an undistinguished city". Paul did not disclose his Roman citizenship.

Verse 40

"And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying,"

An incomplete sentence which comes to its finality in the first verse of the next chapter.

"when he had given him licence..." - lit. "having permitted him..." The verb is the same as that translated "suffer" in the preceding verse.

"beckoned with the hand..." - See Acts 12. 17; 13. 16; 19. 33; Made a sign with the hand. It says much for Paul's platform personality that he could quell the crowd in this manner.

"a great silence..." - Luke draws a tense atmosphere. An apostle's chained hand, raised in an appeal for attention from an unruly throng, suddenly brings about a dramatic hush over the whole assembly while they wait for him to speak.

"he spake...Hebrew..." - Paul was clever here. He could well have spoken Greek because the majority would have understood him. But he had earlier determined to gain the confidence of the Jews so what better gesture at this stage, than speaking their own home language just to show that he was one of them.



## THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

### Chapter 22

#### PAUL'S DEFENCE TO THE JEWS

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**INTRODUCTION:** It may help us in our studies, if we realise the parallel between Jesus and Paul. If we know this, we shall be better able to recognise the events as they occur. It will also help us if we know in advance of the pattern of events as outlined by Luke so that we may be led from one defence to another and understand the structure of what is happening.

The Lord Jesus set the pattern for his servants to follow and Peter filled an important part during the period recorded of his ministry by Luke.

1. Jesus preached to the Jews and received their hostility. Peter and Paul did the same.
2. Both Peter and Paul addressed the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem.
3. The addresses were made at a time of Pentecost.
4. The Sanhedrin passed judgment against Jesus, Peter and Paul.
5. At the time of their arrest, Jesus, Peter and Paul were bound.
6. Jesus and Paul were smitten in the face.
7. Jesus, Peter and Paul were accused of preaching against the temple.
8. Jesus was accused before the governor; Paul before Herod and Felix.
9. The main accusers of Jesus, Peter and Paul was the Sadducean highpriest.
10. Jesus, Peter and Paul were scourged.
11. The trial of Jesus healed a breach of friendship between Pilate and Herod. Likewise, the trial of Paul enabled Felix to be friends with Agrippa.
12. Jesus and Paul are thrice said to be innocent of the charges brought against them.
13. Jesus and Paul were accused of treason.
14. After his resurrection, Jesus had a period of peace; after his symbolical resurrection (release from jail) Peter disappears from Luke's story until for a short time, he is found at peace in Jerusalem; after his trial before Nero, Paul is found in his own hired house, preaching and no man forbidding him.

The short ministry of Jesus laid the basis for all Christian endeavour anywhere. No man has crammed into a lifetime of work the tremendous accomplishment of Jesus. Yet Jesus knew the limitation of his ministry which was for a short while over a very limited area and to Jews only. He foretold that his servants would do greater works. That is to say, they would preach for a longer period over a much wider area. See John 14. 12. They would also preach unto all nations. (Matt. 28. 19.) As we have seen, Paul was the servant chosen to take the gospel to the Gentiles. To do this, he made three recorded missionary journeys and was taken to Rome where he spent all his available time in preaching the gospel. Luke's record of his work and the many letters which he wrote to the various ecclesias survive to this day not only as a tribute to the work which he did, but as the inspired word of God. The Bible would be much poorer without any mention of Paul or his work. He was the apostle to the world.

In writing his account of Paul's work, Luke gave considerable space to the captivity of Paul and to the defence which he made of "the hope of Israel". At the instance of the Jews, he was arrested and held captive by the Romans, by whom he was to be tried. In Paul's case, his arrest and trial were unusual for most people and we are led to assume that Paul's circumstances had vastly improved by the time he arrived at Rome. When writing to the Philippians, he "suffered the loss of all things". (Phil. 3. 8.) At that time, he had no money and thanked the Philippians for their care for him in sending him money. (Phil. 4. 10.) But when we find him at Jerusalem, we read that he was prepared to finance the Nazarite vows of four men. Later, (Acts 23. 16.) we find him accepted by his family and we learn that his nephew and his sister at Jerusalem were prepared to help him in his trouble. A further point for consideration is

that his several appearances before important men like Felix and Agrippa would cost more money than people of normal circumstances could afford. The conclusion is that Paul's finances must have been restored to him for such a change in his circumstances to come about.

Before the days of Jesus, the true religion was in the hands of the Jews and even then, in the hands of a few of them for the ruling classes, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, had turned to false doctrines and to traditions. The rest of the Gentile world was an apostate one and between the two, Judaism and Gentilism or paganism, came Jesus the Saviour who preached only to Jews. The men who were trained and chosen by him then went into all the world to preach, thus giving the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ to a world overcome by a multiplicity of gods, a belief in Plato's immortal soul, a fear of pagan evil spirits and the closed fist of a wicked ignorant priesthood. Everywhere one could go throughout the civilised world at that time, there were beautiful temples, images of worship, oracles to be consulted, mystic faith healing and people who did not want to believe. They were quite content to be as they were. The Jews were ignorant of the Truth as it is in Jesus and the Gentiles had yet to hear of it. In between the two sides stood men like Paul and now he was under arrest by the one side at the instigation of the other.

Paul had a unique position. Between Jew and Gentile, he had the advantage of both. He was a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin. To the Gentile, he was a Roman citizen with municipal voting rights at Tarsus and the citizenship of the Roman Empire wherever he went. This gave him unusual power for a Jew amongst Gentiles. It was to save his life in the present stage in Luke's story but it was to insist that he should go to Rome to state his case before Caesar. At that time, there was an advantage in this, because the Romans had no love for the Jews and as far as they were concerned, the Christian faith had not yet made sufficient inroads into their traditional form of worship to cause them much concern. This was true in spite of the fact that the humble Galilean appeared before Pilate and was handed over to an unruly mob of Jews who were adamant that he should die. Now, his successor Paul, was rescued from an unruly mob of Jews intent upon his death, and his rescue was effected by the same Roman Power that had meekly handed over Jesus to die.

Having been arrested by the Romans, Paul now makes the first of four great speeches in which he defends the True Christian Faith. This speech is made to Jews. The second is made to the Sanhedrin - the Jewish rulers; the third is made to Felix, and the fourth was before Agrippa at Caesarea, where Peter before him had appeared before Herod. Finally Paul must have made a further defence before Nero at Rome but this has not been recorded.

We who study these things, have much to engage our thoughts. We too live in an apostate world which has beautiful temples made with all the skill in men's hands; there are stained glass windows of exquisite beauty; there is a wicked priesthood in charge of a laity overcome by blindness and there are in Catholic churches, the oracle to be consulted and confessed to; in various parts of the world and at different times, there are faith healers who are no better than the charlatans of old and alongside all of this apostacy there is the world of Jewry who are as blind as were the Jews of Paul's day. Over and above all this, there is a world of Gentiles who do not want to believe. They are quite content to be as they are.

It will be interesting for us who have to make a defence to the apostate world of our day, to study how Paul deals with the people and with his subject. To this interesting study we shall now turn.

## Verse 1

"Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make now unto you."

The opposition to Paul was three-fold, namely, he had taught that the Law of Moses was no longer operative; he had taught that the temple worship and ritual had to fall away in Christ Jesus, and he had taught that the Gentiles were now to share the precious Promises that for two thousand years had belonged to the physical seed of Abraham. The last of these appeared to arouse more anger amongst the Jews than the other doctrines. That Paul was a Jew made it worse for him because a Gentile teaching such things would be bad enough but to hear it from a Jew would be much worse.

"Men, brethren and fathers,.. " - Speaking in Hebrew would give him a good start. The Jews would know at once that he was one of them. Most of them had not heard of him before and most of them did not know why they were there and why they had reached a stage of excitement. Paul was always courteous and is so on this occasion. We read of the same salutation from Peter in Acts 1. 16; 2. 29; and 37; Paul used the same in Acts 13. 26; Peter again in Acts 15. 7; and James in 15. 13. The word "fathers" might have been added as a mark of respect to such priests as were there. Paul was to use this salutation again in Acts 23. 1. without using "fathers".

"my defence..." - The Greek word is "apologias" from which we get the English "apology". See Introduction to Acts chapter 7 and in particular, the comments on the word "apology". See the use of the word "defence" in Acts 19. 33. See 1 Cor. 9. 3. for the word "answer"; 2 Cor. 7. 11. for the word "clearing"; Phil. 1. 7. for the word "defence"; See also Phil. 1. 17. for the word "defence". Note that in the R.V. R.S.V. Afrikaans Version and Diaglott, verses 16 and 17 are interchanged. 2 Tim. 4. 16. for the word "answer"; as also in 1 Peter 3. 15. All these words come from the same Greek word translated here as "defence".

## Verse 2

"(And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,)

"he spake in the Hebrew tongue..." - their surprise that he could speak in their tongue or dialect, showed that they could speak Greek or, at least, they could understand it. The Hebrew language had fallen into disuse from the time of the Babylonian captivity, and it was replaced by Aramaic or Syro-Chaldaean. Had Paul been addressing the Sanhedrin which would be composed of well-educated men, he would have spoken pure Hebrew. But, speaking to the common people, he would choose their vernacular which was Aramaic.

"more silence." - a different Greek word from that used in Acts 21. 40. This denotes a stillness and wrapt attention.

## Verse 3

"I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous towards God, as ye all are this day."

"verily..." - "indeed..." That is "it is true that..."

"born in Tarsus..." - he was born in the diaspora. This should make no difference because a Jew who was born abroad would be accepted with full equality as Judean Jews, provided he had not married out of the house of Israel.

"brought up..." - "nourished..." both in mind and in body. This gives the sense that he was educated every bit a Jew.

"in this city..." - in the heart of Jewry.

"at the feet of Gamaliel..." - taught by one of Jewry's greatest scholars and most respected teachers. This accentuates his mental training.

"perfect manner..." - lit. "with accuracy..."

"law of the fathers..." - "the ancestral law..."

"being zealous toward God..." - a Zealot in God's service. See Acts 21. 20.

All the fore-going descriptions of himself show that he was a Jew just as they were. He had been educated as a Jew and his teacher had been the greatest of all teachers. He had been brought up in this city, the very heart of the Jewish nation. He was as zealous as any of them had been. Finally, with excellent psychology, he pays tribute to their zeal.

#### Verse 4

"And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women."

"This way..." - the new Christian faith.

"unto death..." - such was his zeal that he would not permit Christians to live. Just as they had wanted to kill him, thinking he had defiled their temple, so he had desired to kill others.

"binding and delivering..." - he arrested violently, not showing any mercy.

"both men and women." -- Such was his zeal that he spared neither sex.

This is an extension on his proof of his essentially Jewish character and behaviour.

#### Verse 5

"As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished."

"also the high priest..." - This referred to the well known Caiaphas who may well have been still alive at that time. The high priest at this time was Ananias. (Acts. 23. 2.) With his subtlety, Paul gets them on his side with this reference to the respected high priest.

"the estate of the elders,.." - the presbytery. The sanhedrin. See Luke 22. 66. Acts 9. 2. says that Paul desired letters from the high priest. Paul now mentions the Sanhedrin and the high priest and says, "from whom also I received letters..."

Paul outlines his motive in going as far as Damascus, showing, in the first place, that he was prepared to pursue his persecuting ways outside Judea, and in the second place, using this adventure as a lead into the great crisis of his life.

Paul has now completed his build up which must appear to be very powerful to his listeners. Here was a man, a Jew, educated as a Jew by the finest teacher in history, he was known to the high priest and sanhedrin, and went far out of his way and country to persecute Christians. What a strong supporter of Jews he was. All this was not known to them. It must have impressed them a great deal. Paul has now built up an almost impregnable position so that if they were to change now from support to opposition, it could be due only to some motive or feeling within them which was so deeply ingrained that nothing could remove it.

## Verse 6

"And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light around about me."

See notes to Acts 9. 9. where the three accounts of this incident are set out side by side. It will be noted that the story told by Luke in chapter 9 verses 3 to 9. varies very slightly from that told by Paul in this chapter we are studying. The differences are those of grammatical form and tenses. This verse is parallel to verse 3 of chapter 9.

## Verse 7

"And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

This verse is parallel to 9. 4. In the former account, Paul fell to the earth. Here he falls to the ground, the word used here referring to a floor or pavement and may have special reference to the road leading into Damascus.

## Verse 8

"And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest."

The parallel verse is 9. 5. The differences are that in the former, it has "And the Lord said,..," and "I am Jesus..." leaving out "of Nazareth," and adds "it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks (goads)".

## Verse 9

"And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me."

The parallel verse is out of sequence with this verse, being 9. 7. The former account states that the men who were with him "stood speechless" but it does not record that they were afraid. It also records "hearing a voice" which appears to be contradictory to this verse which says "heard not the voice". The difference as explained in the former notes, is that in the one case they heard the voice but did not understand and in this case, they did not hear with the understanding.

## Verse 10

"And I said, what shall I do Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do."

The parallel verse is 9. 6. The differences are that instead of "What shall I do Lord?", the former account has "What wilt thou have me to do?" Instead of "Go into Damascus" it has "Go into the city". The verse ends "and it shall be told thee what thou must do."

## Verse 11

"And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus."

The corresponding verse is verse 8 of chapter 9. In substance there is very little change from the fuller account in chapter 9. In the verse we are studying, Paul ascribes his blindness to the glory of the light. In the former verse, Luke states simply "when his eyes were opened, he saw no man..." and adds as an additional verse (9. 9.) that he was three days without sight and did neither eat nor drink.

## Verse 12

"And one Ananias, a devout man according to the Law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there,"

The difference between Luke's account in Acts 9 from what Paul tells us here is that in Luke's version, he reports the conversation between the Lord and Ananias from Acts 9. 10/16. Paul omits all that because he is telling a story concerning himself. His listeners are not interested in what happened with Ananias. Paul's statement here introduces Ananias very briefly in an unfinished sentence which is continued into the next verse.

## Verse 13

"Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him."

Having introduced Ananias as a devout Jew and stressing "according to the law," Paul shows that the Jews there at the time, accepted him as a devout man of whom the Jews there present and listening to Paul, would accept. Paul also combined this with the presence of the Lord, showing the Divine character of the incident.

"Brother Saul,.. " - Paul refers to two things here. First there is the friendly nature of the greeting "Brother". It would not occur to those listening that Saul was being addressed as a brother in Christ because of the calling from the Lord. The second is that Paul reverts to his Jewish name of Saul. He does not use his Roman name. Although the situation was still a delicate one and he had every reason to refrain from using his Roman name, he was quite correct in what he said. He was actually addressed as Saul in the early account. See "Saul, Saul" of verse 7.

## Verse 14

"And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldst know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth."

The parallel account of chapter 9. 17. is different from what is said here. In the former account there are words by Jesus to Ananias and by Ananias to Paul. Both accounts are in precis form so it must be expected that when extracts are given from a speech of some length, there are bound to be discrepancies. Such discrepancies are not inaccuracies but are the result of inclusion in the one case and omission in the next.

"The God of our fathers..." - thus showing that Christianity is based upon the beliefs of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The pity of it is that modern Christianity does not see the Truth as Paul saw it. Present day ministers would not report the beliefs of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as proofs of what their flock should believe. In fact, they would deny the Promises made unto the fathers. If God is the God of the fathers and also the God of Christians, then the fathers must have believed what Christians believe. If Christians do not believe what the fathers believed, then they do not have the Truth.

"thou shouldest know his will," - this could be possible only by Divine revelation in some form. The manner just described by Paul was sufficient.

"see that Just One,.. " - to be a witness of his resurrection which was one of the qualifications of an apostle. (Acts 1. 22. The Just One means the Righteous One, or simply "the Righteous").

"the voice of his mouth." - to be a witness that his eyes did not deceive him. This was no vision, He actually saw and he heard. Furthermore, he heard Jesus give him his commission as an apostle. All these were very necessary preliminaries to the ordination of an apostle, and would give him his authority.

## Verse 15

"For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard."

This statement is not given in the account of chapter 9. On this occasion it is necessary to repeat the Lord's words because of their importance in establishing Paul as an apostle of Jesus Christ. Compare the words here with those of Acts 1. 8. By "seeing" Jesus, Paul was his "witness".

"all men..." - this appoints Paul to preach to all nations, whether they be Jew or Gentile. This appointment corresponds very nearly with the statement of Acts 9. 15. which records the words of Jesus to Ananias.

Paul now begins to tread upon dangerous ground when he says that he was sent to preach unto all men. He has not as yet mentioned that he was sent unto Gentiles so from the point of view of those who heard this speech, he may have been sent to Jews only. This thought would keep them quiet for a while.

"what thou hast seen..." - he has seen the risen Lord as a proof that he was raised from the dead.

"and heard." - He had heard his appointment as an apostle.

Having reached this stage in his speech, Paul must have impressed those who thought a little about what he had said because here was a man who was educated in the manner of a devout Jew and who had shown zeal for Israel by the energy with which he persecuted the Christians. To suddenly change as he had done was remarkable. The change had been immediate thus indicating that something very unusual had happened to him.

## Verse 16

"And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptised, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

"now why tarriest thou?..." - "why are you delaying?" combined with the word "now" it suggests "why are you delaying at this important time?"

"arise..." - see note to Acts 9: 6. The word "arise" as a command is combined with a word showing the action desired. In this instance, it is baptism.

"wash away thy sins..." - see Col. 2. 12/13. The act of baptism was something the Jewish listeners could understand as it was a Jewish rite.

"calling on the name of the Lord." - See note to Acts 2. 21; 9. 14;

## Verse 17

"And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance;"

"And it came to pass..." - The meaning here is "After a while..." or "after a certain period of time..." The effect is to change the subject from one theme to another. Paul now enters upon a very delicate subject indeed which was hinted at in verse 15 in the note following the section dealing with "all men..."

"I was come again to Jerusalem..." - Paul is aware of the dangerous ground he is about to tread and cleverly refers to Jerusalem again and to the fact that he had entered the temple to pray. If they had any thought that he had deserted True Judaism and turned away from the God of Israel, they were quite wrong. Here he had returned to the Holy City, the city of David, and had entered the temple to pray. There must have been several listeners by now who

began to feel a bit uneasy about Paul, yet they were uncertain enough to maintain the same discreet silence.

"I was in a trance." - see note to Acts 10. 10.

#### Verse 18

"And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me."

"saw him saying..." - saw him as he was saying...

"Make haste..." - lit. "Do thou hasten..."

"get thee quickly out of Jerusalem..." - lit. "come out with speed from Jerusalem..." The instruction is not to "go out" but to "come out". In the first, he would go alone. In the second, he would have the Lord with him.

"they will not receive..." - they will not believe... Paul is building the situation carefully for the time or moment when he has to put his case before them. Will they receive or not receive?

#### Verse 19

"And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee:"

Paul is confronted with the antagonism which met him during the visit he refers to. After he had been such a zealot for the Jews, he was later accused of being a traitor to the Jewish cause. He has to guard against a similar attack on this occasion so builds up his defence by referring to his former zeal.

"imprisoned and beat..." - imperfect tense showing that he continually imprisoned and beat.

"them that believed on thee." - those who believed in Jesus and not such as the present listeners who did not so believe.

#### Verse 20

"And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him."

"thy martyr Stephen..." - Paul did not use the word in its modern sense. The meaning in Paul's day was a witness who has a knowledge of something and can give information concerning it and confirm it. Later many were to be martyrs and shed their blood for their convictions and so the Greek word became Anglicised to its modern meaning. See Bullinger's definition in his Lexicon at page 483. See the usage in Rev. 2. 13 and 17. 6. In mentioning Stephen with the word "martyr" Paul shows that Stephen was a witness to Christ as he Paul, was a witness but in a different way. He could very well die the same way.

"standing by..." - almost as a superintendant of the killing.

"kept the raiment..." - this was the custom in those days. He who kept the raiment was a witness of the death of the victim and that the killing was in order.

The murder of Stephen made a profound impression upon Paul which he was never to forget. In this situation, he uses it to build up his position in readiness for the tremendous shock he is about to deliver.

#### Verse 21

"And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence to the Gentiles."



"Depart:.." - lit. "Go thou for I to the nations at distance will send thee."

"the Gentiles." - Paul comes to the fatal word - Gentiles. To the Jew a Gentile was a dog. To share the precious promises with a Gentile was unthinkable to a Jew. It not only horrified him but it angered him as well. It was akin to bringing a despised and rejected Gentile into the holy part of the temple, the penalty for which was death.

Paul has built up the situation as best as he could, showing that True Jewish religion is no different from True Christianity except in the fact that whereas the Jews looked for the coming of the Messiah, the Christian maintains that the Messiah has come and he is Jesus of Nazareth. Furthermore, he maintains that Jesus will come again. The point to note however, is that the Jews believed in the Promises, in One God, in Jerusalem being the city of the great king who is to come, in the restoration of the former kingdom of God on earth, in the Holy Spirit being the Power of God, in the Coming of the Messiah and the True Christian Believers believe in exactly the same. All the people had to do now was to accept that in the Will of God, salvation was now to be preached unto the Gentiles.

#### Verse 22

"And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live."

The storm now broke in all its fury. The Jews could not endure the thought of sharing salvation with the Gentiles. Thus they listened to him patiently up to the moment he uttered the sentence containing the word "Gentiles", and ending in "send thee".

The word of the Lord given in verse 18 - "they will not receive thy testimony..." were about to be fulfilled.

"Away with such a fellow..." - see note to Acts 21. 36.

"it is not fit..." - it is not proper..." The tense indicates "it has not been fit all along that he should have lived." This was probably a criticism of the chiliarch for rescuing him.

#### Verse 23

"And as they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air,"

"as they cried out..." - lit. "as they were crying out..." the verb "cry" is a strong one meaning yelling, shrieking, shouting.

"cast off their clothes..." - this does not mean that they stripped themselves naked. Such an act would be severely frowned upon by Jews. Nor does it mean that they removed their upper garments nor loosened them preparatory to stoning Paul for they would not have been permitted by the soldiers to do so. Nor does it mean that they prepared themselves to beat Paul and resume the act which they ceased doing in Acts 21. verse 32. The Diaglott translates "tossing up the mantles..." which was a show of rage in which they waved them to signify anger.

"threw dust into the air." - lit. "dust throwing into the air..." This was another method of displaying anger. See the display of anger by Shimei against David recorded in 2 Sam. 16. 13. This was a common method in the east of giving vent to angered feelings.

The use of dust was an oriental method of displaying grief. When Job's friends came to see him after his tragedies, they put dust upon their heads. See Job 2. 12. See also Rev. 18. 19. for the act of showing grief at the destruction of "the great city". Therefore the use of dust in this way is to exhibit great emotional stress.

## Verse 24

"The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him."

The chief captain felt it was time to effect a second rescue of the prisoner so he had him brought into the castle. The speech had told him nothing about the previous trouble which led to the arrest of Paul, either because he did not understand the language in which Paul spoke, or, in spite of that, he would not have understood it unless he had had some grounding in the Hope of Israel.

Therefore the chiliarch decided to use torture in order to get the required information. This barbarous treatment would extort a confession from the victim or would get him to accuse himself. The sudden outburst by the Jews must have intrigued him, making him all the more determined to find out what it was all about.

## Verse 25

"And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the Centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?"

"as they bound him with thongs..." - The method of applying the scourge was to tie the victim to a pillar in a bending position, or to stretch him on a frame. They would then lash the victim with lashes containing on the ends small pieces of lead. The verb here means "extend.." which is to say, stretch him forward over something. Jesus suffered something like this during his mockery of a trial. (Matt. 27. 26.)

"Is it lawful..." - Paul now insists upon his civil rights to a proper trial.

"the centurion..." - the Tribune would not see to the scourging personally but would delegate that unpleasant task to a man of authority such as a centurion. It appears that when Jesus was scourged and crucified, a centurion was standing by. (Matt. 27. 54; Mark 15. 39, 44/45; Luke 23. 47.)

"for you..." - this was an important qualification because the soldiers were the guardians of the State and the enforcers of its laws.

## Verse 26

"When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman."

The centurion quite rightly reported the matter to his chief. Paul had not given any proof of his Roman citizenship yet the centurion and the chief captain were not prepared to risk anything. They felt it was better to be sure than sorry. See notes to Acts 16. 37. for the power and influence of Roman citizenship.

## Verse 27

"Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea."

The motive behind the chief captain's enquiry was surely one of proof that such a bedraggled individual as Paul must have appeared after the rough treatment he had received, now claimed to be a Roman. Roman citizens were usually proud individuals and did not appear in the state Paul was in. All Romans were exempt from the Third Degree methods Lysias was about to apply to Paul. How did a Roman citizen manage to get himself into such a state and such a fix?

## Verse 28

"And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free born."

"With..." - Not in the original which reads, "I of a great sum of money the citizenship this purchased."

"obtained..." - from the fore-going word for word translation, it will be seen that the "freedom" or "citizenship" was purchased rather than obtained. During the reign of Claudius, freedom was sold at exorbitant prices. His wife, Messalina, was at the back of this form of extortion but in later years, she exhibited great contempt for such freedom by selling it almost for nothing.

"I was free born." - the word "free" in the translation is in italics. The R.V. has "a Roman" in italics making the sentence "I am a Roman born." The R.S.V. has "I was born a citizen". without any indication as to the words added to the original. The Diaglott says, "I but even have been born". The Afrikaans Version has "...ek het dit deur geboorte." meaning "I have this through birth". The latter is the most accurate interpretation of all the versions quoted because Paul's reply is a rejoinder to the centurion's statement. It was almost as though Paul had said, "You may have purchased your right to be a Roman citizen but I was born into it through family distinction."

## Verse 29

"Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him."

"straightway..." - immediately. Those who were about to apply the third degree method of "putting the question" as it was called, realised the great risk they were in of having to account for their rough handling of a Roman citizen. It is not recorded that any order was given by the centurion and this is understandable. The soldiers would know well enough the seriousness of the crime of illtreating a Roman. If found guilty, they could be made to suffer the same punishment which they were about to give to Paul.

"they departed..." - because of the illegality of tying him to a post, they would loose him from this first. He still was bound by his chain.

"was afraid..." - Lysias was afraid because of the consequences of his action in having Paul bound to a post when he was a Roman citizen. This fear is related to the statement of verse 28 where he confesses to having purchased his Roman citizenship. This was illegal for there were only three ways in which one may become a Roman citizen and they were (1) by birth; (2) by grant for some service to the State, and (3) by "manumission" giving it by hand for any reason by the proper authority. There was no provision for buying and selling the right. This being the case, Lysias could have had his citizenship taken away from him and, in addition, he would have to undergo some form of punishment not only for binding Paul but also for buying his citizenship. He was in a worse state than any of his soldiers.

Paul is not to be criticised for appealing to his Roman citizenship to save him from further suffering. It was not one of his principles to endure needless suffering. (1 Cor. 13. 3.) If he had died under further punishment, he would have been of no use in preaching. By mentioning his Roman citizenship, he was saved for further work in the Lord's Service.

## Verse 30

"On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from his bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them."

"he would have known the certainty..." - this heavy clause is much simpler in the original Greek, which, when translated, is "wishing to know..."

"the certainty..." - the true facts.

"loosed him..." - by military rule, he would still be bound to a soldier. He may have been loosed from this but still retained either one or two of the chains of 21. 33.

"the chief priests..." - see note to Acts 4. 6.

"all their council..." - all the council to which the chief priests were attached. That is the Sanhedrin. See note to Acts 4. 6.

"set him before them." - in the council chamber. The chief captain was doing the right thing here because if Paul had been guilty of breaking a Jewish Law of which Rome took cognisance, then the sentence which was imposed according to Jewish law would be enforced. On the other hand, if Lysias had liberated Paul and it was found later that his crime was one which Rome recognised, then the chief captain would suffer the same sentence that Paul would have suffered had he been arrested, tried and found guilty.

Paul's defence before the Jewish people came to nothing and he is now about to commence his second defence against the Jewish council. He had made a final attempt to gain Jewish favour by going into the temple in the manner described, but his plan came to nought. He had made a masterly speech in trying to win their favour but the innate Jewish hatred of the Gentile was more than Paul could persuade them to forget. If his appeal to the Sanhedrin was to fail, then there was nothing left for him to do but to bow to the inevitable and turn from Jewry by going to Rome, the heart of Gentile paganism.

## THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

### Chapter 23

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#### Paul's defence before the Sanhedrin

The Sanhedrin had been called upon before to adjudicate in matters concerning the Gospel and its teachers. They were

- |     |                              |                     |
|-----|------------------------------|---------------------|
| (1) | The Trial of Jesus           | Luke 22. 66/71.     |
| (2) | The Trial of Peter and John. | Acts 4. 5/22.       |
| (3) | The Trial of the disciples.  | Acts 5. 21/40.      |
| (4) | The Trial of Stephen.        | Acts 6. 12 - 7. 60. |

Now a fifth Trial is added to the list, Acts 23. 1/10. This was to be Paul's last chance in getting the Jews' sympathy but, in view of the character of the Sanhedrin as a body, the hope was a forlorn one. If we look at the problem the other way, this was to be the Jews' last chance of receiving the Divine favour for their is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. (Acts 4. 12.) If they turned away from the Name, then their hope would be lost.

The question of right and wrong would not be the whole problem particularly as far as the Sadducees were concerned. They were jealous of their standing with the Roman authorities and were very keen to safeguard their position. The Romans for their part, were touchy about any street scene or any demonstration of whatever nature as they would assume without proof that a plot was being hatched against them. The Romans would deal very severely with any hint of insurrection. This being the case, the Sadducees were keen not to upset the Romans so the uproar by the Jews in connection with Paul would induce them to be severe with anyone whom they may think was the root cause.

We must expect that Paul's attitude towards the Sanhedrin would differ largely from that of the humble submission of Jesus, the preacher from despised Nazareth and Galilee. Peter and John showed a confidence and boldness which took the Sanhedrin by surprise because they regarded them as "unlearned and ignorant men". (Acts 4. 13.) Stephen was a man on a much higher intellectual plane and showed no fear of them. With Paul however, there was this difference that intellectually he was their equal. His education was as good as any of them had had and in many cases, had been better. Socially he was as well connected as any of them and he had been a member of the Sanhedrin too. He had belonged to the Pharisees and was one of them. He described himself as "...an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;" (Phil. 3. 5.) and "...after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee." (Acts 26. 5.) It is interesting to speculate on the meaning Paul attached to the description "an Hebrew of the Hebrews..." because the name Hebrew means "a crosser over" and refers to that people who crossed over the Red Sea to make the wilderness journey. If Paul claimed to be "a crosser over amongst those who crossed over" he could have meant that he had crossed over from the Law to Christianity by leaving the other crossers over.

The salutations which opened the speeches show the difference between the accused:-

- |     |                 |  |
|-----|-----------------|--|
| (1) | Jesus:          | "as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so openeth he not his mouth." (Isa. 53. 7.) |
| (2) | Peter and John: | "Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel                                       |
| (3) | The disciples:  | No salutation.   |
| (4) | Stephen:        | "Men, brethren, and fathers,..."   |
| (5) | Paul:           | "Men and brethren..."  |

## Verse 1

"And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."

"earnestly beholding..." - same verb as in Acts 1. 10; 3. 4 and 12; 6. 15; 7. 55; 10. 4; 11. 6; 13. 9; 14. 9; The meaning is that Paul looked at the Council members boldly and with confidence.

"Men and brethren..." - the Gk. is "Men brethren..." This was less respectful than to the assembled mob when he spoke from the stairs. ( Acts 22.1.) This is quite in order. He was able to assert his equality as a member of their august assembly. The address is in friendly terms.

"I have lived..." - the pattern of his life had been shaped by what he believed to be the Word of God. Paul used this expression again in 1 Tim. 1. 5. and 19; Heb. 13. 18. Peter also used it. 1 Pet. 3. 16. The references here are to the "conscience".

"until this day." - without wavering right up to this very moment. There never had been a moment in his adult life that he was not guided by his understanding of the word of God.

## Verse 2

"And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth."

There are several theories as to why Ananias gave such instructions. It might have been Paul's bold assertion that he maintained a clear conscience towards God and men (as he was later to declare to Felix - 26. 16.) Paul was meticulous about his behaviour in this way and expressed a similar opinion to the Corinthians. (1 Cor. 4. 4.) His opinion of his behaviour while under the Law is even more strict. (Phil. 3. 6.) Paul was not referring to his behaviour in the past from a point of view of being right or wrong. He is concerned only with how he behaved according to his conscience before God. Even when he was a persecutor of Christians, he felt he was doing the right thing. (Acts 26. 9.) Ananias was a brutal man and a dictator. In addition to his many unworthy qualities, the following represents a few comments made about him by Josephus:-

"...he was a great hoarder up of money; he therefore cultivated the friendship of Albinus and of the high priest by making them presents; he also had servants who were very wicked, who joined themselves to the boldest sort of people, and went to the threshing floors, and took away the tithes that belonged to the priests by violence, and did not refrain from beating such as would not give these tithes to them....so that priests that of old...died forwant of food."

With his great wealth, Ananias wielded great power. (Ant. Book 20. Chap. 9. part 2.) He was the son of Nedebaeus, and received office from Herod of Chalois, a brother of Herod Agrippa I, in A.D. 47 and held it for about 11 years. He was murdered together with his brother in A.D. 66.

"smite him on the mouth." - Ananias was wrong in giving the order. The symbol of it was to shut up the mouth that had uttered sayings which offended. This was probably the same type of smiting which Jesus suffered because he had given a reply which stung the high priest. (John 18. 22.)

"them that stood by him..." - attendants but not members.

## Verse 3

"Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?"

This was a different reaction to that of the Lord Jesus when he was struck. Paul may be thought by normal standards that he gave way to righteous indignation. Righteous men had been smitten before him. See 1 Kings 22. 24/25. for Micaiah's retaliation when Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah smote him on the cheek. See Jer. 20. 2/3 for the long-suffering Jeremiah's rejoinder when Pashur smote him. Having been smitten, Paul turns the action into a word for Ananias "God shall smite thee..."

"Thou whited wall..." - a wall white-washed or plastered with lime to make it white. A "wall" is a symbol of defence and whiteness should represent righteousness. Paul uses a sarcastic whiteness here which brought Ananias' unrighteousness to the fore and by referring to him as a wall, Paul showed that he should have been a wall of defence to Israel but instead, was weakening it by his abominable rule. The Lord Jesus had referred to the Pharisees and scribes as "whited sepulchres" indicating that they had a form of righteousness which, in itself, was full of uncleanness leading to death.

Did Paul give way to righteous indignation? Having regard to the recommendation given him by the Lord in verse 11, it would appear that he did not. Paul was a follower of Jesus and Jesus of the exemplary character never did anything for which he could be criticised. His was always the perfect attitude and showed more than anything his wonderful achievement in keeping all his feelings in complete check. Paul's remark may have gone further than the short report indicates. He could have given Ananias a short prophecy that the system which he represented and for which he was sitting in judgment, was about to be smitten by God and in a far more serious way than Paul had been smitten. Quite apart from any imperfections in the rule of Ananias, the Sanhedrin had not done right in any of the judgments they had delivered against the servants of God. In their opposition to the growth of Christianity they were filling up their cup of iniquity to the brim. Looked at in this way, Paul's outburst was not one of righteous indignation but of a prophetic warning for an evil system which condemned him before any evidence was heard.

Verse 4

"And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest?"

"They that stood by..." - these are most likely the attendants of Ananias and, therefore, his friends. This being so, their statement that Ananias was God's high priest had no authority. It was a remark of flattery for Ananias.

"God's high priest." - It is not certain that Ananias was "God's high priest" because the office of high priest was given to a man by the Romans and not by any predetermined succession. This point is important in view of Paul's remark in verse 5.

Verse 5

"Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people."

There are a number of theories concerning Paul's words here. Some say that Paul spoke in a sudden burst of righteous indignation and afterwards said he was sorry. Another theory considers that Paul's infirmity was inferior sight and as a result thereof, he could not see that Ananias was the man who spoke and that he was the high priest. If Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles, erred on this occasion, are we to assume that his great admirer, Luke, was inspired by God to record Paul's weakness on this occasion when he must have suffered many worse indignities over the past years?

In the foregoing notes, it has been pointed out that in his statement, Paul could well have given a prophecy concerning the future of the Sanhedrin. Two quotations were given from the O.T. to show how other men of God reacted to being struck. In the first of these, namely, 1 Kings 22. 24/25. Micaiah

uttered a prophecy concerning the fate of the man who struck. In Jer. 20. 2/3. when Jeremiah had been struck by Pashur, he immediately uttered a prophecy of the future of the striker. Is it any wonder then, that Paul, another man of God should make a prophecy concerning God's smiting the Sanhedrin and the whole system it stood for?

Another point for consideration is that Jesus had prophesied

- Matt. 10. 19. "But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.  
20. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."

See also Mark 13. 11. and Luke 21. 14/15. In view of this testimony, were the words spoken by Paul his own words, or the words of Divine inspiration? Would God inspire his servants to be angry against an insult?

Regarding the priesthood, it must be remembered that by that time, there were a number of high-priests so that it was difficult to tell which one was the chief high-priest. The proper high-priest presided at such meetings but in view of the character of Ananias and the tremendous influence he had through his wealth, he would be able to sit at one side and disregard the presence of the officiating high priest while he said something to his attendants.

"I wist not..." - the tense here indicates I did not know and still do not know, that he was the high priest. Why did he not know this? Would not the high priest be in the Chair presiding over the meeting? It must be remembered that it was Ananias's attendants who were spoken to by Ananias, and it was the same attendants who remonstrated with Paul. They could have stated that their master, Ananias was the high priest when he was not the officiating high priest.

The fore-going discussion shows that Paul did make a legitimate error and that there were several reasons why this should have been so. Therefore there was no righteous indignation. Paul could have said something like this:-  
"I did not know which of these men all dressed up as high priests was the officiating high priest. The office of high priest has become something which the law did not envisage and will, as I have prophesied by God's Power working in me, that it will be struck as I have been struck. In the mouth so that it will never speak again."

"Thou shalt not..." - Paul had criticised Ananias for contravening the law. Now it is pointed out to Paul that he is breaking the law too. He is very quick to put matters right. This must be contrasted with Ananias who did nothing to make amends after his indiscretion had been pointed out to him. For the Law which was contravened see Exod. 22. 28.

Verse 6

"But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question."

Paul has been criticised for setting the Sadducees against the Pharisees in this manner but one must realise that the Pharisees were in the majority and they were a united body of believers, even although they believed in error. The Pharisees were divided amongst themselves but there were some fine men amongst them. Nicodemus was such a man. To Paul it was obvious that there was insufficient opposition to the Sadducees to carry the day and he must have known that inasmuch as the Sadducees would not surrender their opposition to the resurrection, they would never become Christians. To turn to the new faith, they had to accept the very point they denied. It would have been much easier for a Pharisee to accept Christianity than it would a Sadducee. This is very much the case to-day when people who believe in an immortal soul going to heaven at death, will not accept True Christianity when it is taught to them.



"I am a Pharisee..." - Whereas Paul had claimed Roman citizenship when he spoke to the tribune, now he claims that he is a Pharisee when he speaks to the Sanhedrin. By speaking to the Sadducees, he was driving a lost cause. He had failed to arouse interest among the people of Israel and he would fail to arouse interest amongst the Sadducees. Only the Pharisees were left so Paul rightly turns to them in such a manner as to ensure that they would be on his side.

"the son of a Pharisee." - some versions have "son of Pharisees" See R.V. R.S.V. and Diaglott. This shows that he was of a Pharisaical line and came from a family of long association with Pharisees. This should make him more of a Pharisee than many Pharisees who were there and would gain a measure of their respect. This would also have a powerful pointer to the fact that he was not prone to friendship with the Romans as the Sadducees were. Paul was friendly to anyone or any nation who was interested in the Faith of Israel even if such people should be Romans or any other nationality. His friendships were not made because of any political gain he might derive from them.

"the hope and resurrection of the dead." - this is usually interpreted as "the hope of the resurrection of the dead". But Paul did not say this. His words were as stated. Where the "hope" fits in is difficult to say but since Israel (with the exception of the Sadducees) had a hope of salvation which was to come at a time of resurrection of the dead, when all would get their salvation at once, it is safe to assume that Paul referred to the hope of Israel which would be realised after the resurrection of the dead. Paul referred to this hope later. Acts 28. 20. and in 2 Tim. 4. 1. and 8.

#### Verse 7

"And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided."

Paul had not been called in question on the doctrinal issues which he named but was arrested as a result of the uproar which followed his statement that the Gentiles were to have a chance of salvation. Taking the long view, he could have found himself in that position as a result of the hope of Israel (and the resurrection of the dead) because such issues were to apply to Gentiles in future.

The fact that Gentiles were to share the Promises made unto Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was not mentioned at this stage. That may have antagonised the friendlier Pharisees. The point to be decided now was the hope of Israel which was closely connected with the resurrection. The Pharisees affirmed this doctrine whereas the Sadducees denied it.

"dissension..." - see definition given against 15. 2.

"multitude..." - refers to the assembled members of the Sanhedrin.

"was divided." - see definition of "divided" against 14. 4.

#### Verse 8

"For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both."

"the Sadducees say..." - that there is no resurrection of the body. This denial assumed that there would be no resurrection because the supposed "soul" survives the body after death, thus rendering the resurrection quite useless. To hold this view, they would have to follow Platonic teachings in connection with the immortality of the soul. Although they believed that a soul survived the body at death, they did not believe that there were angels who did God's bidding. They did not offer any explanation as to why angels are

mentioned so frequently in the O.T. which they professed to uphold. In this, the upholding of the O.T. they opposed the Pharisees who believed in the commentaries and the traditions. Their denial of the "spirit existence" was two fold, angel (angelos) and spirit (pneuma). The latter would include those supposed agencies of evil which were "cast out" when a sufferer was healed. That the Pharisees affirmed the existence of angels and of "spirits" does not prove the existence of either. The existence of angels does not require confirmation from Pharisees because their existence is too obvious from a study of Scripture. That the Pharisees believed in "spirits" does not prove that they existed because a study of Scripture will show that where "spirits" were "cast out", the sufferer was healed of something which to-day, is known to be caused by germs, infection, glandular disorder or other physical imperfection. That the Pharisees believed in a physical resurrection is a point of interest only and no proof that there will be a physical resurrection. The proof comes from Paul's masterly discourse to the Corinthian believers in 1 Cor. 15. 12/23.

"the Pharisees confess both." - the question here is, to what does the word "both" refer when three problems are mentioned, namely, resurrection, angels, and spirits. The problem is resolved to two when we consider the first question being that of resurrection and the second being the existence of supernatural beings of whatever nature, angel or spirit.

Paul's reference to the resurrection was not made with a view to setting the Pharisees against the Sadducees and vice versa. He had just been explaining that he had a strong Pharisaical tradition and was still loyal to it because he believed in the doctrine of a resurrection. This was the Pharisaical hope and the hope of true Israel, whether Mosaic or Christian.

"True Israel" was Mosaic before the first advent of Jesus. It is now "Christian" because just as the Mosaic Israel were the seed of Abraham, so the True Christian believer is the seed of Abraham. (Gal. 3. 29.)

Verse 9

"And there arose a great cry, and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying. We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God."

"there arose a great cry..." - lit. "Great and becoming dispute..."  
Being interpreted, this would mean, "And the dispute becoming great..."

"arose..." - "came into being..." "happened..." (1st.)

"arose..." - "stood up". (2nd.)

"scribes..." - the learned men, the professional leaders such as lawyers, bankers, etc., the guardians of the law. All these took the Pharisees' part.

"we find no evil in this man..." - similar to "I find no fault in him" from Pilate concerning Jesus. (John 19. 6.)

"if a spirit or angel hath spoken to him..." - they would never admit that the risen Jesus had spoken to him but they would be prepared in the face of Sadducean opposition, to claim that an angel spoke to him.

"let us not fight against God." - this is the philosophy of Gamaliel. (Acts. 5. 39.)

Verse 10

"And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle."

"And when there arose a great dissension,.. " - lit. "Great and becoming dispute..." That is to say, "And the dispute becoming vehement..." The support given by the Pharisees to Paul was too much for the Sadducees to endure so they took matters into their own hands by coming to blows with those who opposed them.

In the confusion which followed, the Sadducees fought against the Pharisees but did not forget to do some damage to Paul as well so that Lysias was afraid for the safety of his prisoner. If anything had happened to Paul, the chief captain would have been held responsible.

"pulled in pieces..." - Gk. "pull asunder" or "tear in pieces". The word is the same as that from Mark 5. 4. translated as "plucked asunder". This means that Paul was being attacked by several men at once. The dignity of this august assembly had gone completely. As a result of this, the proper trial of Paul could not take place and there would be no point in continuing with the meeting. The Pharisees appear to have been pulling Paul to their side of the council chamber, and the Sadducees must have been pulling him to their side.

"commanded the soldiers to go down..." - If Lysias was to save his prisoner, he would have to act quickly and in strength. Therefore he sent a detachment down to the council chamber.

"take him by force..." - that would make a third force pulling in the direction of the door. This was the second time that the soldiers had to run "down" from the castle to save Paul's life. See Acts 21. 32.

"bring him into the castle." - the second time the soldiers bring Paul into the castle to save him from further damage and, possibly, death. See Acts 21. 34.

One cannot help feel a little sympathetic towards Lysias in his difficulty. He came across a wild mob of Jews who were yelling, shouting, throwing dust into the air and beating Paul. Naturally he would want to know what it was all about. But when he started questioning the Jews, he could find no one who knew what started it and what the basis of the incident was. Quite rightly and with good common sense, he brought Paul into the safety of the castle, hoping the next day to adopt a third degree method of extracting information from Paul and found himself thwarted by learning that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he, Lysias, could get himself into serious trouble if word of this leaked out and reached a higher authority. Therefore he decided, again wisely and correctly, to call a meeting of the influential and dignified Sanhedrin who could then put Paul under trial in accordance with Jewish custom. All this was very well-meaning so just imagine his great disappointment when he hears a noise and finds that the Jews again, and in this case the Sanhedrin, were fighting amongst themselves over Paul. His problem had immediately become a two-fold one, first to find out what it was all about and secondly, to keep the Jews at peace one with the other. There was one thing Lysias had discovered, and that was that Paul was a very important person. This no doubt, caused him to pass the matter on to a higher level with far-reaching results for Paul and the Lord's work. Thus Luke prepares his readers for the next meeting under trial. From the pattern of the incident, we can be quite sure that Lysias never found out the truth of the matter for the rest of his life.

Verse 11

"And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome."

"the night following..." - Gk. "the next night..." Here is an indication that Paul had to wait for twenty-four hours before encouragement came. He must have felt very depressed as he would be in pain after the several beatings he had had, and in addition to this, he would be very depressed that his final attempt to save the Jews from their blindness, had failed. Not only had he failed to draw the common people, but he had also failed with their leaders.

"the Lord..." - "The Lord Jesus..."

"stood by him..." - the appearances of the Lord to Paul were well timed and had a great effect upon his career as a servant of the Lord. The first was on the road to Damascus when Paul was changed from a persecutor to a preacher, It was the great crisis of his life. The second was at Corinth where the Lord encouraged him to the extent that he remained at Corinth for 1 year and six months. His Corinthian ministry was very important as his two letters to that ecclesia show. Then the Lord appeared to him in a trance while he was at Jerusalem and told him to go to the Gentiles. (Acts 22. 17/21.) Now Paul is to be told that his work has been pleasing and that he is yet to fulfil his ambition by preaching at Rome.

"Be of good cheer..." - the Greek is the same as "be of good comfort" in Matt. 9. 22; "be of good cheer" in Matt. 14. 27; Mark 6. 50; John 16. 33; and again "be of good comfort" in Mark 10. 49. It was a favourite expression of Jesus and means "take courage". Paul realised that all his disappointments had some good about them for they led to greater things in so far as the gospel was concerned. See his remarks in this connection in Phil. 1. 12.

"so must thou bear witness also at Rome." - this was Paul's intention (Acts 19. 21. but he could not go when he wanted to. The Lord had work for him in other places first. Having done what the Lord wanted, Paul would be sent. It is always the Lord's will that prevails and not our own.

Verse 12

"And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul."

"when it was day..." - the Lord must have appeared to Paul during the night so that the incident Luke now records, took place the next day, early in the morning. This shows that the Jews acted fast without wasting much time. The men involved in such a crime would be Zealots who were well known for their murderous ways. They used to mingle with the crowds, even in the temple, and carry a dagger under their cloaks which they would use stealthily when the opportunity occurred. The particular division of the Zealots who did this work were called "Sicarii" from the name of the dagger which they used, the "sica". These assassins also operated in the roads and highways of Judea, thus causing the Romans much annoyance. The Sicarii contributed largely to the Romans turning upon the Jews and destroying them in A.D. 70. The danger from the Sicarii supplied the reason for the great precautions taken by Lysias to ensure Paul's safety.

"banded together..." - "formed a conspiracy". The same Greek word as used for "concourse" in Acts 19. 40.

"bound themselves under a curse..." - "declared that they were anathema or cursed of God if they did not fulfil their intention to slay Paul. For Paul's use of this word "Anathema" see Gal. 1. 8/9; Rom. 9. 3; 1 Cor. 12. 3; 16. 22.

"neither eat nor drink..." - See 1 Sam. 14. 24; 2 Sam. 3. 35; a Jewish custom of long standing. The desire to eat and drink is very great amongst all man's desires. Therefore such a declaration would be a sign of great sincerity.

Verse 13

"And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy."

Luke must have had a purpose in stating that there were more than forty who joined in this "concourse". This was a big organised movement within the Sanhedrin and had that assembly's endorsement. It is not known that the Sanhedrin endorsed the effort but the fact that they did not object nor do anything to stop it shows a tacit approval. That the conspiracy was made public

shows that it was not an underhand intention through personal animosity but was rather a religious ambition whereby the conspirators thought they would be doing God a service. Jesus had predicted this attitude in John 16. 2.

Looking at Luke's construction of these verses, we see that in verse 11, the Lord Jesus commends Paul's work and tells him he will preach in Rome. That was the Divine intention, told to Paul through Jesus. Now, in verses 12 and 13 we find a conspiracy of Jews condemning Paul and determining within themselves to prevent him going to Rome. Here we have the will of man as opposed to the will of God.

#### Verse 14

"And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul."

By coming to the chief priests and elders, they would come to the power section of the Sanhedrin. They solicit help by telling them that they intend to kill Paul.

"We have bound ourselves under a great curse..." - "we have anathematized ourselves under a great anathema..." this is the literal Greek. See note to verse 12.

"eat nothing..." a repetition of their vow. They vowed; they eat nothing.

#### Verse 15

"Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you tomorrow, as though ye would inquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him."

The conspirators suggested to the group of chief priests and elders that they should consult the whole body of the Sanhedrin regarding the proposed plan of killing Paul. How the deeply religious portion of the Sanhedrin could have entertained such thoughts for a moment is hard to understand but it indicates the depths to which they had sunk.

The idea was that the Sanhedrin should ask the chief captain to bring Paul down on the morrow to the council chamber under the pretext of their desire to ask him a few questions concerning himself. The chief captain would have liked to be a listener at that conference so that he may at last be able to find out what the fuss and ado was all about. The Sanhedrin as a body may feel that their meeting of yesterday which was so rudely interrupted by the fighting, could well be continued with Paul there.

The plan was that all responsibility for Paul's death would not attach to the Sanhedrin. The murder would be carried out swiftly and some distance away from the council hall. The problem was to get Paul out of the castle and this seemed the best way in which to do it. The determination of the Jews to kill Paul may be judged from the fact that although Paul would move under a heavy body-guard, the fanatics would follow out their intention to assassinate him regardless of the fact that the soldiers would fight to protect him and there would be a heavy loss of life.

#### Verse 16

"And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul."

This is the first and only mention of Paul's family. Apart from this, nothing is known. It is thought that when Paul wrote to the Philippians saying, "I have suffered the loss of all things,.." (Phil. 3. 8.) he meant that not only had he been disinherited but he had also lost the support and friendship of his family. He was an outcast yet he didn't mind because it was for the Lord's sake. Now we find that his sister must have retained her love for

her brother and must have sustained that family affection in her son. It is unlikely that she lived in Jerusalem because Paul did not stay with her on this visit. Where she lived is unknown and unimportant to the story. Her son, Paul's nephew, must have come to Jerusalem to the University and, through family connections, have had access to the Sanhedrin council chamber. Since Paul had been connected with Pharisees for so long, it must have been a sad blow to his family when he deserted the family tradition and followed the Lord Jesus. Yet there was sufficient affection between the family members for the nephew to risk his life by disclosing to Paul the plot that had been hatched.

"heard of their lying in wait..." - it is interesting to speculate as to how he could have come to know. Did he hear it in council chambers? Did he visit other Sanhedrin members in their homes and hear it discussed? The point is unimportant but it is important that it was Paul's nephew who warned the chief captain because Paul was under loose arrest and could receive visitors. But in view of his recent beatings, he would rather be left alone. However, when a nephew came to see him, and a member of a family once estranged but now on friendly terms again, it would be imperative for Paul to see him. That would be as good a reason as any why Luke, who does not waste words on unnecessary details, would record such information in his story. In view of the secrecy of the matter and that Lysias did not know from any other source, it was necessary in the Divine Purpose that Paul should be saved. Therefore God chose to reveal the plot to the very one whom Paul would be pleased to see at that time. Had it been revealed to someone else, it is possible that Paul would not have received them at that time, and his life would have been endangered as a result.

#### Verse 17

"Then called Paul one of the centurions unto him, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath certain thing to tell him."

Paul takes a necessary precaution. He does not tell the centurion what the news is but asks the centurion to take the young man to the chief captain. There was a possibility that the Sanhedrin may have spies in the castle or in the Roman guard who would not pass on the message which would save Paul's life.

"this young man..." - with Paul at his age, we can imagine that his sister would be about the same age. Therefore the son must have been in his early twenties. The word for "young man" is the same as that used of Paul in Acts 7. 58.

#### Verse 18

"So he took him, and brought him to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto him, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee."

The centurion showed respect for Paul. One would not expect this of a soldier guarding a prisoner but it must be remembered that Paul was a Roman citizen and that the chief captain had very recently ordered a third degree to cease and the prisoner to be released, because Paul was a Roman citizen. Word must have gone about the castle that Paul was a very important person, hence the centurion's willingness to do his bidding.

"Paul the prisoner..." - an expression used by Paul in Ephes. 3. 1; Philem. vvs. 1 and 9; also Ephes. 4. 1. for "prisoner of the Lord" and 2 Tim. 1.8. where Paul refers to himself as being a prisoner of the Lord."

#### Verse 19

"Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went with him aside privately, and asked him, What is that thou hast to tell me?"

Luke describes this incident in great detail so there must be some importance attached to it. It appears that Paul is treated with every courtesy and consideration by the Castle staff under Lysias. Luke's record indicates politeness and consideration in every line, showing Luke's skill as a writer.

It seems as though Lysias is anxious to make up as much as he can for dealing with Paul in the way he did before he learnt that Paul was a Roman citizen.

"privately..." - Lysias was anxious to speak to the young man alone and could very well have asked him if he knew what the fuss was about the other day. Paul's importance appeared to grow by the hour so Lysias may have been anxious to learn more about him.

#### Verse 20

"And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to morrow into the council, as though they would inquire somewhat of him more perfectly."

If Lysias ever rued the day he arrested Paul in the first place, he would never have done so more sincerely than he did now. He had had nothing but trouble with Paul since that time, and his efforts at finding out why Paul was being illtreated all ended in failure, leaving him with a problem which was right outside the "book of rules". What was he to do? It mattered little to a Roman that a Jew might lose his life at the hands of other Jews but when the endangered Jew was a Roman citizen and a prominent one at that, his problem was magnified.

The report given here was substantially the same as recorded by Luke in vvs 12/15.

"inquire..." - the verb here means "to ask for information". The verb "inquire" of verse 15 is a different word and means "to obtain an accurate knowledge of".

#### Verse 21

"But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee."

"But..." - "therefore,..."

"not yield unto them..." - do not allow yourself to be persuaded of them..."

"have bound themselves..." - same verb as in verse 12.

"have killed him." - a different verb from that used in verse 12 which is a strong word meaning "to put to death" or "kill outright". Here and in vvs 15 and 27 and in 25. 3. the verb is simply "to kill".

"promise..." - the promise here is not something which had been promised in the past. What they wanted was a promise from Lysias to do as they wished and to give them an undertaking that he would do so.

#### Verse 22

"So the chief captain then let the young man depart, and charged him, See thou tell no man that thou hast showed these things to me."

"let....depart..." - for the use of this verb, see Acts 3. 13; 4. 21; 4. 23; 5. 40; 13. 3; 15. 30; 33; 16. 35/36; 17. 9; 19. 41; and notes thereon. There is no sense that he discharged the young man nor ordered him to go. He was given freedom to go unhindered.

"charged him..." - "warned him..." "put him under an obligation not to tell."

"See thou tell no man..." - Luke uses the Greek form where he mixes 1st, 2nd and 3rd person in the same sentence with "tell no one that thou hast told these things to me."

"tell..." - "told me" that is "revealed to me" or "let out these things to me."

#### Verse 23

"And he called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night;"

An incomplete sentence terminating at the end of the next verse.

"two centurions..." - by their title they had control of one hundred men each. Therefore two centurions would mean two hundred soldiers would be sent. This is the case, the horsemen would be guards to the troops and the spearmen. All would combine to make two units over which two centurions would normally have charge.

"Caesarea..." - Caesarea Maritime, to-day a few miles north of Tel Aviv.

"horsemen threescore and ten..." - seventy horsemen. The soldiers were of the heavily armed type; the horsemen had the mobility; and the spearmen would be the close body-guard of Paul.

"spearmen..." - lit. "those who take the right hand..." or "a body-guard." They were lightly armed soldiers and extremely agile at close-quarters. The word is unknown in classical Greek and this is its only occurrence in Scripture.

#### Verse 24

"And provide them beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor."

"beasts..." - animals of conveyance or transport. (horses and asses.)

"they may set Paul on..." - lit. "that having mounted the Paul, they.."

"Felix..." - His name was either Claudius Felix or Antonius Felix and he had obtained his freedom from slavery from the emperor Claudius. His brother Pallas was on friendly terms with Nero and through the influence of Claudius, Felix was made Procurator of Judea which he governed first with a man named Cumanus, and later by himself. His childhood and former slavery made him a bitter and cruel man who was ruled by his passions. It was said of him that he ruled as a king with the spirit of a slave. He was a second Paul in his zeal for ridding the country of Zealots. His merciless character is shown by the fact that he hired assassins to kill a man named Jonathan, the High Priest, who had been largely responsible for getting him elected to office. His high handed methods of rule in Caesarea during the last two years of his career, caused him to be recalled to Rome where he had to face certain serious charges. He escaped death through the intervention of his brother, Pallas.

#### Verse 25

"And he wrote a letter after this manner:"

If any should criticise Luke for recording the letter because he could not have access to such a document, the answer is in this verse. He did not see the original draft so wrote, "after this manner." Luke could get to know from a servant or scribe, the gist of the letter.

In those days, it was often the case that one would write at the dictation of another and the dictator would sign.



## Verse 26

"Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix sendeth greeting."

"Claudius Lysias..." - the first name is Latin and the second is Greek. Since he obtained his Roman citizenship by purchase, it is thought that he must have been Greek by birth. He would add a Latin name to his own, namely, Claudius, in honour to the man who sold him his citizenship. See note to Acts 22. 28. against the word "obtained".

"most excellent..." - the modern equivalent would be "Your Excellency.." Luke is the only Biblical writer to use this style. Festus is again addressed in this manner in Acts 24. 3; and 26. 25.

"sendeth greeting." - This salutation also occurs in Acts 15. 23. The Greek word "chairō" carries a meaning of "rejoice", "be glad" and by inference, "to wish well" or "to wish good health". The word is also found in Jas. 1. 1. The R.V. has "greeting". The R.S.V. also has "greeting". The Diaglott has "health" in the word for word translation and "greeting" in the interpretation. There is no verb to justify "sendeth". The Afrikaans has "Groete". (Greetings.)

## Verse 27

"This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman."

"This man was taken..." - lit. "The man this having been siezed..."

"should have been killed..." - lit. "and being about to be killed by them (the Jews)..." The verb "killed" is the same as that used in verses 15 and 21. See note in verse 21.

"then came I with an army,.." - lit. "having come suddenly with the armed force,.."

"rescued him,.." - the sense Lysias conveys is that having come with the armed force, I rescued him,.."

"he was a Roman." - Lysias conveys the meaning that he came with an armed force or body of armed fighting men, when he heard that Paul was a Roman. As we have seen, he discovered that Paul was a Roman citizen after he had rescued and bound him, and as he was about to scourge him. Lysias omits these unpraiseworthy details, and has earned a lot of criticism for himself because of this deceit. However, at this distance one must not be too harsh. No officer of rank would confess to mistakes when making out his report concerning his own action. In this case, Lysias must have realised that a word from Paul or any individual of the escorting squad would have disproved the statement and got Lysias into trouble. He did what any officer would have done and that is report the events briefly and justify his action as much as he could, without pointing to his faults and mistakes. The point is that he saved Paul from certain death and is so saving him again. His duty to Paul is to make as clean a case as is possible. This view is not a condonation of deception at any level but is merely pointing to facts as they are presented and which tend to show the authenticity of the incident. See the view expressed by Tertullus in 24. 7.

## Verse 28

"And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council:"

"when I would have known..." - lit. "Wishing and to know the cause on account of which they were..."

"accused him..." - Gk. "egkaleo" which is the same verb used in Acts 19. 38. as "implead". The word conveys the idea of question and answer. It also appears in Rom. 8. 33. where it is translated as "charge". See also Acts 26.27.

"council..." - Gk. "synedrion" similar to Sanhedrin.

Verse 29

"Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds."

"accused of questions..." - see note in previous verse. The trial would have been one of question and answer if it had been allowed to proceed normally. This is always the character of any trial.

"their Law..." - the Law of Moses and generally the traditional laws formulated by the Jews for the conduct of their religious worship. The final uproar amongst the common people had been the statement that the Hope of Israel would be conveyed to the Gentiles. The uproar amongst the Sanhedrin was the statement about resurrection. The one fits the other because the Hope of Israel requires a resurrection for the Promises of God to be fulfilled. If thought is given to this by modern Christianity, a number of embarrassing questions would arise amongst which would be, If the Hope of Israel was something that Paul preached, does the church preach the same now? and if Paul looked forward to a resurrection, does the church teach a resurrection now? If the answer is "No" as it certainly is, then surely Christianity should make a rapid and complete revision of the tenets of their faith. How would they answer Paul's questions now?

"laid to his charge..." - one Greek word meaning "accusation" being the noun of the verb "accused".

It is to be noted that Lysias made no mention of the uproar in the Sanhedrin and how he had to come with an armed force the second time and rescue Paul. If he had reported this, it would have been a confession of his slackness in keeping order.

It is interesting to compare this assessment of the dispute with that of Gallio (Acts 18. 14/15) and Festus (Acts 25. 18/19.)

Verse 30

"And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also to say before thee what they had against him. Farewell."

The opening sentence of this verse is, literally, "Having been disclosed but to me a plot against the man to be about to be by the Jews..."

"plot..." - this word is used in Acts only at 9. 24; 20. 3 and 19; and here. On each occasion it concerns an attempt on the life of Paul.

"I sent straightway..." - "instantly I am sending..."

"gave commandment to his accusers..." - having commanded also the accusers.

"Farewell." - Be healthy." See Acts 15. 29.

Felix has now been briefly informed of the problem and knows that he will have to judge between Paul and the Sanhedrin who have also been warned to appear. In making these arrangements, Lysias did not know that he was going to give Paul another opportunity of preaching before the Sanhedrin and he would also get an opportunity of preaching to the Roman authorities.

Verse 31

"Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought him by night to Antipatris."

The soldiers, which means all three types, the infantry, the horsemen and the spearmen, took Paul as they had been commanded. The roads in the vicinity

of Jerusalem would be the most dangerous part of the journey so the infantry, horsemen and spearmen would be necessary to Paul's safety. They left at night and would continue throughout the night, journeying at a time when identification would be more difficult than at other times. This would tend to discourage attack.

"Antipatris." - This city was about thirty-five miles from Jerusalem. It had been built by Herod the Great in honour of his father, Antipater the Idumean. It would have been a long journey to be accomplished in the night so it is assumed that they started during the night and travelled throughout the hours of darkness. They reached Antipatris during the course of the next day.

It was at Antipatris that the foot soldiers and the spearmen returned to Jerusalem leaving the horsemen to conduct Paul over the remaining 27 miles to Caesarea.

Verse 32

"On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle:"

"On the morrow..." - during the course of the day, when they reached Antipatris, the infantry and spearmen discontinued the journey. The point is that the returning forces detached themselves from the body-guard and returned. The detaching was done on the day mentioned but it is unnecessary to suppose that they returned the same day without a rest. This would be done on the next day.

"le<sup>ft</sup>..." - "let" or "permitted". This gives the idea of detachment from the main body by allowing the horsemen and Paul to proceed into the city while they stopped. Having stopped for a rest, they would set about their return after a night's rest.

Verse 33

"who, when they came to Caesarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him."

"Who,.." - refers to the horsemen who arrived at Caesarea.

"Caesarea..." - Caesarea Maritime which they had left about 14 days before. Paul's state at the time of arrival was proof of the accuracy of the prophecy of Agabus (Acts 21. 11.)

"delivered..." - "gave up..."

"presented..." - "caused to stand by or near". This covers the English "presented before".

Verse 34

"and when the governor had read the letter, he asked of what province he was. and when he understood that he was of Cilicia;"

An unfinished sentence which ends in the next verse.

"The governor..." - this is understood. The words are not in the original.

"the letter..." - in italics in the translation, therefore it is to be understood from the context. The literal Greek is "Having read and, having asked..."

"asked..." - The meaning Bullinger gives is "to consult, inquire of, question," (Lexicon page 70.) The question was asked in the form of a

preliminary enquiry and not just on a point of curiosity. When he saw Paul for the first time on arrival, it was an official hearing and not a personal meeting on a social occasion.

"of what province he was..." - a very necessary question in view of the strict formality of Roman Law. Felix had been informed in the letter that Paul was a Roman citizen. This meant that the Roman Law applied in his case and it applied as much to the judges as it did to the plaintiffs and the accused. Therefore, having heard that Paul was a Roman, Felix would have to make quite sure that Paul came under his jurisdiction. If he did not, then Felix would be forced under the law, to commit him to trial at some place which ruled his province of citizenship. Cilicia and Judea were now attached by Rome to Syria of which province Felix was the administrator. He could therefore, proceed with the trial in safety, and would not be usurping the authority of anyone else. For an example of this, see Luke 23. 7. where on learning that Jesus was of Galilee, Pilate sent him to be tried by Herod.

"Cilicia..." - see note under this heading in Acts 6. 9. The Cilicia mentioned here is Cilicia Pedias which is a low lying and fertile plain abutting the Mediterranean Sea and separated from Syria by the Amanus range of mountains. The western portion is high, rugged and wild. It reaches as far as Pamphylia. It does not contain the city of Tarsus, which is in the Pedias section.

#### Verse 35

"I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. and he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall."

"I will hear thee,.. " - "I will fully hear thee..." meaning that "I will give your case a thorough examination."

"thine accusers..." - the Sanhedrin members referred to in the letter. See verse 30.

"are also come..." - "are also arrived" or "are also present". See Acts 5. 21, 22, 25; 9. 26; 9. 39; 10. 32; 11. 23; 13. 14; 14. 27; 15. 4; 18. 27; 20. 18. (first) 24. 17, 24; 25. 7. (first) 28. 21.

"Herod's judgment hall." - "Herod's Praetorium. Originally this was the tent of the military commander and eventually the word came to mean the residence of the provincial governor. (Matt. 27. 27; Mark 15. 16; John 18. 28 and 33; 19. 9.) "the palace" of Phil. 1. 13. is also a praetorium. Paul had now come to the same Praetorium that Herod had occupied just before his horrible death at Caesarea. (Acts 12. 19/23.) It was also a fortress in which a garrison lived.

Paul was kept in the praetorium because of his Roman Citizenship. He was not put in the common prison.

A parallel with the Lord Jesus may be drawn here. Paul had been rejected by his own people as Jesus was too. The Lord left Jerusalem for the last time when he was too weak to carry his cross. Paul left Jerusalem for the last time when he was too weak to walk and had to be given a beast to carry him. The Lord had been delivered up to the Gentiles. Paul was also delivered up to the Gentiles, and the Jews had no power to get him back. Having been rejected by the people and the rulers, Jesus could look upon all Israel as a guilty nation. Paul had failed to arouse interest in either the people or the rulers so the whole nation had rejected him. By rejecting Jesus, the nation rejected the man whom God had sent to them. By rejecting Paul, the nation had rejected the man God sent to them.

Luke makes no further mention of the "over forty Jews" who had bound themselves by an oath. If they had pursued their oath to its ultimate finality, they would be dead men and as such, Luke the physician, would have no further interest in them. But with the growth of the apostasy mentioned by Paul in 2 Thess. 2. 8. et seq., and manifested in our days by those who forgive sins for

a fee, there would be high priests enough who would give them absolution and release them from their vows.

We shall see that Felix was to Paul what Pilate was to Jesus. Both men could have released their charges but preferred not to do so because of purely selfish motives.



## THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

### Chapter 24

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#### Verse 1

"And after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul."

"after five days..." - The commentators are almost unanimous in starting these five days from the day Paul was brought before the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem. From the context of the verse, there seems to be no justification for this. The end of the previous chapter told us that Felix kept Paul in the Praetorium until his accusers should come. Then the verse we are studying tells us that five days later Ananias came with the elders from which it is reasonable to assume that Paul was kept indoors for a period of five days. We cannot see that the day of apprehension or examination in Jerusalem has anything to do with the case at all. See notes below to verse 11.

"Ananias..." - the man who commanded his attendants to smite Paul on the mouth. Acts 23. 2.

"descended..." - came down from the height of Jerusalem to the coast.

"with the elders..." - the elders being considered as all the members of the Sanhedrin other than priests and scribes, would not apply here as it is most unlikely that all of them came down. The R.V. has "certain elders", the R.S.V. has "some elders" which limits the number to a few.

"Tertullus..." - diminutive of Tertius, a Roman name and probably a Roman employed by the Jews to state their case in Latin which was the official judicial language.

"who..." - relative to Ananias who was the official accuser.

"informed..." - the Diaglott has "appeared before..." and is consistent in this, in Acts 25. 2.

#### Verse 2

"and when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence,"

An incomplete sentence which comes to its end in the next verse.

The opening gambit appears to be one of flattery in an attempt to gain the governor's support, but one must look to the custom of the age: The Romans called this form of oratory "captatio benevolentiae". He may have tried to obtain the governor's goodwill but this was the usual flowery opening address called an exordium.

"began to accuse him,.." - the sentence is confusing here because it would appear that Tertullus began to accuse Paul by praising him. A reasonable reconstruction could be "Tertullus began to accuse Paul by opening his speech with words of praise for the presiding Judge."

"we enjoy great quietness..." - to a certain extent this was true. Felix had put down the Zealots who were an ever present threat and danger even to Jews. Felix had also disposed of the Egyptian false prophet. (Acts 21. 38.) Nevertheless, it was said of the Romans that when they made peace, they create desolation.

"worthy deeds..." - his military achievements had brought a measure of

peace to the country.

"providence..." - "foresight".

Verse 3

"we accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness."

"accept..." - a word favoured by Luke. See Luke 8. 40; (received) Acts 2. 41; 15. 4; 28. 30. Acts 18. 27; The meaning is "gladly acknowledge".

"most noble..." - a term of praise and respect to an office and not necessarily to a person.

Verse 4

"notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words."

A continuation of the exordium.

"I be not tedious..." - it was the character of a Roman orator that he should not be tedious. The point was that it was customary for an orator to promise brevity. The word appears as "hinder" in Rom. 15. 22; Gal. 5. 7; 1 Thess. 2. 18; 1 Pet. 3. 7.

"I pray..." - the infinitive means "to call upon someone with a view to persuading them". See Acts 8. 31; 9. 38; 13. 42; 16. 9, 15 and 39; 19. 31; 21. 12; (The translations are "pray", "besought" "desired".)

"to hear us..." - may be a Roman advocate identifying himself with the person or persons he represents, or it may show that Tertullus is a Hellenistic Jew, who speaks Latin. In view of the Latin characteristics of his speech, it is more than likely that he was a Roman advocate employed by the Sanhedrin.

"of thy clemency..." - "in thy moderation and impartiality." See Phil. 4. 5. for the word "moderation".

"a few words." - "concisely". "hear us speak concisely."

Verse 5

"For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes:"

"a pestilent fellow..." - this is the first of three charges to be brought against Paul. The reference here is "a public nuisance..." The word actually means "pest" "plague" but has its metaphorical meaning.

"mover of sedition among all the Jews..." - one who stirs up a rising among Jews all over the Roman empire.

"a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes:" - a military rank is used here to indicate one who goes right to the front, a leader.

"sect..." - this word was used in Acts 5. 17. of the Sadducees and in Acts 15. 5. of the Pharisees.

"of the Nazarenes." - a name used in contempt. Followers of the despised Nazarene.



## Verse 6

"Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law."

This is the third charge against Paul.

"hath gone about..." - hath attempted. This is different from the accusation of Acts 21. 28/29, where Paul is definitely accused of taking Trophimus into the temple. Verse 29 casts a doubt upon this and from what we know of Paul's genuine and sincere desire to gain the Jews for Christ, he would not have deliberately flouted them in this way. So being unable to prove their first assertion, Tertullus now suggests that Paul attempts to profane the temple.

"profane the temple" - by taking Christians who were not Jews by birth, beyond the barrier in the Temple.

"whom we took..." - this Paul we the Sanhedrin, took (arrested)

"and would have judged..." - we wanted to put him on trial according to our law.

## Verse 7

"But the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands,"

"but..." - meaning, "were it not for the Roman ruler, we should have judged this man and not be bothering you now."

"came upon us..." - lit. "having come with a great force."

"took him away..." - "led him away..."

There is a great deal of distortion here. Tertullus is determined to put Paul and Lysias in as bad a light as possible because of their hatred for Paul and because Lysias had come upon them at an inopportune time and prevented their killing Paul. Then, when the fight started in the council chamber, Lysias once again interfered and saved Paul. In all this, Lysias had not acted according to law but because he had the army behind him. It is possible for Tertullus to argue this way because he did not disclose to Felix the brutality meted out to Paul by the Jews and from which Lysias rescued him.

The errors of exaggeration and omission may be legal skill but when a man's life is at stake, it was a despicable method of attack and accusation.

Verse 7 is not accepted by the A.V. R.S.V. except as marginal notes.

The charges as presented are:-

- (1) Paul was inciting the Jews to rise all over the Empire. No proof is given by Tertullus but what we are given in this chapter is Luke's summary of what was said. Luke's narrative of the apostolic era of which Paul was an important part, shows that the early Christians had no government ambitions at all but were looking for the return of Christ to set up the Kingdom of God on earth. This is the POLITICAL accusation.
- (2) Paul was a ringleader of the Nazarenes. What effect this would have on Felix is difficult to say. It may have contained the germ of an idea that there was a new body of people (dissenters) who would be worse than the Zealots he had put down. The early Christians were known as the Nazarenes and this may have induced Felix to look upon them with disfavour.

- (3) Paul had attempted to profane the temple. They could not prove that he had so they turned to an accusation that he tried to do so. This led to the point that if Lysias had not interfered, Paul would have been caught red-handed and then he could have been dealt with according to Jewish Law. The Romans were prepared to support Jewish Law in connection with any violation of the temple even if the violator was a Roman. This was putting Lysias in a very difficult position because he had interfered with the Jews attempt to maintain order within the precincts of their own temple. This was not the true facts of course, but Tertullus was arguing on very biased lines. This shows how dangerous facts can become if they are distorted by a clever and ruthless man.

## Verse 8

"Commanding his accusers to come unto thee: by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things, whereof we accuse him."

"Commanding his accusers..." - Tertullus continues his complaint against Lysias. He had not only prevented them from keeping peace in their own temple and trying the culprit according to their own law which Rome permits them to do, but Lysias had also put these old men to great inconvenience and physical hardship by commanding them to come down here to attend this trial (and waste thy time, most noble Felix!) These words are rejected by the R.V. and R.S.V. because they are not found in the oldest manuscripts. This, however, is no proof that they are not genuine. In fact, the sense of the narrative would be very much impaired by their omission. On the contrary, if it is claimed that they are a later insertion into the text, then there seems to be no reason why such words should be chosen.

Another point for consideration is that if the words are omitted, then "of whom" must refer to Lysias. The sense then is that Felix must examine Lysias.

"examining..." - see note to "examined..." in Acts 4. 9.

"thyself mayest..." - "you may be able" The tense is future.

## Verse 9

"And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so."

"the Jews..." - the high priest and the elders who had come to the trial.

"also assented..." - "united in impeaching..." This is one Greek verb

"saying..." "asserting..." The Jews who were there, gave voice to their support of what Tertullus had said.

## Verse 10

"Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself:"

Paul commences his speech with an exordium as was customary in those days. He compliments Felix and states that because Felix has been a judge of the Jews for many years, and must have acquired a knowledge of Jewish affairs during that time, he would be able the better to assess the charge against Paul. Therefore Paul was pleased to be called upon to state his defence before Felix.

## Verse 11

' because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship."

The "twelve days" mentioned here have given rise to some speculation and some calculation. It would appear that the commentators have erred in thinking that Paul spent five days in connection with the vows at Jerusalem. We are of the opinion that Paul spent only one day with the four men. When the Bible says in Acts 23. 35. that Paul was kept in Herod's judgment hall and Acts 24. 1. says that "five days after" the high priest and elders came down from Jerusalem, we accept those facts as they are stated. Therefore the five days must be reckoned with the twelve. This being the case, we find

Day 1	The interview with James and the elders.	Acts 21. 18.
2	Paul in the Temple with the four men.	21. 26.
3	Paul was arrested.	21. 27.
4	Paul stands before the Sanhedrin.	22. 30.
5	A conspiracy is formed.	23. 12.
6.	Paul arrives at Antipatris.	23. 31.
7.	Paul arrives at Caesarea and meets Felix.	23. 33.
8	Paul	
9	spends	
10	these	
11	five days	
12	waiting.	24. 1.

The commentators maintain that Paul spent the first to the sixth day with those who had vowed and find themselves short of days to account for Acts 24. 1. Therefore they assume that the counting of the five days started at the time of the conspiracy, disregarding the fact that the record does not say that. They put his arrival at Caesarea on the day following his night departure from Jerusalem but this is much too big a journey for 1 day. The above list allows for an overnight stop at Antipatris which seems to be indicated by Luke's narrative.

"went up..." - In view of the altitude of Jerusalem, Paul could only go up there from the coast. This is consistent with Biblical usage where one "goes down to" or "comes up from" Egypt. See Gen. 12. 10; and Gen. 13. 1. for this usage in connection with Egypt and Matt. 20. 17/18; and Mark 3. 22. for the usage in connection with Jerusalem.

"to worship." - and not to preach because of the arrangement of Gal. 2. 7. Note also that he did not go there to profane the temple nor to rouse the people to stage a demonstration against the Romans.

## Verse 12

"And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city:"

In making this portion of his defence, Paul denies the charge of disturbing the public peace. Paul had been accused of this before at Philippi. (Acts 16. 21.) and Thessalonica. (Acts 17. 5.) He denies the charge of being a ringleader of any body against the religious practices of the Jews, and denies that he has profaned the temple.

"they neither found me..." - if they found him not then they have no evidence against him.

"in the temple..." - one of the places where they could have looked. He went into the temple to worship and not to preach nor incite the people.

"raising up the people..." - "making a tumult of the crowd.." that is making a riotous mob of them.

"neither in the synagogues..." - not in any of the places where Jews worship have I taught the Jews.

"nor in the city." - I have not preached at street corners or normal gathering places.

Paul denies the charges and says there is no proof. It is now for the Sanhedrin to supply that proof when their turn to speak comes again.

#### Verse 13

"Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me."

Luke's account here is a precis so Paul must have said much more than is reported of him here. Having denied the charges he now calls for proof of such charges. His mention of 12 days in verse 11 adds a powerful argument in his favour. He had been in the country only twelve days, seven of which were spent in Herod's judgment hall waiting for his accusers to come, so how could he have achieved all the subversion he is accused of by Tertullus?

#### Verse 14

"But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:"

Having denied the things he was accused of and showing that he did not do them, Paul now turns to telling the Governor what he did do.

"I worship the God of my fathers,.." - that was the God of Israel. The One God, the Creator of heaven and earth. By their belief in the three gods which are not of Israel, Christianity could not support Paul in this declaration. No Jew ever believed in three gods in one or a triune god, or a trinity of gods. See Paul's statement on behalf of the Christians of his day in Ephes. 4. 6.

"the law..." - this would include all the teaching of the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch. In these books are the Promises made unto Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Modern Christianity repudiates these doctrines and would oppose Paul if he were to defend himself in this manner now.

"the prophets..." - the men of God who, writing under Divine inspiration prophesied the coming of Christ to establish the kingdom of God on earth. Christianity as we know it to-day, would oppose Paul in his belief in the prophets of Israel.

"the way which they call heresy..." - lit. "the way which they called a sect..." - in other words, the religion which the Jews called a sect. Paul's use of the word "sect" (translated here as "heresy") shows that he did not want Christianity to be called a "sect" as were the Sadducees and the Pharisees. Both of these were sects in normal parlance but this could not apply to Christianity because it was a way of life, a behaviour and a frame of mind. A "sect" on the other hand, was an exercise of free will in choosing an opinion and adhering to it. The word "sect" means "choice".

When the True Christian Believer regards modern Christianity in the light of Paul's teaching, he must consider it as being a "heresy". Paul makes it quite clear in his teaching, that Christianity is not a different faith from that of Israel. They still believe in the same promises and still worship the same One and Only True God of Israel, but do not follow the Law of Moses because that has been fulfilled in Christ. Temple worship, circumcision, sabbath keeping and sacrifices must fall away because in their symbolism, they point toward Christ. Now that the anti-type has come, the need for the types falls away.

## Verse 15

"And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust."

Paul now turns to the doctrine which upset the Sadducees and precipitated the fight in the council chamber. Paul says he has the same "hope" and in the next breath, relates this to the resurrection. Both Paul and the Jews had a "hope" in God which is to say, they had faith in God's Promises of the establishment of the future Kingdom of God on earth. The Jews also believed in that and to make this possible, and to justify one's faith in this, there must be a resurrection of the dead. This had been the belief and hope of the Jews for centuries so in preaching this, Paul had not been building up a sect which was different from the Jews. The self-righteous Pharisees might object to the "just and unjust" taking part in the resurrection but if they did, there was the prophecy of Daniel 12. 2. to support Paul's statement. Paul's epistle to the Corinthians contains the best proof yet written concerning the future resurrection of the dead. See 1 Cor. 15. In all this, the beliefs of the Jews and the True Christian Believers were identical.

It is to be noted with regret that modern Christianity would deny Paul's teaching in this verse.

## Verse 16

"And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men."

"I exercise myself..." - "discipline myself..."

"void of offence..." - an offence in the N.T. is not something which offends one's pride, dignity or sensibilities. It is something which leads one astray from the Truth. Jesus was very emphatic about this and foretold woes to him who would bring offences into the Faith. See Matt. 18. 7. When Peter tried to dissuade Jesus from following a course which would lead him to a fulfilment of the Divine prophecies concerning himself, Jesus said, "thou art an offence unto me..." (Matt. 16. 23.)

Therefore, Paul's teaching here is that he has not brought any new Faith into existence. The Faith he has been teaching is the same as that taught by Judaism for many centuries. In verse 15 he showed that this was the teaching of the law and the prophets which he would never surrender. He believes in the One God, One Hope, One Faith, One resurrection, One Messiah as taught by the law and the prophets. This is the Truth of God's Word and to teach anything else would be bringing an offence to bear on those who heard him and who were moved by what he taught. Anything contrary to this would be an offence against God because it would teach against His Word. If he taught anything contrary to this to men, he would be bringing an offence to them and, since men were the creatures of God, it would be an offence against God.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians on the necessity for teaching the Truth not only to Jews, but to Gentiles and to the household of faith. There was to be no compromise when teaching religion. (1 Cor. 10. 32.) See also 2 Cor. 4. 1/5;

## Verse 17

"Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings."

"after many years..." - "in the course of several years..." In this case, it is about four years since he was last in Jerusalem.

"to bring alms to my nation..." - lit. "I came alms bringing to the nation of me..." Luke does not record that Paul brought alms but Paul mentions

them in his epistles. See Rom. 15. 25/28; 1 Cor. 16. 1/4; 2 Cor. 8. 1/24. and chapter 9.

"unto my nation." - note the reference to the Jews being his nation. Paul had not forgotten that he was a Jew not only by birth but by re-birth. (Gal. 3. 27/29.)

"and offerings..." - these are not to be considered as being gifts of money. The Greek word here is that used to denote the offerings of the Mosaic ritual. See Heb. 10. 5, 8, 10, 11, 14, 18. See also Rom. 15. 16; Ephes. 5. 2. The verb appears in Luke 23. 36. The offerings which Paul had in mind are not stated but we can be sure, in view of his strong attitude towards the Law, that he did not yield any point of principle in this.

Paul makes some points here. He is pointing out to the Jews that the Gentiles from afar made a substantial contribution to the poor Jews of Jerusalem. Whether they made this as a token of the debt they owed to the Jews of this city, as Bruce suggests, ("Commentary" page 470.) is of no importance. The fact is that the people regarded once as "dogs" and untouchable by Jews, had now joined the True Faith and had made a cash contribution to those Jews who were in need of help. Perhaps that would induce a sense of gratitude to the Gentile believers and soften the hard attitude of the Jews towards them.

A further point for consideration is that if Paul had brought alms from the Gentiles to the Jews, how could he be consistent in his attitude towards the Jews by defiling their temple? The two actions would have been inconsistent. Apart from this, leaving aside his kindness towards the Jews in collecting money for them and bringing it to them, how could he offer offerings in a temple which he deliberately profaned?

Verse 18

"Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult."

"Whereupon..." - "in which..." referring to the temple Paul was in at the time of the accusation.

"found me purified..." - the point Paul now makes is that the Jews from Asia (Ephesus and district) had seen him in the act of devotion and had accused him of profaning the temple. How could he, in an act of worship, profane the temple? None of those Jews were here and none had come forward to testify.

"neither with multitude, nor with tumult." - when found, Paul did not have with him a mob of people. If there were people there, they were not making a noise.

Verse 19

"Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had aught against me."

If the Jews of Asia felt that they had a case against him, why were they not here so that they could give evidence? As stated in the previous verse, Paul was found in the temple in a state which did not give offence to anyone and which disproved the charges brought against him. Since the Jews from Asia had laid the charge, they should be here now to answer for themselves. Instead, the high priest and Tertullus who did not have first hand information, were leading their case. The wrong people are here.

'object...' - Gk. "accuse..."

Verse 20

"Or else let these same here say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council,"

Since the Jews of Asia had not come forward, let the Sanhedrin explain what crime was found in him. He had stood before them in Jerusalem as Lysias may explain, so they should be in a position to know what the charge was.

Paul has now made a delicate turn in his argument. He has disposed of the charge of sedition and rioting as well as being a Nazarene. Now he turns cleverly to a line which brings the Sanhedrin into the debate more closely. Amongst that body of men were the spiritual leaders of Israel. They could deal with the final charge, namely, that of destroying some facet of their Faith.

#### Verse 21

"Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day."

"Except it be..." - "Unless it was..."

"this one voice..." - "this lone voice to which you are now listening, namely, my voice,.." Paul refers to his declaration which he is about to quote as a "voice".

"Touching the resurrection..." - Paul's quotation of his words in Acts 23. 6. is reasonably accurate. He omits "hope and" and adds "this day".

There is no evidence against me and if there is anything which started this unfortunate business, it could have been my statement which I now quote. The statement about the resurrection gave ample evidence that Paul had not surrendered the True Jewish Faith, the Great Hope of Israel as promised to the fathers by God and communicated to Israel by the prophets. He believed in the resurrection and to believe this, he had to look for the coming of the Messiah. These things he believed with all his heart. How could he be profane when he believed such things. The Gentiles were indoctrinated with the theories of Plato who reasoned that there must be a soul which goes to heaven at death. At no time did Paul ever teach that. Modern Christianity sides with Plato and would excommunicate Paul for such beliefs, yet that is what he, the inspired servant of God, taught.

#### Verse 22

"And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of that way, he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter."

The R.V., R.S.V., and Diaglott omit "when...heard these things..." The sense is "And Felix, having more perfect knowledge..."

"of that way,.." - of the Jews' religion, because of his long experience in Judea. His wife may have taught him something too for she was a member of the Herod family and was called Drusilla. He probably had a small knowledge of Christianity as well.

"deferred them..." - "put them off..." There is every reason to suppose that Felix would have dismissed the charge because of Paul's Roman citizenship were it not for the fact that the Sanhedrin were represented there by their top men and they represented all Jewry throughout the world as it then was. He could not leave the matter here so decided to adjourn the case sine die. On the next hearing, he would have Lysias there as he would be a good witness.

It is assumed that the case was adjourned sine die (to a date to be determined) because nothing further is heard of it and the matter probably was shelved long enough for it to be forgotten. Luke is silent upon what happened over the next two years until Paul again was brought before a ruler.

Bruce says, "Drusilla was the youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa being born in A.D. 38. She was betrothed by her father to Epiphanes, son of King of Commagene, but did not marry him as he refused to be circumcised. Her brother Agrippa II gave her in marriage to Azizus, king of Emesa; but Felix, by mediation of a Cypriote magician named Atomos, persuaded her to leave her husband and join himself as his third wife. Their son Agrippa perished in the eruption of Vesuvius in A.D. 79. "(Bruce: "Text" page 427.) This eruption was the same that destroyed Pompeii and Herculaneum.

## Verse 23

"And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him."

"a centurion..." - Gk. "the centurion..." This may be the centurion who brought him to Caesarea, from Antipatris, the other centurion having returned to Jerusalem.

"keep Paul,..." - "to guard Paul..."

"let him have liberty..." - apparently contradicts the information that Paul was held prisoner. He cannot be held prisoner and given liberty. The Greek word is "let". That is "permit him to have this favour..." The meaning implies a relaxation of tension. See 2 Cor. 2. 13. "rest"; 2 Cor. 7. 5. for "rest"; 2 Cor. 8. 13. for "eased"; 2 Thess. 1. 7. for "rest".

"his friends..." - these may have been Paul's companions who had been with him during his travels. Since Paul was now at Caesarea, we may assume that amongst his friends were residents of Caesarea namely, Philip and his four daughters, (Acts 2. 8.) Luke no doubt was with him too.

"to minister..." - to cater for his needs.

"to come unto him." - just to visit him without caring for any of his needs.

## Verse 24

"And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ."

"And after some days..." - see note to Acts 9. 19. under the heading "certain days".

"Felix came..." - Drusilla was about 6 years of age when her father died and would be about 18 at this time. It is said that Felix called for Paul to satisfy her curiosity. The word "came" indicates that he came from his place of residence to the council hall.

"which was a Jewess..." - Luke may have mentioned this to explain why Drusilla should be interested in hearing and seeing Paul. She, being a Jewess, would be interested in hearing of this man whom the Jews had so strongly opposed.

"sent for Paul..." - Felix would not go to the prison quarters but would send for Paul to come to the council hall.

"heard him concerning the faith in Christ." - he listened to Paul explain the new Faith in Christ Jesus which was really the old Faith of Israel with the added interest of the Messiah and the teaching about him.

## Verse 25

"And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."



"reasoned..." - Paul did not preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God but gave him a discourse which was directed against the loose morals of Felix and his wife, Druscilla, who was married to Felix while married to another man. Felix had persuaded her to do this. Now he was to get from Paul much the same as Herod had received from John the Baptist. (Matt. 14. 3/4.)

"righteousness..." - doing that which is right in the sight of God.

"temperance..." - self-control. Keeping the many lusts of the flesh in check. This would be directed against Felix's evil deeds of the past, and the fact that he had married a woman who was already married.

"judgment to come..." - Paul was speaking to his judge of present matters concerning the coming of the Greater Judge who will come at some future time. This future judge will take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. 1. 8.)

"Felix trembled..." - lit. "being terrified, Felix..."

"Go thy way for this time..." - this was a fatal remark by Felix. His opportunity for repentance was there and then. Instead he procrastinated and this meant that time could heal the wound he had received so that within a short time he would forget about it.

"convenient season..." - in actual fact, this was as good as saying, "I will listen to you again if I feel like it but I know I wont."

#### Verse 26

"he hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him."

"also..." - "at the same time..."

"he hoped..." - it is difficult to know how Luke would have known about this unless Felix had actually asked for a bribe. That he did so is indicated by the words, "communed with him" but this is not certain. Paul would not spend any time discussing the pros and cons of a bribe. The taking of bribes was expressly forbidden in Rome by legislation to that effect. Nevertheless, this law was often observed in the breach. Felix would not ask outright for a bribe but would make it plain to Paul that his freedom was available to him if he would be prepared to pay for it.

Felix sent for Paul more frequently to bring great persuasion to bear. That Paul refused and aroused the anger of Felix by his constant refusal, may account for the fact that Felix kept Paul in prison for two years without doing anything further to bring the matter to a conclusion.

#### Verse 27

"But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound."

After two years Felix was succeeded by his successor, Festus. Some historians say that the year for this event was A.D. 61. Felix was recalled to hear complaints lodged against him by the Jews. In view of this turn of events, he left Paul in bonds to earn some support from the Jews.

Some commentators suggest that Druscilla was at the back of Paul's imprisonment because of what he had said during his discourse to her and Felix. If this were so, then Druscilla was no different from Herod's wife who called for the head of John the Baptist.

This stage in Paul's life was now drawing to a lingering close. He was more estranged from the Jews than ever. His life too, was nearing it's end and, at the same time, the enmity displayed by the Jews towards the Romans was growing in intensity and would, within a decade, bring about the destruction of

Jerusalem and the scattering of the Jewish people throughout the length and breadth of the earth. In the words of Jesus, Jerusalem was to be "trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." (Luke 21. 24.) This prophecy by Jesus was to run out on June 7th, 1967, when, after a short war between the Arab Bloc and the Jews, Jerusalem would be liberated from Gentile domination and no longer be trodden down of them. Paul must have known of the nemesis awaiting the Jews and their land and city, and must have felt a great desire in his heart to preach to them again and again so that they would turn back again to the God of Israel. (Rom. 10. 1.)

Paul had made his defence to no avail. He was yet to make a fourth defence to Festus.

# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

## Chapter 25

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### Verse 1

"Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem."

"Festus..." - called Porcius Festus in 24. 27. He was to have a short-lived term of office for he died in AD 62, having officiated for two years. Three days after he had taken up the prefecture, he went up to Jerusalem. Apart from any interest he may have had in the city as the capital of the country, he wanted to gain the favour of the Jews.

### Verse 2

"Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him,"

An unfinished sentence which comes to its end in verse 3.

"the high priest..." - some texts have "high priests".

"and the chief of the Jews..." - the elders. The two classes together made up the Sadducean group and were the leading men of the Sanhedrin.

"informed..." - Gk. "appeared", "manifested", "informed", "indicted". The verb is also used in Acts 24. 1. and in Acts 23. 15 and 22 where it is translated as "informed", "inquire" and "shewed" respectively.

### Verse 3

"And desired favour against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him."

It was natural that Festus should go to Jerusalem at the beginning of his prefecture. The fact that the Sanhedrin approached him on this occasion shows careful planning on their part. They were anxious to test him and act upon any mistake he may make, at all times with a view to taking Paul's life. That those in charge of the spiritual life of the Jews should be so taken with such an ambition says little for them as religious men. The Law of Moses taught nothing such as this. It was this wilful aggressiveness against the Romans which eventually brought the Romans against them in A.D. 70. Maybe their animosity against Paul was symptomatic of the age.

"desired favour..." - This was a disgraceful request. They asked Festus to give them preference against Paul so that he should be brought to Jerusalem. They did not want to bring him to trial again for they knew that their case was too weak to face up to another defensive speech by Paul.

"laying wait..." - they wished to ambush Paul on his journey to Jerusalem so that they could kill him. This was a more certain way of getting rid of him than going to further litigation before Festus.

### Verse 4

"But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly thither."

It says much for the justice of Roman Law that Festus would not entertain the plan asked for by the Sanhedrin members.

Festus did not intend to stay long at Jerusalem so ordered that if they wanted to accuse him, they had better come down to Caesarea and do it. He, Festus, would be returning there soon.

## Verse 5

"Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with me, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him."

"are able..." - "have the power to do so..." This usage is found in Luke 14. 31; Rom. 4. 21; 11. 23; 14. 4; 2 Cor. 9. 8; 2 Tim. 1. 12; Titus 1. 9; Heb. 11. 19; Jas. 3. 2. The journey was a long and arduous one so only those young and vigorous enough could do it. This, however, is not the meaning ascribed to the word by the commentators. It is felt that the word means, "those who are powerful enough" - "those whose position makes them powerful enough to be there." See the following references where the word "mighty" or "powerful" occurs:- 1 Cor. 1. 26; 2 Cor. 10. 4; 12. 9; 13. 9; and Rev. 6. 15. The reference from 2 Cor. 13. 9. has "strong". The same Greek word appears in all these verses.

"if there be any wickedness..." - Italics are not used in the English translation yet the word "wickedness" does not appear in the original. The sense is "if there be anything amiss in the man..." as given by the R.V. or "if there be anything wrong about the man..." as supplied by the R.S.V. The latter translation gives the English meaning of the Afrikaans "as daar iets verkeerds in hiedie man is,..."

## Verse 6

"And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought."

"more than ten days..." - the commentators are agreed that the translation here is wrong and should be "not more than ten days" or "eight to ten days..." or "not more than eight to ten days." By modern standards that would be a long time if Festus said that he would "depart shortly". In those days, such a delay would be normal.

"the next day..." - he must have made a rapid journey from Jerusalem to Caesarea to be able to sit at the judgment seat the next day. It could have been done if he rode on horses, changing his horse at intervals, or went by chariot with a change of horses.

"sitting on the judgment seat..." - The judgment seat or tribunal, was the official place for the passing of judgment. Therefore he would have to sit at the judgment seat so that his judgments and sentences were official.

## Verse 7

"And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove."

"when he was come..." - lit. "Having approached..."

"which came down from Jerusalem..." - "having come down from Jerusalem."

"stood round about..." - there is a threat in this statement. It appears that they stood round about him ready for the kill.

"many and grievous..." - "many and heavy..."

"which they could not prove." - They had had two years to prepare for this examination and trial yet they had not yet worked out an indictment which they could substantiate.

## Verse 8

"while he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all."

"answered..." - the Greek word is "apologia" from which is derived the English "apology". The meaning is to talk one'sself out of a difficulty" see Bullinger" Lexicon page 55) It also means to defend one'sself by speaking before a tribunal. The meaning is not the normal English "answer" in reply to a question because no question was put. No evidence was raised. No proofs of statements were given. Therefore Paul is defending his right to be the man he is and to follow the religion to which he has been called. Again his defence takes the threefold line:-

(1) "neither against the law..." - Paul denies the charge that he has attempted to destroy the Law of Moses. This was one of the charges against Stephen. (Acts 6. 13/14.)

(2) "against the temple..." - what is meant here is the ritual of worship which was performed in the temple. The offerings and the altar were symbols pointing towards Christ. (Heb. 10. 1.) Now that Jesus had come and made the perfect sacrifice, the need for such things fell away. Instead of the priesthood which was the mediator between God and man under the Law, Christ is now the mediator. (1 Tim. 2. 5.) Therefore there are now better things in Christ (Heb. 12. 24.) and the Law must fall away. (Heb. 8. 13.) This was not condemning the Law but establishing it. (Rom. 3. 31.)

(3) "against Caesar..." - this was also directed against Jesus and called forth from the Jews, the statement "We have no king but Caesar." (John 19. 15.) see also John 19. 21. There were two reasons for such an accusation against Paul. (i) The Jews were afraid of the Romans and thought that any hint of subversion against Caesar would bring all the brutality of the Romans upon them; (ii) The Sadducees were keen on getting the favour of the Romans so they would allow nothing to offend them. In other words, there was more fear of man than of God amongst the Jews.

In consideration of the fore-going, see notes to Acts 24. 7. In this particular trial, no proof has been given against Paul so Paul need not bring forward proof concerning his faith. All he need do is to deny the charges which he does. Now it is up to the Jews to bring forward their proofs but having none, they cannot continue.

## Verse 9

"But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?"

Festus now finds himself in a difficult position. Unlike Felix, he had no knowledge of Judaism, so was perplexed and unable to come to a decision. With the lack of evidence before him, and with the trial on that account have been reduced to an accusation without proof followed by a denial, his duty was to dismiss the case and reprimand the Sanhedrin for bringing their petty personal quarrels to him and wasting the Court's time. But there was a political issue involved. The Jews could write to Rome and make things embarrassing for Festus. Therefore he made the mistake of seeking the Jews favour.

"to do the Jews a pleasure..." - lit. "wishing a favour to lay up for himself..." This is the same as in Acts 24. 27. where the translation is "willing to show the Jews a pleasure..." the only difference being that in the verse we are studying, the "favour" is single whereas in the other verse, it is in the plural. This indicates that Felix used many methods of conciliation whereas Festus used only one, that being the suggestion given here.

"before me." - if Festus was in the judgment seat, then justice would be assured. This, however, was not what the Jews wanted. Paul must have had

a suspicion of danger, because he refused to give his permission for a trial as suggested. Since he was a Roman citizen, his permission would have to be obtained first before he could be brought to trial before a provincial tribunal.

## Verse 10

"Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest."

"I stand at Caesar's judgment seat..." - Paul's statement here was an uncomfortable one for Festus. The judgment seat before which Paul was now standing was indeed Caesar's judgment seat inasmuch as Festus was Caesar's representative. Would Caesar be as lenient upon the Jews as had Festus? Would Caesar leave the matter undecided as Felix and Festus had both done?

"I ought to be judged:.." - "I should have had a judgment given which would have had the effect of closing this case." Also inferred, "I am being tried by Caesar's court representative and not by the Sanhedrin. They are leading evidence and not hearing it. They are accusers and not judges. I am a prisoner of the Romans and not of the Jews. Must I then stand trial at the Jews' tribunal once again?"

"as thou very well knowest." - In actual fact, Festus did not know very well as he was not informed on the tenets of Judaism nor of Christianity. The words here indicate that Festus was now better informed on these things than he had been when the trial started. That is to say, "if you did not know this at the beginning, you know it now."

## Verse 11

"For if I be an offender, or have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar."

Paul now explains that he is not saying this to escape trial and punishment.

"For..." - this connects the present statement with "I have done no wrong" of verse 10. Thus we have the continuance, "For if I have done wrong", translated here as "For if I be an offender..."

"committed anything worthy of death,.." - this would include leading a Gentile behind the middle wall of partition in the temple; sacrilege in the temple, both of which are punishable by death under the Law and traditions, and, on the Romans's side, doing anything subversive against the State.

"I refuse not to die:.." - The Greek means "I entreat that something may not take place,.." "I ask leave to be excused..." (Bullinger's Lexicon page 631 under "Refuse" No. 1.) In other words, "If I have done wrong against the Law and the Temple and if I have done anything subversive against the State, I do not ask a favour of the Court to excuse me from my punishment."

"no man may deliver me unto them." - "no one may deliver me over to them to gratify them." (Bullinger's Lexicon page 214 No. 12.) What Paul is saying is, "if I am not guilty, then to make me over to the Jews just to please them, is not something which even you can do." Further inference, "Therefore, if we all go to Jerusalem for a further trial in their court, even if you preside, what are you going to achieve? You could not be bound by their decisions nor their wishes. This is Caesar's court. Act as though it were. The Jews are trying to work upon your ignorance and lack of experience, therefore, it must follow that I....."

"appeal unto Caesar." - Latin "Caesarem Appello". Once these words are spoken, they may not be retracted. The Law must now take its course. Paul

puts himself beyond the reach of the Jews. The word "appeal" means "to invoke" "to call to one's aid". The same verb is used in "call upon the name of the Lord." See Acts 2. 21; 7. 59; 9. 14 and 21; 22. 16.

Here we are at another of the great crises in the Acts. By making this appeal, Paul's case is automatically taken away from Festus and transferred to the Emperor. Paul knew he could not expect justice from Festus and he could see that the Jews were working upon Festus' weakness, his lack of knowledge of Judaism and Christianity, his desire to please the Jews, and the pressure of their good relationship which the Sadducees had built up with the Romans.

His appeal now ensured that he would be transferred to the great capital of the Gentiles, the heart of the pagan empire.

#### Verse 12

"Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go."

"when he had conferred..." - "having conferred with..."

"the council..." - his own council. Those who sat with him as assessors. He did not consult the Jews nor the Sanhedrin as may be thought. The conference was solely with his council of assessors.

"Hast thou appealed...?" - no question is asked in the original. It is a simple statement "thou hast appealed unto Caesar..." It would appear that having consulted the council of assessors and had the appeal accepted, Festus gave to Paul the reason why he is to go to Caesar - "because you have appealed". Not every Roman citizen who appealed could have the appeal granted. Anyone who was caught in the act of sabotage against the State, could have no such appeal. On the other hand, a Governor could commit a prisoner to Caesar's court but this would have to be something very serious and altogether justified. To avoid any doubt in the matter, Festus said, "Thou hast appealed unto Caesar and because of this, you are going to Caesar."

#### Verse 13

"And after certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus."

"And after certain days..." - lit. "Days and having intervened some..."

"Agrippa..." - the son of Agrippa the 1st, who is always called Herod and whose miserable death is recorded in Acts 12. 23. At the time when this happened, Agrippa II was at Rome where he was being brought up at the court of Claudius. When Herod I died, Agrippa II was only 17 years of age so Claudius did not give him his father's kingdom of Judea but waited a further eight years when his uncle Herod of Chalcis died. Claudius then gave Chalcis to Agrippa. In A.D. 53 Claudius gave him the rulership as king of certain principalities in Northern Palestine.

"Bernice..." - was the daughter of Agrippa I and the sister of Mariamne and Druscilla. For Druscilla see Acts 24. 24. Bernice married her uncle, Herod of Chalcis, When he died she went to Rome to live with her brother, Agrippa II but when their relationship aroused some scandals, she left to marry Polemo King of Cilicia. Soon after she deserted her and she returned to her brother and here we find her at Caesarea. She was an undesirable woman without morals for she later became the mistress of father and son, namely, Emperor Vespasian and Titus. She first married her uncle at the age of 13.

The arrival of Agrippa was a fortuitous circumstance to Festus because Agrippa was a Jew and well informed on Judaism. In committing Paul to Rome he would have to make out a report and would have to give an intelligible account of the Jews' religion. With Agrippa here, he could get his advice as to how this should be done. Agrippa was a Jew but had received a Gentile education at Rome.

## Verse 14

"And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix:"

"declared Paul's cause..." - lit. "submitted the things against the Paul..." or "stated the things concerning Paul..." The Greek verb is the same as that translated as "communicated" in Gal. 2. 2. The meaning is to give the details concerning a matter with a view to consulting.

"in bonds..." - "a prisoner..." The sentence is "having been left behind in prison..."

## Verse 15

"About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment against him."

"the chief priests and the elders..." - see verse 2 where it is stated "the high priest and the chief of the Jews." See notes to this verse.

"desiring to have judgment..." - verse 3 does not go this far in stating the motive for the request for Paul to stand further trial at Jerusalem. According to verse 3 all they wanted was for Paul to go to Jerusalem so that they could kill him by ambushing him. Festus did not know about the ambush plans but he rightly summed up the motive for a trial. This understanding substantiates Paul's assertion of verse 10, "as thou very well knowest."

## Verse 16

"to whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him."

Festus is giving here a lot more than Luke reported in verses 7 - 12. There is the strong possibility that the statement here recorded of what Festus said about himself and what he did, may be subject to the same embellishments that Lysias gave in his report. One would not expect Festus to confess to indecision or to a desire to build up favour amongst the Jews. These things must be borne in mind when examining his speech to Agrippa. The tribute to a Roman sense of justice and fair trial is genuine enough.

"deliver..." - this is the word Paul used when he referred to Festus presenting him to the Jews as a gift. See notes to verse 11.

"to die..." R.V. R.S.V. and Diag. omit.

"face to face..." - see 2 John 12. (marg.) also margin to 3 John 14.

"licence to answer..." - opportunity for apology in the sense of defence. Lit. "place of apology". See "place of repentance" in Heb. 12. 17.

## Verse 17

"Therefore when they were come thither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth."

"without any delay on the morrow..." - a true statement. See note to verse 6 under heading "the next day..." Festus may have made this statement to contrast his action with that of Felix who deferred the matter until Lysias should come down. (Acts. 24. 22.)

"brought forth." - "forth" does not appear in the original Greek. The R.V. and Diag. omit. R.S.V. says "brought in".



## Verse 18

"Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed:"

"Against..." - "concerning..."

"the accusers stood up..." - "the accusers stood around..." See note to verse 7.

"such things as I supposed." - here is a confession of ignorance concerning the doctrinal issues which must have been discussed during the trial. See Acts 18. 14/15. for the manner in which Gallio handled this matter about which he was ignorant.

## Verse 19

"But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive."

"questions..." - topics of enquiry. See Acts 15. 2; 18. 15; 23. 29; 26. 3;

"superstition..." - the Greek meaning of this word is "fear of the gods" (in a good sense). Adapted to English, it is simply "religion". The noun occurs only in this verse. For the adjective, see Acts 17. 22.

"of one Jesus..." - Jesus being a name used by several people, it was necessary to single out a particular Jesus.

"affirmed..." - imperfect tense, "constantly and repeatedly affirmed"

"to be alive." - to a Roman and pagan who believed that one has an immortal soul which goes to heaven at death, the resurrection is a doctrine almost impossible to accept. There is no sense in being resurrected if one has a soul. A belief in the resurrection requires a rejection of the soul theory because the two cannot exist together.

## Verse 20

"And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of such matters."

"because I doubted..." - "being in doubt..." or being at a loss.

"of such manner of questions..." - the sense is "being at a loss to how an enquiry regarding such questions or doctrines may be investigated..."

"whether he would go..." - "whether he would be willing to go..."

This statement by Festus gives the impression that Paul refused to go on trial about a matter which was perplexing to the Roman mind. Paul's refusal was not concerning a trial but against the unfairness of a situation which should have been resolved long before. See notes to verse 11.

## Verse 21

"But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar."

"when Paul had appealed to be reserved..." - lit. "The but Paul having appealed to be kept himself..."

"the hearing of Augustus..." - margin "the judgment of Augustus." The Greek word for "hearing" is "diagnosis" which is used in English as a medical term indicating a critical examination and discrimination of diseases.

"Augustus..." - Gk. "Sebastos" meaning "august", "venerable", "reverend" which was a title given to the first Emperor, Octavian Caesar, in pagan recognition of the divine origin of his august self. The idea of divine origin of kings is a Babylonian one and is allied to the Babylonian worship of the sun-god, the moon-goddess and the god of the morning star, this trinity being preserved to-day in the worship of a trinity of gods. The term of veneration is not used by Paul but by Festus. Paul did not believe in a trinity of gods but worshipped ONE GOD, the Father. (1 Cor. 8. 4 and 6.)

"to be kept..." - "to be watched and guarded."

"until I might send..." - certain formalities would have to be complied with. The journey would have to be organized. An escort would have to be arranged. Rome would have to be advised.

#### Verse 22

"Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. Tomorrow, said he, thou shalt hear him."

"I would also hear the man myself." - Lit. "I was wishing also myself the man to hear." The imperfect tense shows that Agrippa had been wanting to see Paul for some time. Herod had entertained the same desire to see Jesus, and had so desired for a long time. See Luke 23. 8. The statement is made in a polite way as if to say, "if you dont mind, I should like to see him on this visit of mine."

"Tomorrow, thou shalt..." - Festus promptly replies that Agrippa will see Paul. Festus would be pleased for this to happen if his dilemma could be solved by such a meeting.

#### Verse 23

"And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth."

"On the morrow..." - Next day. This expression occurs more in the Acts than in any other book.

"when Agrippa was come..." - "Agrippa having come,..."

"and Bernice..." - mentioned as a companion and not as a wife.

"With great pomp..." - "with great display..." Gk. "phantasia" from which the English "fantasy" is derived.

"the place of hearing..." - Gk. "akroaterion" a place of audience. This is not a particular place but any place where one is heard, such as a lecture room, a council chamber, or a court room. Nothing definite is stated here so the assumption is that it was a place set aside of furnished for this particular occasion. This is the only appearance of the word in Scripture.

"chief captains..." - "chiliarchs."

"principal men..." - The more illustrious the men around Agrippa, the more pomp to the occasion. This was gratifying to his pride. This would include Jews as well as Gentiles.

"Paul was brought forth." - Paul would be brought forth to stand before them in chains. Acts 26. 29. indicates the presence of chains.

## Verse 24

"And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer."

"And Festus said,.. " - Festus makes an opening speech to inform those present why this august assembly had been called. He would also have to make an explanation as to why Paul was apparently being tried when he had already appealed unto Caesar and was thus freed from any further enquiry.

"King Agrippa..." - lit. "Agrippa, O King!" He is mentioned first.

"all men which are here present..." - to-day, an orator would say, simply, "Gentlemen.." or "Ladies and Gentlemen" if ladies were present. The females are omitted here because this is a judicial enquiry from which they would be excluded.

"all the multitude..." - a hyperbole, customary to the age.

"dealt with me..." - "applied to me..." or "petitioned me..."

"here..." - at Caesarea..."

## Verse 25

"But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him."

"when I found..." - "when I perceived..." or "when I ascertained..."

"he had committed nothing worthy of death..." - Festus does not give any reason as to why he did not immediately discharge Paul. Instead he asked him whether he was prepared to stand a further trial before a more prejudiced assembly. If Festus had acted as he should have done, Paul would not have felt obliged to take matters into his own hands by appealing to Caesar.

"he himself hath appealed unto Caesar..." - the entire blame for this appeal is laid upon Paul. No reason is given as to why Paul appealed. This Festus could not do without admitting to his own laxity in judgment. The translation gives "Caesar" but it should be "Augustus".

"I determined to send him." - I decided to send him. Festus claims the decision for himself but there was no other alternative.

By admitting that Paul was innocent in his view, Festus tacitly admitted that Paul's appeal was made because of a lack of decision on his part. The indecision of Festus now complicates matters for him as he himself admits in the next verse.

## Verse 26

"Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord, wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O King Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write."

"I have no certain thing to write..." - Festus will not admit his own lack of decision and his desire to build up popularity for himself amongst the Jews, (verse 9) so he claims that there is nothing positive about which he can write.

Festus attempts to clear himself because of his ignorance of Jewish customs and beliefs so he brings Paul before Agrippa, the Jew, so that after they both examine Paul, He, Festus, may have something to write to Rome about Paul so as to justify his appeal to Caesar. Without a proper explanation as to why Paul has so appealed, the authorities at Rome would realise that Festus had neglected his duty at the trial, Festus must, by this time, be very sorry he had shown such favour towards the Sanhedrin and had been so undecisive at the trial.

"my lord,.. " - The Greek is "kurios" and is applied by the writers of the N.T. to Jesus. The Latin form is "dominus" meaning "Lord of the house" (English "dominate", "dominion") from "domus" a house. English "domicile". Augustus Caesar refused the title and so did Emperor Tiberius. Later, the Caesars did not show such humility and accepted the title. Nero demanded it and it is to him that the title is now directed.

#### Verse 27

"For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes laid against him."

"unreasonable..." - "absurd..." And well might Festus say this. Why then, did he not dismiss the case against Paul? The answer is because he had more thought for his own position in the eyes of the Jews.

It would appear that Festus has reached a stage where he would give anything for Paul not to go to Rome and to Caesar. Whatever he would like to happen now, such as a new trial at Jerusalem, or to let Paul go, he could not overcome three things:-

(1) Paul's keenness to go to Rome. After two years of languishing in jail, he now has a chance of going to Rome, which he has wanted to do for a long time. (Acts 19. 21.)

(2) Paul's Roman citizenship made him entitled to a special consideration and, having appealed to Caesar, he must go through with it.

(3) Whatever reasons may be ascribed to the appeal unto Caesar, there is no doubt that it was the Divine Will that Paul appealed as he did. It was God's Will that Paul should go to the Gentiles. (Acts 22. 21.) Nothing that Festus or Agrippa could do would change the course of events now. Paul would have to go to Rome.

It was at this stage that Festus concluded his speech of which Luke has given us a precis. Agrippa would have heard all this before from Festus so what was said now was for the people present at the assembly. Agrippa would hear Paul, so Paul is about to make his defence before the world and his last defence in this part of the world.

# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

## Chapter 26

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Verse 1

### PAUL'S SPEECH BEFORE AGRIPPA.

"Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself:"

This speech is one of the great discourses of the Acts. It is a triumph both for Paul who made the speech and for Luke who recorded it and summarised it as published in this chapter. Those who were present and privileged to hear the Divinely inspired words of a master of rhetoric, did not realise the greatness of the occasion to which they were witnesses. His logic, his choice of words and his moments of emotion make Paul one of the great orators of any age. His speech is a model of style and presentation for any who would be a public speaker and hold forth on the same subject as Paul gave here.

"Agrippa said unto Paul,.. " - thus Agrippa acts as the chairman or president of the Meeting by calling upon Paul to speak and giving him permission to do so. Normally Festus would have been president and Agrippa would have been the honoured guest. It says little for the personality of Festus that Agrippa could have supplanted him in this manner.

"Thou art permitted to speak for thyself..." - "It is permitted for thee in behalf of thyself to speak." That is the literal translation and means that Paul was now permitted to speak in his own defence.

"stretched forth the hand..." - lit. "having stretched out the hand." This may have been a characteristic of the age that a speaker did this at the beginning of his address. It would not call for silence as the people present would not mumble to each other while Agrippa was there. It may have been to exhibit the chains on his hand but this is very unlikely with a man of the brave character of Paul.

"answered for himself." - lit. "made a defence". The word "defence" comes from Gk. "apologia".

Verse 2

The exordium:

"I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews:"

The opening sentence is, literally, "Concerning all things of which I am accused by Jews, O king Agrippa, I esteem myself happy before thee being about to-day to make a defence." (Diag.)

It is to be noted how different this opening is from that given to Felix (Acts 24. 10.) and Festus (Acts 25. 8 and 10.) Felix as the opponent of the Zealots, was well-known in Judea while Festus was a newcomer and an ignorant man concerning anything to do with Jewish custom and religion.

"happy..." - compare with the less forceful "more cheerfully" of 24. 10.

"before thee..." - Paul would be pleased to make his defence before Agrippa and his tribunal as a preliminary to speaking before Caesar.

Note the courtesy with which Paul addresses Agrippa when he must have despised him for his incestuous association with Bernice, his sister. In things concerning the preaching of the Truth, Paul did not pre-judge but gave every man a chance.

"of the Jews." - "by Jews". The word "the" is not in the original and should be omitted. This applies to the whole speech where "the" Jews are mentioned.

## Verse 3

"especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently."

"because I know..." - omit. These words are not in the original.

"expert..." - this word is connected to the opening "especially" making "especially expert" meaning "you are expert in many things O king, but, being a Jew are especially expert in all..."

"customs..." - the operation of the Law of Moses. See Acts 6. 14.

"questions..." - such as circumcision. See Acts 15. 2.

"patiently." - a word peculiar to this speech.

His Pharisaic upbringing and origin.

## Verse 4

"My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews."

"manner of life..." - comes from one Greek word which is used only in this speech.

"among mine own nation..." - that is among the Jews and not among the Gentiles in foreign lands.

## Verse 5

"Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee."

Paul was a well-known character and as a result of this, he would have been talked about and so all men would come to know something about him.

"if they would testify..." - "they would if they were willing..."

"most straitest..." - in English a double superlative characteristic of the age of the translators. (Early 17th Century.) Means "most rigid sect" That is to say, the most inflexible of all the sects of the people. They would not change from their set opinions. Paul emphasises this so as to lead into his great argument that the appearance of Christ to him made him change from this inflexibility. How else could one explain such a sudden change of heart? Therefore the appearance of the Lord to him must be true.

"I lived a Pharisee." - not "lived as a Pharisee but "lived a Pharisee". The difference is important because Paul did not live a make believe life. He genuinely thought, behaved, worshipped and believed in the Pharisaical way of life. He embodied it in his life and habits. See Acts 23. 6. Phil. 3. 5.

## Verse 6

"And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers:"

"And now..." - as opposed to "from the beginning..." of verse 5.

"I stand and am judged..." - "I have stood being judged..."

"for the hope of the promise..." - note that it is not for the promises of God but for the hope given him by those promises in which he so earnestly believes. Christianity would condemn Paul to-day for believing in the promises

made unto Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the Covenant with David. In the opinion of modern Christianity such promises have been fulfilled in the coming of Jesus but that was not Paul's opinion. Thirty years after Jesus had ascended into heaven, Paul was still believing in the promises made unto the Fathers. By and large, Christianity does not know what such promises are. Therefore, if modern teachers had listened to Paul's speech which Luke records here, they would have condemned him.

"our fathers:" - the "our" limiting such promises to the fathers of the Jewish people. The use of "our" also brings Agrippa into the picture because he was a Jew. That this is the theme of Christianity, see Acts 3. 13; 5. 30; 7. 2/3; 7. 17; 7. 32; 7. 37; 7. 46; Some editions omit "our" but the R.V., R.S.V., and Diag. retain it.

#### Verse 7

"Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews."

This verse is a continuation of the previous unfinished verse. The word "promise" is not in the original and appears here in italics. Grammatically it is in order and does not destroy nor distort the sense of the passage.

"twelve tribes..." - one Greek word correctly translated and occurring only here. It is neuter indicating a body of people representing twelve tribes. According to a religious body of people, there were not twelve tribes in Judea at that time because the ten northern tribes had been scattered and were on their way to Britain. If this is so, then Paul must be wrong - there were not twelve tribes there. Alternatively, accepting that there were not twelve tribes, the ten must have forgotten the Divine Promises, so they were not hoping for their fulfilment and Paul was wrong. We feel that the twelve tribes were indeed in Judea and also scattered abroad with those of Judah. They were the Hebrews to whom James wrote. (Jas. 1. 1.)

"instantly..." - "intently."

"serving..." - "worshipping..." with a meaning of serving and at the same time, having in mind a recompense for such work. That is to say, worshipping God with the hope of salvation in the kingdom of God on earth, in terms of the promises.

"For which hope's sake..." - the hope of the Messiah who must come and the hope of the resurrection. This would explain why he was so fanatical a Pharisee.

The Jews who were present, as well as Agrippa, would hear that the Christianity was no different from the Jewish faith with the sole exception of the identity of the Messiah and the change of ritual of worship.

"king Agrippa..." - some texts omit "Agrippa". Omitted by the R.V., R.S.V. and Diag.

"I am accused of the Jews." - This is a repetition of the phrase in verse 2. The repetition adds emphasis to what Paul is saying. The Jews accuse him of believing the same as they do. The sole exception were the Sadducees who denied the promise of a resurrection.

#### Verse 8

"Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?"

"Why should it be thought..." - Lit. "What! Is it thought incredible by you that..."

"That God should raise the dead?" - lit. "if the God dead ones raises?"

As the verse stands translated, it appears that Agrippa would consider that the resurrection was an incredible thing and something he could not believe. The literal translations as supplied above show that Agrippa, having been trained in Jewish beliefs, would not think it an incredible thing. It is so-called Christians who do not believe Paul's words. In this, Paul appeals to Agrippa as a fellow believer in the resurrection.

"dead". - Some unbelieving Christians attempt to eliminate the resurrection by stating that the word "dead" here is singular and points to the raised Christ. This is wrong however, because the Greek for "dead" is a plural word.

Paul's former zeal as a persecutor.

Verse 9

"I verily thought of myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth."

"Verily..." - "Therefore..." or "So then..." The connection is with the words "I lived a Pharisee." at the end of verse 5. From there on there is a digression while Paul states with surprise that he should be accused by the Pharisees of holding the doctrine of the Pharisees. Having finished with the digression, he brings his listeners back to his main theme... 'I lived a Pharisee, therefore I thought within myself that I ought to do many things...'

"contrary to..." - "against..." or "in opposition to..."

"the name of Jesus..." - this is more than doing something against Jesus. It is against all that he stood for, all that he means to mankind. It is against the "name" which he established by his death - the name into which baptism is made. (Acts 2. 38.)

"of Nazareth." - lit. "the Nazarene."

Verse 10

"which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them."

"I also did..." - the verb here is different from the verb "to do" in verse 9. In the previous verse it is used as a continued act not completed but to be done continually. In this verse, it refers to the action and not the contemplation of an action.

"the saints..." - "the separated ones..." Those who have separated themselves from a world of unbelief. The word is used four times in the Acts, namely, 9. 13, 32, 41; 26. 10. It is much more frequent in use in Paul's epistles. Paul's use of the word at this stage shows an admission of his former error. He would not have called them "saints" before but he does so now. This admission is directed at the remainder of the sentence which now follows...

"having received authority..." - his error just referred to was authorised by the chief priests. He had the zeal and the desire but could have done nothing about it without the proper authorisation. In saying this, Paul does not attempt to excuse himself but brings some of the guilt upon the proper authorities who have been accusing him.

"when they were put to death..." - "they being killed..." There were many such martyrs. See Acts 22. 4.



"I gave my voice against them." - lit. "I brought against a vote." See Acts 8. 1; 22. 20. The word "voice" or "Vote" comes from the Greek "psephos" meaning a stone which was used in voting. Two colours were used, white and black. White indicated acceptance of "yes" and black indicated rejection or "No". The word (Greek) occurs only twice in the N.T. here and in Rev. 2. 17. In the latter reference it appears as "stone" and in particular a white stone, showing acceptance of the saints into the kingdom of God. In the use made of the word here, it suggests that when the Sanhedrin considered whether or not a person should die because of their adherence to the Christian Faith, a vote was cast and Paul would cast a black stone.

The act of Paul casting his vote (literally) raises a question which cannot be answered with any degree of certainty. If he had been a member of the Sanhedrin and had been admitted to that body according to its rules, he must have been married before but was later a widower, as seems to be suggested by 1 Cor. 7. 7. Sanhedrin rules required their members to be married, hence the qualification which we state - "admitted according to its rules,". Failing this, then he used the term metaphorically knowing that everyone who heard the expression would know that he was in favour of the death of the saints, without exercising a vote in the Sanhedrin which he did not have. The weight of evidence leans towards Paul having been a member of the Sanhedrin.

#### Verse 11

"And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities."

"in every synagogue..." - hyperbole customary to the age. Lit. "In all the synagogues..." thus showing his zeal and thoroughness. This would mean that he went throughout the country, for there were many synagogues.

"punished them..." - the original states "and punishing them often in all synagogues, I compelled them..." The punishment, if not ending in death, would be by scourging. For the method of scourging, see notes to Acts 22. 25. under "as they bound him with thongs..."

"compelled them to blaspheme;.." - lit. "I was compelling..." thus showing the constant work being done by him. "to blaspheme" see Acts 13. 45. means to revile Jesus Christ - to curse the name of Christ. In this, Paul would find out who were the true Christians because the true Christians would not yield in this and preferred death rather than such blasphemy. Bruce quotes Pliny the Younger's report to Trajan: "if people suspected of Christianity blasphemed Christ, he discharged them as this was something true Christians could not be compelled to do. ("Commentary" footnote No. 17 on page 490).

"being exceedingly mad against them..." - lit. "being furious towards them."

"I persecuted them..." - imperfect. "I went on (continued) persecuting them..."

"even unto strange cities." - "even to foreign cities". There is no record in the Acts that Paul went further than Damascus, before which city he was arrested in his progress and held captive by Christ from then on. He may have made unrecorded journeys to other cities beyond the borders of Judea.

The Vision of Christ and Paul's conversion:

#### Verse 12

"Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,"

The speech to this stage has shown the tremendous work Paul did in his ignorance and with the authority of the Sanhedrin. Having built up this intense picture, he shows what an enormous and sudden change had come over him. It must have taken something terrifying to bring about such a sudden change in so devout an enthusiast.

This verse is uncompleted and comes to its end in the next verse. The translators (or editors) of the Book of the Acts have set this verse apart in this manner so as to allow Paul's exposition of his conversion to start with a verse to itself.

"whereupon..." - lit. "in which..." referring to the persecution mentioned in the next verse.

"as I was going to Damascus with authority..." - note the emphasis on the authority given to him. The Sanhedrin wanted him to do what he was doing. Jesus did not want him to do so. The choice is left with the listeners - the Sanhedrin or Jesus.

"authority and commission..." - Acts 9. 2. and 22. 5. mention "letters" being letters of authority. Paul now discloses more about the contents of those letters by saying that they gave authority (license) to do what he did and, in addition, gave him "commission" (full powers) to kill, arrest or scourge whomsoever he would. The Sanhedrin not only gave him permission but authorised him to do the dastardly work. The inference to follow is he was converted but the Sanhedrin continue to seek his life as they sought (and still seek) the life of Christians.

"from the chief priests." - That is, from his present accusers.

#### Verse 13

"At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me."

The corresponding verses are 9. 3/9; 22. 6/11. and 26. 12/18. See notes given under Acts 9. 9. for the parallel accounts.

"At midday..." - 22. 6. says "noon". The "midday" here accentuates what follows about the "brightness of the sun" because at midday, the sun is brightest. The times are the same of course, but the usage here is more powerful.

"O king..." - Gk. "basileus..." wherever the word "king" appears in the N.T. this word is used.

"brightness of the sun..." - the use of midday also shows that this was not an imagined scene but was seen in the middle of the day. This account gives more detail than the other two, here showing the brightness of the sun.

"shining round about me..." - additional information.

"them which journeyed with me." - The extent of the shining is additional in this account.

#### Verse 14

"And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

"we were all fallen to the earth..." - the other accounts state that Paul fell to the earth. Paul makes his account more general here by stating what happened to his companions as well.

"fallen..." - a verb peculiar to the Acts and appears here and in 28. 6. The meaning is "fallen prostrate" or "fallen down dead." In this instance, obviously "fallen prostrate." Acts 9. 7. states that the men who were with Paul, "stood speechless" whereas here they are stated to have fallen prostrate. See note to Acts 9. 7. The meaning there for "stood still" is that they stopped and made no further progress in their journey. Thereafter, they fell as Paul did. They could not have seen the light as brightly as Paul did for they did not suffer blindness as Paul did.

"Hebrew tongue..." - see note to Acts 22. 2.

"It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." - This proverbial expression would require no explanation for those to whom it was addressed. The Jews were a pastoral people and also an agricultural community so kicking against the goad would be something they all knew about. It is also found in Latin and Greek literature.

Some critics see in the expression, a pricking of Paul's conscience since the day of Stephen's apology delivered in the presence of Paul. His explanation covered O.T. ground which would be familiar to Paul and he must have understood the message which Stephen found in O.T. history. Perhaps Paul thought to himself that Christianity may be right after all but, through his zeal for other things, he kicked against this pricking of conscience and tried to disregard it. If this were not so, what reason would Jesus have had for asking him why he kicked against the pricks? What was goading his mind to stop his persecutions? There seems to be no answer to the question, "What pricks was Paul kicking against?" other than that of his own conscience, pricked into a mild response to the logical teaching of Stephen.

#### Verse 15

"And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."

There is little difference between the three accounts except that the record in Acts 9. 4/5. change the order of words but in no way alter the sense.

#### Verse 16

"But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;"

This record differs from the other two by putting into the mouth of Ananias the words spoken here by Jesus. Paul appears to consider that the messenger is not as important as his message and in this case, the message came from Jesus. Therefore he attributes it all to Jesus and dispenses with Ananias altogether. This is in order as such a small detail, while interesting to the Bible student, would have been of no value whatsoever to Agrippa.

"Stand upon thy feet..." - A comparison with Ezek. 2. 1/3. is interesting because the prophet had fallen upon his face when seeing the vision. He was then told to stand upon his feet and, in verse 3, he is told that he will be sent to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that had rebelled against God. Being a Jew, and a well educated man, Agrippa may have been familiar with the prophet's words. If he were not, the point would not be lost because the Jews would certainly have known the allusion to Ezekiel.

"for this purpose,.." - Paul had to stand upon his feet because Jesus had purposed to send him forth as a minister of the Word of God. He could not go forth if he remained on the ground.

"minister..." - see note to Acts 13. 5. under "to their minister."

"these things which thou hast seen..." - that Jesus was alive, having been raised from the dead. Only an eye witness of such things could be a true apostle.

"those things in the which I will appear unto thee." - Jesus appeared unto Paul on subsequent occasions. See Acts 18. 9. 22. 17/21; 23. 11.

## Verse 17

"Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,"

See Jer. 1. 7 et seq. for the sending of the prophet Jeremiah.

"The people..." - the Jews.

"delivering thee..." - Middle Voice meaning "taking thee out of the people for my sake..."

Paul is now to be taken from the covenant people and given to the new covenant people.

"I send thee." - the verb is "apostello" denoting an apostolic commission. It is Jesus who sends, and this accounts for Paul's statement in Gal. 1. 1. and Rom. 1. 1.

## Verse 18

"To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me,"

This concludes the sentence commenced in verse 16.

"to open their eyes..." - metaphorically to make it possible for them to see the light of the truth of the Gospel. See Isa. 35. 5. and 42. 7. which Paul may have had in mind as he uttered these words. The light is that which shone in the face of Jesus Christ. See John 8. 12; 9. 39/41; 2 Cor. 4. 6.

"turn them from darkness to light..." - darkness is the Biblical symbol of ignorance of the LOGOS - ignorance of the Plan and Purpose of God. See Matt. 4. 16; Rom. 13. 12; Ephes. 5. 8; Col. 1. 12/13; 1 Thess. 5. 5; 1 Pet. 2. 9; 1 John 2. 8.

"from the power of Satan,..." - lit. "from the authority of the adversary..." The "adversary" in this case being the High Priest, the Sanhedrin or perhaps the Romans, and their rulers all of whom opposed the spreading of the light of the gospel. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians and said "...for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." he could have written those words while he was in jail at Caesarea before the coming of Festus. If that is so, he could well have had the chief priest in mind, or even Felix or Festus because they were opposing the Way of the Lord. (2 Cor. 11. 14.)

"that they may receive forgiveness of sins..." - which the Law could not give and which was not given to Gentiles because of their unbelief and their being strangers from the covenants of promise. See Acts 2. 38; 5. 31; 10. 43; 13. 38.

"inheritance...etc.," - that they may receive the inheritance which is the hope of the Faith that is in me, that is, the same Faith that I am in.

His obedience to the Vision.

## Verse 19

"Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:

"Whereupon..." - "Thereupon..." Because of this vision and these words.

"disobedient..." - "unwilling to be persuaded..."

"heavenly vision..." - the use of the English word "vision" seems to suggest that what Paul saw was imaginative and not actual. This is not the sense of the words in Greek which mean "heavenly sight" or "appearance".

#### Verse 20

"But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance."

"shewed..." - "declared..."

"Damascus....Jerusalem..." - See Acts 9. 20/29.

"all the coasts of Judea..." - there is no record in Acts that Paul did this preaching tour but that does not mean to say that Paul is in error here. It is possible and very probable that he did this preaching when he returned to Judea with famine relief. Acts 9. 29/31. Acts 11. 30; 12. 25.

"the Gentiles..." - Paul mentions these last because they were always preached to after the Jews had rejected him. Being the apostle to the Gentiles, he would regard them with great importance.

"repent..." - see note to Acts 2. 38.

"do works..." - "doing works" or "performing works". Note the idea of continuation.

#### Faul's arrest:

#### Verse 21

"For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me."

"For these causes..." - On account of these things..." The "these things" mentioned here refer to Paul's preaching to Jews and to Gentiles. (2 Tim. 1. 11.) The Jews could not endure the thought of Gentiles coming into their Divine Covenants of Promise. Paul created an insuperable difficulty by by-passing Judaism by allowing converts to share in the Promises without having to become Jews first by circumcision and submission to the temple ritual.

"caught me in the temple..." - "having siezed me in the temple..." This shows where their resentment lay. The profanation of their temple was the reason given by the Jews from Asia. (Acts 21. 28.)

"went about to kill me." - "attempted with violent hands to kill me." This is the literal translation but the R.V. has "assayed to kill me." The R.S.V. has "tried to kill me." The verb translated as "went about" comes from "peirao" meaning "to attempt", "undertake", "endeavour". The verb "to kill" comes from "diacheirizo" appears in the Middle Voice and gives the sense of "laying hands upon to kill" hence the Diaglott's "with violent hands."

#### Verse 22

"Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saving none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:"

"Having therefore obtained help of God,.." - The Diaglott renders the word for word translation thus:- "help therefore having obtained of that from of the God,.." which is to say, "having obtained therefore, that succour which is from God,.."

"help..." - the word means 'succour' such as is given by an ally.

"unto this day..." - these words can fit either side of "I continue" to give either of two senses, (1) having obtained succour from God unto this day, I continue,,," or "having obtained succour from God, I continue unto this day..."

"I continue..." - "I stand..." This can be used in either of two senses or both, namely, (1) "in spite of their attempts to kill me, I am still standing..." or (2) "in spite of everything, I still maintain my position, I still hold fast to my doctrine..." "Furthermore, I still stand as a preacher of these things..." See Paul's remarks in Rom. 5. 2; 1 Cor. 15. 1; Ephes. 6. 13/14; Col. 4. 12;

"witnessing both to small and great..." - the result of his still standing. Not that he does so of his own volition but as an apostle, one sent by Jesus. This has reference to verse 17 above.

"small and great..." - does not only refer to rank but to age (young and old), social standing (important and unimportant) class (high and low) thus carrying the distinction through all strata and types. Covering all types, it could be rendered "from the least unto the greatest". The only other usage of this expression in the N.T. is Rev. 11. 18; 13. 16; 19. 5 and 18; 20. 12.

"none other things...prophets and Moses." - The complete answer to all who accuse him of destroying the religion of their fathers. Not only did he teach those things spoken of by the prophets of Israel, but he spoke also those things spoken by the great prophetic law-giver, Moses. The Jews accused him of speaking against Moses. Paul claimed that he spoke the same things that Moses spoke. See his declaration under Acts 24. 14.

"should come." - "being about to take place." Note that Moses spoke of things yet to happen relative to his day. Therefore he is one of the great prophets of Israel. His teaching was not static and applicable to his times. It also had relation to Jesus, as the epistle to the Hebrews shows so well.

#### Verse 23

"That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles."

"Christ should suffer..." - The verb is peculiar to this verse. It means "Christ should be liable to suffer..." The Jews could not understand a Saviour who had to endure suffering. They repelled the thought. Their O.T. was full of such references. See Luke 24. 44/46. Isaiah 53 is the best known of such O.T. prophecies. The sense of these words by Paul is "That the Messiah should be a sufferer."

"first that should rise..." - this qualification of Jesus is inseparable from "he should suffer." The two had to go together, "death" (after suffering) followed by resurrection. He was the first-fruits. (1 Cor. 15. 23.)

"shew light..." - for the Gentiles, see Isa. 42. 6; 49. 6; 60. 3: The "light" thus proclaimed was the resurrection through Jesus. Paul brings his listeners back again to the question of which he was accused by the Sadducees and to which he referred in Acts 26. 7/8. This connects the suffering with the death, with the resurrection, with the preaching to the Gentiles. All of this is O.T. teaching. All of it is Paul's teaching. His accusers accuse him of turning away from Moses and the prophets but these things which he taught were spoken of by Moses and the prophets. Where, then, is their accusation? The resurrection of Jesus is the greatest miracle of all time. There was no evangelist standing by to call him from the dead or pray over his dead body as Jesus had done over others. Without any mediator of any nature, Jesus was raised from the dead. This could only be the Power of God working through him. This shows that Christianity is true.

"Gentiles," - his was referred to in verse 17. Jesus was doing no more than had been prophesied.

Verse 24

"And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad."

This is the first recorded interruption Paul had. The resurrection was too much even for Agrippa who should have believed in it if he had known the O.T. Scriptures. When Festus listened to Paul, he must have noticed the tremendous enthusiasm of the apostle. Paul lived for his Faith and spoke about it with such conviction that Festus came to the conclusion that Paul must have been overcome with rapture, hence his rather absurd statement concerning Paul's sanity.

"as he thus spake for himself..." - "as he was thus apologising..." or "defending..."

"thou art beside thyself..." - "thou ravest (as a madman)..." or simply "thou art mad..."

"much learning..." - lit. "many letters..." - an acquaintance with literature without any specific reference to the type of literature. This will be inferred in the next clause.

"doth make thee mad." - "turns thee to mania." The inference appears to be that much devotion to the Hebrew Scriptures had turned Paul's thinking to mania. To this day, non-religious persons accuse the religious of having religious mania. Religion can often lead to mania or fanaticism which is much the same thing. Paul's religion however, was a religion requiring its adherents to grow in knowledge of the Word of God. Thus, no room is left for mania. See 2 Tim. 2. 15. 1 Thess. 5. 21. John 17. 3; 1 Cor. 15. 34; Ephes. 4. 13; Phil. 1. 9; Col. 1. 9; 1 Tim. 2. 4.

Verse 25

"but he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness."

Paul's rejoinder to this silly accusation is the essence of politeness. To appreciate how polite Paul was and what forbearance he exercised, one must realise that Paul was speaking to Agrippa and not to Festus. Therefore, if he had shown some impatience with Festus, many would have excused him. But this he does not do.

"I am not mad..." - this must be regarded as a rejoinder to the "Thou art mad..." from Festus.

"most noble..." - no doubt Paul did not, for one moment, regard Festus as being most noble. This is merely a term of respect to a position. It is like our modern, "Your Excellency."

'speak forth...' - "I utter..."

"words of truth..." - "truth" as opposed to the theory of Plato about an immortal soul that goes to heaven at death which is not Truth, but a persuasive error of mankind's philosophy.

"soberness." - "sanity" as opposed to Festus' insinuation that he was mad.

## Verse 26

"For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner."

Let us give some consideration to the facts at this moment:-

1. Festus had already sat in judgment over Paul and had not given any decision.
2. He had tried to get Paul to agree to a further trial under the Jews.
3. Through his willingness to ingratiate himself with the Jews, he had forced Paul to appeal to Caesar.
4. Having got himself into a very embarrassing situation, Festus confessed that the situation was more than he could handle. (Acts 25. 20 and 26.)
5. Because of his incompetence, Festus had asked Agrippa to attend this meeting.
6. Since this meeting was called for Agrippa, and Agrippa had invited Paul to speak, (verse 1) Paul was addressing Agrippa and not Festus.
7. Festus had no knowledge of the Jewish nor the Christian Faith and was not in a position to pass any judgment at all.

These factors gave Paul every reason to be rude to Festus, yet he was not rude but spoke very politely to Festus.

"the king knoweth..." - "the king is informed" as opposed to Festus who is not.

"these things..." - the religious beliefs of the Jews which are almost identical with those of the Christians.

"before whom also I speak freely..." - lit. "to whom also being confident I may speak..." I speak with confidence before Agrippa (but before Festus I am interrupted...)

"none....are hidden from him..." - Paul assumes that Agrippa not only knows something of the Scriptures but also has had knowledge of Jesus and must have heard of his resurrection.

"this thing..." - "this whole affair..." The resurrection.

## Verse 27

"King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest."

Whereas the Gentiles who were listening would not know much of what had been said, with Agrippa it was different. He was a Jew and must have known something of the Scriptures. At the very least he would have had a respect for the Word of God whether or not he was obedient to it. If Agrippa could be brought to a confession of these things, his attendants would have been astonished and Paul's case would have been immensely strengthened. He would have been a link between Rulership and the Faith; Gentile and Christian and Jew and Christian.

"believest thou the prophets?" - "believing" means much more than just believing that they existed. The believers of the prophets had to know their message and believe in it. He had to trust their word, knowing it to be the inspired Word of God. He would regard them as the spokesmen for God.

Agrippa was in a difficult situation at this question and appeal. He knew the prophets to be true. He must have heard of Jesus for this was common knowledge all over the country wherein he now was. Could he give Paul his patronage and receive the enmity of the Jews? Alongside of him was Festus who had just expressed an opinion which was wrong but which would have a great deal of support from many people. On the contrary, how could Agrippa state emphatically that he did not believe in the Prophets and thus speak against the Most High God whose servants the prophets were?



"I know that thou believest." - It was not a matter of Paul knowing what was going through Agrippa's mind. Paul knew that any Jew would know something of the prophets. He knew also, that recent history confirmed many of the things spoken about by the prophets. This evidence could not be denied, especially by a man like Agrippa. Every Jew knew of the prophecy of Deut. 18. 18. and a short account of the work of Jesus compared with that of Moses, would show that this prophecy by God had been fulfilled in Jesus.

Verse 28

"Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

Now we know why Luke added to his record, the statement by Festus concerning Paul's alleged "mania". This had had an effect on Agrippa who could not now support Paul and by so doing, support a man who was suspected of being mad - of being a fanatic.

On the other hand, what was Agrippa to say? If he denied the prophets, he would offend the Jews who regarded him as their helper. He would lose his influence with the Jews if he dared give any indication that he did not believe the prophets.

"Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." - Gk. "Within a little thou persuadest me a Christian to become."

It is accepted by Commentators, that the title "Christian" had the same meaning then as it does now. With this, we disagree, being the only one out of step. See notes to Acts 11. 26. Agrippa got out of the difficulty by making a joke about it. "With a little more effort you could persuade me to become a goody-goody." Note that he did not align himself with the Christians. He could not use that word in a nice sense. It had to be contemptuous. He could not say in effect, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a follower of Christ" because that would acknowledge in the presence of Jews that Jesus was the Christ. Therefore at the risk of disagreeing with such famous scholars as Alexander, Walker, Rackham and the modern authority, Professor F.F. Bruce, we must still maintain that the term "Christian" did not mean then what it means now.

Verse 29

"And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds."

"I would to God..." - lit. "I would pray to the God..." Thus Paul passes off the slight against the Believers as "worthy fellows". He finds nothing worthy of contempt in the word but adds that he could pray to God for all men to be the same "worthy fellow" that he was.

"not only thou..." - all along Paul had been addressing Agrippa except the few words he spoke to Festus after that man's rude interruption. Now Paul deftly and without giving any offence, turns from Agrippa to all men.

"were both...such as I am..." - this sentence is not quite what Paul said. Lit. "within a little and within much, but also all those hearing me today, to become such as even I am..."

"except these bonds." - No doubt, holding up one wrist to which a chain was fastened. If anyone was to be held captive, let them be held captive by the Lord Jesus.

If Agrippa was ashamed to admit the truth of the prophets, Paul's rejoinder here must have made him more ashamed. Paul showed courage which is much more than Agrippa displayed.

## Verse 30

"And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them:"

"When he had thus spoken..." these words are omitted in the R.V. R.S.V. and others such as the Diaglott, Schonfield, Weymouth and the N.E.B.

The address seems to come to an abrupt end at this stage. Perhaps Agrippa was embarrassed or thought he had said too much in the presence of Jews and Gentiles. Paul had been too logical for comfort for such as he.

"the king rose up..." - no one would dare move as long as he was seated. Therefore it was Agrippa who broke up the meeting.

"the governor..." - Festus.

"and Bernice..." - the order of leaving is correct. They all left according to rank. As Shakespeare once put it into the mouth of Lady Macbeth, "Stand not upon the order of your going..." - "Do not follow protocol in going..." (Macbeth Act 3, Scene 4 line 119.)

## Verse 31

"And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds."

"when they were gone aside..." - lit. "having retired..." This indicates that they withdrew to a place where they could discuss matters amongst themselves privately.

"they talked between themselves..." - Lit. "they spoke to each other..."

The question now arises, who is referred to by "they"? It is improbable that all the assembly, including Bernice and the Jews would retire for private discussion amongst themselves. In view of the "Then said Agrippa to Festus.." of the next verse, it is more than likely that Agrippa and Festus withdrew for a private talk between themselves. Festus was anxious to know what he should do and how he should report the matter to Rome. Now was his opportunity while the matter was fresh in the mind of Agrippa.

## Verse 32

"Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar."

"Then said Agrippa unto Festus..." - see concluding note to the previous verse. These words identify for us the people who went into a private discussion.

"This man might have been set at liberty..." - "set free" or "discharged..." - "release" "let... go." See John 19. 12; Acts 3. 13; 4. 21, 23; 5. 40; 16. 35/36; 17. 9; 23. 22; 24. 23; 26. 32; See also Matt. 27. 15, 17, 21; Mark 15. 9, 11; Luke 23. 16/18 and 20; Also Mtt. 27. 26; Mark 15. 6 and 15; Luke 23. 25.

"if he had not appealed unto Caesar." - There is a fore-boding in this qualification of Paul's possible liberty. Does the appeal to Caesar take away any chance that Paul would have liberty? Perhaps Agrippa knew the character of the Caesar who was none other than Nero. He was a man who had no sympathy whatsoever for Christians, worthy fellows or not.

Having appealed unto Caesar, Paul was now bound to go to Rome. Luke has no further interest in Agrippa or Festus so drops the subject abruptly at this point. This closes Luke's account of Paul's defence of his Faith. From now on we are given adventure, but at the same time, a historical analogy.

Up to this period in ecclesiastical history, opposition to the preaching of the gospel had come from Jews. Luke has recorded how they used to follow Paul from place to place and try to prevent him from preaching. In addition, they would stir up the Gentiles against him. The Gentiles, on the other hand, were surprisingly tolerant towards the preaching of Christianity. They appeared to raise some opposition only when their business interests became affected. See Acts 16. 16/24. See also the opposition from Demetrius and his men recorded in Acts 19. 24/41. Whenever the Gentiles raised a protest, they always framed their objections along religious lines but it is obvious that their main concern was their business interests. Thus the Gentiles were prepared to allow the preaching of Christianity and have a laugh at it now and again when they met some of the "worthy fellows". The general attitude was that Christians were fanatics, as Festus expressed.

The time came, however, when Christianity began to spread amongst the Gentiles. As long as the adherents kept to apostolic teaching and remained humble men, they did not interfere with the law and did not come up against the rulers or their deputies. Once the wolves entered in among them and sought to draw disciples after them, (Acts 20. 29/30.) clashes with the Government and its servants were inevitable. The gradual appearance of a large body of people who worshipped a God no one had ever heard of was something to be considered with alarm in countries where the worship of idols made by man's hands was a State religion. It would take only the mildest of causes to trigger off a mass punishment of innocent people.

At the time of history Luke has now reached in his narrative, (A.D. 59) Gentile attitude was still admirably tolerant towards the Christians. It was in A.D. 62 that Nero divorced his wife Octavia and married a woman called Poppea. It was about this time that Agrippa had built himself a large dining room in the royal palace at Jerusalem but to the dismay of the Jews, it overlooked the Temple in such a manner that Agrippa could eat while lying down as the custom was, and see what was going on in the temple area and watch the details of the sacrifices. To preserve the secrecy of their ritual, the Jews built a large wall which blocked the view as well as the view of the western cloisters of the temple. Festus ordered them to pull the wall down again but the Jews asked to be allowed to send an ambassage to Rome to ask Nero about it first. Permission was given and in due course, news of the wall came to the ears of Poppea. She was a religious woman, and was thought to have been a proselyte because of her good favour towards the Jewish people and their form of religion. She managed to influence Nero so that he gave the Jews permission to retain their wall. This story is told in "Antiquities of the Jews" by Josephus, Book 20, chapter 8 paragraph 11.

This instance of Nero's mildness and kindness was not due wholly to his character but to the influence of his religious wife. To what extent she influenced him in his later attitude towards Christians is hard to say. In A.D. 64, the great fire of Rome took place and Nero, looking for a scapegoat, blamed it on the Jews. Perhaps his Jew-loving and God-fearing wife had heard of the Christians and, in spite of them being regarded as a branch of Judaism, she followed the more militant Jews and urged her husband to despatch as many of them as he could. The slaughter of Christians which followed gives history one of its many lamentable chapters. The cruelty was characteristic of the age yet it is hard to believe that a religious person could descend to such diabolical cruelty regardless of who the victim was or what religion was followed. It is thought that Paul met his death during this time.

Returning to Agrippa's statement that Paul would have been set at liberty had he not appealed unto Caesar, he must have known of the pro-Jew attitude of Agrippa's wife, Poppea, and knew that if she had any say in the matter, Paul would not have been set at liberty at any time. However, there is evidence that Paul was set free and continued his travels but more of this anon.

The slaughter ordered by Nero set the pattern for persecution in the

years which followed. The tempo of persecution for Christianity increased after A.D. 70 when the Jews were no longer a force to be reckoned with. The same years however, saw the growth of apostacy within the ecclesias until the True Christian Faith almost died out. The few that held the Truth, were driven into the "wilderness" (Rev. 12. 14) and to this day, form a very small part of what is called "Christianity". Once the growth of the apostacy was complete and doctrines such as the trinity, immortal souls, heaven going at death, the pre-existence of Christ, the devil and satan, and such festivals as Christmas, Easter and the various religious holidays became part of Christianity, the True Christian Faith had gone and in its place arose a pagan religion with all the pagan beliefs given a "Christian character".

When this stage had been reached, the Roman Catholic church took over completely from the pagans and, in the course of time, controlled the State as well. Instead of the high priest, there was the pope. In the place of the course of the priesthood, there were the various classes of Catholic priests. The worship of the sun god, moon goddess and morning star was replaced by the three-gods-in-one of Christianity. The pre-existence of Nimrod who was now the morning star was replaced by a belief in the supposed pre-existence of Christ. The worship of Diana, (Artemis to the Greeks) was now replaced by the worship of the virgin Mary. Instead of turning departed souls into constellations, Christianity now consigned souls to heaven at death. Instead of believing in evil spirits, Christians now believed in a supposedly immortal angel of evil to which they gave the Hebrew word for an adversary - "sahtahn" and altered the spelling and added a capital to get "Satan". As the pagans had done, so the Roman Catholics did with their Inquisitions in which acts of most appalling cruelty were done to bring about the death of those who would not bow to their will in matters of belief. This was largely prophesied in Rev. chapter 13. The complete victory of paganism came about when the mid-winter festival to the sun god became what is known as Christmas Day and the festival to the moon goddess (Astarte) became the festival of Easter.

## THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

### Chapter 27

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#### Paul's sea journey and shipwreck.

Luke's story of Paul's journey by sea which culminated in shipwreck is a classic in any age. For narrative skill and the power of descriptive writing, it is unsurpassed amongst the literature of all nations. As a record of seamanship of the age in which it was written, it is the most instructive and authoritative. The details of the story prove the authenticity of Luke's narrative for no one could have written such an account without having been there to experience such a storm and such an ending.

Are we to think that God inspired Luke to write as he did just for the pleasure of his readers? Must we think that the Divine story which has just been told of all that the apostles did and taught over a dynamic period of thirty years, suddenly came to an end and God added an exciting story for us to read to our children but in which there is no didacticism at all? When we read the story, must we notice only the suspense and excitement and feel the relief of the traveller when all came safely to land?

Whereas we shall summarise our lessons when we come to the end of the chapter, we shall as an introduction, note that a voyage is comparable to the adventures of our lives. We hope for a smooth passage but never get one. We are tossed about from one difficulty and situation to another. Sometimes events happen which change the course of our lives and lead us to a different haven from that we first intended to visit. In hard times and in dangers, the best and the worst in our characters is revealed. Our determination in adversity shows what stuff we are made of.

From the earliest times in cultural history, man has feared and avoided or loved and respected, the sea. To the Greeks and Romans of Paul's day, it represented the great unknown and the creaky shell boats plus the ignorance of navigation, made any sea journey a hazardous undertaking. Such were the dangers involved that sea journeys during the winter were forbidden. There was a great traffic on the Mediterranean between Egypt, Asia and Europe, yet most of this was done during the summer when the winds were favourable and the storms were not so severe as they were in the winter. Nevertheless, sea travel required endurance from sailor and passenger alike. The smallness of the ships necessitated cramped quarters. The wood from which ships were made rendered the lighting of a fire a dangerous risk so all meals were cold. There was no comfort for anyone who undertook a journey by sea. The lack of knowledge of trigonometry and geometry and the lack of navigational instruments of reasonable accuracy left the sea farer in the hands of God and gave rise to superstition amongst those who believed in gods of their own making. If the particular god which was worshipped did not calm the sea within a very short time, the sailor would quite easily turn to another god. Thus it was that the pagan sailors who had Jonah in their ship, prayed to all their gods in a time of distress. (Jonah 1.5.) Since these gods did not do anything about calming the storm, the ship's master came to Jonah and asked him to pray to his God, "if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not." (Jonah 1. 6.) When the God of Israel calmed the storm, the sailors offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and would remember Him the next time a storm arose.

We shall now give attention to the 27th chapter and in doing so, shall note from time to time, the various allegories which point to the Christian way of life. If we regard Paul as a type of Christ and the passengers and crew as the believers making their journey through life, we shall be helped in our study and much interest will be added to the task before us.

## Verse 1

"And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band."

"it was determined..." - it had already been determined (decided) to send Paul to Rome. See Acts 25. 12, 21 and 25. The determination in the present instance refers to the time of sailing. The decision in this matter could be taken finally after the officials at Rome had signified their assent to Paul's appeal.

"Italy..." - apart from this reference, Italy is mentioned in Acts 18. 2; 27. 6; and Heb. 13. 24. It referred to the country south of the Alps, and does not include the Alps as does modern Italy.

"we..." - indicating the presence of Luke. This word was last seen in Acts 21. 18. as "us". Nothing is known of Luke's movements during the two years of Paul's imprisonment but he must have lived nearby so that he could join his leader whenever he came out of prison. Luke must have had money of his own to be able to afford a passage such as this.

"they..." - Festus, the governor would have the power to give the order. Paul was being taken to Rome after Festus had reported his appeal to Caesar. The order would be given by both Festus and Agrippa, hence the use of the word "they". Alternatively, it could be used as a generic plural and mean only Festus and all that he controlled.

"certain other prisoners..." - from the treatment given to them, it is certain that they were not appellants as Paul was. They were most likely, criminals who were being sent to Rome to certain death in the amphitheatre.

"Julius..." - this centurion was, as is the case with other centurions, an outstanding character.

"Augustus' band." - the word "band" means "cohort". See introduction to Acts chapter 10. This particular cohort was one of five auxiliary cohorts stationed at Caesarea. It carried the title "Augustan" to indicate that it was an Imperial cohort. With the extension of the Roman Empire throughout the habitable world at that time, communications between the provinces and the controlling centre at Rome were essential. To enable this to come about, bodies of troops were formed which were called "frumentarii". They travelled back and forwards between Rome and foreign parts and the centurions in charge were officer-couriers. They formed an excellent means of communication for the Emperor and his foreign armies. Their head-quarters were at Rome on the Caelian Hill and only foreigners called "Peregrini" could be recruited for these cohorts. That this cohort was called the "Augustan cohort" showed that it was an Imperial cohort and one likely to be entrusted with the conveyance of prisoners.

## Verse 2

"and entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us."

"Entering..." - "embarking..." (going on board).

"Adramyttium..." - a port of Mysia, about 45 miles east of Assos (Acts 20. 14.) at the deepest end of the gulf of Adramyttium. It was a popular trading centre and dealt in ointment. Exports used to go as far as Syria and the coast of Caesarea so this vessel was probably on its way back to its home port.

"we launched..." - "we put to sea..."

"meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia..." - lit. "was about to sail to places in Asia."

They would go to the coasts of Asia hoping to find a ship sailing to Italy. There was more hope of finding such a ship on the Asian coast than there was at Caesarea because of the greater traffic between Italy and those parts.

"Aristarchus,.. " - he is mentioned in Acts 19. 29; 20. 4. which verses show him to have been a companion with Paul on his travels. He is mentioned in Col. 4. 10. as "my fellow prisoner..." and in Philemon 24, he is described by Paul as "my fellow labourers". He and Luke were constant companions of Paul, the two of them representing Jewry and Greek. It is difficult to account for their presence here because ordinary passengers would not be allowed to travel on such a ship with all those soldiers and prisoners. Paul was an important prisoner, being a Roman citizen and an appellant unto Caesar. Therefore he might have been permitted to have with him his chosen slaves or attendants.

Verse 3

"And the next day we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself."

"we touched at Sidon..." - "we were brought to land at Sidon."

"Sidon..." - often mentioned with Tyre which lies twenty miles to the south. Sidon was about 70 miles north of Caesarea. It was of more importance in O.T. days than it was at the time of Paul's visit. It had fallen to Alexander the Macedonian and had never regained its former importance.

"courteously..." - "philanthropically..."

"entreated..." - "used" or "treated".

"his friends..." - there might have been brethren there as there were at Tyre. Acts 21. 4/5. The word means "loved ones" or persons for whom one has an affection. After a long period of work in the Master's service, it is unlikely that Paul would have had friends who were not Christians. On this basis, it is more likely that there was an ecclesia there and that the members of it were close friends of Paul.

"to refresh himself". - "to receive hospitality" and also "to receive care and attention". From the meaning of this word ("receive attention" either as hospitality or care) there is a strong suggestion that Paul was in poor physical condition and that his friends gave him such attention as they could.

Julius immediately rises in our estimation of his character and we find again that a centurion is one to be admired.

Verse 4

"And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary."

"when we had launched..." -- "having put out to sea..."

"we sailed under Cyprus..." - they sailed under the lee of the island of Cyprus, which means that they sailed west and north of Cyprus. During the summer, the winds are westerly. If a voyage was being made from Asia, a vessel would hold Cyprus on its port beam, which is to say that it would pass to the right of Cyprus. See note to Acts 21. 3.) They would therefore, pass Cyprus north of the island. This would bring them into the lee of the wind. It would also help them in regard to a current which flows strongly westward, enabling them to make progress against a wind. This fact shows that Luke's record was accurate and that the ship was navigated by experienced sailors.

"the winds were contrary." - they were from the west and they were sailing westward. By sailing north and west, they would avoid this.

## Verse 5

"And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia."

"sailed over..." - "having sailed through..."

"the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia..." - Cilicia lies due north of Cyprus and Pamphylia is to the north, north east (N.N.E.) This means that the ship, having passed Cyprus to the east and going north, would come in sight of the mainland. Then it would turn west and follow the coast westward until it came to Myra, the most southerly port of Asia Minor. Little is left to-day of this old city. Its theatre remains as a vestige from which it can be gathered that Myra was a city of good size. (A city can often be gauged for size by studying the size of its theatre.)

## Verse 6

"And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us thereon."

Myra was one of the grain ports and Egypt was the supplier of Grain. This accounts for the fact that the ship came from Alexandria, Egypt, and was carrying some of its cargo of wheat to Italy. This brought to an end the first stage of the journey because they had a change of ship here.

Ramsay points out that Egypt was one of the granaries of Rome and the trade in wheat between Egypt and Rome was of the highest importance. It was also very large as can well be imagined with a city the size of Rome. The ship would call first at Myra in order to discharge some of its cargo and would then continue its journey. (Ramsay: "St. Paul the Traveller" page 318)

## Verse 7

"And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone;"

"sailed slowly..." - a term used only navigationally, showing Luke's knowledge of the language of the sea.

"Cnidus..." - the sea journey took them along the coast and to the north of the island of Rhodes. Then, turning a little southwards, they would make their way along the mainland until they came to the port of Cnidus on the mainland. This was another favourite port of call for ships from Egypt. Here they could have waited for a favourable wind as there were two harbours there.

"not suffering us..." - "not permitting us..." A verb peculiar to this verse. Used by sailors.

"we sailed under Crete,..." - along the lee of the island, that is along its southern coast. The wind at this time would be north west. It is now known that at the time of late summer referred to here, this wind does blow north-westerly.

The sense is that they did not land at Cnidus because the wind did not permit them to do so. Therefore, they turned southwards along the lee of Crete, making for the cape of Salmone as a guide to their further course.

## Verse 8

"And, hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called The fair Havens; nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea."

"hardly passing it,..." "having passed it with difficulty..."



"The fair Havens..." - to-day the place is called in Greek "Limeonas Kalous" meaning "The fair Havens". Having rounded the cape Salmone, they sailed along the south coast until they came to this port. Not far from this port is a place called Lasea. This place has almost disappeared but vestiges were discovered in 1856.

A few miles to the west of The fair Havens, is Cape Matala, not mentioned by Luke, but beyond which, the coast turns northwards. Any ship sailing at this time, would find itself beating up against a head-wind. We shall see when we come to verse 12 how this affected the travellers.

Verse 9

"Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them,"

"when much time was spent..." - "much time having been spent..." They had spent a lot of valuable time in sailing against a contrary wind and in waiting at The fair Havens for better sailing weather.

"sailing was now dangerous..." - this helps us to place the time of the year. The dangerous time for sailing was between September 14th. and November 11th. After November 11th. all navigation ceased until the winter had passed.

"the fast was now already past,.." - the fast referred to is the Day of Atonement which, in A.D. 59, fell on 5th. October. But the fast was already past so it must have occurred while they were at The Fair Havens. They would have sailed from The Fair Havens about the middle of October.

"Paul admonished them," - "Paul advised them,"

Ramsay (op. cit.) suggests that a council was called and that Paul had been invited to attend and express his opinion as to what they should do. It seems strange that a captain should call such a council because he is the sole and supreme authority on the ship. In verse 11 the centurion's opinion is recorded. The point to note is that such was the importance of the wheat trade between Alexandria and Rome, that the transport was not left to the caprice of private enterprise but was run as a State Department. Therefore, when the Centurion came aboard the ship, he was the highest ranking Government officer aboard. This could not occur in our times, unless it was Soviet Russia, but in those days, they had different ranks of seniority and different rules from what we have now. In our custom, the Captain alone would take the decisions even against the Owner and would be protected by the State if he did. In those days, however, the Centurion was the senior officer therefore he had to be obeyed.

Verse 10

"And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives."

"Sirs,.. " - "Sirs,.. "

"I perceive..." - the meaning is that having been a spectator of what had occurred and what was happening, and having given consideration to these things in the light of future possibilities, I understand that.....

"hurt and much damage..." - relevant to the risks involved.

"the lading..." - the cargo.

"our lives." - in this Paul was wrong. There was no loss of life. In this he was not inspired. But, in so far as he states that there is a risk to the cargo, the ship and the lives, he was quite right. It is in this sense that the passage was written.

## Verse 11

"Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul."

"the master..." - the person responsible for the navigation of the ship. Rev. 18. 17. - "the shipmaster". He was the pilot.

"the owner of the ship..." - it would be better here to translate the word as "captain". Two people are involved here regarding the ship, the master and the captain. The Master would be the navigator, and the owner would be the captain, the person in command.

"the centurion believed...." - he believed old and experienced sailors and would have been very foolish if he had not done so. Although Paul was right and the men of experience turned out to be wrong, the centurion was still correct in listening to the men of experience rather than to a land-lubber whom he knew nothing of. Nevertheless, in view of the gale which was blowing and the contrary nature of the winds, it would seem - at this distance - to have been foolhardy to set sail from The Fair Havens which, at least was a harbour and afforded much more protection than the open sea.

## Verse 12

"And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north west."

"because the haven was not commodious..." - this is not saying that the haven was not commodious but that the majority advised that they should leave because in their opinion, the haven was not commodious to winter in.

"to winter in..." - used as a noun "for wintering in" as one word.

"the more part..." - "the greater part" or "the majority".

"to depart..." - to be led out..."

"thence..." - "from The Fair Havens..."

"they might attain to Phenice..." - see note to verse 8. The coast a few miles from The Fair Havens suddenly turns northwards exposing the vessel to a strong head-wind. This actually happened to them. See verses 14/16.

"Phenice..." - a port on the south coast of Crete where the coast line turns northwards. The modern name is Lutro. It is the only port on the south coast which has some protection from all winds. It is mentioned in Acts 11. 19; 15. 3; 21. 2; It had a good harbour in those days and this was the reason for the decision given by the pilot and the captain when the matter was discussed.

"there to winter..." - they had abandoned all hope of getting to Italy before winter. They would remain there during the closed months for shipping.

"the south west and north west." - it lay on the coast that turned northwards.

## Verse 13

"And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had attained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete."

"when the south wind blew softly..." - "the south wind having underblown. The verb "underblown" means "blow more than gently." This would help them in their five mile journey to Cape Matala and thence the thirty-four mile journey to Phenice.

They had wished to proceed to Phenice but were unable to because of the direction of the wind. When the wind suddenly began to blow from the south and, better still, to blow softly instead of as a gale, they thought that they would achieve their purpose of getting to the desired port.

"loosing thence..." - the word "thence" does not appear in the original. The sense is "weighing anchor..." Lit. "lifting up..."

"sailed close by Crete." - "sailed close inshore." A peculiar and nautical term.

#### Verse 14

"But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon."

"Not long after..." - lit. "After not much..." That is to say, hardly had they rounded Cape Matala....

"arose..." - "but beat against her..." It appears that they had not gone far - probably sufficient to round the cape - when a wind arose which was contrary to them. The south wind favoured their direction of travel. This wind beat against them and made it impossible for them to continue on their chosen course. If the wind blew from the north, it would blow over the mountains of Crete and beat down upon the ship.

"tempestuous wind..." - Gk. "typhonikos..." from which we get typhoon. A sudden change from a gentle south wind to a violent north wind is common in these parts.

"Euroclydon." - also known as "Euraquilo". These names are capable of break downs into forms which might be satisfactory. For example, "Euros" the east wind; "Aquilo" the north wind, making E.N.E. wind. "Euroclydon" can be broken down to "wind causing broad waves." It probably refers to the direction of a prevailing wind as one would refer to "the South Easter" in the Cape Peninsula of South Africa, or a "westerly buster" in Durban. Naming winds is and has been a common practice for centuries.

#### Verse 15

"And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive."

"when the ship was caught..." - "having been caught by the wind..."

"could not bear up into the wind..." - "could not sail into the wind..." The bow would keep falling away so as to present the ship side on to the wind.

"we let her drive." - "having given up we were driven, or we were borne along". They turned their stern towards the wind and were carried along before the wind, that is in the same direction as the wind. This would have the effect of blowing them a long way out of their way.

#### Verse 16

"And running under a certain island which is called Claudia, we had much work to come by the boat."

"running under a certain island..." - "running under the lee of a certain island..." that is to the sheltered side.

"Claudia..." - the modern name is "Gozzo". It lies to the south west of Crete.

"we had much work..." - the use of "we" shows that the passengers had to help with the work of managing the ship.

"had much work..." - lit. "were hardly able..."

"come by the boat." - "to become masters of the boat." This is a boat which is towed behind a ship. In the storm, it could easily be lost so it was thought best to haul it aboard.

Verse 17

"which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven."

"which..." - the small boat just referred to. These small boats were used in harbours where there was no quay. They would anchor the big ship in deep water and row to the shore in the small boat.

"they used helps..." - these were called "frapping cables".

"undergirding the ship..." - this means running a cable round and under the ship so as to save her planks from the violence of the waves. This work was also called "frapping".

"quicksands,..." - they were being driven towards Africa. On the north coast there are quicksands, one called Syrtis Major and the other Syrtis Minor. The former is near Tripoli and the other near Tunis. The one they had in mind was Syrtis Major.

"strake sail..." - lit. "loosened the main sail..." Commentators are disagreed on this and some suppose that the sail was loosened in such a manner that it did not catch any wind but just flapped loosely. This is most unlikely as no captain would risk his sail being torn in this way. It could also mean that they put out a sea-anchor. This is something which is let into the sea at the end of a cable and, at the same time, the bow is turned into the wind. The boat then drifts before the wind but progress is slow.

"And so...." - "and thus..." or "and in this manner."

Verse 18

"And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship;"

"the next day...." - there was no abatement of the storm on the following day.

"they lightened the ship". - lit. "a throwing out the began."

Verse 19

"And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship."

"we..." - again an indication that Luke was called upon to help. One feels that Luke mentions these personal things to indicate how seriously they were placed. Normally sailors would not allow non-seafaring persons to interfere in any way. On this occasion however, they were quite prepared to receive what help they could and probably asked for it.

"with our own hands..." - they could not use the ship's gear to off-load. The derricks could not be used because of the storm.

"the tackling of the ship." - the ship's furniture. This would add to their discomfort in an extremely uncomfortable situation.

## Verse 20

"And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away."

"neither sun nor stars..." - In navigation, a compass merely shows the direction in which a craft is travelling. Sights with a sextant and the calculations consequent upon such observations, enable the navigator to plot his position. But he must have sight of either sun or the stars to find his co-ordinates. In those days, there was no compass so a sight of the sun or stars would be necessary to check their direction of travel. Day to day differences in latitude or longitude would not be noticeable.

"In many days...." - they would certainly have had a method of what is now known as "dead reckoning". This is a method whereby the position at noon the next day is anticipated and when the time comes, any variation will give an idea of speed and direction of travel. Thus, daily checks can be made. Not having had a chance to make checks for several days, the people would be quite lost and would lose all hope of getting to land safely.

"no small..." - common figure of speech used by Luke.

"lay on us..." - "pressing on us..."

"all hope..." - the darkness, the storm, the lack of checks of position or direction, the need for frapping, and the lack of any sign of abatement, took away any hope they may have had of being saved.

## Verse 21

"But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss."

"long abstinence..." - "no food for a long time..." Lit. "Long but abstinence existing..."

"Paul stood forth in the midst..." - showing his talent for leadership.

"Sirs..." - lit. "O men..."

"not have loosed..." - "not to have sailed..." from the Fair Havens.

"harm and loss." -- the same words as translated "hurt and damage" in verse 10.

## Verse 22

"And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship."

In desperate situations, the calm person is invaluable. Paul was on this occasion. He showed concern for their welfare rather than his own. He exhorted them and not himself.

"there shall be no loss of life..." - this allayed their worst fears.

## Verse 23

"For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve!"

"For there stood by me..." - the angel was close and not at a distance. Divine help was at hand and not far away. (Psa. 34. 7.)

"whose I am..." - "to whom I belong." He is a bond servant.

"whom I serve..." - "whom I worship." ("I offer service")

## Verse 24

"Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee."

"Fear not,.. " - this expression occurs frequently in the N.T. and is sometimes translated as "do not be afraid..." or "be not afraid.." An occurrence in Acts is found in 18. 9. where the encouragement "Be not afraid" is given to Paul. See the Divine assurance of Acts 23. 11.

"brought before..." - this is passive. In verse 23 it is active and appears as "stood by". The same Greek verb is used.

"lo,.. " - "behold..." yet again signifying something surprising to follow, in this case, the safety of all the passengers, whether free or prisoner.

"God hath given thee..." - Gk. "God hath graciously given thee..." The R.V. and R.S.V. have "God hath (has) granted to thee..." The verb "granted" carries the idea of granting as a favour or act of graciousness.

"given thee..." - or "granted thee" raises the question Why should God grant the people to Paul? Why not just "God will spare the lives of all who sail with thee". But the lives were to be granted to Paul. This tells us that Paul must have prayed very earnestly for the lives of all his companions whether known to him or not, to be spared and God had answered that prayer affirmatively.

## Verse 25

"Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me."

"Wherefore,.. " - "therefore,.. "

"be of good cheer, sirs,.. " - "take courage, men,.. "

"I believe God,.. " - Paul shows his utmost faith in God. His religion was based upon God fulfilling his promises, and Abraham was quoted by Paul as one who believed God. (Acts 4. 19/22.)

## Verse 26

"Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island."

"God did not reveal to Paul the name of the island, apparently, otherwise Paul must surely have mentioned it.

"Howbeit..." - "But..."

"we must be cast..." - Gk. "it is necessary us to be cast." It was necessary in the Divine Plan and Purpose to cast them upon a certain island.

## Verse 27

"But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country;"

"the fourteenth night..." - Since leaving the Fair Havens at Crete.

"driven up and down..." - lit. "being driven along..." It is unlikely that they would have been driven on a zig-zag course as here indicated. The wind blew from one direction and would blow them in one direction. The translation is incorrect and the Greek is as indicated here.

"Adria..." - "the Adriatic Sea in the ancient sense and not in the modern one which limits it to the Gulf of Venice. In Paul's day, it covered the part of the Mediterranean Sea which lies between Crete, Greece, Italy and westward as far as Malta.

"shipmen..." - "sailors..." Mentioned here to distinguish them from the soldiers, prisoners or other passengers who would not have the knowledge of the sea to express an opinion.

"deemed..." - "suspected..." Some commentators supply "supposed" but this would indicate guesswork whereas practiced sailors feel by the swell of the sea, or "bounce back" waves which go in a reverse direction after striking a shore, that land is near. Therefore it would be more correct to say "suspected" which indicates some thought being put to the matter.

"they drew near to some country..." - lit. "to draw near some to them country". That is "some country drew near to them". Some texts give "that some land was resounding..." which means that they could hear the sound of the breakers. Hearing such a sound is most unlikely. Breakers a mile off could never be heard in a gale such as that they were experiencing. It is more likely that an optical illusion of the sea gave them the impression that land was approaching them instead of the other way round.

#### Verse 28

"and sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms."

"And sounded..." - "having sounded..." The method of sounding is to swing the lead at the side of the ship and let go on the forward swing. The lead sinks to the bottom and the sailor reads off the depth, from the number of cloths tied to the line at regular intervals. The depth is recorded in the distance between the tips of the fingers of out-stretched arms. This approximates one fathom, or six feet. Two expressions come from this practice. One is "to sound" a person for information. This comes from sounding the sea for information as to its depth. The other is "to swing the lead". If the sailor was not working, he would just swing the lead back and forth without getting any information of the depth. His swinging the lead would give the impression that work was being done but in fact, he would just be bluffing.

"when they had gone a little further..." - lit. "a little and having intervened..." This expression appears in Luke 22. 59;

"fifteen fathoms." - The part of Malta they would reach first would be a bay which is now known as "St. Paul's Bay". Soundings here show 20 fathoms and 15 fathoms exactly as here described.

It has been calculated by one writer (The Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul - by James Smith) that by drifting before the wind, the ship would travel at  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles an hour. This would be 36 miles a day or 504 in 14 days. The distance between Clauda and the point of Koura at the entrance to St. Paul's Bay is 476.6 miles. He calculates that this would take 13 days, 1 hour and 21 minutes for the journey if the rate of drift is correct. Furthermore, he showed that there is no other island where they could have landed in view of the direction of the wind.

Most commentators agree that the mariners would hear the sound of the waves breaking against the shore but we feel this is most unlikely. The "bounce back" waves would come from all directions if there was a bay nearby, and would make the sea choppy. A choppy sea is a good sign of land nearby. The sloping sea bed would also cause higher swells to build up which would eventually break as waves upon the shore. The rising steepness of the swells would also signify land ahead. If waves could have been heard, then the passengers would have heard them, yet Luke is careful with his words and states that the sailors suspected the proximity of land. Only they could tell from the sea surface.

## Verse 29

"Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day."

"lest we should have fallen upon rocks..." - lit, "lest on rough places we should fall..." "Rough places" is a Greek technical term for rough places of the sea such as a rocky coast. Luke shows his knowledge of sea-faring language here.

"four anchors out of the stern..." - it must have been a powerful wind to require four anchors to arrest the progress of the ship. Commentators appear to be mystified that the anchors were cast out from the stern but it must be realised that if they were drifting before the wind, they would not drift stern first. They would be bow first and it was in this position that they cast out the four anchors. It would make it much easier, when day broke and they could see where they were going, to release the anchors and drift toward a beach if one was there, and ground the ship.

"wished for the day." - lit. "wishing for the day to be." It will be noticed that "wish" is imperfect denoting continuous wishing. It must have been a very anxious night and the continuous wishing indicates that nobody slept.

## Verse 30

"And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the fore-ship,"

An incomplete verse which comes to completion in the next verse.

"the shipmen..." - "the sailors."

"were about to flee..." - they were determined to get away from the ship without caring what happened to the others.

"had let down the boat..." - the method of escape which they planned, was to use the small boat which had been rescued from the sea and brought aboard as described in verse 16. This they would launch from the bow of the ship.

"under colour..." - "under pretence..."

"cast anchors..." - they had to work at the bow of the ship to lower the boat. To justify their being there, they pretended to be casting out anchors from the bow.

## Verse 31

"Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved."

Paul sums up the situation quickly but realises that he is powerless to stop determined sailors from doing this. He therefore, calls upon Julius the centurion and the soldiers with the hint that if the sailors did not stay in the ship, they would not be saved. The centurion was the most important person aboard and would give the instructions to the sailors. The soldiers would see to it that his instructions were carried out. The proper reason for preventing the sailors from deserting the others was really due to the fact that God had told Paul that all would be saved. This was how the saving of the crew came about.

This is the third recorded time that Paul spoke to the ship's company. See verses 10 and 21.

## Verse 32

"Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off."



"the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat..." - "the soldiers" means "some soldiers". They acted in accordance with instructions from the centurion or from their own fear that Paul's words would come true.

"the ropes..." - the ropes in those days would be made from twisted rushes fashioned into ropes. They would not be difficult to cut with a sharp sword. The short swords which they used were sharpened for close combat.

"of the boat,.." - nowadays we should call this boat a dinghy. It must have been let down from the bow by this time, preparatory to the sailors getting into it.

"let her fall off." - lit. "let her fall away." They were prepared to sacrifice the dinghy to save all lives. This took faith and courage because it could be useful in getting people ashore if the ship stuck fast some distance from the shore.

All this time, the ship would be held by her anchors. The sea bed in St. Paul's Bay is sandy so the anchors would hold.

#### Verse 33

"And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing."

"while the day was coming on,.." - lit. "Till and while about day to be,.."

"Paul besought them..." - "Paul exhorted them..." They had a hard day ahead of them and would need all the strength they could muster for the task of landing.

"to take meat,.." - lit. "to partake of food,.." It is within Biblical character to refer to food as "meat". This is Middle English. See the translation in Gen. 1. 30. and note that vegetable matter is referred to as "meat".

"ye have tarried..." - "you have waited..." for deliverance. This expression indicates the suspense all had been through.

"and continued fasting..." - the sense of this translation is that they had fasted for the past fourteen days. This is not the case in the original Greek which is "and ye continue fasting..." That is to say, you have been through all this suspense yet you continue to fast.

"having taken nothing." - This is another example of permissible hyperbole. They had not fasted for fourteen days so what Paul means is that for the past fourteen days they had not had a proper meal.

#### Verse 34

"Wherefore I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you."

"Wherefore..." - "because of all this,.."

"I pray..." - "I entreat..." or "I plead with you..."

"take some meat:.." - "take some food:.." See note to previous verse.

"this is for your health:.." - lit. "this is for your salvation:.." The Greek word translated as "health" here, appears in Acts 4. 12. where it is translated as "salvaticn". The Greek word means "safety", "preservation from destruction." In classical Greek, the word means physical safety and not spiritual safety. See also Acts 13. 26 and 47; 16. 17.

"there shall not a hair..." - This is a Jewish proverbial expression meaning that no harm shall come. See 1 Sam. 14. 45; 2 Sam. 14. 11; 1 Kings 1. 52; Luke 21. 18.

## Verse 35

"And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat."

"when he had thus spoken..." - lit. "Having said these (things)..."

"gave thanks to God..." - this was a Jewish custom from ancient times and was carried on in Christian homes by the saying of Grace before meals. As is usual with commentators, some find problems everywhere and the problem here is whether Paul started a "breaking of bread" ceremony; behaving like a father of a family or behaving in the manner of a pious Jew who acknowledges that everything comes from God. The latter is nearer the mark and is probably correct. He would not have broken bread in the presence of unbaptised people in view of what he had to say to the Christian believers at Corinth. See 2 Cor. 6. 14/18. In so far as acting as a father of a family is concerned, there is an element of truth in this because this is the fourth time, Paul took charge of the people on board. He saw what was good for their health so he took appropriate action as a father would care for his children.

"in the presence of them all..." - The Gentile people on board were to learn in this simple act, what faith in God means.

"he began to eat." - Paul set the example so that others would follow.

## Verse 36

"Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat."

"were they all of good cheer..." - "having been encouraged..." The adjective here is from the same word as the verb in verses 22 and 25. The modern English derivative of the Greek is "enthus". Gk. "Euthumeo" (verb) and "euthumos" (adjective).

"took..." - this is the same word as the second "take" in verse 33 which means "take by the hand and draw on one side. That is to say, they each took their share of food and went to one side to eat it. The first "take" in verse 33 is another Greek word meaning to take in sharing with others. Each meaning is very appropriate in the senses in which they are used.

"some meat." - "some food."

## Verse 37

"And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls."

The Vatican MSS has "three score and sixteen" (76) but this would make the ship a small one and of a size unlikely for the transport of important people or prisoners. The Historian Josephus was wrecked a few years later in a ship carrying 600 people (souls) and of these, only 80 were saved including Josephus. Luke's 276 people is correct.

There must be a reason why 276 is given. Some commentators say that the number was known because a roll call was taken for the distribution of meals. This is most unlikely because they would have known how many were aboard at the time they left Myra. (vs 5.)

Bullinger points out (Companion Bible, Appendix No. 10. page 11.) that 13 is the number of rebellion (Gen. 14. 4. and Gen. 17. 25.) He states that 13 and all its multiples are associated with rebellion. 13 is the sixth prime number and the number of man is 6. Bearing these facts in mind, turn to John

21. 11. for the 153 fishes which were caught and "yet was the net not broken." That the net was not broken indicates that none got away as some did in Luke 5. 6. when the net broke. The significance of the net breaking in the one instance and not in the other, shows that the preaching of the gospel brings many people into the spiritual net that is Christ but after a while, some turn away. When Christ returns, all those found worthy will be taken in another spiritual net and none will turn away. They will all be saved by the Grace of God. (Ephes. 2. 8.) "Grace" occurs as a word 153 times in the N.T. (see Young's Concordance). It was through Grace that Jesus died and through Grace that we are saved. Cp. Heb. 2. 9. and Ephes. 2. 8. The Hebrew word for "Sons of God" is "Beni Elohim" and the numerology of that word is 153. The numerology of the word "Bezaleel" meaning "In the shadow of El" is 153. (See John 10. 28/29.)

This study of 153 discovered by bro. Arthur Hall of the Coventry Ecclesia shows one way in which the number 276 may be studied. If 153 is deducted from 276, we are left with 123 the factors of which are 3 X 41. Now 3 is the sign of Divine completeness. Jesus rose on the third day. On the third day of creation, the earth rose up from the waters and was separated from the waters. The vegetation of the earth rose up from the earth on this day. The figure 41 is the thirteenth prime number and 13, as stated above, is the number of rebellion. So, taking GRACE away from 276, we have the product of the Divine will against those who rebel against Him. In other words, the significance of 276 may be this, that if that ship's complement of people were to lose the Grace of God, they would perish. Also, if those few who were baptised believers by the Grace of God, were removed from the ship, there would be left the 123 who were spiritually rebellious and who would come under the completeness of God's warning of destruction upon such rebellious people.

The fore-going is a suggestion. God does not waste words and if Luke was inspired to set down the figure 276 for us, there must be a reason for it. It is not there for interest only.

#### Verse 38

"and when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea."

"they had eaten enough.." - lit. "Being satisfied with food..."

"they lightened the ship..." - see verse 18 for when this action was started. The tense here indicates that they continued to lighten the ship. The phrase used is an ancient nautical one, showing Luke's knowledge of the sea.

"cast out the wheat..." - this was the last of the cargo to be thrown out. As a cargo it was important so they would not jettison it while on the high seas as there would be no chance of rescuing it later. Here, in St. Paul's Bay, with the shore not far off, there was every chance of saving it. If the ship was to be lost, some of the cargo of wheat would be lost too, so it was best to take the barrels in which it was stored, and cast them into the sea so that they could wash ashore. No commentator reasons this way but considers that this was the manner in which the ship was lightened. It certainly was lightened but a careful reading of the verse shows that (1) the ship was lightened and (2) the wheat was cast into the sea. The wheat would not be carried in bulk as it is in ships these days but would be stored in barrels. Casting out the barrels of wheat is the same as casting out the wheat.

#### Verse 39

"and when it was day, they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship."

"when it was day..." - "when it became day..." The translators took no notice of the difference between the verb "to be" and the verb "to become".

"they knew not the land..." - they did not recognise the land.

The tense indicates that they continuously tried to recognise the land, but they could not. If the sailors had been to Malta before, they would have landed at the proper harbour. Being at this end of the island, they would not recognise it.

"discovered..." - they observed and examined closely, the tense indicating that they continued to do so.

"a creek..." - the Greek word here means "bosom" being that part of the chest between the arms. This has no reference to the female bosom but refers to the hollow formed in the upper part of a loose garment which was bound by a girdle and in which things were carried or kept. See the following verses for the manner of how this is used figuratively:- Luke 6. 38; Isa. 65. 6; Jer. 32. 18. The bosom is used of a place where a reward is given. The gift can be kept there. It is also used figuratively as a place of blessedness. See Luke 16. 22/23. John 1. 18. Some claim that the shape of the "bay" is the same as that of the division between the breasts but such a meaning would not fit the figurative sense which is used in the references given. The derived meaning is "bay". In the figurative sense of this story which is yet to be discussed, the use of bosom as a place of reward and blessedness rather than of shape is much more to the point.

"with a shore..." - "having a beach..." a sandy beach would extend below the water line and make a good place for casting an anchor. A sandy creek.

"they were minded..." - They consulted one with the other.

"to thrust in the ship." - "to thrust OUT the ship." They did not decide to thrust the ship into the creek but decided to thrust out into the sea so that they could safely sail into the creek.

Verse 40

"And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed themselves unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoisted up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward the shore."

"when they had taken up the anchors..." - when they had cut off the anchors. This was much easier than having to raise them against the pull of the ship. If the ship was to be wrecked, there would be no point now in saving the anchors by hauling them aboard.

"they committed (themselves) unto the sea..." - the word "themselves" is in italics showing that it was not in the original Greek. The sentence relates to the anchors and not to themselves. They had just cut off the anchors. The next thing consequent upon that act was to let them fall into the sea. That is what Luke is saying here.

"loosed the rudder bands..." - ships in those days had two rudders which were long oar like implements. These were lashed together with ropes so that to pull on one oar meant that two were being pulled together. When lying at anchor, they would be lashed together. If they were about to sail, they would have to have the use of the rudders so they loosed the bands with which they were lashed. The steering oars (rudders) would be lashed so as to bring them out of the water. Now they would drop into the water again and could be used to steer the ship.

"hoisted up the mainsail..." - "hoisted up the foresail." The foresail was not used as a driver but as a means of holding the bow into the wind. It was necessary for steering. The Greek is "artemon" and the use of it shows once more Luke's nautical knowledge. This is the only appearance in the Bible of this word.

"to the wind..." - the participle is used here indicating that they raised the sail into the "blowing wind".

"made toward shore." - "pressed towards the shore." or "held her down towards the shore." All the foregoing narrative complies with the phrase "to thrust out the ship" as described in the notes to the previous verse.

## Verse 41

"And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves."

"a place where two seas met..." - St. Paul's Bay is separated from the main island by a channel about 100 yards wide. Malta is on the one side and a small island called Salmonetta is on the other. This channel can be described as "a place where two seas met." The Greek is "a place with a sea on both sides."

"they ran the ship aground, " - there is one word in Greek to convey the meaning of "run aground." It is a nautical term and is one more to add to Luke's nautical knowledge.

"the forepart..." - in verse 30 this translation appears as "foreship".

"remained unmoveable..." - "having stuck fast remained immovable."

"the hinder part..." - rendered "stem" in verse 29.

"with the violence..." - lit. "by the violence." The word is also used to describe the "violence" of human beings. See Acts 5. 26; 21. 35; 24. 7.

## Verse 42

"And the soldiers counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape."

Such was military discipline amongst Roman soldiers that they would do anything to prevent prisoners from escaping. An escape would bring disgrace upon the army and a terrible retribution on themselves. Therefore they decided to kill the prisoners rather than allow them to escape. There would be no consultation about this as it would be normal military practice to which they would turn without much thought.

We get a further insight into Roman Military character here. Their plan was to kill the prisoners lest they should escape. They knew that away from the ship there was escape but on the ship there was certain death. This means that they preferred certain death for themselves rather than permit the prisoners to escape. This is the character of German soldiers too.

## Verse 43

"But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land: "

"The centurion..." - he was of first rank above all on the ship. His word was law.

"willing to save..." - "wishing to save..."

"kept them..." - "restrained them..." The centurion would be able to do this on account of the strict military discipline and the utmost obedience by soldiers to the orders of a superior. Again the character appears in German soldiers of to-day who will do almost anything possible if ordered to do so, even if it was against human nature.

Some would give Julius all the benefit of the doubt and say that he was a

kind man and much in the same category as Cornelius. However, he was a Centurion to whom the fulfilment of an assignment was a matter of high honour. He had been chosen to lead Paul to Caesar and this he would do so long as it remained within his power. One does not want to be uncharitable to a man who showed friendship towards Paul but he was essentially a soldier and a Roman one at that.

"commanded..." - Julius gave a command which could have led to the prisoners' escape, but it nevertheless would mean the saving of their lives. By landing on an island they could be apprehended in the course of time, and perhaps Julius realised that they were on an island. He had one good reason for believing this. See Verse 26.

"they which could swim..." - they would get first to land and be in a position to help the less able to reach the shore.

Verse 44

"And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land."

This verse is a continuation of the previous one and must be read as such. This means that Julius commanded that those who could swim should do so, the rest could get ashore by devious means.

"the rest..." - "the rest of you who cannot swim..."

"boards..." - this is the only occurrence of this word which means boards, planks or anything made from such. This would include parts of the furniture of the ship which had not been jettisoned before. See note to verse 19.

"broken pieces..." - which either they could break off or which were broken by the violence of the waves. The evacuation would have taken some hours.

"so it came to pass..." - lit. "thus it happened..."

"they all escaped..." - as was prophesied in verse 24. The end of the story does not justify the prophecy. On the contrary, the end came about because of the prophecy. The end was not fortuitous but was according to the Word of God.

It is to be noted that St. Paul's Bay is not generally accepted as the bay where this incident took place. Some authorities say "Tiellihā Bay" which is further north. The actual site is of little importance because as we have seen, there was much evidence to show that Luke gave a faithful and true record of what happened.

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An attempt will now be made to interpret the allegory of the story of Paul's journey and shipwreck.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE:

Paul representing in general, the True Christian Believers who are on their pilgrimage at the end of which, they are to be judged by a King in the city of his throne. (We think the Judgment Seat will be at Sinai but the meeting with the Christ will be at Jerusalem, the city of the Great King.

Luke and Aristarchus. Both represent the True Christian Believers with the following characteristics:-

- (1) they are a few amongst the ship's company. Likewise, the True Christian Believers will always be a few throughout all ages.
- (2) Luke represents the Gentile believer and Aristarchus the Jewish Believer of which there are practically none now but there were many in Paul's day.

Julius represents in type the Gentiles from whom the converts come. In the story he has the potential of becoming a Believer.

The soldiers represent the type of Gentile who has been disciplined by his church in accordance with its tenets of faith. He is obedient to everything the Minister says and accepts his word and explanations without question. Usually he is an admirable type but not according to knowledge.

The prisoners are types of those unfortunate people who are held captive by a ruthless apostacy which would destroy them if they wanted to leave this church. In the past, such deserters were cruelly done to death.

The sailors are typical of the irreligious people who are knowledgeable in worldly ways and who care nothing for religion. They would not help others in a time of trouble, but will go to any lengths to help each other. They make brave soldiers and sailors in real life.

Verses 1 and 2 The introduction to the story and the introduction of the characters.

Verse 3 They touch at Sidon as their first port of Call. The meaning of the name is "Fishery" where fish are caught. Thus the spiritual net is spread and the fish, many of whom are to get away when the net breaks, start on their journey. Paul, the True Christian Believer meets his friends. Those in the Household of Faith are always pleased to meet others who are on the same journey. That Julius is kind to Paul shows that those Christians who are potential believers are well disposed to them of the Household of Faith.

Verse 4 They pass Cyprus. The meaning of the name is uncertain but the name has been corrupted to "copper", this metal having been mined there. We bear in mind our sinful nature.

Verse 5 They changed ship at Myra, a city of Lycia. The name of Lycia is derived from a word meaning "wolf" and we are reminded that Paul warned the True Christian Believers that the time would come when wolves would enter in among them. It was at this place that they joined with other companions who spiritually were "wolves".

Verse 6 The centurion took action here and chose the ship. The Truth was committed to the Gentiles.

- Verse 7 For many days they made slow progress, the reason being that the wind would not permit them to go any faster. There is a hint here that the "winds of doctrine" spoken of by Paul, (Ephes. 4. 14.) These would make shipwreck of any church which adopted them. They were "over against" Salmone, and the meaning of this name is one which is derived and refers to the pounding of waves upon a rock.
- Verse 8 They came to The Fair Havens near to Lasea.
- Verse 9 The calm which the early Christians enjoyed at the hands of the Gentiles was soon coming to an end.
- Verse 10 Their spiritual journey from now on would be characterised by "much hurt". Not only would their churches be destroyed but also they would lose their lives.
- Verse 11 The good Gentiles who were near to the Truth but who did not have it, preferred to believe the apostacy than the True Christian Believers. This has always been the character of evangelism throughout the Gentile age. The Established Churches have always had a hold upon the people.
- Verse 12 The True Christians were now "on the run" as was prophesied in Rev. 12. 14.
- Verse 13 The "calm" after the accession of Constantine "blew softly" but it was soon to come to an end.
- Verse 14 Then the great persecution of the True Christian Believers started in earnest. This was after the Council of Nicea which gave to the world a doctrine no one knew of before, the trinity of gods.
- Verse 15 The True Christian Religion could not stand up to the organisation which was established to exterminate them, this having been prophesied in Rev. 13. It went where it was blown by the winds of false doctrine.
- Verse 16 The True Christian Believers had to do their best to save what little they had. The little boat shows the small ecclesia, separate from Christianity.
- Verse 17 Fearing that they would be dragged into the "quicksands" of apostacy from which there was no escape, they did all they could to strengthen their ecclesias.
- Verse 18 In the years which followed, the True Christian Believers grew in knowledge and threw over much of their "furniture" which they had taken from the apostacy. They discarded many rituals which they knew to be false.
- Verse 19 The Reformation Period came and much "house cleaning" came about.
- Verse 207 As the years went by and it became more and more difficult to lead a good Christian life, one looked for salvation in greater earnestness. Yet there was no revelation from God, and no God-inspired prophets to help them. All they had was the Bible and their own faith.
- Verse 21 In the great weakness of religion, there stood up a man who gave them "good cheer" by showing how the true Christian church had lost much because of its departure from "The Fair Havens" of two testaments.
- Verse 22 Now there would be "good cheer" because in the Truth, there would be no loss of life.
- Verse 23 The Gospel message had been restored.
- Verse 24 The True Christian Believers would be brought to judgment before their great king. All those who sail in these stormy seas of Gentile times will be saved.



- Verse 25 The True Christian Believers have faith in God's Promises.
- Verse 26 They realise that salvation does not come immediately. Death comes.
- Verse 27 Towards the end of the stormy passage, they became aware from the signs of the times that they were near the end of their journey.
- Verse 28 They examined carefully the signs of the times by sounding the depth of the sea. The sea symbolises the nations. They looked at the state of the nations in the storm and knew that the end was near.
- Verse 29 They feared the spiritual dangers of latter day times and did not want to suffer spiritual shipwreck. Therefore they looked to the safety of their anchors which were four in number, namely, the OT, the gospels, the letters and Revelation or simply, the four gospels. They wish for the day.
- Verse 30 In the times of trouble which were to come upon the face of the earth, the ungodly ones will not do anything to help the religious ones. They may put them in jail for not helping in the war effort. Many people would leave Christianity and Atheism would abound.
- Verse 31 But the message goes out, Except all believers abide in the one and only Household of Faith, they cannot be saved.
- Verse 32 Conditions become harder for the True Believers. The religious people who lack knowledge will join the irreligious against the believers. Atheism will abound. Standards of behaviour will be lowered.
- Verse 33 The Household of Faith is exhorted to take the spiritual food which they know so well, the more so as they see the day approaching.
- Verse 34 If the faithful continue in the Lord's Service and study His Word, they cannot fail.
- Verse 35 They break bread together. They worship in spite of difficulties.
- Verse 36 Then they are encouraged to continue in the faith.
- Verse 37 In the world just before the end of the Gentile times, there are the faithful who will be saved and the irreligious rejectors who will be destroyed.
- Verse 38 When the Lord comes, and they receive the call to judgment, they cast aside all worldly things. They leave aside the Bible for the time has come to leave the ship and meet the Lord.
- Verse 39 when they are taken away to the Judgment Seat, they will not know where they are.
- Verse 40 They will go as a cloud to meet the Lord.
- Verse 41 They meet with those from the Mosaic era and the Christian era. They will leave their place of worship. They will not use it again.
- Verse 42 The righteous will fight against the irreligious people.
- Verse 43 The believers will be conveyed away to escape the wrath to come.
- Verse 44 So the Believers will come to the Kingdom of God by being given immortality. Some will be shining lights. Others will be like broken boards or pieces of a ship but the point is, they will be saved.

## Chapter 23 as a continuation:-

- Verse 1 Once they escape death by being immortalised, they will know that they are in the Kingdom of God.
- Verse 2 Those who once had been unbelievers, will show kindness to the saints. They will bring offerings during the time of the rain - the latter rain.
- Verse 3 The saints will then not be affected by sin, the sting of which is death. The mortal people will see the immortality of the saints and will not understand.
- Verse 4/6 When the Gentiles see the immortality of the saints, they will realise that it is Divinely given.
- Verse 7/10 During the Millenium, illnesses will disappear. This had been symbolised in the many cures which Jesus had performed on the Sabbath Day.

# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

## Chapter 28

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### Verse 1

"And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita."

"And when they were escaped,.. " - "And having safely escaped,.."

"then they knew..." - "then we knew..." The R.V., R.S.V. and the Afrikaans Bybel all translate "we". This infers that Luke also knew that the island was called Melita.

"Melita." - the ancient name for Malta. It means in Hebrew, "Refuge" and it was most appropriately a refuge on this occasion. It is situated 60 miles from Cape Passaro, the southern headland of Sicily. It is about 200 miles from Cape Bon on the African coast. The longest length and breadth of Malta are 17 and 9 miles respectively and the circumference is about 60 miles. The first civilised inhabitants were the Phoenicians and after them, came the Greeks. It was held by Carthage for some time until in B.C. 218 it came into the possession of the Romans. Throughout the Middle Ages, it changed hands several times but resisted invasions from the Turks in A.D. 1551, 1563, and 1565. The last of these occasions saw one of the great sieges of history when about 30,000 Turks lost their lives, being about one quarter of their forces engaged. The people who defended Malta on that historic occasion were reduced from 9,000 to 600. Napoleon took the island in A.D. 1798 but the British took it from him in 1800 and held it until it was given Independence in A.D. 1967. The Island was given the George Cross for its admirable defence against the many attacks by Hitler's forces during World War II.

### Verse 2

"And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold."

"The barbarous people..." - "the barbarians..." Luke applies Greek custom in referring to all non-Greeks as "barbarians."

"no little..." - "not common..." or "not the ordinary..."

"kindness:..." - the Greek word is "philanthropic" from which we get the English "philanthropy".

"received us..." - "they brought us..." It appears that the people saw the shipwrecked people and came to help them. This they did by, among other things, lighting a fire to warm themselves and invited the mariners and voyagers to come and warm themselves.

"the cold." - that it was cold shows that the north wind must have been blowing. See John 18. 18 for another cold occasion. Paul refers to his having experienced cold in 2 Cor. 11. 27.

### Verse 3

"And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand."

"the fire,..." - this does not refer to the flames but to the assembly of combustible material which was gathered together for the purpose of burning.

"there came a viper..." - all commentators point out that there are no poisonous vipers on Malta. This is very true. There are no poisonous snakes on the island but there are non-poisonous ones which look very much like the poisonous ones found elsewhere. But Luke is not recording the type of snakes to be found in the twentieth century but states what was there during the first

century and in particular, on the day that Paul threw some extra fuel on the fire. During the centuries which followed, the population of Malta increased until there are over 2,000 people to the square mile. If there were poisonous snakes after all this, it would be astonishing. So we are not surprised to learn that there are no poisonous snakes there now. However, there was a poisonous snake there in the days when Paul was shipwrecked there. Luke tells us there was and we have no way of showing him he was wrong.

Basically, there are two types of snakes, one is the viperine type whose poison coagulates the blood. The patient gradually goes to sleep through the blood supply being gradually cut off from the brain. Death ensues later. The other type is called the colubrine species, whose poison paralyzes the nervous system and the patient suffocates through a cessation of breathing, and general paralysis. The "viper" type comprise all adders - night adder, puff-adder and so on. The "colubrine" species comprises all mambas, cobras, ringhals boomslang and so on. The American rattlesnake is of the colubrine type.

Verse 4

"And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live."

"venomous beast..." - "wild beast..." one Greek word meaning a beast that is hunted.

"hang on his hand..." - which indicates that he was bitten.

"among themselves..." - "to each other..."

"vengeance..." - the Greek word here is Dike which is the name for the goddess of vengeance. She was the daughter of Jupiter and was also known as "Nemesis". The only other occurrence of the word is in Jude 7, where it appears as an adjective. The Greek equivalent of Jupiter is Zeus, pronounced "Zoos".

Verse 5

"And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm."

One commentator doubts that the snake fastened on to Paul's hand because, he states, a snake bites and then pulls its head away instantly. This is not true. A snake prefers to get a good bite and if it does, it lingers so as to bring about a good injection of venom. Paul therefore, could not drop the snake off into the fire. He would, indeed, have to shake it off.

"felt no harm." - Many commentators are reluctant to acknowledge anything supernatural, therefore they consider that the snake which bit Paul was not venomous. The point is that it was considered venomous by the islanders and they, no doubt, had had experience of this type of snake.

Verse 6

"Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god."

"they looked..." - "they were waiting..." The verb occurs in Acts 3: 5; 10: 24; 27: 33. The translations in these verses are, "expecting", "waited", "tarried", respectively.

"should have swollen..." - "to be about to swell..."

"after they had looked..." - the same word as the first "looked" in this verse. It should be "waited". See note above.

"a god." - any god. Not necessarily any of their gods but could be someone else's god.

## Verse 7

"In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously."

"In the same quarters..." - "In that vicinity..."

"were possessions..." - "were lands..." (estates)

"the Chief man..." - "the first man..." (in official rank) It does not signify wealth or social standing because his father was still alive and would hold those ranks.

"Publius..." - a Roman name.

"lodged us..." - entertained us as guests.

"three days..." - at a guess, this may be during the period proper accommodation was being sought for them.

"us." - Paul, Luke and Aristarchus. Not the entire ship's company.

## Verse 8

"And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux, to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him."

"It came to pass..." - "It happened..." This expression indicates that the event which is about to be described happened a little after the period of hospitality.

"lay..." - "was lying down..."

"fever..." - the original has "fevers".

"bloody flux..." - "dysentery." Gk. "dysenteria". Some scholars point out that dysentery nowadays is unknown on the island. This is true of to-day but Luke is writing of A.D. 59. when there was dysentery on the island as this incident proves. Bruce (Commentary) observes that Malta has long had a fever of its own known as "Malta Fever" which is due to microbes in goat's milk. (page 523. footnote No. 17.)

"entered in, and prayed,.." - see Acts 9. 39/40.

It is appropriate that Luke should record two noteworthy events at this stage. They are (1) Paul being unaffected by a serpent's bite, and (2) the laying of hands on the sick and they recover. See

Mark 16. 18. "They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

## Verse 9

"So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed."

"So when this was done..." - lit. "This therefore being done..."

"others..." - "the rest remaining..." That is to say, all the others in the island who had infirmities. There being a small population at that time, and their stay being protracted for three months, a wholesale curing of illnesses was quite possible.

"came..." - "came to..." as he could not go to them.

"came, and were healed." - Through the tense, we see that they continued to come and the healing was continuous. Doctor Luke would have helped.

## Verse 10

"Who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary."

"honoured us with many honours..." - deemed us worthy to receive an honorarium - (valued at a price.) To value at a price is the sense in which this word is used throughout the Acts. See Acts 4. 34; 5. 2/3; 7. 16; (sum of money) 1 Tim. 5. 17. (honour).

"they laded us..." - they loaded onto the new ship in which we were sailing, many things - probably to replace what we had lost in the storm and shipwreck.

## Verse 11

"And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux."

"After three months..." - When Winter was past and navigation was now possible again. The usual time for going to sea again was 5th March. The term "three months" is not to be taken precisely as 90 days. It is probably a round figure.

"we departed..." - "we set sail..."

"a ship of Alexandria..." - this was another of the grain ships. That the ship came from Egypt and wintered in Malta shows that the sailors of the wrecked vessel could have visited Malta before but, because they did not touch the island at the recognised port of entry, they were not sure where they were when the unorthodox landing was made.

"whose sign was Castor and Pollux," - their ensign was Dioscuri.

"Dioscuri" is the Greek name but the Latin is Gemini, the "heavenly Twins," of the astronomers. Castor and Pollux are the twin stars of the constellation "Gemini", and from South Africa, are seen in the northern hemisphere rather low down. The mythical brothers were regarded as being the patron saints of mariners. The static electricity which appears in the rigging of ships is known as "St. Elmo's Fire". The ancient sailors used to think this showed the presence of the two brothers.

## Verse 12

"And landing at Syracuse, we tarried there three days."

"landing at Syracuse..." - "Having been led down to Syracuse..."

"Syracuse..." - it was founded in B.C. 734 by colonists from Corinth. It became the most important city in Sicily and was powerful enough in B.C. 415 - 412 to defend itself against an invasion by the Athenians. It became the capital of Sicily, and came under Roman control in B.C. 212.

"three days." - In those days, a ship would wait some days for a wind to become favourable.

## Verse 13

"And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli;"

"we fetched a compass..." - this does not mean they went to a ship's chandler and bought a compass. Such things had not been invented at that time.

It means that they "made a circuit" or they tacked from here to there and back again while sailing into the wind.

"Rhegium..." - the modern name is "Reggio di Calabria". It lies directly across the Strait of Messina opposite the Sicilian port of Messina.

It is dangerous sailing in these parts because of the whirlpool of Charybdis and the rock of Scylla. Therefore it was the practice for mariners to await a convenient wind before setting sail from there. This all seems to be connected with Castor and Pollux, the patron saints of sailors who would welcome the gods in such a dangerous part of the sea.

"A south Wind..." - this they got after one day.

"the next day..." - "the second day..." actually the following day. The distance travelled was 182 miles and this could have been accomplished in a little over 24 hours. Therefore they would arrive at Puteoli the next day.

Verse 14

"Here we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome."

"we found brethren..." - by this time, the Gospel had spread very nearly over the whole habitable world. See Col. 1. 6. and verse 23.

"we were desired..." - "we were invited..."

"to tarry with them seven days:..." - Julius must have treated Paul with the same consideration and liberty as he did when they reached Sidon. (Acts 27. 3.)

"so we went toward Rome." - "So we came to Rome." Luke makes this statement and then adds a little story in retrospect which he gives in the next verse.

Verse 15

"And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage."

"from thence..." - "from Rome."

"the brethren..." - the believers at Rome.

"they came to meet us..." - if Paul had had any anxiety as to the reception he would receive from the brethren, they would have been dispelled at this meeting. It would appear from this that God gave His Blessing to Paul's visit to Rome.

"the Appii forum..." - the market place on the Appian Way. This was 43 miles from Rome on the road from Rome to Brindisi. It is thought that the Appian Way received its name from Allius Claudius who constructed a large portion of the road about 310 B.C. It was at this market that a change of horses would take place.

"The three Taverns..." - Latin: "Tres Tabernae". It was ten miles nearer to Rome and was at the junction of the Appian Way and a branch road which went to Antium and the sea coast. It was an inn or a resting place.

"he thanked God..." - no doubt in prayer. His frequent prayers of thanks are an exhortation to us. See Acts 27. 35.

"he took courage." - He would delight in the evidence of Divine approval of his visit. It would encourage him to greater efforts.

#### Verse 16

"And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him."

"we came to Rome..." - a repetition of the information given in verse 14, the intervening remarks being a statement of the reception given to the travellers by the brethren. Luke is not about to describe the reception given to the travellers by the authorities.

"Rome..." - situated on the river Tiber and reputed to be the oldest city in the world, Rome is the capital of Italy. The Bible does not mention it in very early times, so it is certain that there are a number of ancient cities in existence which pre-date Rome. Jerusalem is one of them. Tradition has it that Rome was founded by twin brothers, Romulus and Remus who had been put in a small vessel on the river Tiber and were found and suckled by a she-wolf before being cared for by a woman. Remus was killed at an early age and Romulus went on to weld the tribe known as the Latins into a powerful group who afterwards controlled all of Italy. Having founded the city of Rome, the people then called themselves Romans but still spoke the language of the Latin tribe, and called the language Latin. The story of the twins and the wolf is ridiculous of course, but it was probably allegorical for some other manner of rising to great power. They were supposed to have founded the city in B.C. 753, this year being known as "urbae-conditi" ("the foundation of the city"). This was written U.C. For information only, we state that there are:-

A.M. = anno mundi	=	the year of the world, that is the number of years since the world was made.
B. C. = before Christ	=	the number of years before Christ.
U. C. = urbae conditi	=	the number of years since the foundation of the city of Rome.
A. D. = anno domini	=	the year of our Lord - the number of years since the year of the birth of Jesus.

In the early Christian era, from the third and fourth century, the priests of the Roman Catholic church were known as the Latins. This was due to the fact that they spoke Latin and not Greek as did nearly everyone else. Thus it is that all Roman Catholic church notices are in Latin and their prayers and the Mass are said in this language. This is a copy of the pagan priests who also spoke Latin in their pagan ceremonies.

"the captain of the guard..." - the Greek is "stratopedarcho" which the Diaglott renders "prefect of the Praetorian camp". This would be "the captain of the Praetorian guard, who, at that time, was a man named Afranius Burrus. The camp of the Praetorian Guard was on the Caelian Hill. (See note to Acts 27. 1.) Historically it is known that Afranius Burrus was put to death in March A.D. 62. so Paul's arrival must have been before that date. It would have been proper for Julius to have handed the prisoners over to his superior officer which here he appears to do.

"Paul was suffered to dwell by himself..." - Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with a soldier who would have been chained to him. Paul's reference to this may be that written in Phil. 1. 13. See also Ephes. 6. 20. The soldier would have been relieved at regular intervals much to the relief of Paul who would have someone new to talk to and to the relief of the soldier who could get away from a man of Paul's dynamic character.



The "we" section ends at this verse. Apparently Luke became separated from Paul for a while during his incarceration. Luke did not desert Paul but was with him to the end. 2 Tim. 4. 11.

## Verse 17

"And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews' together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against our people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans."

Paul was now about to meet the Jews. In the past he had always made it his purpose to visit them in their synagogues, but being bound to a soldier, he would find this method almost impossible. Therefore he had to call them together to meet him. His wish to meet with the Jews at Rome and with the brethren there, was now being fulfilled after a chain of events had led up to this. He had prayed to God to bring him to Rome safely, (Rom. 1. 10.) the meeting with Aquila and Priscilla who had come from Italy, (Acts 18. 1.) his declared intention after he had passed through Macedonia, (Acts 19. 21.) the Divine Declaration at Caesarea, (Acts 23. 11.) his appeal unto Caesar, (Acts 25. 11.) the Divine encouragement at sea, (Acts 27. 24.) his delivery from the bite of the serpent, (Acts 28. 5.) had all in some inevitable way, contributed to his arrival at Rome.

"the chief of the Jews..." - See Acts 25. 2. and note thereon. Luke records this meeting here but does not state whether Paul met the Christians first. We may infer that he did since they came from Rome to meet him on the Appian Way.

"Men and brethren..." - lit. "Men, brethren..." It is to be noted that Paul still refer to them as "brethren" being of the house of Israel. Here is a pointer to the fact that the early Christians such as Paul was, regarded the Jews as their brethren of the house of Israel. To-day, Christians would deny any such relationship but the True Christian Believer would admit that God still has a Plan and Purpose with Israel after the flesh. (Rom: 11. 2.)

"I have committed nothing against our people..." - Although the Law was no longer operative, Paul is speaking of his Faith and not of ritual. He still looked forward, as a True Christian Believer, to the fulfilment of the Divine Promise to Abraham, and so did the Jews at that time. The modern Jew has discarded this portion of his faith. He still believed in the One God of Israel. He looked for his salvation on earth as did the Jews. The modern Jews do not look forward to salvation on earth but have adopted the pagan belief that the 'soul' (whatever that may be) goes to heaven at death.

"or customs of our fathers..." - Paul had not spoken against the mosaic ritual. Such ritual had automatically fallen away in Christ. There was now no need for an altar when Christ our altar was here. There was no need for a priest now that our High Priest had come. There was no need for the sacrifices now that Jesus had made the perfect sacrifice. All these things were not Paul's doing. They were all in the Plan and Purpose of God.

In spite of all these things, said Paul, he was delivered into the hands of Gentiles at Jerusalem. He had been preaching a gospel of peace. His present condition was due to the violence of the Jews and not for anything violent that Paul had done. His appeal to Caesar was not made to embarrass the Jews but to save his own life which they had threatened to take. In this the Jews had been most unreasonable.

## Verse 18

"Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me."

Paul now pursues his point that the Jews were responsible for his present impasse. The Gentiles who had arrested him, had found him not guilty. This was insufficient to release him because of further difficulties from the Jews. Paul explains this in the next verse.

"would have let me go..." - "wished to release me..." The tense here is imperfect suggesting that their willingness to release him was a continuous one.

#### Verse 19

"But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had aught to accuse my nation of."

"when the Jews spake against it..." - the continual opposition from the Jews prevented him being set at liberty as the Romans desired to do. His bonds therefore, were due to the unforgiving and militant character of the Jews.

"I was constrained..." - "I was forced..." for my own safety.

"not that I had aught..." - he had lots to complain of in the way the Jews had treated him but he had nothing of a criminal nature which he could accuse them of. He had acted on defence for his own protection against the Jews' determination to kill him.

Paul, therefore, was not a criminal as the other prisoners were. He had not come on trial to Rome. He had come to be heard and to be exonerated. He was not a criminal pleading for mercy. He was not even accusing Israel but, on the contrary, had addressed them as "brethren" thus identifying himself with them. They had attacked him. He was not attacking them.

#### Verse 20

"For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain."

"For this cause..." - "this cause" is that he was on the defensive so he had called for them to explain all things to them. He did not want them to think that he had abandoned the religion of Israel. He had not. He still believed in the Hope of the Promises and the promise of resurrection.

"the hope of Israel,..." - what Christian could make such a statement to-day as Paul made on that occasion? To make a statement such as Paul made here would bring excommunication from many a modern Christian church. Only the True Christian Believer would accept Paul's declaration about the "hope of Israel". The Jews had accused him of abandoning their faith. Here he was making a firm declaration of support for it. There are two Testaments but only ONE FAITH.

"I am bound with this chain." - the chain by which he was bound to the soldier. Paul used the chain as a metaphorical example of the binding influence of the Gospel message, "In thee shall all nations be blessed." (Gal. 3. 8.)

#### Verse 21

"And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee."

The Jews' reply may have surprised Paul because throughout Luke's record of Paul's preaching career, we find that the Jews were determined to undermine his influence and followed him around to oppose him wherever he went. Why then, had not the Sanhedrin sent letters to Rome? Maybe they had but they were held back by the Postal authorities because winter sailing had been closed for some months.

"the brethren that came..." - those of the Jewish community. The translation here indicates that some had come but they brought no information

concerning him. This is not the sense of the Greek. The indication is that no one came who gave any such information concerning Paul.

## Verse 22

"But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against."

They had come to Paul to hear him and to learn of him - what he taught, what he believed. Above all they wanted to hear from him the reason for his imprisonment. He was a Roman citizen and had successfully appealed unto Caesar. He had been heard by Festus and later by Agrippa. Now he was to be heard by Nero himself. This did not put him in a favourable light with the Jews. If this sort of thing happens to a Christian, then we do not want to hear about it.

"sect..." - Greek "hairesis" from which the English "heresy" is derived. It is translated as "heresy" in Acts 24. 14. It means a "choice" but in the fuller meaning of the term, it denotes a bias for one choice of thinking and its development. In Paul's day, it was regarded as something which was not the True Christian Faith (or not the True Hope of Israel). Nowadays, it is regarded by the Roman Catholic church as any group of believers who do not believe as they do. In the days after Paul, when the apostasy was growing quickly, the True Christian Believers who had kept to the true Hope of Israel of Paul, Peter and the others, regarded the "catholic church" as a sect. And in this sense, the Roman Catholics remain a sect unto this day.

"it is everywhere spoken against..." it is opposed everywhere. People are speaking in opposition against it everywhere, therefore we do not wish to have anything to do with it.

## Verse 23

"And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening."

Those who heard Paul were very interested in all he had to say for they made an appointment to hear him again.

"when they had appointed..." - lit. "having appointed to him a day..."

"there came many to him..." - the word "many" is correctly translated in one sense of the word but there is also the sense of a large number, or a larger number than before. The sense here is comparative rather than precise.

"lodging..." - the word is used here and in Philem 22. It refers to a room with a friend rather than an "hired house" (vs 30.) In this respect it would mean a temporary abode.

"expounded..." - this word is used solely by Luke in Acts 11. 4; 18. 26; and in the verse before us. In all cases, it is used to indicate the careful and detailed exposition either of a happening or of a concept.

"and testified..." - the Greek is "earnestly testified..." This must not be regarded as an act separate from the "expounded". The two must go together as "expounded and testified". For "testified" see Acts 2. 40; 8. 25; 10. 42; 18. 5; 20. 21, 23, 24; 23. 11; In this, Paul acted as an apostle. (see Acts 1. 8.)

"the kingdom of God..." - to give it its full title, "the gospel of the kingdom of God". This kingdom is to be given to Jesus as the Anointed Son of God, so Jesus was the Messiah (The Anointed One). He was also the central figure of the promises made unto Abraham and also the covenant with David. Therefore, in expounding the "kingdom" Paul must have spoken about Jesus.

"persuading them concerning Jesus..." - as we have seen, it is impossible to expound the gospel without mentioning Jesus. It is impossible to testify without referring to the resurrection of Jesus. Therefore Luke records that Paul did all these things.

"out of the law of Moses..." - there being no New Testament, Paul had to refer to the Law of Moses which is the first five books of the Bible. This portion contains the promises, the law with its symbolical ritual pointing to Christ, and many references to the coming of the Messiah. This was the only portion of God's Word the Jews would accept. If the teachers of modern Christianity were to be asked to expound and testify Jesus from the Pentateuch, they could not do so. The earnest True Christian Believer would have no difficulty. If one accepts the Promises made unto the Fathers and the Divine Covenant with David as Peter did (Matt. 16. 16.) a great deal of Bible teaching becomes clear.

"out of the prophets." - Particularly Isaiah who was one of the greatest of the Messianic prophets. They all testified to the coming of the Lord and of his future kingdom on earth.

"morning till evening." - all day long. They did not have lunch in those days so his discussions would last "from morning till evening" without a break.

Verse 24

"And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not."

"some believed..." - this was not a new experience to Paul. See Acts 13. 42/43; 14. 1/2; 18. 4/6; 18. 12; 19. 8/9. The Greek sentence gives "And these indeed were persuaded..." The tense is imperfect giving "And these were in the course of being persuaded..." which is to say that they did not turn to Paul's teaching right away, but that they showed a tendency to believe.

"things which were spoken,.." - in the subject matter covered and detailed in verse 23, these "things" were a summary of the LOGOS, the Divine Plan and Purpose.

"some believed not." - also imperfect indicating a continuous disbelief. When the Word of God is preached these days, the same reaction is apparent. The genuine seeker after Truth is profoundly interested but will not make up his mind until much more study has been done. On the other hand, the unbeliever, without being able to prove from Scripture that what is being taught is wrong, will maintain an iron curtain which no persuasion will pass. Of such it can be said that their minds are blinded. (2 Cor. 4. 1/4.)

Verse 25

"And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Spirit by Isaiah (Esaias) the prophet unto our fathers,"

"when they agreed not..." - lit. "being not harmonious..." This is a musical expression. This negative form appears only here. The positive is found in Acts 15. 15.

"they departed..." - lit. "they were dismissed..." Paul had no time to waste on those who were determined not to believe. Many people come to us, not to hear what we have to say, but to express their opinion and get us to believe as they do. No amount of persuasion will change such people. The same verb is used in Acts 19. 41.

"Well spake the Holy Spirit..." - In turning away from hearing the Truth, the Jews were doing no more than had been prophesied of them. In the same way,

those who scoff at The True Christian Believers (Christadelphians) in their interest in prophecy, are doing no more than was prophesied of them. In their scoffing, they are fulfilling the prophecy they despise. (2 Pet. 3. 3/4.)

"Well..." - meaning "now appropriately Isaiah said..."

"spake the Holy Spirit..." - the trinitarians quote this passage to show that there was another "person" and that this "person" wrote the passage from Isaiah. (See Acts 1. 16; 4. 25;) The "Holy Spirit" in the prophets was the Power of God working in them.

"Esaias..." - Isaiah. The quotation is from Isa. 6. 9/10. The Lord Jesus also quoted this prophecy and appropriately we too might quote it of the present generation. It has been true of all generations. Men will not believe if what the Truth teaches is something they do not wish it to be.

"unto our Fathers." - Paul is clever here. He has just expounded the gospel to them and the gospel was taught to Abraham. (Gal. 3. 8.) That is to say, if the gospel was taught to the fathers, then the fathers were also told that in the years to come, many would not believe that Gospel.

Verse 26

"Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive:"

"Hearing ye shall hear,.." - You will hear because God will see to it that the Truth comes your way. If you shut your mind to it then, it will be taken away from you and taught to somebody else. You will get a chance of hearing the Truth of the Word of God.

"shall not understand;.." - "hearing" and "seeing" in English are different words with different meanings applying to two different senses. In Greek the meaning is closer and follows a Hebrew idiom which emphasises what is being taught or said. The Greeks had an idiomatic way of describing those who will not hear because they do not want to. They say, "hearing not to hear..."

Verse 27

"For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

The quotation follows closely the LXX Isaiah wrote "Make the heart of this people fat,.." which is given here as "waxed gross." This suggests that God hardens the heart and this gives rise to the question, "Why does God harden one person's heart and not another's? Paul answers this question in Rom. 9. 13/33. We must accept this fact and also accept the teaching that if we turn from the Truth and turn unto fables, God will deal with us even more severely. (2 Thess. 2. 10/12.)

The effect of hardening the heart in the one instance and giving the increase in the other, is to drive further and further apart those who believe and those who dont. It is a Divine separation of His people from the vessels of wrath. The actual heart is not meant. The Biblical significance of a heart is the intellect.

"dull of hearing..." - hear indistinctly.

"eyes have they closed;.." - "eyes they have shut down.." To shut the eyes in death.

"be converted..." - they should turn and retrace their steps. The effect of this would be to walk against themselves - to go against the direction in which they are going.

"heal them." - sin is represented as an illness which requires a cure.

The meaning of this passage from Isaiah is found in certain variations in Jer. 5. 21; Ezek. 12. 2; and is quoted by Jesus in Matt. 13. 14; Mark 4. 12; Luke 8. 10; John 12. 40. In each of the passages quoted, the statement is made against deliberate unbelief.

Verse 28

"Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it."

This passage is supposed to be a quotation from Psalm 67. 2. That Psalm refers amongst other things, to the sending forth of the Word of God to the nations. See Acts 13. 46/47; 18. 6; 19. 9; Paul had his way in preaching to the Jews (Rom. 10. 1.) but in view of the hardness of their heart, he turned so often to the Gentiles. This was in obedience to the word of prophecy.

"they will hear it." - The Gentiles heard but still the pattern of Scripture remains. Only a few from every age turn to the Truth. The statement hear means that they will have the chance of hearing it. It does not state that all men will hear it in the sense of believing it.

Verse 29

"And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves."

Some of the oldest versions omit this verse. It is difficult to see what can be gained by anyone having inserted it as a distortion of the original.

"the Jews departed..." - there is a dramatic note here. Paul had been preaching the LOGOS to them and showing them the way to everlasting life in the Kingdom of God through Jesus Christ. It required a simple belief in the Divine Promises in which they believed already, but in addition, it required them to identify Jesus with the Messiah. The slightest turn of thought from them and they would be on the way to live forever in the sight and glory of God. In a moment, they turned away and went out into the street, casting away in that act, a chance of eternal life. There is also in this, a great sorrow.

"great reasoning..." - much dispute. Some said this and some said that. No doubt that little word "but" appeared. The word "but" will keep many a person out of the Kingdom of God. They do not want to change to the truth but would rather believe a falsehood. To bolster up a falsity, they counter with "But....." and then quote one verse out of its context. Such a verse is John 10. 30. which is often quoted to support a belief in the trinity of gods. "I and my father are one". Obviously three gods are not mentioned. Obviously, if put back in its context, the words concern FELLOWSHIP with the Father and with the Son. They do not in any way concern three gods in unity. Yet people will hang on to the destroying trinity doctrine and say "But.....what about 'my father and I are one'?"

Verse 30

"And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him,"

Paul had now come to the heart of a Gentile and unbelieving world. This was the seat of the great apostacy which had taken over from Babylon the leadership of a world of false doctrines. In the years to come, the great apostacy would still be there, making the kings of the earth drunk with the wine of her fornication. (Rev. 17. 2.) The influence of the Falsity of Rome would spread into every faith no matter where it might be. The Jews adopted a

belief in the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and heaven going at death, thus giving up a belief in the promises of God contained in Gen. 17. 8; 22. 17/18; 26. 3/4; 28. 13/14. Although some religions may have cast out false doctrines, they nevertheless cling to certain false doctrines. For example, the Seventh Day Adventists reject the immortality of the soul but cling to the trinity of gods and the pre-existence of Christ as well as a belief in satan. The Jehovahs Witnesses reject the soul theory and, to a certain extent the trinity abomination, yet they cling to the myth of satan firmly, and the pre-existence of Christ. Paul was not to experience the introduction of the dreadful apostasy of the early Fourth Century which came with the Council of Nicea and brought the Nicene Creed to an unbelieving world. Nevertheless he was contending against false preachers as he tells Timothy. (1 Tim. 1. 19/20; 4. 1/3; 2 Tim. 3. 1/9.)

"dwelt..." - "remained" or "continued".

"two whole years..." - two unbroken years. There was no disturbance of the work he did. It continued for all of that time.

The significance of "two whole years" is important to Luke's story because it was a provision of Roman Law that the plaintiff had two years in which to prove his charge, failing which the accused would go free. Luke must have supplied this information to tell his readers that the Jews once again had failed to convince the adjudicators that they, the Jews, had a legitimate charge against Paul. After the two whole years had expired, Paul would be free to go where he wished.

"his own hired house..." - not a dwelling which he was wont to hire out or rent to others, but a house which was let to him and for which, presumably, he paid rent. The words "his own" do not imply ownership but that he lived in the dwelling by himself and did not share it with others. He was however, chained at all times to a soldier with a light chain on the wrist.

"received..." - visitors came to him. He did not go out to others. It was at this time that the gospel had been preached unto all the world. Therefore it was unnecessary for him to go to other places to preach. The Jehovah's Witnesses would not agree with Luke's record here but it must be accepted that at that time, Paul would have written his epistles to the Colossians in which he said that the gospel had been preached to all the world in terms of Jesus' words in Matt. 24. 14. See Col. 1. 6 and 23.

#### Verse 31

"Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him."

"Preaching..." - in regard to the meaning of the word "preach" here, Bullinger defines it as "to be a herald, discharge an herald's office, to make proclamation, proclaim, announce publicly, publish announcements." It refers to making known and not to teach. He made the gospel known and then taught.

"the kingdom of God..." - the gospel of the kingdom of God. This was proclaimed. See note to verse 23.

"teaching..." - this covers the teaching of the contents of what was proclaimed. The teaching was done by discussion and answering questions.

"those things..." - lit. "the things..." all the Biblical doctrines concerning the Lord Jesus Christ; his place in the Promises of God; his part in the future kingdom; his atonement; his resurrection; what his resurrection means to all who believe; fellowship with him and with God; forgiveness of sins through him only; baptism into his Name. His future Kingship and Priesthood.

"With all confidence,.. " - with all boldness. He preached freely and with plainness of speech. He did not withhold certain doctrines because they were unacceptable to the people. His enthusiasm for what he believed would be passed on to those who heard him.

"no man forbidding him." - Paul had freedom to preach in spite of the fact that he was still a prisoner. In terms of Bullinger's definition of the word "preach", Paul also preached by letter and during his stay at Rome, wrote his epistles to the Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians and Philemon. His last epistle, namely 2 Timothy, was also written from Rome but probably not during these two years. It was written just before his death, with Luke, the faithful companion, still by his side.

At this stage, Luke lays down his pen. Many would wish that he had continued to write the history of the early church but he was not writing history alone, he was showing us how the Word of God was established by God's Grace, beginning at Jerusalem as Jesus had predicted (Acts 1. 8.) the heart of the Jewish world, and going by devious routes and in different ways, to the heart of the Gentile world. Thus the Word of God went from Jew to Gentile and Luke's story ends on the happy note of harmony in Paul's home, and a work continuing with full vigour. The Jews had misused the oracles of God which had been committed to them, with the result that they fell into disfavour.

The tragedy of it is that the Gentiles did the same.



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