

The Book of

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# ACTS



BIBLE STUDY COURSE BY  
RICHARD "RUSTY" RUTHERFORD

# The Acts of the Apostles

## *The Gospel of Luke--Book II*

All of you must turn to God and change the way you think and act. And each of you must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ so your sins will be forgiven. Then you will receive the Holy Spirit as a gift. This promise belongs to you and to your children and to everyone who is far away. It belongs to everyone who worships the Lord our God. **Acts 2:38-39**

The story of the apostles of Jesus sent to preach the Gospel from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

Written and taught by

**Richard “Rusty” David Rutherford**

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## Author's Preface



How appropriate as I am beginning my 80th year of life that I begin a study of the Book of Acts. In the same way as the Book of Acts is a new beginning in the life of the church, I feel I am being given some extra time by God in his grace to continue my studies in the Bible. Moses says in Psalm 90:

Each of us lives for 70 years – or even 80 if we are in good health. But the best of them bring trouble and misery. Indeed, they are soon gone and we fly away. **Psalm 90:10**

Moses lived to 120 years, just long enough to see Joshua prepare God's people to cross the Jordan River and enter the Promised Land of Canaan. In fact, at age 80, God was calling Moses from the burning bush to give him his commission to lead God's people out of Egypt.

I have just written a study of the Gospel of Luke in pericopes. While the Gospel of John is my favorite Gospel, I have grown a new love for the Gospel of Luke. Luke focuses on Jesus' love for people – all people for at all levels of the social strata. Jesus *has come to seek and to save that which is lost*. **Luke 19:10**. Having become acquainted with Luke's style of writing, it is only appropriate I study his second volume, the Book of Acts.

Rusty Rutherford

## Introduction

The Book of Acts took place over a 30-year period from 33 AD to 63 AD. Jesus died on the cross in 33 AD and 50 days later poured out the Holy Spirit on his disciples gathered in Jerusalem. Acts portrays the disciples establishing a church in Jerusalem under the guidance of the apostle Peter and later under Jesus' half-brother, James. Later a church was begun at Antioch in Syria that was used by the apostle Paul to launch three missionary journeys in Asia and Macedonia. At the conclusion of his third missionary journey, Paul returned to Jerusalem where he was taken prisoner by the Romans, first to Caesarea Maritima and later to Rome. This is the story.

### Timeline of the Book of Acts

4-5 BC	Jesus born in Bethlehem of Judea
33 AD	Jesus died in Jerusalem and rose again. Pentecost.
36	Saul of Tarsus meets Jesus
39-40	Saul goes to Jerusalem and meets Barnabas.
44	Death of Herod Agrippa I. Peter leaves Jerusalem.
45-47	Paul's <u>First</u> Missionary Journey
50	Council of Jerusalem. Gentiles admitted to the church.
51-54	Paul's <u>Second</u> Missionary Journey
54-58	Paul's <u>Third</u> Missionary Journey
59-60	Paul in prison in Caesarea Maritima
61	Paul in Rome Awaiting Trial Before Nero

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#### Notes on this Bible Translation and My Editorial Insertions

The translation used in this study is the *GOD'S WORD* translation (GWT). The GWT translation is an attempt to make the English text of the Bible developed in the 1500's more readable to modern Americans. It is not a paraphrase, but it has retranslated the oldest manuscripts into modern American English at about newspaper level using "closest natural equivalence". The Bible is meant by God to be understood. Therefore, using modern language is essential.

I have used this translation in my teaching since 1996 and have found it very accurate. I love the King James Version, and so when there are variances in the GWT, I may insert within the Bible text the original transliterated Hebrew or Greek word in **10-point bold-face italic type** followed by an English word to help better understand the meaning of the passage. English words added to aid in understanding are also in 10-point type but are not in bold. Lastly, if the original Hebrew or Greek word appears in the Bible 10 times or less, I may also indicate how often it appears (e.g., 10x or 2x, etc.). Here's an example from John 11:33 and the raising of Lazarus involving three Greek words:

<sup>33</sup>When Jesus saw her crying and the Jews who were crying with her were deeply moved *embrimaomai*—groaned 5x *pneuma*—spirit and troubled *tarasso*—agitated.

This has shown me that the GWT translation is remarkable for finding the right meanings to phrases that are often difficult to translate.

#### Notes on Font Usage

All text is in the Big Caslon font. Scripture text is in regular 14-point. If I have inserted parallel Scripture quotations, they are also in regular 14-point, but are slightly further indented (.08) than the main Scripture text and are enclosed by brackets [ ]. All Scripture citations are in **12-point bold face**. All my comments and questions to think about are all in regular 12-point.

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# PERICOPE I

## Preface to the Book of the Acts of the Apostles

<sup>1</sup>In my first book, Theophilus, I wrote about what Jesus began to do and teach. This included everything from the beginning of his life <sup>2</sup>until the day he was taken to Heaven. Before he was taken to Heaven, he gave instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles, whom he had chosen.

## COMMENT

Luke begins his second book of Acts by referring to his first book, the Gospel of Luke. This is his preface to the Gospel of Luke:

[Many have attempted to write about what had taken place among us. They received their information from those who had been eyewitnesses and servants of God's word from the beginning of Jesus' ministry and they passed it on to us. I, too, have followed everything closely from the beginning. So I thought it would be a good idea to write an orderly account for Your Excellency, Theophilus. In this way you will know what you've been told is true. **Luke 1:1-4**]

Paul refers to Luke as *my dear friend Luke, the physician*. **Colossians 4:14**. Luke apparently joined Paul on his second missionary trip in Antioch on the way to Philippi, *a leading city in that part of Macedonia* **Acts 16:11** after Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia urging him: *Come to Macedonia and help us*. **Acts 16:7**

Luke is not only a doctor, but he is a historian who carefully checks his facts. Theophilus is apparently the lawyer in Rome who will represent Paul before Emperor Nero. Luke does not reveal whether Theophilus is a believer in Jesus. His knowledge of the Greek language is extensive, and he writes in a high literary style.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Luke apparently met Paul in Antioch, the third largest city in the Roman Empire, after Paul's missionary journey. After Paul told of his adventures, Luke knew that Paul would need a doctor to accompany him. What was Luke's motive for accompanying Paul?

2. Who was Paul's primary source for the earlier part of his narrative in Acts before he met Paul in Antioch? **Acts 15:36**
3. If Luke was traveling with Paul, when did he have time to gather the facts for his two books and to compose them?

## Part One – Prior to the Events of Pentecost

[ Then Jesus took them to a place near Bethany. There he raised his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken to heaven. **Luke 24:50-51** ]

After Jesus first ascended to heaven, he then returned and for 40 days he instructed his disciples. Then, 10 days were left until the Feast of Pentecost. In the Upper Room, Peter spoke to the 120 disciples gathered there saying: *Someone must be added to our group to replace Judas.* The disciples determined that two men had been in the disciple company since the time John was baptizing in the Jordan River until Jesus' ascension.

Then they prayed asking God to choose the replacement 12th apostle. They drew lots and Matthias was authorized. However, it seems that Paul was really chosen as the 12th apostle as Matthias is not mentioned by Luke again.

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# PERICOPE 2

## Jesus Ascends to Heaven

<sup>3</sup>After his death *pascho*-passion Jesus showed the apostles a lot of convincing evidence *tekmerion*<sup>ix</sup> that he was alive *zao*. For 40 days he appeared *optanomai* to them and talked *Iego* with them about God's Kingdom.

Paul later says that he is passing on important points of doctrine he has received:

[ Christ died to take away our sins as the Scriptures predicted. He was placed in a tomb. He was brought back to life on the third day as the Scriptures predicted. He appeared to Cephas Peter. Next he appeared to the twelve apostles. Then he appeared to more than 500 believers at one time. Most of these people are still living but some have died. Then he appeared to James. Then he appeared to all the apostles. Last of all, he appeared to me. **1 Corinthians 15:3-8** ]

Paul says many people saw Jesus alive after his resurrection, not just his twelve apostles. Today we call this the *Mystery of Faith*. Why is this important?

<sup>4</sup>Once, while he was meeting with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait there for what the Father had promised. Jesus said to them: I've told you what the Father promises: <sup>5</sup>John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

<sup>6</sup>So when the apostles came together, they asked him: Lord is this the time when you're going to restore *apokathistemi*<sup>8x</sup> the Kingdom to Israel?

The disciples are still thinking of the nationalistic Messiah most Jews looked for. This Messiah, a descendant of King David, would throw the Romans out of God's Holy Land and set up his throne in Jerusalem, ruling the world through the Jews. See **Matthew 17:11; Mark 9:12**. But, Isaiah said the Kingdom would come when *the Spirit is poured out on us from on high*. **Isaiah 32:15**

<sup>7</sup>Jesus told them: You don't need to know *ginosko* about times *chronos* or periods *kairos* that the Father has determined by his own authority. <sup>8</sup>But you will receive *lambano* power *dynamis* when the Holy Spirit comes to you. Then

you will be my witnesses *martys* to testify about me in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Jesus repeats what he told the disciples in the Upper Room on Easter night:

[ Scripture also says that by the authority of Jesus people should be told to turn to God and change the way they think and act so that their sins will be forgiven. This would be told to people from all nations beginning in the city of Jerusalem. You are witnesses to these things. **Luke 24:47** ]

<sup>9</sup>After he had said this, he was taken to Heaven. A cloud hid him so that they could no longer see him.

<sup>10</sup>They were staring *atenizo* into the sky as he departed. Suddenly, two men in white clothes stood near them. <sup>11</sup>They asked: Why are you men from Galilee standing here looking at the sky? Jesus, who was taken from you to Heaven, will come back in the same way that you saw him go to Heaven.

## COMMENT

Even though Jesus has returned to earth and been with them 40 days teaching them about God's Kingdom, the disciples still harbor thoughts of the nationalistic Messiah. Jesus will return to earth a second time, but this time it would be not to teach and perform healings and miracles but to judge. This is when God's Kingdom would be inaugurated. Most believe this would be during the Millennial Kingdom described only in **Revelation 20:1-6**. But Jesus would also return before this time to rapture all believers from the earth before the Seven Bowl Judgments of the Great Tribulation. **Revelation 14:14-16; Revelation 15:1-18, 24**

The ascension of Jesus is important for the disciples. If Jesus had simply vanished, they wouldn't have known where he was. But they stared intently as he rose up to Heaven so that they knew where he is. Peter later says Jesus now provides a time of refreshing his disciples as he sends the Holy Spirit to them and intercedes for them from Heaven as they minister to God's people. **Isaiah 53:12; Hebrews 7:25**

Jesus ascends from the Mount of Olives, probably near the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus in Bethany. **John 11:1**. Zechariah prophesies Jesus one day will return to this same place:

[ On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, just east of Jerusalem. The Mount of Olives will be split in two, forming a very large

valley from east to west. Half of the mountain will move toward the north, and the other half to the south. **Zechariah 14:4** ]

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Why is the ascension of Jesus such an important event?
2. Many people are confused about what is called Jesus' Second Coming. Luke talks about this in his Gospel. But sometimes it refers to the rapture and other times to the Millennial Kingdom. Read **Luke 9:26; 17:22-37; 21:5-28** and explain.
3. How does missionary activity depend on Jesus' intercession from Heaven?
4. Where In his letters will Peter talk several times about Jesus' return? Why is it important to constantly keep the returning of Jesus in mind?

# PERICOPE 3

## Peter Determines Judas' Place Should Be Filled

<sup>12</sup>Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mountain called the Mount of Olives. It is near Jerusalem, about half a mile away.

<sup>13</sup>When they came into the city, Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James, son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas, son of James, went to the second-story room where they were staying.

<sup>14</sup>The apostles had a single purpose *homothymadon* as they devoted themselves to prayer *proseuche*. They were joined by some women, including Mary, the mother of Jesus, and they were joined by his brothers.

<sup>15</sup>At a time when about 120 disciples had gathered together, Peter got up and spoke to them. He said:

<sup>16</sup>Brothers, what the Holy Spirit predicted through David in Scripture about Judas had to come true. Judas led the men to arrest Jesus. <sup>17</sup>He had been one of us and had been given an active role in this ministry.

<sup>18</sup>With the money he received from the wrong he had done, he bought a piece of land where he fell headfirst to his death. His body split open and all his internal organs came out. <sup>19</sup>Everyone living in Jerusalem knows about this. They even call that piece of land *Akeldama*, which means Field of Blood in their dialect.

<sup>20</sup>You've read in Psalms: Let his home be deserted and let no one live there. Psalm 69:25. and Let someone else take his position. Psalm 109:8

Therefore, someone must be added to our number to serve with us as a witness that Jesus came back to life. <sup>21</sup>He must be one of the men who accompanied Jesus with us the entire time that the Lord Jesus was among us. <sup>22</sup>This person must have been with us from the time that John was baptizing people to the day that Jesus was taken from us.

<sup>23</sup>The disciples determined that two men were qualified. These men were Joseph (who was called Barsabbas and was also known as Justus) and Matthias.

<sup>24</sup>Then they prayed *proseuchomai*: Lord, you know everyone's thoughts. Show us which of these two you have chosen. <sup>25</sup>Show us who is to take the place of Judas as an apostle since Judas abandoned his position to go to the place where he belongs.

<sup>26</sup>They drew names to choose an apostle. Matthias was chosen and joined the eleven apostles.

## COMMENT

In his first action since Jesus had risen, Peter leads the disciples to choose another apostle to replace Judas. Who has told Peter to do this? Peter has even decided the requirements this new apostle must meet. He has even quoted Scripture as his authority. So the disciples all pray and the lot falls to Matthias.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. What was the single purpose the disciples had as they prayed?
2. Peter may have remembered Jesus saying:

[ I can guarantee this truth: When the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne in the world to come, you my followers, will also sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. **Matthew 19:28** ]

Is this the reason Peter felt a 12th apostle had to be chosen?

3. How authoritative are the two Scriptures Peter has quoted?
4. In Peter's defense, all the 120 disciples do pray before casting lots. Is this enough? We never hear of Matthias again. Why not? But we do hear extensively about Paul.



## Part Two - Pentecost When Jesus Baptizes with the Holy Spirit

During the Last Supper, Jesus promised his disciples he would send them the Holy Spirit. He said:

[ If you love me, you will obey my commandments. I will ask the Father and he will give you another helper who will be with you forever. That helper is the Spirit of Truth. The world cannot accept him because it doesn't see or know him. You know him because he lives with you and will be in you. **John 14:15-17** ]

[ A person who doesn't love me doesn't do what I say. What I say comes from the Father who sent me. I have told you this while I'm still with you. However, the helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything. He will remind you of everything I have ever told you. **John 14:24-26** ]

[ The helper whom I will send to you from the Father will come. This helper, the Spirit of Truth who comes from the Father, will declare the truth about me. You will declare the truth too because you have been with me from the beginning. **John 15:26-27** ]

[ Now, I'm going to the one who sent me. Yet, none of you ask me where I'm going. But because I've told you this, you're filled with sadness. However, I'm telling you the truth: It's good for you that I'm going away. If I don't go away, the helper won't come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

He will come to convict the world of sin, to show the world what has God's approval, and to convince the world that God judges it. He will convict the world of sin, because people don't believe in me. He will show the world what has God's approval, because I'm going to the Father, and you won't see me anymore. He will convince the world that God judges it because the ruler of this world has been judged.

I have a lot more to tell you, but that would be too much for you now. When the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you into the full truth. He won't speak on his own. He will speak what he hears and will tell you about things to come. He will give me glory, because he will tell you what I say. Everything the Father says is also what I say. That is why I said: He will take what I say and tell it to you. **John 16:5-15** ]

Since the Last Supper, the eleven apostles have been waiting for the Holy Spirit that was already with them, as Jesus had sent them out in Galilee to preach the Gospel, heal the sick, and exorcise demons. But later, Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would be in them. What would this mean?

Notice that the Holy Spirit is referred to as he not it. Count the number of times in the quotations from the Beloved Disciple the Holy Spirit is referred to as he? What is being emphasized?

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# PERICOPE 4

## The Disciples Are Filled with the Holy Spirit

<sup>21</sup> When Pentecost, the fiftieth day after Passover, came, all the believers were together in one place. <sup>2</sup> Suddenly, a sound like a violently blowing wind came from the sky and filled the whole house where they were staying. <sup>3</sup> Tongues that looked like fire appeared to them. The tongues arranged themselves so that one came to rest on each believer. <sup>4</sup> All the believers were filled *pimplemi* with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them the ability to speak *apophthengomai* <sup>3x</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Devout Jewish men from every nation were living in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup> They gathered when they heard the wind. Each person was startled to recognize his own dialect when the disciples spoke.

<sup>7</sup> Stunned *existemi* and amazed *thaumazo* the people in the crowd said: All of these men who are speaking are Galileans. <sup>8</sup> Why do we hear them speaking in our native dialects? <sup>9</sup> We're Parthians, Medes, and Elamites. We're people from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, the province of Asia, <sup>10</sup> Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and the country near Cyrene in Libya. We're Jewish people, converts to Judaism, and visitors from Rome, <sup>11</sup> Crete, and Arabia. We hear these men in our own languages as they tell about the miracles *megaleios*-wonderful works <sup>2x</sup> that God has done.

<sup>12</sup> All of these devout men were stunned *existemi* and puzzled *diaporeo*-doubted <sup>5x</sup>. They asked each other: What can this mean? <sup>13</sup> Others said jokingly: They're drunk on sweet wine.

## COMMENT

Pentecost was one of the three great pilgrim festivals mentioned in the Towrah. All male Jews were to celebrate this festival in Jerusalem once a year. **Deuteronomy 16:16**. Jews memorialized the giving of the Law or Towrah to Moses by God on Mount Sinai and there were great celebrations in the Temple of song and sacrifice.

God had given notice that he would give his Holy Spirit to his Chosen People through the prophets. God had said to Isaiah:

[ Then a Savior will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from rebellion, declares the Lord. This is my covenant to them, says the Lord. My Spirit, who is on you, and my words that I put in your mouth will not leave you. They will be with your children and your grandchildren permanently, says the Lord. **Isaiah 59:20-21** ]

And to Ezekiel he said:

[ I will sprinkle clean water on you and make you clean instead of unclean. Then I will cleanse you from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I will remove your stubborn hearts and give you obedient hearts. I will put my Spirit in you. I will enable you to live by my laws and you will obey my rules. Then you will live in the land that I gave your ancestors. You will be my people and I will be your God. **Ezekiel 36:25-28**

And John the Baptist prophesied:

[ I baptize you with water. But the one who is more powerful than I is coming. I am not worthy to untie his sandal straps. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. **Luke 3:16** ]

How did these 120 disciples know that Jesus had given them the Holy Spirit? They began to speak in foreign languages. What did they say? They praised God for his goodness and kindness to them.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Jesus must have given the Holy Spirit to his 12 apostles and to the 70 disciples before he sent them out to preach the Gospel, exorcise demons, and heal the sick. These disciples did miracles only with the Holy Spirit working in them, just as Jesus did miracles in his human nature. How was this baptism of the Holy Spirit different?
2. In the Hebrew Bible, there are reports of Moses having the Holy Spirit and God giving it to Israel's leaders.

[ The Lord answered Moses: Bring me 70 Israelite men who you know are leaders and officers of the people. Take then to the Tent of Meeting and have them stand with you. I'll come down and speak with you there. I'll take some of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them. They will help you take care of the people. You won't have to take care of them alone. **Numbers 11:16-17** ]

How long did this Spirit stay on them? We don't hear of any miracles they did.

3. Joshua was filled with the Spirit of wisdom for Moses laid his hands on him. **Deuteronomy 34:9**. What deeds did Joshua do?

# PERICOPE 5

## Peter's Sermon on the Feast of Pentecost

<sup>14</sup>Then Peter stood up with the eleven apostles. In a loud voice he said to them: Men of Judea and everyone living in Jerusalem. You must understand this, so pay attention to what I say: <sup>15</sup>These men are not drunk as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning. <sup>16</sup>Rather, this is what the prophet Joel spoke about:

<sup>17</sup>In the Last days, God says: I will pour my Spirit on everyone. Your sons and daughters will speak what God has revealed. Your young men will see visions. Your old men will dream dreams.

<sup>18</sup>In those days, I will pour my Spirit on my servants, on both men and women. They will speak what God has revealed.

<sup>19</sup>I will work miracles in the sky and give signs on the earth: blood, fire, and clouds of smoke.

<sup>20</sup>The sun will become dark, and the moon will become as red as blood before the terrifying day of the Lord comes.

<sup>21</sup>Then whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. **Joel 2:28-32**

<sup>22</sup>Men of Israel, listen to what I say: Jesus from Nazareth was a man whom God brought to your attention. You know that through this man God worked miracles, did amazing things, and gave signs. <sup>23</sup>By using men who don't acknowledge Moses' Teachings, you crucified Jesus, who was given over to death by a plan that God had determined in advance. <sup>24</sup>But God brought him from death back to life and destroyed the pains of death, because death had no power to hold him. <sup>25</sup>This is what David meant when he said about Jesus:

I always see the Lord in front of me.

I cannot be moved because he is by my side.

<sup>26</sup>That is why my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices.

My body also rests securely

<sup>27</sup>because you do not abandon my soul to the grave  
or allow your Holy One to decay.

<sup>28</sup>You make the path of life known to me.

In your presence there is complete joy. **Psalm 16:8-11**

<sup>29</sup>“Brothers, I can tell you confidently that our ancestor David died and was buried and that his tomb is here to this day. <sup>30</sup>David was a prophet and knew that God had promised with an oath that he would place one of David’s descendants on his throne.

[ Your royal house will remain in my presence forever. Your throne will be established forever. **2 Samuel 7:16** ]

<sup>31</sup>David knew that the Messiah would come back to life, and he spoke about that before it ever happened. He said that the Messiah wouldn’t be left in the grave and that his body wouldn’t decay.

<sup>32</sup>“God brought this man Jesus back to life. We are all witnesses to that. <sup>33</sup>God the Father used his power to give Jesus the honored position—the one next to him on the heavenly throne. Jesus has also received and has poured out the Holy Spirit as the Father had promised, and this is what you’re seeing and hearing. <sup>34</sup>David didn’t go up to Heaven, but he said:

The Lord said to my Lord:

Take the honored position—the one next to me God the Father on the heavenly throne—

<sup>35</sup>until I put your enemies under your control. **Psalm 110:1**

<sup>36</sup>“All the people of Israel should know beyond a doubt that God made Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.

<sup>37</sup>When the people heard this, they were deeply upset. They asked Peter and the other apostles: Brothers, what should we do?

<sup>38</sup> Peter answered them: All of you must turn to God and change the way you think and act, and each of you must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins will be forgiven. Then you will receive the Holy Spirit as a gift. <sup>39</sup> This promise belongs to you and to your children and to everyone who is far away. It belongs to everyone who worships the Lord our God.

<sup>40</sup> Peter said much more to warn them. He urged: Save yourselves from this corrupt generation. <sup>41</sup> Those who accepted what Peter said were baptized. That day about 3,000 people were added to the group.

There are two comparisons here to God giving the law at Mount Sinai and the people making a golden calf idol and Pentecost. The Law was given 50 days after the Passover when Israel left Egypt and so was Pentecost. 3,000 Israelites were killed after they made the Golden Calf, and on Pentecost 3,000 Israelites were saved. **Exodus 19:1, 32:28**

## COMMENT

In his first sermon recorded in the Bible, Peter speaks boldly summarizing the events of Jesus' earthly ministry. He reminds the people of Jerusalem that they participated in Jesus' crucifixion by not stopping the Sanhedrin and the Romans from executing him unjustly. Remember that Luke reminds us the people of Jerusalem left the crucifixion scene beating their breasts. **Luke 23:48**. How these words of Peter: *You crucified Jesus*, must have rung in their ears. Peter says these words twice.

Peter continues: Yet God resurrected Jesus back to life and now he is the one who is pouring out the Holy Spirit on his disciples. All of you must repent and turn to God believing in Jesus and be baptized. Then you will receive the Holy Spirit as a gift. 3,000 Israelites from Judea, Galilee, and the diaspora responded to Peter's call.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Where in the city of Jerusalem did Peter and the twelve baptize 3,000 people? This was a time when Jerusalem was filled with pilgrims and very crowded.
2. Did Luke leave anything essential to salvation out of Peter's sermon? What does God do and what do people do?
3. Peter assumes his hearers had a knowledge of Jewish history when he mentions Moses, David and the Hebrew prophets. Many of these were Jews from the diaspora, that is, living



outside Israel and they spoke Aramaic only as a second language. Peter also assumes they were in Jerusalem 50 days earlier when Jesus was crucified when he says: You crucified Jesus.

4. What were the diaspora Jews to do after they returned home? How were they to learn more about Jesus?
5. What did the people expect the Holy Spirit to do in their lives?
6. Was this the fulfillment of John the Baptist's prophecy that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire? **Luke 3:16**
7. Speaking other languages was truly a miracle for Galileans. Their accent was unique from those living in Judea as they had the habit of swallowing syllables when speaking. Galileans were looked down upon as country bumpkins. How could these people speak the languages of the countries where the people of the diaspora were living?

## EXTRA CREDIT

1. Peter mentions Jesus is now at the right hand of God. **Acts 2:25, 30, 33, 34**. Why is this important especially for the house of Israel? **Acts 2:14, 22, 29**
2. Peter says to be baptized *in the name of Jesus* while Jesus' command to his disciples in **Matthew 28:19** is *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*. Which is correct?
3. When Peter said that Jews killed their own Messiah, what does he now want Jews to do?
4. Why does Peter not talk about Jesus as the substitutional atonement for all humanity?

## Additional Teaching on the Meaning of Repentance

The Greek word *metaneo* translated by the **GOD'S WORD**® translation as *change the way you think and act* means to turn away from your sinful life and turn to God's way of living. It has two meanings: (1) to turn away from sinful practices and (2) to turn away from false ideas held. Both appear in Scripture.

In Hebrew, the word *shuwb* translated *repent* means to turn or to turn about. John the Baptist called for Israelites to *bring fruit worthy of repentance*. **Luke 3:8**. The act of repentance brings forth fruit. Repentance is a change of a person's perspective that transforms a person's thinking and approach to life. This is what God does when he justifies a person. He gives them the gift of faith in Jesus that transforms a person's thinking and action. People who repent trust Christ to guide their lives.

If a person thinks of repentance only as their rejecting evil and doing good, that is something a person does. But a genuinely saved person repents only because God has given them the ability

to do so. Good works have no part in salvation. Salvation is a gift of God. **Ephesians 2:8-10**. This is not just mental assent but confidence that Jesus' death on the cross has given sinful humans reconciliation with God.

### **Additional Teaching on Baptism**

Jews were used to cleansing themselves with water to purify themselves to ready themselves for worshiping God. Gentiles self-immersed publicly when becoming proselytes as a testimony of their conversion to Judaism. Baptism in water for Christians is an outward sign of a commitment to Jesus as Lord.

Spirit baptism is mentioned in over 100 places in the Bible where inward faith in Jesus is the only condition for salvation. God alone by his act of justification forgives our sins. At the time God justifies us, he gives us his Holy Spirit. This may or may not occur at the time of water baptism. The apostles assumed that when a person believed and trusted Jesus, they then would be baptized to confirm their commitment.

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## Part Three - The Formation of the Jerusalem Church

Luke doesn't give us details of the formation of the church in Jerusalem. There is a lot more we would like to know. There must have been a central meeting place. Perhaps it was the Upper Room where Jesus' disciples had met for the Last Supper and where they met when the Holy Spirit was poured out on Pentecost. But how many could that room have held.

Most of the activities of the early church in Jerusalem were probably held in people's houses, and each house had a leader. Then the apostles would visit these homes. Perhaps only the leaders of these house churches met in the Upper Room with the apostles in church meetings.

Paul tells us:

James, Cephas <sup>Peter</sup>, and John who were recognized as the most important people [who seemed to be pillars KJV] acknowledged that God had given me this special gift. **Galatians 2:9**

Luke further tells us that Peter left James in charge when he left Jerusalem:

Peter motioned with his hand to quiet them down and told them how the Lord had taken him out of prison. He added: Tell James and the other believers about this. Then he left and went somewhere else. **Acts 12:17**

James seems to be the leader at the Council of Jerusalem in 50 AD:

After they finished speaking, James responded: Brothers, listen to me. **Acts 15:13**

When Paul returned to Jerusalem after his third missionary journey:

The next day, Paul went with us to visit James. All the spiritual leaders were present. **Acts 21:18**

Luke tells us:

The believers had a single purpose and went to the Temple every day. They were joyful and humble as they ate at each other's homes and shared their food. **Acts 2:46**

# PERICOPE 6

## The Early Days of the Church

<sup>2:42</sup> The disciples were devoted *proskartereo*-steadfastly <sup>10x</sup> to the teachings *didache* of the apostles, to fellowship *koinonia*, to the breaking *klasis* of bread *artos*, and to prayer *proseuche*.

<sup>43</sup> A feeling of fear *phobos* came over everyone as many amazing things *teras* and miraculous signs *semeion* happened through the apostles.

<sup>44</sup> All the believers *pisteuo* kept meeting together *epi*, and they shared everything with each other. <sup>45</sup> From time to time, they sold their property and other possessions and distributed the money to anyone who needed it.

<sup>46</sup> The believers had a single purpose *homothymadon*-one accord and went to the Temple every *kata* day *hemera*. They were joyful *agalliasis* and humble *aphelotes*-singleness <sup>ix</sup> *kardia*-heart as they ate at each other's homes and shared their food.

<sup>47</sup> At the same time, they praised *aineo*<sup>9x</sup> God and had the good will *charis* of all the people. Every day the Lord saved *sozo* people, and they were added to the group *ekklesia*-congregation.

## COMMENT

Luke characterizes the early church in an almost idealistic situation. He introduces two words he will use many times in his book. The Greek word *homothymadon* meaning *one accord* appears <sup>ix</sup> in Acts 1:14; 2:1, 46; 4:24; 5:12; 7:57; 8:6; 12:20; 15:25; 18:12; 19:29. The word *ekklesia* translated *church* or *congregation* appears <sup>24x</sup> in Acts 2:47; 5:11; 7:38; 8:1, 3; 9:31; 11:22, 26; 12:1, 5; 13:1; 14:23, 27; 15:3, 4, 22, 41; 16:5; 18:22; 19:32, 39, 41; 20:17, 28.

Luke first introduces the four main activities of the church: (1) the apostolic teaching, (2) the fellowship, (3) the breaking of bread, and (4) prayer. The people met in homes and went to the Temple every day. They shared resources and possessions. People in Jerusalem looked up to them and added saved people to their congregation.

But then Luke says their minds had one accord and singleness of heart. Certainly their focus was on Jesus and his teachings, sacrifice, and return but they were human: They couldn't have

always agreed with each other all of the time. But there was a remarkable harmony Luke was attempting to portray.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. When something new happens, often things go well. How long does it take for things to deteriorate?
2. We might ask now why Jesus established twelve apostles? Was it to establish the right teaching about Jesus? Were they the only ones qualified to teach? 120 people were there at Pentecost, and we don't know any of their names except Jesus' mother Mary.
3. How could the disciples go to the Temple every day? Didn't people work for a living? Most people in Jerusalem were not wealthy, although some were.
4. We would like to know how the early church was administered. How did 12 apostles baptize 3,000 people? Who taught the people and where? Did everyone conduct the Eucharistic ceremony or only the twelve? Who led the prayer? Were there worship services outside the Temple? Were scrolls of Jesus' sayings compiled?
5. One of the miracles of the early church was their unity, their *one accord*. How was this accomplished?

## EXTRA CREDIT.

Luke has seven progress reports found in **Acts 2:46-47; 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:30-31**. Summarize them. How do they remind us of the main theme of the book?

# PERICOPE 7

## Peter Heals a Lame Man and Preaches a Sermon

<sup>31</sup> Peter and John were going to the Temple *hieron* courtyard for the three o'clock evening prayer. <sup>2</sup> At the same time, a man who had been lame from birth was being carried by some men. Every day these men would put the lame man at a gate in the Temple courtyard. The gate was called Beautiful Gate. There he would beg for handouts from people going into the courtyard. <sup>3</sup> When the man saw that Peter and John were about to go into the courtyard, he asked them for a handout.

<sup>4</sup> Peter and John stared at him. Look at us, Peter said. <sup>5</sup> So the man watched them closely. He expected to receive something from them. <sup>6</sup> However, Peter said to him: I don't have any money, but I'll give you what I do have. Through the power of Jesus Christ from Nazareth, walk. <sup>7</sup> Peter took hold of the man's right hand and began to help him up.

Immediately the man's feet and ankles became strong. <sup>8</sup> Springing to his feet *exallomai*<sup>ix</sup>, he stood up *histemi* and started to walk *peripatao*. He went with Peter and John into the Temple courtyard. The man was walking *peripatao*, jumping *hallomai*<sup>3x</sup>, and praising *aineo* God.

<sup>9</sup> All the people saw him walking *peripatao* and praising *aineo* God. <sup>10</sup> They knew *epiginosko* that he was the man who used to sit *kathemai* and beg at the Temple's Beautiful Gate. The people were amazed *ekstasis* and stunned *thambos* to see what had happened to him. <sup>11</sup> They were excited *ekthambos*<sup>ix</sup> and everyone ran to see them at the place called Solomon's Porch. The man wouldn't let go of *krateo*-held Peter and John.

## Peter's Second Sermon

<sup>3:12</sup> When Peter saw this, he said to the people:

Men of Israel, why are you amazed about this man? Why are you staring at us as though we have made him walk by our own power or godly life?

<sup>13</sup>The God of our ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed Jesus over to Pilate. You rejected him in Pilate's presence, even though Pilate had decided to let him go free. <sup>14</sup>You rejected the man who was holy and innocent. You asked to have a murderer given to you, <sup>15</sup>and you killed the source of life.

But God brought him back to life, and we are witnesses to that. <sup>16</sup>We believe in the one named Jesus. Through his power alone this man whom you know was healed, as all of you saw.

<sup>17</sup>And now, brothers I know that like your rulers you didn't know what you were doing. <sup>18</sup>But in this way God made the sufferings of his Messiah come true. God had predicted these sufferings through all the prophets.

<sup>19</sup>So change the way you think and act *metaneo*, and turn <to God> *epistrepho*-be converted to have your sins *hamartia* removed *exaleipho*-blotted out 5x. <sup>20</sup>Then times *kairos* will come when the Lord *kyrios* will refresh *anapsyxis* 1x you. He will send *apostello* you *prosopon*-presence Jesus, whom he has appointed *prokerysso*-preached 2x before to you to be the Christ Messiah.

<sup>21</sup>Heaven must receive *dechomai* Jesus until the time *chronos* when everything *pas*-all will be restored *apokatastasis* 1x as God promised through his holy prophets long ago.

[ So when the apostles came together, they asked him: Lord, is this the time *chronos* when you're going to restore *apokathistemi* 8x the kingdom *basileia* to Israel? Acts 1:6 ]

<sup>22</sup>Moses said:

The Lord your God will send you a prophet, an Israelite like me. Listen to everything he tells you. <sup>23</sup>Those who won't listen to that prophet will be excluded from the people. Deuteronomy 18:17-20

<sup>24</sup>Samuel and all the prophets who followed him spoke about these days.

<sup>25</sup>You are the descendants of the prophets and the heirs of the covenant that God made to our ancestors when he said to Abraham:

Through your descendant all people on earth will be blessed. **Genesis 12:3**

<sup>26</sup>God has brought his servant back to life and has sent him to you first *proton*. God did this to bless *eulogeo* you by turning *apostrepho*<sup>10x</sup> every one of you *hekastos* from your evil ways *poneria*<sup>7x</sup>.

## COMMENT

Luke in this chapter mentions the Temple for the second of 25 times in Acts. He has already mentioned the believers went to the Temple every day of the week. **Acts 2:46**. In his Gospel, Luke began and ended in the Temple, mentioning it 14x – more than any other Gospel. John mentions it 11x, Matthew 9x, and Mark 8x. Good Jews regarded the Temple as the closest place to God on earth.

The two times a day people usually went to the Temple was for the morning and evening sacrifices commanded in the Towrah. **Exodus 29:38-39**. Throughout the Bible, Jews paid particular attention to this. When the Jews came back to Jerusalem from the Babylonian captivity, they first built an altar and begin offering the morning and evening sacrifices even before the Temple was constructed. **Ezra 3:1-3**

Peter sees a lame man and gives a command: Through the power of Jesus Christ from Nazareth, walk. Peter took a hold of the man's hand and helped him up. Immediately, the man's feet and ankles strengthened and he started to walk. Then he started jumping and praising God. All the people were stunned. With the people excited, Peter began his second speech after Pentecost.

Peter gave all the credit to God. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did this to honor his servant Jesus. Although you handed Jesus over to Pilate and Pilate wanted to release him, you asked that Barabbas be released and Jesus be crucified. You killed the source of life. But God brought him back to life and through him this man was healed.

Although you men like your leaders didn't know what you were doing, God made the suffering of his Messiah come true as his prophets predicted. Now that you know this, turn back to God. Repent of your wicked lives and have your sins removed. Then God will send the spirit of Jesus into your lives although Jesus will remain in heaven until the right time.

Moses had said he would send a prophet to his people at the right time and commanded everything he said be obeyed. God had said to Abraham that through his descendant all the people on earth would be blessed. God has sent this descendant to you first to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways.



## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Describe how boldly Peter speaks.
2. Peter uses a full title for Jesus: Jesus Christ from Nazareth. Christ is the Anointed One or Messiah. Why does Peter stress Jesus is the Messiah?
3. Peter uses Scriptures familiar to Jews involving both Moses and Abraham to show how God has given Jesus authority to do miracles. He claims Jesus used this authority to heal the lame man. Why would this impress Jews?
4. Why does Peter repeat, as he did on Pentecost, that the people of Jerusalem killed Jesus?
5. What does Peter mean that *the Lord will refresh you*?
6. What does Peter mean that *everything will be restored as God promised through the prophets*?
7. What in a very practical sense is Peter calling the people to do now that they have seen this miracle?

## EXTRA CREDIT

Peter uses four titles for Jesus: (1) The Servant of YHWH; (2) the Holy One; (3) the Righteous One; and (4) the Prince or Author of Life. List at least one OT Scripture where this title appears.

## EXTRA, EXTRA CREDIT

If Jesus was the Davidic Messiah, why didn't he bring in the Messianic Kingdom and rule from Jerusalem?

# PERICOPE 8

## Peter and John's Trial in Front of the Jewish Council

<sup>4</sup><sup>1</sup> Some priests, the officer *strategos* <sup>10x</sup> in charge of the Temple guards, and some Sadducees approached Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. <sup>2</sup> These religious authorities were greatly annoyed. Peter and John were teaching the people and spreading the message that the dead will come back to life through Jesus. <sup>3</sup> So the Temple guards arrested them. Since it was already evening, they put Peter and John in jail until the next day.

<sup>4</sup> But many of those who had heard the message became believers, so the number of men who believed grew to about 5,000.

<sup>5</sup> The next day the Jewish rulers, the leaders, and the experts in Moses' Teachings met in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup> The Chief priest Annas, Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and the rest of the Chief priest's family were present. <sup>7</sup> They made Peter and John stand in front of them and then asked: By what power or in whose name did you do this?

<sup>8</sup> Then Peter, because he was filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them:

Rulers and leaders of the people, <sup>9</sup> today you are cross-examining us about the good we did for a crippled man. You want to know how he was made well.

<sup>10</sup> You and all the people of Israel must understand that this man stands in your presence with a healthy body because of the power of Jesus Christ from Nazareth. You crucified Jesus Christ, but God has brought him back to life.

<sup>11</sup> He is the stone that the builders rejected, the stone that has become the cornerstone. **Psalm 118:22.** <sup>12</sup> No one else can save *soteria*-salvation us. Indeed, we can be saved *sozo* only by the power of the one named Jesus ,and not by any other person.

<sup>13</sup>After they found out *epiginosko* that Peter and John had no education *agrammatos* <sup>ix</sup> or special training *idotes*-ignorant <sup>5x</sup>, they were surprised *thaumazo*-marveled to see how boldly *parresia* they spoke. They realized *katalambano* that these men had *en* been *syn* with Jesus.

<sup>14</sup>When they saw the man who was healed standing with Peter and John, they couldn't say anything against the two apostles. <sup>15</sup>So they ordered Peter and John to leave the council room and began to discuss the matter among themselves.

<sup>16</sup>They said: What should we do to these men? Clearly, they've performed a miracle that everyone in Jerusalem knows about. We can't deny that. <sup>17</sup>So let's threaten them. Let's tell them that they must never speak to anyone about the one named Jesus. Then the news about the miracle that they have performed will not spread any further among the people.

<sup>18</sup>They called Peter and John and ordered them never to teach about Jesus or even mention his name. <sup>19</sup>Peter and John answered them: Decide for yourselves whether God wants people to listen to you rather than to him. <sup>20</sup>We cannot stop talking about what we've seen and heard.

<sup>21</sup>The authorities threatened them even more and then let them go. Since all the people were praising God for what had happened, the authorities couldn't find any way to punish Peter and John. <sup>22</sup>The man who was healed by this miracle was over 40 years old.

## COMMENT

Peter and John are arrested by the Sanhedrin in the Temple courtyards for speaking about Jesus having risen from the dead. When they learned the apostles were unschooled yet spoke so boldly, they marveled and knew they had been with Jesus. Peter was even quoting Scripture.

So they told them to speak no more about this, but they protested they had to speak about what they had seen and heard. Decide for yourselves whether God wants people to listen to you or to us, they boldly said.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. What a change in Peter's boldness. After Jesus' death, the disciples were behind locked doors for fear the Sanhedrin would do to them what they did to Jesus. What has caused this change?
2. The Sanhedrin had arrested the two. Why didn't they just put them back in prison after they spoke so boldly against them?
3. Why didn't the Sanhedrin turn these men over to the Roman Governor?

# PERICOPE 9

## Life in the Early Church

<sup>4:23</sup> When Peter and John were released, they went to their own people and told them everything the chief priests and leaders had said. <sup>24</sup> When they heard this, they were united *homothymadon* and loudly prayed *airo*-lifted up *phone* voice to God *theos*:

Master *despotes*, you made the sky, the land, the sea, and everything in them. <sup>25</sup> You said through the Holy Spirit, who spoke through your servant David our ancestor:

Why do the nations act arrogantly? Why do their people devise useless plots? <sup>26</sup> Kings take their stand. Rulers make plans together against the Lord and against his Messiah. **Psalm 2:1-2**

<sup>27</sup> In this city, Herod and Pontius Pilate made plans together with non-Jewish people and the people of Israel. They made their plans against your holy *hagios* servant *pais*-child Jesus, whom you anointed. <sup>28</sup> Through your will and power, they did everything that you had already decided should be done.

<sup>29</sup> Lord pay attention to their threats *apeile*<sub>4X</sub> now and allow us to speak your word *logos* boldly *parresia*. <sup>30</sup> Show your power by healing, performing miracles, and doing amazing things through the power and the name of your holy *hagios* servant *pais* Jesus.

These are the only two places in the Bible where Jesus is called *your holy child*.

<sup>31</sup> When they had finished praying *deomai*, their meeting place shook *saleuo*. All of them were filled *pimpiemi* with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak God's word *logos* boldly *parresia*.

## The Believers Share Their Property

<sup>32</sup>The whole group of believers lived in harmony *one heart **kardia** and one **heis** soul **psyche***. No one called any of his possessions his own. Instead, they shared everything. <sup>33</sup>With great ***megas** power **dynamis*** the apostles continued to testify ***martyrion*** that the Lord Jesus had come back to life. God's abundant good will was with all of them.

<sup>34</sup>None of them needed anything. From time to time, people sold land or houses and brought the money <sup>35</sup>to the apostles. Then the money was distributed to anyone who needed it.

<sup>36</sup>Joseph, a descendant of Levi, had been born on the island of Cyprus. The apostles called him Barnabas, which means a person who encourages. <sup>37</sup>He had some land. He sold it and turned the money over to the apostles.

## COMMENT

Luke stresses the harmony that existed among the disciples using the word meaning *one accord*. They witnessed *boldly* about the resurrection of Jesus and shared their few possessions as Jesus would have wanted. Luke introduces us to Barnabas who was born on Crete, a large island in the Mediterranean Sea. He was wealthy and sold some of his land giving the money to the apostles.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. This was the honeymoon period of the Jerusalem church. All went well. Everyone got along and was generous. Would this go on forever?
2. Did the Sanhedrin cease to persecute the apostles? Did they continue to preach about Jesus in the Temple courtyards?

# PERICOPE 10

## Lying to the Holy Spirit

<sup>5:1</sup> A man named Ananias and his wife Sapphira sold some property. <sup>2</sup>They agreed to hold back some of the money they had pledged and turned only part of it over to the apostles.

<sup>3</sup>Peter asked: Ananias, why did you let Satan fill you with the idea that you could deceive the Holy Spirit? You've held back some of the money you received for the land. <sup>4</sup>While you had the land, it was your own. After it was sold, you could have done as you pleased with the money. So how could you do a thing like this? You didn't lie to people but to God.

<sup>5</sup>When Ananias heard Peter say this, he dropped dead. Everyone who heard about his death was terrified. <sup>6</sup>Some young men got up, wrapped his body in a sheet, carried him outside, and buried him. <sup>7</sup>About three hours later Ananias' wife arrived. She didn't know what had happened. <sup>8</sup>So Peter asked her: Tell me, did you sell the land for that price? She answered: Yes, that was the price.

<sup>9</sup>Then Peter said to her: How could you and your husband agree to test the Lord's Spirit? Those who buried your husband are standing at the door and they will carry you outside for burial. <sup>10</sup>Immediately, she dropped dead in front of Peter. When the young men came back, they found Sapphira dead. So they carried her outside and buried her next to her husband.

<sup>11</sup>The whole church *ekklesia* and everyone else who heard about what had happened were terrified *me-gas*great *phobos*fear.

This is the second time Luke uses the word *ekklesia* translated church. He will use the word 24x in Acts, the most of any Bible book.

## The Apostles Perform Many Miracles

<sup>5:12</sup>The people saw the apostles perform many miracles *semeion*-signs and do amazing things *teras*-wonders. The believers had a common faith *homothymadon*-

one accord in Jesus as they met on Solomon's Porch. <sup>13</sup> None of the other people dared *tolmao* to join *kollao* IOX them, although everyone spoke highly of them.

<sup>14</sup> More men and women than ever began to believe *pisteuo* in the Lord. <sup>15</sup> As a result, people carried their sick into the streets. They placed them on stretchers and cots so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some sick people as he went by. <sup>16</sup> Crowds from the cities around Jerusalem would gather. They would bring their sick and those who were troubled by evil spirits and each person was cured.

## COMMENT

A husband and a wife made a vow to give a certain amount of money to the church. However, they changed their mind and lowered the amount at the last moment. When the husband gave the reduced amount, Peter called him out. Then the man dropped dead. The wife came in soon after and repeated the lie. Peter called her out for lying and she too dropped dead. The entire church was filled with great fear as were others when they heard about it.

From then on people were afraid to join the church but everyone spoke highly of them. Many more people in Jerusalem began to believe in Jesus. People even carried the sick into the streets so that Peter's shadow would fall on the sick and they would be healed. God was doing amazing wonders to jump start his church.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Barnabas was a Levite and thus prohibited from owning land in the Holy Land. **Numbers 18:24**. How then could he do what he did?
2. What was Ananias' motive in declaring a price and then holding back part of it?
3. The Holy Spirit can do amazing things. How appropriate was it for God to kill Ananias and Sapphira? What was God teaching?
4. Why was there great fear after this happened and people were afraid to join the church?
5. Why were people still not afraid to place their sick in the streets so that Peter could heal them?
6. How do Christians lie to the Holy Spirit today?



## PERICOPE II

### The Apostles' Trial in Front of the Jewish Council

<sup>5:17</sup>The Chief priest and the whole party of the Sadducees who were with him were extremely jealous. So they took action <sup>18</sup>by arresting the apostles and putting them in the city jail.

<sup>19</sup>But at night an angel from the Lord opened the doors to their cell and led them out of the prison. <sup>20</sup>The angel told them: Stand in the Temple courtyard and tell the people everything about life in Christ. <sup>21</sup>Early in the morning, after they had listened to the angel, the apostles went into the Temple courtyard and began to teach.

The Chief priest and those who were with him called together the Jewish council, that is, all the leaders of Israel. They also sent men to the prison to get the apostles. <sup>22</sup>When the Temple guards arrived at the prison, they didn't find the apostles. The guards came back and reported: <sup>23</sup>We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors. However, when we opened the doors, we found no one inside.

<sup>24</sup>When the officer of the Temple guards and the chief priests heard this, they were puzzled about what could have happened. <sup>25</sup>Then someone told them: The men you put in prison are standing in the Temple courtyard. They're teaching the people.

<sup>26</sup>Then the officer of the Temple guards went with some of his men to bring back the apostles without using force. After all, the officer and his guards were afraid that the people would stone them to death for using force. <sup>27</sup>When they brought back the apostles, they made them stand in front of the council.

The Chief priest questioned them. <sup>28</sup>He said: We gave you strict orders not to mention Jesus' name when you teach. Yet, you've filled Jerusalem with your teachings. You want to take revenge on us for putting that man to death.

<sup>29</sup> Peter and the other apostles answered:

We must obey God rather than people.

<sup>30</sup> You murdered Jesus by hanging him on a cross. But the God of our ancestors brought him back to life. <sup>31</sup> God used his power to give Jesus the honored position — the one next to him on the heavenly throne the right hand of God — as leader *archegos* Prince and Savior *soter*.

He did this to lead the people of Israel to him, to change the way they think and act, and to forgive their sins. <sup>32</sup> We are witnesses to these things and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.

<sup>33</sup> When the men on the council heard this, they became furious and wanted to execute the apostles. <sup>34</sup> But a Pharisee named Gamaliel stood up. He was a highly respected expert in Moses' Teachings. He ordered that the apostles should be taken outside for a little while.

<sup>35</sup> Then he said to the council: Men of Israel, consider carefully what you do with these men. <sup>36</sup> Some time ago, Theudas appeared. He claimed that he was important and about four hundred men joined him. He was killed and all his followers were scattered. The whole movement was a failure. <sup>37</sup> After that man, at the time of the census, Judas from Galilee appeared and led people in a revolt. He too died, and all his followers were scattered.

<sup>38</sup> We should keep away from these men for now. We should leave them alone. I can guarantee that if the plan they put into action is of human origin, it will fail. <sup>39</sup> However, if it's from God, you won't be able to stop them. You may even discover that you're fighting against God.

<sup>40</sup> The council took his advice. They called the apostles, beat them, ordered them not to speak about the one named Jesus and let them go. <sup>41</sup> The apostles left the council room. They were happy to have been considered worthy to suffer dishonor for speaking about Jesus.

<sup>42</sup> Every day in the Temple courtyard and from house to house, they refused to stop teaching and telling the Good News that Jesus is the Messiah.

## COMMENT

Finally, the Sanhedrin acts. The miracles done by the apostles are severely embarrassing them. They arrest Peter and the other apostles and put them in prison. But in the night an angel comes, releases them, and commands them to go to the Temple and preach about Jesus. They do so.

In the morning, the Temple guards go to the prison to bring the apostles before the Sanhedrin and find the cells empty. Then someone tells them the apostles are preaching in the Temple. The guards go get them and ask the apostles to come before the Sanhedrin. The apostles comply with this request.

The Chief priest asks the apostles why they continue to preach when the Sanhedrin, the Jewish High Council, forbid them. Peter answers: *We must obey God rather than men.* Then Peter again preaches the story of Jesus.

The Council becomes furious. But a highly respected Pharisee named Gamaliel asked they be put outside while he spoke. Then Gamaliel said: Several agitators have arisen, but they came to nothing. Let's wait and see what happens. If these men do succeed, we may find we are fighting against God.

So the Sanhedrin commanded the apostles be beaten, threatened them, and released them. The apostles rejoiced they had been allowed to witness for Jesus. And they continued preaching every day in the Temple courtyard and from house to house.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. How could members of the Sanhedrin think God was not with the apostles when an angel released them from prison although the doors were locked? What does this say about their faith in God?
2. What is Peter claiming when he says: We must obey God rather than people?
3. Why is Gamaliel giving good reasonable advice? What is motivating him?
4. What justification does the Sanhedrin have for beating the apostles?
5. The Sanhedrin is going to hear from the apostles that Jesus is now at the right hand of God. The Sanhedrin heard Jesus claim this at his trial **Luke 22:69** and soon will hear this from Stephen twice. **Acts 7:55, 56**. Why does saying this rile them up so violently? What does this say about Jesus' identification, position with God, and current status?

6. Did the Sanhedrin intend to kill the apostles if Gamliel had not stopped them? So Gamliel, a Pharisee in the minority party in the Sanhedrin, is protecting the apostles from the Sadducees. What a reversal.

## PERICOPE 12

### The Disciples Choose Seven Deacons to Help the Apostles

<sup>6:1</sup> At that time, as the number of disciples grew, Greek-speaking Jews complained about the Hebrew-speaking Jews. The Greek-speaking Jews claimed that the widows among them were neglected every day when food and other assistance was distributed.

Greek-speaking Jews were those from the diaspora who had lived outside Israel but returned to the Holy Land usually to Jerusalem so they could be near the Temple when they died. Most of these Jews were bi-lingual, speaking both Aramaic and Greek, but their primary language was Greek. Jews from Galilee could also speak some Greek, but their primary language was Aramaic. They spoke Greek only when they had to.

<sup>2</sup> The twelve apostles called all the disciples together and told them:

It's not right for us to give up God's word *logos* in order to distribute food. <sup>3</sup> So, brothers, choose seven men whom the people know are spiritually wise *martyreo*-witness *pleres*-full *hagios*-Holy *pneuma*-Spirit. We will put them in charge *kathistemi*-appoint of this problem. <sup>4</sup> However, we will devote ourselves to praying *proseuche* and to serving in ways that are related to the word *logos*.

<sup>5</sup> The suggestion pleased the whole group. So they chose Stephen, who was a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit and they chose Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, who had converted to Judaism in the city of Antioch. <sup>6</sup> The disciples had these men stand in front of the apostles who prayed *proseuchomai* and placed *epithithemi* -laid their hands *cheir* on these seven men.

<sup>7</sup> God's Word *logos* continued to spread and the number of disciples in Jerusalem grew very large *sphodra*-greatly. A large *polys* number of priests *hierous* accepted the faith.

## COMMENT

It seems like the honeymoon period of the *ekklesia* is coming to an end. Now there are disputes in the church. The Aramaic speaking apostles are now joined by Greek speaking disciples. And the widows of these Greek-speaking disciples are not being fairly treated. There is discrimination. So the apostles decide to appoint deacons or assistants to help in the distribution of charity to the widows.

As seven is a good Biblical number, seven men were chosen, and the apostles after praying laid their hands on them and commissioned them as deacons. Fortunately, the church continued to grow and a large number of the priests in Jerusalem accepted faith in Jesus.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. These Greek-speaking Jews are those who lived in the diaspora outside Israel where most Jews spoke Aramaic, although many spoke Greek as a second language. Greek was the common language spoken in the Roman Empire. It was a common practice for most Jews to consider those who lived in the Holy Land better than those living outside Israel. Why did this discrimination even creep into the church?
2. Were the apostles attempting to be elites by saying they were too good to serve tables?

# PERICOPE 13

## Stephen's Sermon Before the Sanhedrin and Execution

<sup>8</sup>Stephen one of the seven deacons was a man filled with God's favor and power. He did amazing things and performed miracles. <sup>9</sup>One day some men from the cities of Cyrene and Alexandria and the provinces of Cilicia and Asia started an argument with Stephen. They belonged to a synagogue in Jerusalem called Freedmen's Synagogue.

There were about 400 synagogues in Jerusalem. It required ten heads of household to have a synagogue. People gathered in these synagogues on the Sabbath as well as going to the Temple. Widows received help weekly from these synagogues.

<sup>10</sup>They couldn't argue with Stephen because he spoke with the wisdom that the Spirit had given him. <sup>11</sup>Then they bribed some men to lie. These men said: We heard him slander Moses and God. <sup>12</sup>The liars stirred up trouble among the people, the leaders, and the experts in Moses' Teachings.

So they went to Stephen, took him by force, and brought him in front of the Jewish council. <sup>13</sup>Some witnesses stood up and lied about Stephen. They said: This man never stops saying bad things about the holy place and Moses' Teachings. <sup>14</sup>We heard him say that Jesus from Nazareth will destroy the Temple and change the customs that Moses gave us.

<sup>15</sup>Everyone who sat in the council stared at him *atenizo* and saw that his face looked like an angel's face.

## Stephen Speaks in His Own Defense

<sup>7:1</sup>Then the Chief priest asked Stephen: Is this true? [Did you say that Jesus would destroy the Temple?]

<sup>2</sup>Stephen answered: Brothers and fathers, listen to me.

The God who reveals his glory appeared to our ancestor Abraham in Mesopotamia. This happened before Abraham lived in Haran. <sup>3</sup>God told him: Leave your land and your relatives. Go to the land that I will

show you. **Genesis 12:1.** <sup>4</sup>Then Abraham left the country of Chaldea and lived in the city of Haran. After his father died, God made him move from there to this land where we now live.

Stephen is appealing to Jewish tradition rather than to Genesis. Some find 15 variations in Stephen's sermon. The Bible says God called Abram in Haran and that his father Terah was still alive when Abram left for Canaan.

<sup>5</sup>Yet God didn't give Abraham anything in this land to call his own, not even a place to rest his feet. But God promised to give this land to him and to his descendants, even though Abraham didn't have a child. **Genesis 12:7**

<sup>6</sup>God told Abraham that his descendants would be foreigners living in another country and that the people there would make them slaves and mistreat them for 400 years. <sup>7</sup>God also told him: I will punish the people whom they will serve. After that they will leave that country and worship me here. **Genesis 15:17**

<sup>8</sup>God gave Abraham circumcision to confirm his covenant. **Genesis 17:10-11.** So when Abraham's son Isaac was born, Abraham circumcised him on the eighth day. **Genesis 21:4.** Isaac did the same to his son Jacob, and Jacob did the same to his twelve sons, the ancestors of our tribes.

<sup>9</sup>Jacob's sons were jealous of their brother Joseph. They sold him into slavery, and he was taken to Egypt. **Genesis 37:28.** But God was with Joseph <sup>10</sup>and rescued him from all his suffering. When Joseph stood in the presence of Pharaoh, the King of Egypt, God gave Joseph divine favor and wisdom so that he became ruler of Egypt and of Pharaoh's whole palace. **Genesis 41:40**

<sup>11</sup>Then a famine throughout Egypt and Canaan brought a lot of suffering. Our ancestors couldn't find any food. <sup>12</sup>When Jacob heard that Egypt had food, he sent our ancestors there. That was their first trip. **Genesis 42:3**

<sup>13</sup>On the second trip, Joseph told his brothers who he was, and Pharaoh learned about Joseph's family. **Genesis 45:1.** <sup>14</sup>Joseph sent for his father



Jacob and his relatives, 75 people in all. **Exodus 1:1-4.** <sup>15</sup>So Jacob went to Egypt, and he and our ancestors died there. <sup>16</sup>They were taken to Shechem for burial in the tomb that Abraham purchased in Shechem from Hamor's sons. **Genesis 50:12**

<sup>17</sup>When the time that God had promised to Abraham had almost come, the number of our people in Egypt had grown very large. <sup>18</sup>Then a different king, who knew nothing about Joseph, began to rule in Egypt. <sup>19</sup>This king was shrewd in the way he took advantage of our people. He mistreated our ancestors. He made them abandon their newborn babies outdoors, where they would die. **Exodus 1:8-16**

<sup>20</sup>At that time Moses was born and he was a very beautiful child. His parents took care of him for three months. **Exodus 2:2.** <sup>21</sup>When Moses was abandoned outdoors, Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and raised him as her son. **Exodus 2:10.** <sup>22</sup>So Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and became a great man in what he said and did.

<sup>23</sup>When he was 40 years old, he decided to visit his own people, the Israelites. <sup>24</sup>When he saw an Israelite man being treated unfairly by an Egyptian, he defended the Israelite. He took revenge by killing the Egyptian. **Exodus 2:11-12**

<sup>25</sup>Moses thought his own people would understand that God was going to use him to give them freedom. But they didn't understand. <sup>26</sup>The next day Moses saw two Israelites fighting, and he tried to make peace between them. He said to them: Men, you are brothers. Why are you treating each other unfairly? <sup>27</sup>But one of the men pushed Moses aside. He asked Moses: Who made you our ruler and judge? <sup>28</sup>Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday? **Exodus 2:13-14**

<sup>29</sup>After he said that, Moses quickly left Egypt and lived in Midian as a foreigner. **Exodus 2:15.** In Midian he fathered two sons. **Exodus 2:22**

<sup>30</sup>Forty years later, a messenger appeared to him in the flames of a burning bush in the desert of Mount Sinai. <sup>31</sup>Moses was surprised when he saw

this. As he went closer to look at the bush, the voice of the Lord said to him: <sup>32</sup>I am the God of your ancestors — the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Moses began to tremble and didn't dare to look at the bush. <sup>33</sup>The Lord told him: Take off your sandals. The place where you're standing is holy ground. **Exodus 3:2-5.** <sup>34</sup>I've seen how my people are mistreated in Egypt. I've heard their groaning and have come to rescue them. So now I'm sending you to Egypt.

### **The Israelites Rejected Moses**

<sup>7:35</sup>This is the Moses whom the Israelites rejected by saying: Who made you our ruler and judge? This is the one God sent to free them and to rule them with the help of the messenger who appeared to him in the bush. <sup>36</sup>This is the man who led our ancestors out of Egypt. He is the person who did amazing things and worked miracles in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the desert for 40 years.

<sup>37</sup>This is the same Moses who told the Israelites: God will send you a prophet, an Israelite like me. **Deuteronomy 18:15.** <sup>38</sup>This is the Moses who was in the assembly in the desert. Our ancestors and the messenger who spoke to him on Mount Sinai were there with him.

Moses received life-giving messages to give to us, <sup>39</sup>but our ancestors were not willing to obey him. Instead, they pushed him aside and in their hearts they turned back to Egypt. <sup>40</sup>They told Aaron: We don't know what has happened to this Moses, who led us out of Egypt. So make gods who will lead us. **Exodus 32:4.** <sup>41</sup>That was the time they made a calf. They offered a sacrifice to that false god and delighted in what they had made.

<sup>42</sup>So God turned away from them and let them worship the sun, moon, and stars. This is written in the book of the prophets:

Did you bring me sacrifices and grain offerings in the desert for 40 years, nation of Israel? <sup>43</sup>You carried along the shrine of Moloch, the star of the god Rephan, and the statues you made for yourselves to

worship. I will send you into exile beyond the city of Babylon. **Amos 5:25-27**

<sup>44</sup>In the desert our ancestors had the Tent of God's covenant. Moses built this Tent exactly as God had told him. He used the model he had seen. **Exodus 2:8-9**

<sup>45</sup>After our ancestors received the Tent, they brought it into this land. They did this with Joshua's help when they took possession of the land from the nations that God forced out of our ancestors' way. This Tent remained here until the time of David, <sup>46</sup>who won God's favor. David asked that he might provide a permanent place for the family of Jacob. **2 Samuel 7:2.** <sup>47</sup>But Solomon was the one who built a house for God. **1 Kings 6:38**

<sup>48</sup>However, the Most High doesn't live in a house built by humans, as the prophet says:

<sup>49</sup>The Lord says: Heaven is my throne. The earth is my footstool. What kind of house are you going to build for me? Where will I rest? <sup>50</sup>Didn't I make all these things? **Isaiah 66:1-2**

<sup>51</sup>How stubborn can you be? How can you be so heartless and disobedient? You're just like your ancestors. They always opposed the Holy Spirit and so do you. <sup>52</sup>Was there ever a prophet your ancestors didn't persecute? They killed those who predicted that a man with God's approval *dikaios* the Just One would come. You have now become the people who betrayed and murdered that man [Jesus].

<sup>53</sup>You are the people who received Moses' Teachings which were put into effect by angels. **Deuteronomy 33:2.** But you haven't obeyed those teachings.

## Stephen Is Executed

<sup>54</sup>As council members listened to Stephen, they became noticeably furious.

<sup>55</sup>But Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit. He looked into heaven, saw God's

glory, and Jesus *histemi*-standing in the honored position — the one next to God the Father on the heavenly throne. <sup>56</sup> So Stephen said:

Look, I see heaven opened and the Son of Man *histemi*-standing in the honored position—the one next to God the Father on the throne.

Stephen is saying that Jesus of Nazareth is alive and standing at God's right hand. He is repeating what Jesus said to the Chief priest at his trial before the Sanhedrin before they took him to Pilate, the Roman Governor. **Luke 22:69**

<sup>57</sup> But the council members shouted and refused to listen. Then they rushed at Stephen with one purpose in mind *homothymadon*. <sup>58</sup> After they had thrown him out of the city, they began to stone him to death. The witnesses left their coats with a young man named Saul.

<sup>59</sup> While council members were executing Stephen, he called out: Lord Jesus, welcome my spirit. <sup>60</sup> Then he knelt down and shouted: Lord don't hold this sin against them. After he had said this, he died.

## COMMENT

Stephen is a well-educated Jewish man who knows his Hebrew Bible and Jewish tradition well. He develops the story of his people from the time God called Abraham, although there are details that differ from the Biblical record. God called Abraham in Haran and he left before his father Terah had died. But Stephen shows how faithful the patriarchs were.

He then gets to Moses, a leader selected by God whom the Israelites constantly disobeyed. They even made a golden calf while Moses was up on Mount Sinai with God. And even while they were traveling with God in the wilderness for 40 years, they carried their idols along with them. Moses was the one who predicted God would send a prophet just like him to Israel.

Stephen talks about the Wilderness Tabernacle Moses built at Mount Sinai which the Israelites carried with them for 40 years. This Tent of God's covenant accompanied them into the Promised Land and was set up at Shechem. Then King David proposed building a Temple for God, but his son Solomon actually built the Temple. However, God said in the Scriptures that he does not live in a Temple--an earthly house.

Then Stephen comes to his climax. *You people killed the prophet Moses said would come. You betrayed and murdered that man Jesus. Even though you received God's teachings given to you by angels, you haven't obeyed those teachings.*

Stephen has finished. But the Sanhedrin members are furious. Yet Stephen filled by the Holy Spirit raised his eyes and said: *I see heaven opened and the Son of Man at the right hand of God.* But the Sanhedrin wouldn't listen. They took him out of the city and stoned him to death. As he was dying, Stephen said: Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. He shouted: Lord, don't hold this sin against them. Saul, who later became the apostle Paul, approved of putting Stephen to death.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. How does Stephen demonstrate the Jerusalem Temple isn't necessary for God?
2. How does Stephen show that it was not unusual for Israel to reject a leader God sent to them?
3. How does Stephen show how the Sanhedrin murdered Jesus without ever saying the name Jesus.
4. How does Stephen show he knows the story of Jesus as he tells the story of Israel?
5. Why does Stephen say he saw Jesus standing rather than sitting at the right hand of God?
6. Stephen emphasizes the Israelites rejected the leaders God sent to them, especially the prophets. How does that make the Sanhedrin leaders think of their execution of Jesus?
7. Does Stephen emphasize that God is calling Israel to a new way of worship replacing the Temple? How?

## Part Four - The Church Expands Beyond Jerusalem

Three hundred miles north of Jerusalem was Antioch on the Orantes River. It was the capital of Syria and the home to the Roman Legate to whom the Governor of Judea reported. Four Roman legions were stationed there to defend the eastern border of the Roman Empire from the Parthians. It was the third largest city in the Roman Empire behind Rome and Alexandria, Egypt and had about 250,000 inhabitants compared to Jerusalem's permanent population of about 50,000.

It was here that Luke reports:

[ Some of the believers were scattered by the trouble that broke out following Stephen's death went as far as Phoenicia, Cypress, and the city of Antioch. They spoke God's word only to Jewish people but other believers who were from Cypress and Cyrene arrived in Antioch. They started to spread the Good News about the Lord Jesus to Greeks. The Lord's power was with his followers and a large number of people believed and turned to the Lord. **Acts 11:19-21** ]

Here is a map depicting many of the places mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles.



# PERICOPE 14

## Some Samaritans Believe in Jesus

<sup>8:1</sup> Saul approved of putting Stephen to death.

On that day widespread persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem. Most believers, except the apostles, were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.

<sup>2</sup> Devout men buried Stephen as they mourned loudly for him.

<sup>3</sup> Saul tried to destroy *lymaino*-havoc <sup>IX</sup> the church. He dragged men and women out of one home after another and threw them into prison.

## Some Samaritans Become Believers

<sup>4</sup> The believers who were scattered *diaspeiro* <sup>3X</sup> went from place to place *dierchomai*-everywhere, where they spread the word.

<sup>5</sup> Philip went to the city of Samaria and told people about the Messiah. <sup>6</sup> The crowds paid close attention to what Philip said. They listened to him and saw the miracles that he performed. <sup>7</sup> Evil spirits screamed as they came out of the many people they had possessed. Many paralyzed and lame people were cured. <sup>8</sup> As a result, that city was extremely happy.

The Jews disliked the Samaritans immensely and considered them half-breeds. Back in 734-722 BC the Assyrians had deported the Jews living there and brought in Gentiles from other parts of the Assyrian Empire. These Gentiles then intermarried with the remaining Jews living there. When the Jews were brought back from the Babylonian captivity, these Samaritans asked to help them rebuild the Jerusalem Temple, but the Jews refused. So the Samaritans looked for a Restorer or Taheb and worshiped at Mount Gerizim at Shechem.

<sup>9</sup> A man named Simon <sup>Magus</sup> lived in that city. He amazed the people of Samaria with his practice of magic *mageuo* <sup>IX</sup>. He claimed that he was great *meGas*. <sup>10</sup> Everyone from children to adults paid attention to him. They said: This man is the power *dynamis* of God, and that power is called great *meGas*.

<sup>11</sup>They paid attention to Simon because he had amazed them for a long time with his practice of magic *mageia* <sup>IX</sup>.

<sup>12</sup>However, when Philip spread the Good News about God's Kingdom and the one named Jesus Christ, men and women believed him and were baptized. <sup>13</sup>Even Simon believed *pisteuo* and after he was baptized *baptizo*, he became devoted *proskartereo* <sup>IOX</sup> to Philip. Simon was amazed *existemi* to see the miracles *dynamis* and impressive things *me-gas*-great *semeion*-signs that were happening.

### The Samaritans Receive the Holy Spirit

<sup>8:14</sup>When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that the Samaritans had accepted God's word, they sent Peter and John to them. <sup>15</sup>Peter and John went to Samaria and prayed that the Samaritans would receive the Holy Spirit. (<sup>16</sup>Before this the Holy Spirit had not come to any of the Samaritans. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) <sup>17</sup>Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and the Samaritans received the Holy Spirit.

<sup>18</sup>Simon saw that the Spirit was given to the Samaritans when the apostles placed their hands on them. So he offered Peter and John money <sup>19</sup>and said: Give me this power so that anyone I place my hands on will receive the Holy Spirit.

<sup>20</sup>Peter told Simon: May your money be destroyed with you because you thought you could buy God's gift! <sup>21</sup>You won't have any share in this because God can see how twisted your thinking is. <sup>22</sup>So change your wicked thoughts, and ask the Lord if he will forgive you for thinking like this. <sup>23</sup>I can see that you are bitter with jealousy and wrapped up in your evil ways.

<sup>24</sup>Simon answered: Pray to the Lord for me that none of the things you said will happen to me.

In second century writings, Simon went on to Rome and impressed people with his magic. He also clashed with Peter. But none of this is verifiable although he is mentioned by early church writers such as Irenaeus and Justin Martyr. **Wikipedia**



<sup>25</sup>After they had boldly spoken about the message of the Lord, they spread the Good News in many Samaritan villages on their way back to Jerusalem.

## COMMENT

The Samaritans are descendants of people brought into Israel from 735-722 BC by the Assyrians. When the Assyrians conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel, they deported many of the Jews living there, sending them to other parts of the Assyrian Empire. Then they brought in Gentiles from the Assyrian Empire to replace them. Later in 535 BC, when the Jews came back to Israel from the Babylonian captivity, the Samaritans wanted to assist them to build the Jerusalem Temple. The Jews refused and the two peoples became enemies. But through the centuries, the Samaritans intermarried with the Jews. They believed in God and the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, but worshiped on Mount Gerizim rather than in Jerusalem. So some called them half-Jews, but most Jews treated them like Gentiles and there was hatred between the two.

Why did Philip go to Samaria? The Bible doesn't say. But remember that Jesus made a Samaritan a hero in his parable of the "Good Samaritan" **Luke 10:25-37** and in his event of healing ten lepers. **Luke 17:11-19**. Only one leper returned to thank Jesus for his healing. That leper was a Samaritan.

Philip preached the word and did miracles. The people loved him. A magician named Simon Magus or Simon the Great was impressed and became a believer and was baptized. The apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaritans were becoming believers, so they sent Peter and John to investigate. Unfortunately, when Philip baptized in the name of Jesus, God had not sent the Holy Spirit to these new believers. So Peter and John placed their hands on the believers, and they now received the Holy Spirit.

Simon was so impressed that he offered Peter and John money if he too could baptize people with the Holy Spirit. Peter was shocked and cursed Simon. Then Simon asked Peter to pray that God would not punish him. Later church tradition has Simon going to Rome and contesting with Peter.

Peter and John then returned to Jerusalem but evangelized many Samaritan villages on the way back. Gentiles were being accepted into the church.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. This is an amazing development that Gentiles are accepted into the church. But remember that Philip is a diaspora Jew and not one of the twelve selected by Jesus. So the church at Jerusalem sent Peter and John to confirm Samaritans had accepted God's word, but had not

received the Holy Spirit. Peter and John came to Samaria and then laid hands on these Gentiles, and they too received the Holy Spirit. Unlike Judaism where Gentiles could come under the umbrella of Judaism, they were never considered genuine Jews or members of the covenant. But now Peter and John were accepting Gentiles into the body of Jesus and God confirmed it by giving them his Holy Spirit as he had given the disciples at Pentecost. How did Peter and John have the authority to do this?

2. Luke doesn't say that members of the church in Jerusalem disagreed with what Peter and John did. Why not?
3. Why did God withhold the Holy Spirit from the Samaritans when they were baptized by Philip?
4. How did Simon know that the Samaritans had received the Holy Spirit when Peter laid hands on them?
5. Wasn't Simon to the Samaritan church as Ananias and Sapphira were to the Jerusalem church? Would Peter have wondered if God would kill Simon?
6. Was Simon the Great a genuine believer? If so, what was lacking?
7. What has God taught Peter from this encounter?

# PERICOPE 15

## Philip Tells an Ethiopian about Jesus

<sup>26</sup>An angel from the Lord said to Philip: Get up and take the desert road that goes south from Jerusalem to Gaza. <sup>27</sup>So Philip went.

An Ethiopian man who had come to Jerusalem to worship in the Temple was on his way home. The man was a eunuch, a high-ranking official in charge of all the treasures of Queen Candace of Ethiopia. <sup>28</sup>As the official rode along in his carriage, he was reading the prophet Isaiah out loud. <sup>29</sup>The Spirit said to Philip: Go to that carriage and stay close to it.

<sup>30</sup>Philip ran to the carriage and could hear the official reading the prophet Isaiah out loud. Philip asked him: Do you understand what you're reading? <sup>31</sup>The official answered: How can I understand unless someone guides me? So he invited Philip to sit with him in his carriage.

<sup>32</sup>This was the part of the Scriptures that the official was reading:

He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. He was like a sheep that is silent when its wool is cut off. He didn't open his mouth. <sup>33</sup>When he humbled himself, he was not judged fairly. Who from his generation will talk about his life on earth being cut short? **Isaiah 53:7-8**

<sup>34</sup>The official said to Philip: I would like to know who the prophet is talking about. Is he talking about himself or someone else? <sup>35</sup>Then Philip spoke. Starting with that passage, Philip told the official the Good News about Jesus.

<sup>36</sup>As they were going along the road, they came to some water. The official said to Philip: Look, there's some water. What can keep me from being baptized? <sup>38</sup>The official ordered the carriage to stop. He and Philip stepped into the water, and Philip baptized him.

<sup>39</sup>When they had stepped out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away. The official joyfully continued on his way and didn't see Philip again.

<sup>40</sup>Philip found himself in the city of Azotus. He traveled through all the cities and spread the Good News until he came to the city of Caesarea.

## COMMENT

Why did God select an official from Ethiopia to come to Jerusalem to worship? Since the Queen of Sheba in Yemen on the Arabian peninsula had come to see King Solomon between 970-930 BC, 1 **Kings 10:2** stories had circulated about the God of Israel and his Temple in Jerusalem. One story even circulated that the Ethiopians had rescued the Ark of the Covenant from the Temple before the Babylonians had destroyed the Temple in 586 BC. Many believe it is still there today.

As the official traveled south to his home, he was reading the scroll of Isaiah out loud. The Holy Spirit brought Philip to him. Philip asked: *Do you understand what you're reading?* The official asked Philip to explain it to him. So Philip told him the story of Jesus. The official was so impressed that he asked Philip to baptize him. So Philip did. Then the Holy Spirit took Philip to Caesarea Maritima on the Mediterranean Sea where the Governor of Judea had his palace.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Did Philip baptize the Ethiopian with the Holy Spirit?
2. Why does Luke include this story about this far away official?
3. Eunuchs were forbidden from joining the Jewish congregations. **Deuteronomy 23:1**. The eunuch probably knew this. Why, then did he ask Philip to baptize him?
4. Most Jews believed that Isaiah Chapter 53 applied to the nations of Israel. Where did Jesus say that this prophecy applied to him?
5. If Jews did not allow eunuchs to join the congregation of Israel, why did Christians allow them to join the *ekklesia*?
6. Why does Luke say the Spirit carried Philip around much like Ezekiel? **Ezekiel 3:12, 14**. What point is he making?

7. How does the conversion of Samaritans, then far away Ethiopians demonstrate that God was doing something new, he had never done before? He was making Isaiah's prophecy come true:

[ They will not hurt or destroy anyone anywhere on my holy mountain. The world will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord like water covering the sea. At that time the root of Jesse will stand like a banner for the people to gather around. The nations will come to him. His resting place will be glorious. **Isaiah 11:9-10** ]

# PERICOPE I6

## Saul Becomes a Follower of Jesus

<sup>9:1</sup> Saul kept threatening *apeile* <sub>4x</sub> to murder *phonos* <sub>10x</sub> the Lord's disciples *mathetes*. He went to the Chief priest <sup>2</sup> in Jerusalem and asked him to write letters of authorization to the synagogue leaders in the city of Damascus Syria. Saul wanted to arrest any man or woman who followed the way *hodos* of Christ and imprison them in Jerusalem.

Early Christians at this time were called *Followers of the Way*. This designation of *The Way* only appears in **Acts 18:24-25; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22**. This title may have come from Jesus saying: *I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life*. **John 14:6**. The word *mathetes* meaning *disciples* appears 28x in Acts, 37x in Luke, 71x in Matthew and 42x in Mark.

<sup>3</sup>As Saul was coming near the city of Damascus <sub>135 miles north of Jerusalem</sub>, a light from heaven suddenly flashed around him. <sup>4</sup>He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him: Saul ! Saul ! Why are you persecuting me? <sup>5</sup>Saul asked: Who are you sir *kyrios*-Lord?

The person replied: I'm Jesus, the one you're persecuting. <sup>6</sup>Get up! Go into the city and you'll be told what you should do.

Jesus did not say Paul was persecuting only the *ekklesia*, but Paul was persecuting Jesus himself. This astounded Paul. He didn't consider Jesus God. He felt he was helping God by defending God and his laws. And he didn't realize that when Jesus' disciples suffered, Jesus himself suffered. It would take him three days to fully understand this. Jesus did not condemn Paul, but commanded him to go and wait.

<sup>7</sup>Meanwhile, the men traveling with him were speechless. They heard the voice but didn't see anyone. <sup>8</sup>Saul was helped up from the ground. When he opened his eyes, he was blind. So his companions led him into Damascus. <sup>9</sup>For three days he couldn't see and didn't eat or drink.

<sup>10</sup>A disciple named Ananias lived in the city of Damascus. The Lord said to him in a vision: Ananias! Ananias answered: Yes, Lord. <sup>11</sup>The Lord told him: Get up. Go to Judas' house on Straight Street, and ask for a man

named Saul from the city of Tarsus. He's praying. <sup>12</sup>In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias place his hands on him to restore his sight.

<sup>13</sup>Ananias replied: Lord, I've heard a lot of people tell about the many evil things this man has done to your people *hagios*-saints in Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup>Saul has come here to Damascus with authority from the chief priests to put anyone who calls on your name in prison. <sup>15</sup>The Lord told Ananias: Go! I've chosen this man to bring my name to nations, to kings, and to the people of Israel. <sup>16</sup>I'll show him how much he has to suffer for the sake of my name.

Ananias is bewildered at God's request. But he is obedient, although he goes in fear. God will certainly allow Paul to suffer greatly as he carries out his mission. Ananias apparently tells Paul this as he will mention this later in his testimony.

<sup>17</sup>Ananias left and entered Judas' house. After he placed his hands on Saul, Ananias said: Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way to Damascus, sent me to you. He wants you to see again and to be filled with the Holy Spirit. <sup>18</sup>Immediately, something like fish scales fell from Saul's eyes and he could see again. Then Saul stood up and was baptized. <sup>19</sup>After he had something to eat, his strength came back to him.

One commentator summed up this event by saying: Paul went to Damascus under the orders of the Chief priest in Jerusalem, but his journey was interrupted by Our Chief priest in the order of Melchizadek. **Hebrews 5:9**

Ananias was not commissioning Saul, God was. But Ananias was empowered by God to baptize Saul, lay his hands on Saul, and to see him filled with the Holy Spirit.

## Saul Evangelizes in Damascus

<sup>9:19</sup> Saul was with the disciples in the city of Damascus for several days. <sup>20</sup>He immediately *eutheos* began to spread the word *christos*-Anointed One in <their> the synagogues *synagogue* that Jesus *hoynos*-he was the Son of God.

Saul had three days being blind to think. Being a Pharisee he prayed. God gave him the insight that Jesus was the Son of God. During his persecution of Christians, Saul had often heard the disciples proclaim the Gospel, so he was quickly able to proclaim the Gospel himself. How wonderfully God prepares his servants in ways we would never imagine. We wonder how often Saul gave his testimony in the house churches in Damascus.

<sup>21</sup> Everyone who heard him was amazed *existemi*. They asked: Isn't this the man who destroyed those who worshiped the one named Jesus in Jerusalem? Didn't he come here to take these *ho* worshipers *epikaleo*-called *touto*-this *onema*-name as prisoners *deo*-bound to the chief priests in Jerusalem?

<sup>22</sup> Saul grew more *mallon* powerful *endynamoo* 8x, and he confused *sygcheo* 5x the Jews living in Damascus by proving *sybibazo* 6x that Jesus *hoitos*-this was the Messiah *christos*.

<sup>23</sup> Later the Jews planned to murder *anaireo* Saul, <sup>24</sup> but Saul was told about their plot. They were watching the city gates day and night in order to murder him. <sup>25</sup> However, <Saul's> the disciples lowered him in a large basket through an opening in the wall one night.

In his Letter to the Galatians, Paul says:

[ But God, who appointed me before I was born and who called me by his kindness [grace] was pleased to show me his Son. He did this so that I would tell people who are not Jewish that his Son is the Good News. When this happened, I didn't talk it over with any other person. I didn't even go to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was. Instead, I went to Arabia and then came back to Damascus. Then three years later, I went to Jerusalem to become personally acquainted with Cephas [Peter]. I stayed with him 15 days. I didn't see any other apostle. I only saw James, the Lord's brother. God is my witness that what I'm writing is not a lie. **Galatians 1:15-20** ]

## Saul Goes to Jerusalem

<sup>9:26</sup> After Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to join *kallao* the disciples. But everyone was afraid *phobeo* of him. They wouldn't believe that he was a disciple.

## Barnabas Takes a Liking to Saul

<sup>9:27</sup> Then Barnabas took an interest *epilambanomai* in Saul and brought *ago* him to the apostles. Barnabas told the apostles how Saul had seen *eido* the Lord



*kyrios* on the road *hodos*-way and that the Lord had spoken *laleo* to him. Barnabas also told them how boldly *parresiazomai*<sup>9x</sup> Saul had spoken about the one named Jesus in the city of Damascus.

## Saul Preaches Throughout Jerusalem

<sup>9:28</sup> Then Saul went throughout Jerusalem with the disciples. He spoke *laleo* boldly *parresiazomai* with the power and authority of in the *onoma*-name of the Lord *kyrios iousous*. <sup>29</sup> He talked and argued *syzeteo*-disputed <sup>10x</sup> with Greek-speaking Jews, but they tried *epicheireo* <sup>3x</sup> to murder *anaireo* him.

The word *anaireo* translated *murder* appears 18x in Acts out of the 22x it appears in the New Testament. The word is also used to describe the killing of the Lord Jesus.

<sup>30</sup> As soon as the disciples found out about this, they took Saul to Caesarea and sent him to Tarsus his hometown in Cilicia in Asia.

<sup>31</sup> Then the church *ekklesia* throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace *eirene oikodomeo*-built up. The number of people increased *plethyno* as people lived *poreuo*-walking in the fear *phobos* of the Lord *kyrios* and the comfort *paraktesis* of the Holy Spirit.

## COMMENT

We now come to the story of the conversion of the apostle Paul. It is quite a dramatic story. Paul was a diaspora Jew born in Tarsus in Asia. His family had sent him to Jerusalem to study with Gamaliel. **Acts 6:34**. We are first introduced to him watching the stoning of Stephen. **Acts 7:58; 8:1**. Saul apparently first arrested Followers of the Way in Jerusalem and now we find him traveling the 135 miles from Jerusalem to Damascus.

At a point on the road, Jesus appears to Paul as a bright light and according to tradition knocks him off his horse onto the ground. He is immediately struck blind. A voice asks him: *Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?* Saul asks: *Who are you?* The voice replies: *I'm Jesus, the one you are persecuting. Go into Damascus and you'll be told what to do.*

His companions helped him into Damascus, and he sat blind three days not eating or drinking, most probably in deep prayer. God then sent a disciple named Ananias to Saul, although he was very reluctant to go as he knew of Saul's activities in Jerusalem. He went to the house and told Saul that the Lord Jesus had sent him to lay hands on him so that he could see again and

be filled with the Holy Spirit. Saul immediately could then see, and he was baptized. Then he ate and drank.

Immediately, Saul went to work visiting synagogues claiming that Jesus was the long awaited Messiah, the Son of God. He disputed with Jews so much they planned to murder him. So the disciples let him down over the city wall in a basket and he came to Jerusalem. Note the discrepancy in Paul's testimony as Luke portrays it and Paul's own testimony in Galatians.

In Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him. But Barnabas, an important member of the *ekklesia*, took an interest in him and his story. Barnabas told the apostles about him, his conversion story, and his preaching in Damascus. Then Saul accompanied the disciples and preached the Gospel in Jerusalem. But the diaspora Jews resented him and planned to murder him. So the disciples sent him the 50 miles to Caesarea Maritima, and placed him on a boat back to Tarsus, his hometown.

Then the *ekklesia* had peace and the number of believers increased. Paul will remain in Tarsus for the next seven years. We do not know what he did there during this time.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. When Saul was converted in Damascus, why did he go to Jewish synagogues besides going to the disciples' *ekklesia* or house churches?
2. Why did these diaspora Jews attempt to murder him?
3. Why did Barnabas take an interest in Saul? Was it because Barnabas was also a diaspora Jew coming to Jerusalem from Crete?
4. Paul must have had some friends in Jerusalem as he had studied there with the Rabbi Gamaliel. How long did that friendship last after Saul told him his conversion story?
5. Even the apostles at first were afraid of Saul until Barnabas told them his story. Then they allowed him to preach with them in Jerusalem. But Paul immediately got into disputes with other diaspora Jews who tried to murder him. What was Saul saying?
6. In Luke's summary statement in **Acts 9:31**, is he saying that the church increased in number because they had peace because Saul was gone?
7. Since Jesus directly called Saul, is Paul now the 12th apostle who should have replaced Judas Iscariot?

## EXTRA CREDIT

Later, Paul recounts his conversion testimony to Jews in Jerusalem. But here he says after he was baptized and received the Holy Spirit, he returned to Jerusalem and had a vision in the Temple itself where Jesus told him he would go on the mission to the Gentiles. Why does Paul tell a differing testimony here? **Acts 22:17-21**. Luke also presents another testimony to King Agrippa II in **Acts 26:19-21**.

Describe the differences and explain why Paul told his testimony story in different ways.

## EXTRA, EXTRA CREDIT

Paul never forgave himself for persecuting the disciples. God forgave him, and the Christians forgave him, but it seems he could never forgive himself.

[ I'm the least of the apostles. I'm not even fit to be called an apostle because I persecuted God's church. But God's kindness *charis*-grace made me what I am and that kindness grace was not wasted on me. Instead, I worked harder than all the others. It was not I who did it but God's kindness grace. **1 Corinthians 15:9-10** ]

Did Paul work so hard because he was attempting to earn God's forgiveness?

# PERICOPE 17

## Peter Heals Two People in Lydda

Lydda was 25 miles northwest of Jerusalem in the coastal plain about 10 miles inland from the Mediterranean Sea where both Jews and Gentiles lived.

<sup>32</sup> When Peter was going around to all of God's people, he came to those who lived in the city of Lydda. <sup>33</sup> In Lydda Peter found a man named Aeneas who was paralyzed and confined to a cot for eight years.

<sup>34</sup> Peter said to him: Aeneas, Jesus Christ makes you well. Get up and pick up your cot. Aeneas immediately got up.

<sup>35</sup> Everyone who lived in the city of Lydda and the coastal region of Sharon saw what had happened to Aeneas and turned to the Lord in faith.

## Peter Brings Tabitha Back to Life

<sup>36</sup> A disciple named Tabitha lived in the city of Joppa. Her Greek name was Dorcas. She always helped people and gave things to the poor. <sup>37</sup> She became sick and died. Her body was prepared for burial and was laid in an upstairs room.

<sup>38</sup> Lydda is near the city of Joppa. When the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him. They begged Peter: Hurry to Joppa. We need your help.

<sup>39</sup> So Peter went with them. When he arrived, he was taken upstairs. All the widows stood around him. They were crying and showing Peter the articles of clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them.

<sup>40</sup> Peter made everyone leave the room. He knelt and prayed. Then he turned toward the body and said: Tabitha, get up.

Tabitha opened her eyes, saw Peter, and sat up. <sup>41</sup> Peter took her hand and helped her stand up. After he called the believers, especially the widows, he presented Tabitha to them. She was alive.

<sup>42</sup>The news about this spread throughout the city of Joppa, and as a result, many people believed in the Lord. <sup>43</sup>Peter stayed in Joppa for a number of days with Simon, a leatherworker.

## COMMENT

Luke now shows that Peter, not wanting to be an administrator, leaves running the church in Jerusalem to James, Jesus' half-brother and John. Peter evangelizes Jews living on the Mediterranean seacoast. Here he does signs and wonders bringing people to belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. In the power of the Holy Spirit, he even raises a woman from death to life. Joppa is a little way north of Lydia and on the seacoast. Peter is more broadminded than most pious Jews since as a leatherworker he was employed in an unclean occupation among dead animals.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Peter is following the command of Jesus, to go out from Jerusalem to tell the Gospel to people of all nations. **Luke 24:47-48**. Is he preaching only to Jews or to both Jews and Gentiles?
2. Why does Luke mention Peter is staying at the home of a leatherworker, an unclean profession?
3. Do miracles alone bring people to faith in Jesus?

# PERICOPE 18

## Peter Watches as the Holy Spirit Comes to Gentiles

<sup>10:1</sup> A man named Cornelius lived in the city of Caesarea.

Caesarea Maritima was about 30 miles north of Joppa on the Mediterranean seacoast. It contained the palace of the Roman Governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate, and later governors and had a harbor that Herod the Great had constructed.

He was a Roman army officer *hekatontarches* centurion 8x in the Italian regiment. <sup>2</sup>He and everyone in his home were devout *eusebes* 4x and respected *phobeo* feared God. Cornelius gave many gifts *eleemosyne* alms to poor Jewish people and always *diapantos* 7x prayed *deomai* to God.

Cornelius was a God-fearer, a Gentile who was not circumcised but who attended the local synagogue and believed in the God of the Bible and tried to observe the commandments. This title God-fearer does not appear in the Bible, but the phrase *feared God* does.

<sup>3</sup>One day, about three in the afternoon, he had a vision. He clearly saw an angel from God come to him and say: Cornelius! <sup>4</sup>He stared at the angel and was terrified *emphobos* -afraid 6x. Cornelius asked the angel: What do you want, sir?

The angel answered him: God is aware of your prayers *proseuche* and your gifts to the poor *eleemosyne* and he has remembered *mnemosynon* 3x you. <sup>5</sup>Send messengers now to the city of Joppa and summon a man whose name is Simon Peter. <sup>6</sup>He is a guest of Simon, a leatherworker, whose house is by the sea.

<sup>7</sup>After saying this, the angel left. Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier, one of those who served him regularly. <sup>8</sup>Cornelius explained everything to them and sent them to Joppa.

## Peter Has a Vision

<sup>9</sup>Around noon the next day while Cornelius' men were on their way and coming close to Joppa, Peter went on the roof to pray *proseuchomai*. <sup>10</sup>He

became hungry *prospeinos* IX and wanted to eat. While the food was being prepared, he fell into a trance *ekstatis* 7X. <sup>11</sup> He saw the sky open and something like a large linen sheet *othone* 2X being lowered by its four corners to the ground. <sup>12</sup> In the sheet were all kinds of four-footed animals, reptiles, and birds.

<sup>13</sup> A voice told him: Get up, Peter! Kill these animals and eat them. <sup>14</sup> Peter answered: I can't do that Lord. I've never eaten anything that is impure or unclean. <sup>15</sup> A voice spoke to him a second time: Don't say that the things which God has made clean are impure. <sup>16</sup> This happened three times. Then the sheet was quickly taken into the sky.

### **The Holy Spirit Tells Peter to Go with the Men Knocking on the Door**

<sup>10:17</sup> While Peter was puzzled by the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found Simon's house and went to the gate. <sup>18</sup> They asked if Simon Peter was staying there.

<sup>19</sup> Peter was still thinking about the vision when the Spirit said to him: Three men are looking for you. <sup>20</sup> Get up and go downstairs. Don't hesitate to go with these men. I have sent them. <sup>21</sup> So Peter went to the men. He said: I'm the man you're looking for. Why are you here?

<sup>22</sup> The men replied: Cornelius, a Roman army officer, sent us. He's a man who has God's approval *dikaios*-righteous, obeys the commandments and who respects *phobos*-fears God. Also the Jewish people respect *martyreo* him. A holy angel told him to summon you to his home to hear what you have to say.

<sup>23</sup> Peter asked the men to come into the house and had them stay overnight.

### **Peter Preaches a Sermon but the Holy Spirit Interrupts Him**

The next day Peter left with them. Some disciples from Joppa went along. <sup>24</sup> The following day they arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called his relatives and close friends together.

<sup>25</sup>When Peter was about to enter Cornelius' house, Cornelius met him, bowed down, and worshiped Peter. <sup>26</sup>But Peter made him get up. He told him: Stand up! I'm only a man.

<sup>27</sup>As Peter talked, he entered Cornelius' house and found that many people had gathered. <sup>28</sup>He said to them: You understand how wrong it is for a Jewish man to associate or visit with anyone of another race. But God has shown me that I should no longer call anyone impure or unclean. <sup>29</sup>That is why I didn't object to coming here when you sent for me. I want to know why you sent for me.

<sup>30</sup>Cornelius answered: Four days ago I was praying at home. It was at this same time, three o'clock in the afternoon. Suddenly, a man dressed in radiant clothes stood in front of me. <sup>31</sup>He said to me: Cornelius, God has heard your prayers and has remembered your gifts to the poor. <sup>32</sup>So send messengers to Joppa, and summon a man whose name is Simon Peter. He's a guest in the home of Simon, a leatherworker who lives by the sea.

<sup>33</sup>So I sent for you immediately. Thank you for coming. All of us are here now in the presence *pareimi* of *enopion*-before God to listen to everything <the Lord> God has ordered *prostasso*<sub>7x</sub> you to say.

## Peter Begins His Sermon

<sup>10:34</sup>Then Peter said: Now I understand that God doesn't play favorites. <sup>35</sup>Rather, whoever respects God and does what is right is acceptable to him in any nation.

<sup>36</sup>God sent his word to the people of Israel and brought them the Good News of peace through Jesus Christ. This *hoytos*. Jesus Christ is *esti* everyone's *pas*-all Lord *kyrios*. <sup>37</sup>You know what happened throughout Judea.

Everything began in Galilee after John spread the news about baptism. <sup>38</sup>You know that God anointed Jesus from Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Jesus went everywhere and did good things such as healing



everyone *pas*-all who was under the Devil's power. Jesus did these things because God was with him.

Peter says that *Jesus is Lord of all*. Verse 36. By saying Jesus healed everyone Peter implies he healed both Jews and Gentiles.

<sup>39</sup>We can testify to everything Jesus did in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. People hung him on a cross and killed him, <sup>40</sup>but God brought him back to life on the third day.

God didn't show him <sup>41</sup>to all the people. He showed Jesus to witnesses, apostles he had already chosen. We apostles are those men who ate and drank with Jesus after he came back to life. <sup>42</sup>He ordered *parangelo*-commanded us to warn *kerysso*-preach and *diamartyroi*-testify to the people: God has appointed *horizo*-ordained Jesus to judge *krites* the living *zao* and the dead *nekros*.

No such specific command is found in the Gospels, although Jesus implies it when he says: *All authority has been given to me*. **Matthew 28:18**. However, in the Gospel According to John Jesus said:

[ The Father doesn't judge anyone. He has entrusted judgment entirely to the Son so that everyone will honor the Son as they honor the Father. He has also given the Son authority to pass judgment because he is the Son of Man. Don't be surprised at what I've just said. A time is coming when all the dead will hear his voice and they will come out of their tombs. Those who have done good will come back to life and live. But those who have done evil will come back to life and be judged. **John 5:22-23, 27-29** ]

<sup>43</sup>In addition all the prophets testify that people who believe in the one named Jesus receive forgiveness for their sins through him.

### **The Holy Spirit Descends on all the Gentiles Present in the Room**

<sup>10:44</sup> While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit came *epipto*-fell to on everyone *pas*-all who heard *akouo* his message *lego*.

Note the Holy Spirit came on these Gentiles because they believed in Jesus as Peter had outlined. No one had to lay hands on them or baptize them. Peter had not prayed for them to receive the Holy Spirit. God simply gifted them.

### The Jewish Witnesses Who Came With Peter Cannot Believe This

<sup>10:45</sup>All the Jewish believers who were circumcised and who had come with Peter were amazed *existemi* that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured on people who were not Jewish. <sup>46</sup>They heard these non-Jewish people speaking in other languages and praising *megalyno*-magnify God.

These Gentiles were probably praising God in Aramaic or classical Hebrew rather than Greek, making this remarkable to Peter's companions.

Then Peter said: <sup>47</sup>No one can refuse to baptize *baptizo* these people with water. They have received the *dorea*-gift Holy Spirit *ekcho*-poured out in the same way that we did. <sup>48</sup>So Peter ordered that they should be baptized *baptizo* in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for several days.

### COMMENT

God is going to give Peter a detailed lesson in what Jesus commanded him to do when he said on Easter night in the Upper Room:

[ Scripture says the Messiah would suffer and would come back to life on the third day. Scripture also says that by the authority of Jesus people would be told to turn to God and change the way they think and act so that their sins would be forgiven. This would be told to people of all nations, beginning in the city of Jerusalem. You are witnesses to these things. **Luke 24:46-48** ]

As he did on Pentecost, Peter reviews the story of Jesus. He also testifies that he is one of Jesus' apostles who ate and drank with him. As these are Gentiles, he tells them that God has given Jesus power to judge the living and the dead. This is what Paul will later tell the Greeks on Mars Hill in Athens. **Acts 17:31**. Then he says all the Hebrew prophets testify that those who believe in Jesus receive forgiveness of their sins.

While Peter is still talking, the Holy Spirit interrupts by being poured out on all those who heard Peter speaking. The six Jewish believers Peter brought along as his witnesses were amazed *existemi* seeing Gentiles speaking in other languages praising God. Peter ordered that all there should be baptized. Peter stayed with them several days.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. How did Peter understand that God was *not* talking about clean and unclean food but how all human beings made by him are clean, not only the Chosen People?
2. Peter had seen previously that Samaritans who most Jews considered Gentiles were saved and could receive the Holy Spirit. How was Cornelius' household different?
3. Why did Peter bring along six Jews as witnesses? Did he think he might need them? Why?
4. Peter mentions that God has appointed Jesus to judge the living and the dead. This is never mentioned in the Gospel of Luke, or is it? See **1 Peter 4:5**.
5. Paul in Athens will also mention that Jesus will judge all men. **Acts 17:30-31**. Why is this especially pertinent to Gentiles?
6. This event was a first in that God gave the Holy Spirit to Gentiles without any prerequisites, except believing in Jesus Christ? The hymn *Hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness*, expresses this perfectly. Why do we attempt to place additional restrictions on becoming a Christian today?
7. What did Peter require of these Gentiles before baptizing them?

# PERICOPE 19

## Peter Is Criticized for Eating with Gentiles

<sup>1</sup>The apostles and the believers throughout Judea heard that people who were not Jewish had accepted God's word. <sup>2</sup>However, when Peter went to Jerusalem, the believers who insisted on circumcision began to argue with him. <sup>3</sup>They said: You went to visit men who were uncircumcised, and you even ate with them.

## Peter Gives His Testimony to the Church in Jerusalem

<sup>4</sup>Then Peter began to explain to them point by point what had happened. He said: <sup>5</sup>I was praying in the city of Joppa when I fell into a trance. I saw something like a large linen sheet being lowered by its four corners from the sky. The sheet came near me. <sup>6</sup>I looked into the sheet very closely and saw tame animals, wild animals, reptiles, and birds.

<sup>7</sup>I also heard a voice telling me: Get up, Peter! Kill these animals, and eat them. <sup>8</sup>But I answered: I can't do that, Lord. I've never put anything impure or unclean into my mouth. <sup>9</sup>A voice spoke from heaven a second time: Don't say that the things which God has made clean are impure. <sup>10</sup>This happened three times. Then everything was pulled back into the sky again.

<sup>11</sup>At that moment three men arrived at the house where we were staying. They had been sent from Caesarea to find me. <sup>12</sup>The Spirit told me to go with them without any hesitation. Six believers from Joppa went with me and we visited Cornelius' home.

<sup>13</sup>He told us that he had seen an angel standing in his home. The angel told him: Send messengers to Joppa and summon a man whose name is Simon Peter. <sup>14</sup>He will give you a message that will save *sozo* you and everyone in your home.

<sup>15</sup>When I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came *epiipto*-fell to these people. This was the same thing that happened to us in the beginning at Pentecost. <sup>16</sup>I

remembered that the Lord had said: John baptized with water, but you will be baptized by the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:5. <sup>17</sup>When they believed, God gave them the same gift *dorea* that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. So who was I to interfere with God?

<sup>18</sup>When the others heard this, they had no further objections *hesychazo* held their peace <sup>5x</sup>. They praised *doxazo* glorified God by saying: Then God has also led people who are not Jewish to turn to him so that they can change the way they think and act and have Eternal Life. [Then has God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life. KJV.]

## COMMENT

When Peter came back to Jerusalem, he was called before the leaders and asked to explain why he had done what he had done. The believers who said Gentiles should be circumcised before they were baptized argued with him. Peter gave his testimony. God gave these Gentiles the Holy Spirit as we were given at Pentecost. How could I refuse to baptize them? The ones arguing with Peter were silent. But, as we will see shortly, many still didn't agree with him.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. James is administering the church. What does James say?
2. The opinion of the apostles isn't mentioned. Why not?
3. Apparently, the church at Jerusalem doesn't have even one Gentile believer. Is this possible when there are 5,000 members in the church?

## PERICOPE 20

### The New Church in Antioch, Syria

Antioch was the third largest city in the Roman Empire with a population of over 500,000 people consisting of both Gentiles and over 70,000 Jews. It was a Greek city built in the 4th century BC by Seleucus I Nicator, one of Alexander the Great's generals. It was the capital of the Seleucid Empire until Rome took it over in 63 BC, making it the seat of the Roman Province of Syria. It was also known as a very licentious city. Four Roman legions were stationed there to protect the Empire from the Parthians and the Roman Legate of Syria was the supervisor of the Roman Governor of Judea.

<sup>19</sup> Some of the believers who were scattered by the trouble that broke out following Stephen's death went as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and the city of Antioch. They spoke God's word only to Jewish people.

<sup>20</sup> But other believers, who were from Cyprus and Cyrene [Libya] arrived in Antioch. They started to spread the Good News about the Lord Jesus to Greeks. <sup>21</sup> The Lord's power was with his followers and a large number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

<sup>22</sup> After the news about Antioch reached the church in Jerusalem, Barnabas was sent <from Jerusalem> to Antioch. <sup>23</sup> When he arrived there, he was pleased to see what God had done for them out of kindness *charis*-grace. So he encouraged all the people to remain solidly committed to the Lord. <sup>24</sup> Barnabas was a dependable man, and he was full of the Holy Spirit and faith. A large crowd believed in the Lord.

<sup>25</sup> Then Barnabas left Antioch to go to the city of Tarsus to look for Saul. <sup>26</sup> After finding Saul, Barnabas brought him back to Antioch. Barnabas and Saul met with the church in Antioch for a whole year and taught a large group of people. The disciples *mathetes* were called Christians *christianos* for the first time in the city of Antioch.

<sup>27</sup> At that time some prophets came from Jerusalem to the city of Antioch. <sup>28</sup> One of them was named Agabus. Through the Spirit Agabus predicted that a severe famine would affect the entire world. This happened while

Claudius was Emperor of Rome. [41-54 AD] <sup>29</sup>All the disciples in Antioch decided to contribute whatever they could afford to help the believers living in Judea. <sup>30</sup>The disciples did this and sent their contribution with Barnabas and Saul to the leaders <in Jerusalem>.

## COMMENT

Barnabas, a native of Cypress, but who was a leader in the church at Jerusalem, was sent by James and the apostles to see what was happening in Antioch, 300 miles north of Jerusalem. Many Jews had settled in Antioch for years and now it was rumored that many were turning to the faith together with many Gentiles. Relations between Jews and Gentiles in Antioch had been historically very cordial. It was in Antioch that believers were first called Christians or Christ followers.

Barnabas was pleased to see what had happened. He remembered his friend Saul who he had befriended before in Jerusalem and went north to Tarsus in the Roman Province of Cilicia where Saul was living in his hometown. After locating Saul, Barnabas brought him back to Antioch, and together they taught believers in the various house churches in the city.

A prophet came from Jerusalem named Agabus. He predicted a famine that would affect people in the whole world. As most people in Jerusalem were very poor, this would affect them dramatically. So the believers in Antioch collected a fund and sent the money with Barnabas and Saul to the elders *presbyteros* in Jerusalem.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. What impressed Barnabas so much about Saul?
2. Why did the fact that so many Jews lived in this city make it a center for missionary Christianity?
3. Would the fact that Antioch was known as a licentious city have contributed to the growth of Christianity to the Gentiles? Why? Apparently, this fact helped the growth of the church in Corinth.
4. Why would the Christians in Antioch have felt a need to help believers in Jerusalem 300 miles south?

## PERICOPE 21

### Peter Escapes from Jerusalem and Ministers Elsewhere

<sup>12:1</sup> About that time King Herod <Agrippa I 41-44 AD> devoted his attention to mistreating certain members of the church. <sup>2</sup>He had <the apostle>James, the brother of John <Zebedee>, executed. <sup>3</sup>When he saw how this pleased the Jews, he arrested Peter too. This happened during the days of Unleavened Bread < Festival>.

<sup>4</sup>After capturing Peter, Herod had him thrown into prison with sixteen soldiers in squads of four to guard him. Herod wanted to bring Peter to trial in front of the people after Passover. <sup>5</sup>So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was praying very hard to God for him.

<sup>6</sup>The night before Herod was going to bring Peter to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers. His hands were bound with two chains and guards were in front of the door. They were watching the prison.<sup>7</sup>Suddenly, an angel from the Lord stood near Peter and his cell was filled with light. The angel nudged Peter's side, woke him up and said: Hurry! Get up! At that moment the chains fell from Peter's hands. <sup>8</sup>The angel told him: Put your shoes on and get ready to go. Peter did this. Then the angel told him: Put your coat on and follow me.

<sup>9</sup>Peter followed the angel out of the cell. He didn't realize that what the angel was doing was actually happening. He thought he was seeing a vision. <sup>10</sup>They passed the first and second guard posts and came to the iron gate that led into the city. This gate opened by itself for them, so they went outside and up the street. The angel suddenly left Peter.

<sup>11</sup>When Peter came to his senses, he said: Now I'm sure that the Lord sent his angel to rescue me from Herod <Agrippa I > and from everything the Jewish people are expecting to happen to me.

<sup>12</sup>When Peter realized what had happened, he went to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark. Many people had gathered at her home and were



praying. <sup>13</sup> Peter knocked on the door of the entryway and a servant named Rhoda came to answer. <sup>14</sup> When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so happy that instead of opening the door, she ran back inside and reported: Peter is standing at the door. <sup>15</sup> The people told her: You're crazy! But she insisted that Peter was at the door. They said: It has to be his angel.

<sup>16</sup> But Peter kept knocking. When they opened the door, they were shocked to see him. <sup>17</sup> Peter motioned with his hand to quiet them down and told them how the Lord had taken him out of prison. He added: Tell James and the other believers about this. Then he left and went somewhere else.

This is the first time in Acts that James, the Lord's brother, is mentioned. No one knows where Peter went to preach. I believe Mark followed Peter and wrote the Gospel According to Mark based on Peter's preaching.

<sup>18</sup> In the morning the soldiers were in an uproar over what had happened to Peter. <sup>19</sup> Herod searched for Peter but couldn't find him. So he questioned the guards and gave orders to have them executed.

## Herod's Death

Then <King>Herod <Agrippa I> left Judea and went to Caesarea, where he stayed for a while.

<sup>20</sup> Herod was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon. They were going to meet with Herod. They had agreed on what they wanted to do: They enlisted the help of Blastus to ask Herod for terms of peace. This was because their cities depended on Herod for their food supply. Blastus was in charge of the King's living quarters.

<sup>21</sup> The appointed day came. Herod, wearing his royal clothes, sat on his throne and began making a speech to them. <sup>22</sup> The people started shouting: The voice of a god and not of a man. <sup>23</sup> Immediately, an angel from the Lord killed Herod for not giving glory to God. Herod was eaten by maggots, and he died. <sup>24</sup> But God's word continued to spread and win many followers.

## COMMENT

God miraculously saves Peter from the clutches of evil King Herod Agrippa I, the grandson of Herod the Great who killed the innocents in Bethlehem when Jesus was born. He only rules for four years from 41-44 AD. Herod had killed the apostle James Zebedee. Seeing how this pleased the Jews in Jerusalem, he imprisoned Peter for no reason and planned to kill him after the Passover Festival was over. But God had other plans for Peter.

That night an angel came to Peter in his cell. Peter was guarded by 16 soldiers. But the angel led Peter out of prison without disturbing anyone. Peter went to a house where Christians were praying for his release. A servant girl recognized Peter's voice at the door. She was so excited she didn't open the door but went to the others. They ridiculed her, but Peter kept knocking at the door and they finally heard it.

Peter told his story about the angel. Then he asked them to tell James, the administrator of the Jerusalem church, that he was leaving to get away from Herod. It may be that Peter went to Rome at this time while Mark recorded Peter's preaching and wrote a Gospel based on it.

Wicked King Agrippa I went to Caesarea Maritima where he led festivities in honor of Caesar. On the second day, he saw an owl perched above his head, yet he did not rebuke the people for calling him a god. Later he had violent stomach pains and died. This account is provided by the Jewish historian Josephus.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Why didn't the church believe the servant girl when she said Peter was at the door? What does this say about the faith of those Christians that God would save Peter?
2. Peter is not mentioned again in Acts until the Council of Jerusalem in Chapter 15. What is he doing all this time?
3. When did James, Jesus' half-brother, become the head of the church in Jerusalem? Why wasn't another of the twelve chosen to lead if Peter did not want to continue?
4. Peter is now going to disappear into the background until the Council of Jerusalem while Luke devotes himself to Paul's first missionary journey? Why doesn't Luke continue with the story of Peter?
5. When James, one of the twelve, was killed, why didn't the church elect a new apostle to replace him as they did when they elected Matthias?

## Part Five - Paul's First Missionary Journey (45-47 AD)

With the call of God and the elders at Antioch laying hands on them, Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark leave Antioch for the island of Cyprus, the home of Barnabas. Barnabas has brought his cousin John Mark with them. This is a large island in the Mediterranean Sea settled by people originally from Greece. The trio evangelize this large island including the governor of the island. Luke now begins calling Saul by the name Paul. They then take a ship north to Pamphylia where John Mark deserts them.

In Antioch Pisidia, they go into a synagogue and Paul preaches. Luke does not say what Barnabas does. Paul begins by reciting the history of Israel and speaking how the Hebrew prophets predicted a Messiah would come. Paul says that the Messiah did come. His name is Jesus and he died to save all humanity from their sins. But even though Jesus was killed, God brought him back to life again and he appeared to many of his followers who had come to Jerusalem with him from Galilee. Then Paul made his appeal. If you believe in Jesus, your sins can be forgiven.

Among those in the synagogue were some Gentiles Luke calls *proselytes prostelytos* 4x. If these men loved the God of Israel, but were not circumcised, the Jews called them *the proselytes of the gate*. If they were circumcised, they were called *proselytes of righteousness*. Many Jews believed Paul, but many did not. It was the Gentiles, the God-fearers, who really flocked to him. So Paul formed them into an *ekklesia*.

This map shows each of Paul's missionary travels, including his first.



## PERICOPE 22

### Paul and Barnabas Return from Jerusalem

<sup>12:25</sup>After Barnabas and Saul delivered the contribution to the leaders in Jerusalem they returned to Antioch from Jerusalem. They brought John Mark with them.

<sup>13:1</sup> Barnabas, Simeon, called the Black, Lucius from Cyrene, Manaen, a close friend of Herod since childhood, and Saul were prophets and teachers in the church in Antioch.

### The Elders at Antioch Lay Hands on Barnabas and Saul

<sup>2</sup>While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said: Set Barnabas and Saul apart for me. I want them to do the work for which I called them. <sup>3</sup>After fasting and praying, Simeon, Lucius, and Manaen placed their hands on Barnabas and Saul, and released them from their work in Antioch.

<sup>4</sup>After Barnabas and Saul were sent by the Holy Spirit, they went to the city of Seleucia and from there sailed to the island of Cyprus. <sup>5</sup>Arriving in the city of Salamis, they began to spread God's word in the synagogues. John Mark had gone along to help them. <sup>6</sup>They went through the whole island as far as the city of Paphos.

In Paphos they met a Jewish man named Barjesus. He was an astrologer who claimed to be a prophet. <sup>7</sup>He was associated with an intelligent man, Sergius Paulus, who was the governor of the island. The governor sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear God's word. <sup>8</sup>Elymas, whose name means *astrologer*, opposed them and tried to distort the meaning of the faith so that the governor wouldn't believe.

<sup>9</sup>But Saul, also known as Paul, was filled with the Holy Spirit.

This is the first time Luke uses Saul's Gentile name of Paulus. All Jews had two names, a Hebrew name and a Roman or Gentile name.

He stared at Elymas <sup>10</sup> and said: You are full of dirty tricks and schemes, you son of the devil! You hate everything that has God's approval. Quit trying to distort the truth about the way the Lord wants people to live. <sup>11</sup> The Lord is against you now. For a while you will be blind, unable to see the light of day.

Suddenly Elymas couldn't see a thing. He tried to find people to lead him. <sup>12</sup> When the governor saw what had happened, he believed *pisteuo*. The Lord's teachings amazed *ekplesso* him.

## COMMENT

Barnabas, Saul, and John Mark are called by God to evangelize. They go first to Barnabas' home of Cyprus. Barnabas brings along his cousin John Mark who he had brought back from Jerusalem. They sail from the port of Seleucia to Crete, arriving at the city of Salamis.

This island, the third largest island in the Mediterranean Sea after Sicily and Sardinia, was originally settled by the Mycenaean Greeks around 2000 BC. But it was later invaded by the Assyrians, Egyptians, Persians and then by Alexander the Great in 333 BC. When Alexander died, Ptolemy Egypt took over the island. In 58 BC, the Roman republic took over.

The group traveled the 140 miles from one end to the other teaching in the synagogues arriving at the city of Paphos. There they met the governor of the island, Sergius Paulus. Attending him was a Jewish astrologer named Barjesus. This man opposed Paul, so Paul called on God to blind him. This so impressed the governor that he believed the Lord's word.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Why does Saul blind Elymas or Barjesus? Wasn't there another way to silence him? Would he now be blind all his life?

## PERICOPE 23

### Paul and Barnabas Go to Antioch Near Pisidia

<sup>13:13</sup> Paul and his men took a ship from Paphos and arrived in Perga, a city in Pamphylia. John Mark deserted *apochoreo* them there and went back to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> Paul and Barnabas left Perga and arrived in Antioch, a city near Pisidia. On the day of rest—a holy day, they went into the synagogue and sat down.

<sup>15</sup> After reading from Moses' Teachings and the Prophets, the synagogue leaders *archisynagogos* <sup>9x</sup> sent a message to Paul and Barnabas. The message said: *aner*-men Brothers *adelphos*, if you have any words of encouragement *paraklesis*-exhortation for the people, feel free to speak.

<sup>16</sup> Then Paul stood up, motioned with his hand, and said:

Men of Israel and converts to Judaism *phobos*-fear *theos*-God, listen to me.

<sup>17</sup> The God of the people of Israel chose our ancestors and made them a strong nation while they lived as foreigners in Egypt. He used his powerful arm to bring them out of Egypt, <sup>18</sup> and he put up with them for about forty years in the desert. <sup>19</sup> Then he destroyed seven nations in Canaan and gave their land to his people as an inheritance. <sup>20</sup> He did all this in about four hundred and fifty years.

After that he gave his people judges until the time of the prophet Samuel.

<sup>21</sup> Then the people demanded a king, so God gave them Saul, son of Kish, from the tribe of Benjamin. After forty years <sup>22</sup> God removed Saul and made David their King.

God spoke favorably about David. He said: I have found that David, son of Jesse, is a man after my own heart. **1 Samuel 13:14.** He will do everything I want him to do.

<sup>23</sup> God had the Savior *soter* Jesus come to Israel from David's descendants, as he had promised. <sup>24</sup> Before Jesus began his ministry, John the Baptizer

told everyone in Israel about the baptism of repentance. <sup>25</sup>When John was finishing his work, he said: Who do you think I am? I'm not the person you're looking for. He will come later. I'm not even good enough to untie his sandals. **Luke 3:16**

<sup>26</sup>Brothers — descendants of Abraham and converts to Judaism *phobos*-fear *theos*-God — the message that God saves *soteria*-salvation people was sent to us.

<sup>27</sup>The people who live in Jerusalem and their rulers didn't know who Jesus was. They didn't understand the prophets' messages, which are read every day of rest — a holy day. So they condemned Jesus and fulfilled what the prophets had said. <sup>28</sup>Although they couldn't find any good reason to kill him, they asked <the Roman Governor> Pilate to have him executed.

<sup>29</sup>When they had finished doing everything that was written about him, they took him down from the cross and placed him in a tomb. <sup>30</sup>But God brought him back to life *egeiro*-raised *nekros*-dead, <sup>31</sup>and for many days he appeared to those who had come with him to Jerusalem from Galilee. These people are now witnesses and are testifying to the Jewish people about him.

<sup>32</sup>We are telling you the Good News *euangelizo*: What God promised *epangelia* our ancestors has happened. <sup>33</sup>God has fulfilled *ekpleroo* IX the promise for us, their descendants, by bringing Jesus back to life *anistemi*-raised. This is what Scripture says in the Second Psalm:

You are my Son. Today I have become your Father. **Psalm 2:7**

<sup>34</sup>God stated that he brought Jesus back to life and that Jesus' body never decayed. He said: I will give you the enduring love promised to David. **Isaiah 55:3** <sup>35</sup>Another psalm says: You will not allow your holy one to decay. **Psalm 16:10**

<sup>36</sup>After doing God's will by serving the people of his time, David died. He was laid to rest with his ancestors, but his body decayed. <sup>37</sup>However the man God brought back to life had a body that didn't decay.

Paul is quoting from Peter's Pentecost sermon.

- <sup>38</sup> So, brothers, I'm telling you that through Jesus your sins can be forgiven. Sins kept you from receiving God's approval through Moses' Teachings.  
<sup>39</sup> However everyone who believes in Jesus receives God's approval.

[ By him everyone who believes *pisteuo* is justified *dikaioo* from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. KJV ]

This is the only place in Acts where Luke uses the word *justified*. Luke uses the word *dikaioo* 5x in his Gospel and Paul uses the word 14x in Romans.

- <sup>40</sup> Be careful, or what the prophets said may happen to you.

<sup>41</sup> Look, you mockers! Be amazed and die! I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe even if it were reported to you!  
**Habakkuk 1:5**

<sup>42</sup> As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak on the same subject the next day of rest—a holy day. <sup>43</sup> When the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas. Paul and Barnabas talked with them and were persuading them to continue trusting God's good will *charis*-grace.

<sup>44</sup> On the next day of rest—a holy day, almost the whole city gathered to hear the Lord's word. <sup>45</sup> When the Jews saw the crowds, they became very jealous. They used insulting language to contradict whatever Paul said.

### **Paul States His Method of Missionary Activity Plainly**

<sup>13:46</sup> Paul and Barnabas told them boldly *parresiazomai*: We had to *anagkaios*-necessary 8x speak God's word to you first *proton*. Since you reject *apotheo*-push away 6x the word and consider *krino*-judge yourselves unworthy *ou* of everlasting *aionios* life *zoe*, we are now going to turn *strepho* to people of other nations *ethnos*. <sup>47</sup> The Lord gave us the following order:

I have made you a light for the nations so that you would save people all over the world. **Isaiah 49:6**



Paul here clearly states his method of evangelism – to the Jew first, and then to the Gentile. He will say this again in Rome in **Acts 28:25-28**, so these are bookends around Paul’s missionary activity. Everlasting life is mentioned only twice in Acts.

### **Luke Says Everyone God Had Prepared to Receive the Gift of Faith Rejoiced**

<sup>13:48</sup> The people who were not Jews were pleased with what they heard and praised *doxazo* the Lord’s word. Everyone who had been prepared *tasso*-ordained <sup>8x</sup> for everlasting *aiouios* life *zoe* believed *pisteuo*. <sup>49</sup> The word of the Lord spread throughout the whole region.

### **But Those God Had Not Prepared Rejected the Word of God**

<sup>13:50</sup> But Jews stirred up devout women of high social standing and the officials of the city. These people started to persecute *diagmos* <sup>10x</sup> Paul and Barnabas and threw them out *ekballo*-expelled of their territory.

<sup>51</sup> In protest against these people, Paul and Barnabas shook the dust off their feet and went to the city of Iconium. <sup>52</sup> Meanwhile, the disciples in Antioch continued to be full of joy and the Holy Spirit.

## **COMMENT**

Paul and party left Crete from the port of Paphos and arrived in Perga in Asia Minor. At Pamphylia John Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas left Perga for Antioch near Pisidia.

Luke is now calling Paul by his Greek or Roman name. At the synagogue on a Sabbath, Paul is asked to speak. Paul first rehearses the history of Israel beginning with their amazing increase in population while in Egypt. God brought Israel out of Egypt and then led them for forty years in the wilderness. Then he helped them drive out the seven nations of Canaan and gave them this land as an inheritance doing all this in 450 years.

Then God gave his people judges until the time of the prophet Samuel when he gave them a king named Saul ben Kish from the tribe of Benjamin. After 40 years, God made David their king, a man after God’s own heart. God then raised up the Savior Jesus from King David’s descendants as he had promised through his prophets. Before Jesus began his ministry, God sent John the Baptist to introduce him.

But the rulers in Jerusalem did not know who Jesus was, as they did not understand the prophets' messages read every Sabbath day. So they condemned Jesus and asked the Roman Governor Pilate to execute him. He died and his body was placed in a tomb. But God raised him back to life and he appeared to those who had come to Jerusalem with him from Galilee. These people are now witnesses and testifying to the Jewish people about him.

We are telling you the Good News that what the prophets promised your ancestors has happened. God has raised Jesus from death to life. It is confirmed in **Psalm 2**: *You are my Son and today I have become your Father.*

Although King David died, God brought his ancestor Jesus back to life. By believing in him, your sins can be forgiven. God approves of you by giving you faith. Be careful to accept this gift of faith or what the prophets said may happen to you. *Be amazed and die.* **Habakkuk 1:5**

Many whom God gave the gift of faith believed. But others did not. To them Paul said: *We are commanded to preach to you first. But if you do not accept our message, we will go to the Gentiles. They will believe.* This was the essence of Paul's missionary practice and he never deviated from it.

When some began to persecute them, Paul and Barnabas left. But those who believed continued to be full of joy in the Holy Spirit.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Why did John Mark leave Paul and Barnabas and return to Jerusalem?
2. Why does Paul begin with the history of Israel and only then bring in the event of Jesus' death and sacrifice?
3. Paul uses the word *dikaioo* meaning *justified* in verse 34. Why doesn't he explain what he means by this word?
4. When Paul quotes Habakkuk in verse 41, does this support that a terrible thing will happen to those who don't believe in Jesus?
5. Why does Paul only talk about Eternal Life here and not in subsequent sermons in Acts. He will only use this phrase 7x in his thirteen epistles.
6. Why does Paul not talk about believers receiving the Holy Spirit when they believe in Jesus?

## PERICOPE 24

### Paul and Barnabas Finish Their First Journey

<sup>1</sup>The same thing happened in the city of Iconium. Paul and Barnabas went into the synagogue and spoke in such a way that a large crowd of Jews and Greeks believed. <sup>2</sup>But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up some people who were not Jewish and poisoned their minds against the believers.

<sup>3</sup>Paul and Barnabas stayed in the city of Iconium for a long time. They spoke boldly about the Lord, who confirmed their message about his good will *charis*-grace by having them perform miracles and do amazing things. <sup>4</sup>But the people of Iconium were divided. Some were for the Jews, while others were for the apostles.

<sup>5</sup>In the meantime, Paul and Barnabas found out that the non-Jewish people and the Jewish people with their rulers planned to attack them and stone them to death. <sup>6</sup>So they escaped to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding territory. <sup>7</sup>They spread the Good News there.

### Paul and Barnabas in Lystra

<sup>8</sup>A man who was born lame was in Lystra. He was always sitting because he had never been able to walk. <sup>9</sup>He listened to what Paul was saying. Paul observed him closely *atenizo* and saw that the man believed *echo*-had *pistis*-faith he could be made well. <sup>10</sup>So Paul said in a loud voice: Stand up. The man jumped up and began to walk.

This miracle duplicated Peter's healing of a lame man at the Temple in Jerusalem. **Acts 3:1-11**

<sup>11</sup>The crowds who saw what Paul had done shouted in the Lycaonian language: The gods have come to us, and they look human. <sup>12</sup>They addressed Barnabas as Zeus and Paul as Hermes because Paul did most of the talking. <sup>13</sup>Zeus' temple was at the entrance to the city. The priest of the god Zeus brought bulls with flowery wreaths around their necks to the temple gates. The priest and the crowd wanted to offer a sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas.

<sup>14</sup>When the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard what was happening, they were very upset. They rushed into the crowd <sup>15</sup>and said: Men, what are you doing? We're human beings like you. We're spreading the Good News to you to turn you away from these worthless gods to the living God.

### Paul's First Sermon Entirely to Gentiles

The living God made the sky, the land, the sea, and everything in them. <sup>16</sup>In the past God allowed all people to live as they pleased. <sup>17</sup>Yet, by doing good, he has given evidence of his existence. He gives you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons. He fills you with food and your lives with happiness.

<sup>18</sup>Although Paul and Barnabas said these things, they hardly kept the crowd from sacrificing to them.

<sup>19</sup>However, Jews from the cities of Antioch and Iconium arrived in Lystra and won the people over. They tried to stone Paul to death and dragged him out of the city when they thought that he was dead. <sup>20</sup>But when the disciples gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city.

### Paul and Barnabas Retrace Their Route and Return to Antioch in Syria

<sup>14:20</sup> The next day Paul and Barnabas left for the city of Derbe. <sup>21</sup>They spread the Good News in that city and won many disciples. Then they went back to the cities of Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch (which is in Pisidia). <sup>22</sup>They strengthened the disciples in these cities and encouraged the disciples to remain faithful.

Paul and Barnabas told them: We must suffer a lot *polys*-much *thilpsis*-tribulation, oppression to enter the kingdom of God. **Acts 9:16.** <sup>23</sup>They had the disciples in each church choose *cheirotoneo*-ordained spiritual leaders *presbyteros* and with prayer *proseuchomai* and fasting *nesteia* 8x they entrusted *paratithemi*-commended the leaders to the Lord in whom they believed.

It took 10 heads of households to form a synagogue. Paul and Barnabas probably followed this same procedure to form an *ekklesia* as the Jerusalem church had done and appointed elders or "pastors" *presbyteros*. **Acts 11:30**

<sup>24</sup>After they had gone through Pisidia, they went to Pamphylia.

<sup>25</sup>They spoke the message in the city of Perga and went to the city of Attalia.

<sup>26</sup>From Attalia they took a boat and headed home to the city of Antioch in Syria. In Antioch they had been entrusted *paradidomi* handed over to God's care *charis* grace for the work *ergon* they had now finished *pleroo* fulfilled.

<sup>27</sup>When they arrived, they called the members of the church together. They reported everything God had done through them especially that he had given people who were not Jewish the opportunity to believe *anoigo* opened *thyra* door *pistis* faith. <sup>28</sup>They stayed for a long time with these disciples.

## COMMENT

Paul and Barnabas are allowed to speak in the synagogues, but their audience is divided. Some believe in Jesus, but others feel they are betraying the faith of their fathers. The people in Iconium are especially upset and planned to stone Paul and Barnabas for being false prophets, as Deuteronomy commanded:

[But any prophet who dares to say something in my name that I didn't command him to say or speaks in the name of other gods must die.  
Deuteronomy 18:20]

Paul and Barnabas escaped to the city of Lystra. There, Paul healed a man who had been lame from birth. There was a temple to Zeus in the city, so the priest brought out bulls with garlands around their necks and proclaimed Paul as Zeus and Barnabas as Hermes.

Barnabas and Paul were very upset. They preached a sermon about the one invisible God who had made everything. But this hardly kept the people from sacrificing to them. Then, the Jews from Antioch near Pisidia and Iconium came and began to stone Paul. They dragged him out of the city and thought he was dead. But when disciples arrived, he got up and went back into the city.

The next day they left for the city of Derbe, and then retraced their steps back through Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch near Pisidia strengthening the disciples. They ordained elders in each city to guide the house churches. Then they went to Pamphylia, Perga, and then in Attalia they boarded a boat back to Antioch in Syria.

When they arrived in Antioch, they reported to the church elders what they had done. They focused on how many Gentiles had come to believe in Jesus.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. In Iconium, a large crowd of Jews and Greeks believed after Paul preached. Paul and Barnabas stayed there a long time. Is this why the unbelieving Jews committed themselves to stone Paul for being a false prophet? How did they accomplish this?
2. We learn that Paul did most of the talking. **Acts 14:12**. What did Barnabas do?
3. Describe how Paul attempted to tell the people in Lystra why they were not gods walking around on the earth. Is this a compelling argument?
4. The people from Iconium and Antioch near Pisidia finally catch up with Paul and Barnabas and stone Paul in Lystra leaving him outside the city. But, he recovers. How is this? Some say Paul was dead and God resurrected him.
5. Why is only Paul stoned? What is Barnabas doing all this time?
6. Luke says the two returned to Derbe but returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch near Pisidia. How could they return to Lystra after Paul was stoned there?
7. Paul told the elders in Antioch in Syria that *We must suffer a lot for the kingdom of God*. God had told this to Ananias in Damascus. **Acts 9:16**. How did Paul know this? Did Ananias tell him this?

## EXTRA CREDIT

Paul and Barnabas ordain elders *presbyteros* in each city. How did they know who to appoint?

## EXTRA, EXTRA CREDIT

During their trip, why didn't Paul and Barnabas talk about Jews and Gentiles receiving the Holy Spirit when they believed in Jesus? Wouldn't this have been an incentive for non-believers to believe in Jesus and to receive the Holy Spirit as a gift? Remember that Peter mentioned this in his Pentecost sermon. **Acts 2:38**

# PERICOPE 25

## The Jerusalem Council

<sup>15:1</sup> Some men came from Judea and started to teach believers that people can't be saved *sozo* unless they are circumcised *peritemno* as Moses' Teachings require.

[God also said to Abraham: You and our descendants in generations to come are to be faithful to my covenant. This is how you are to be faithful to my covenant. Every male among you is to be circumcised. All of you must be circumcised. That will be the sign of the covenant from me to you.

For generations to come every male child who is eight days old must be circumcised, whether he is born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner who's not related to you. Every male born in your household or bought with your money is to be circumcised without exception.

So my covenant will be a sign on your flesh, an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male must be excluded from his people because he has rejected my covenant. **Genesis 17:9-14**]

Jews zealously performed circumcision. But to Greeks any denigration of the human body was blasphemous. Jews remembered the time in 163 BC when the Syrian King Antiochus IV Epiphanes hung dead children around the necks of their mothers who had circumcised them. So they fiercely guarded this tradition.

<sup>2</sup> Paul and Barnabas had a fierce dispute *ou-no oligos-small stasis*-dissent with these men. So Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were sent to Jerusalem to see the apostles and spiritual leaders *presbyteros*-elders about this claim.

<sup>3</sup>The church sent Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem. As they were going through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told the whole story of how non-Jewish people were turning to God. This story brought great joy to all the believers.

<sup>4</sup>The church in Jerusalem, the apostles, and the spiritual leaders welcomed Paul and Barnabas when they arrived. Paul and Barnabas reported everything that God had done through them. <sup>5</sup>But some believers from the party of the Pharisees stood up and said: People who are not Jewish must be circumcised and ordered to follow Moses' Teachings.

<sup>6</sup>The apostles and spiritual leaders met to consider this statement. <sup>7</sup>After a lot of debating, Peter stood up and said to them:

Brothers, you know what happened some time ago. God chose me so that people who aren't Jewish could hear the Good News and believe. <sup>8</sup>God, who knows everyone's thoughts, showed that he approved of people who aren't Jewish by giving them the Holy Spirit as he gave the Holy Spirit to us.

<sup>9</sup>God doesn't discriminate *oudeis*-no *diakrino*-difference between *metaxy* Jewish and non-Jewish people. He has cleansed *katharizo*-purified *autos*-their *kardia*-hearts non-Jewish people through faith *pistis* as he has cleansed us Jews. <sup>10</sup>So why are you testing *peizazo* God?

[He <sup>Moses</sup> named that place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites complained and because they tested the Lord asking: Is the Lord with us or not? **Exodus 17:7**]

You're putting a burden *zygos*-yoke on the disciples *mathetes*, a burden neither our ancestors nor we can carry *ischyo*-able *bastazo*-bear. <sup>11</sup>We certainly believe that the Lord Jesus *christos* Christ saves *sozo* us the same way that he saves them — through his kindness *charis*-grace.

<sup>12</sup>The whole crowd was silent *sigao* <sup>9x</sup>. They listened to Barnabas and Paul tell about all the miracles and amazing things that God had done through them among non-Jewish people. <sup>13</sup>After they finished speaking, James responded:



Brothers, listen to me. <sup>14</sup>Simon has explained how God first showed his concern by taking from non-Jewish people those who would honor his name. <sup>15</sup>This agrees with what the prophets said. Scripture says:

<sup>16</sup>Afterwards, I will return. I will set up David's fallen tent again. I will restore its ruined places again. I will set it up again <sup>17</sup>so that the survivors and all the people who aren't Jewish over whom my name is spoken, may search for the Lord, declares the Lord. <sup>18</sup>He is the one who will do these things that have always been known. **Amos 9:11-12**

[In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen and close up the breaches thereof. And I will raise up his ruins and I will build it as in the days of old. That they may possess the remnant of Edom and of all the heathen which are called by my name, says the Lord that does this. **Amos 9:11-12 KJV**]

<sup>19</sup>So I've decided that we shouldn't trouble non-Jewish people who are turning to God. <sup>20</sup>Instead, we should write a letter telling them to keep away from things polluted by false gods, from sexual sins, from eating the meat of strangled animals, and from eating bloody meat.

<sup>21</sup>After all, Moses' words have been spread to every city for generations. His teachings are read in synagogues on every day of rest—a holy day.

<sup>22</sup>Then the apostles, the spiritual leaders, and the whole church decided to choose some of their men to send with Paul and Barnabas to the city of Antioch. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, who were leaders among the believers <sup>23</sup>They wrote this letter for them to deliver:

From the apostles and the spiritual leaders, your brothers.

To their non-Jewish brothers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia.

<sup>24</sup>We have heard that some individuals who came from us have confused you with statements that disturb you. We did not authorize these men to speak.

[ Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls saying: You must be circumcised and keep the law – to whom we gave no such commandment – **Acts 15:24 KJV** ]

<sup>25</sup>So we have come to a unanimous decision *homothymadon* that we should choose men and send them to you with our dear Barnabas and Paul.

<sup>26</sup>Barnabas and Paul have dedicated their lives to our Lord, the one named Jesus Christ. <sup>27</sup>We have sent Judas and Silas to report to you on our decision. <sup>28</sup>The Holy Spirit and we have agreed not to place any additional burdens on you. Do only what is necessary <sup>29</sup>by keeping away from food sacrificed to false gods, from eating bloody meat, from eating the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual sins. If you avoid these things, you will be doing what's right. Farewell.

<sup>30</sup>So the men were sent on their way and arrived in the city of Antioch. They gathered the congregation together and delivered the letter. <sup>31</sup>When the people read the letter, they were pleased with the encouragement it brought them. <sup>32</sup>Judas and Silas, who were also prophets, spoke a long time to encourage and strengthen the believers.

<sup>33</sup>After Judas and Silas had stayed in Antioch for some time, the congregation sent them back to Jerusalem with friendly greetings to those who had sent them. <sup>35</sup>Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch. They and many others taught people about the Lord's word and spread the Good News.

## COMMENT

In 50 AD, twenty years after Jesus had died and risen again to life and ascended into heaven, the apostles and elders met in a church council in Jerusalem. This was the first of many church councils held to discuss and arrive at a consensus about problems facing the church.

The question was: Was circumcision necessary for male Gentiles, if they wanted to join the *ekklesia*? Paul and Barnabas reported the results of the first missionary trip. Peter then gave his testimony of how the Holy Spirit had come to Gentiles who had not been circumcised. **Acts 10:44-48**. Recall that Peter has already testified to this happening to the church in **Acts 11:1-18**.

But because of some in the ekklesia who were still objecting to Gentiles joining the church without being circumcised, James, the administrator of the church, held a council of all the leaders.

James then, as the first bishop of the ekklesia, stated the decision, for the members of the council were silent after Peter spoke. **Verse 12.** No one gave a dissenting opinion. James quoted Scripture he felt proved God wanted Gentiles into the ekklesia established by Jesus. So he wrote a letter saying Gentiles only had to obey certain laws, including some laid down by God to Noah. **Genesis 9:4**

James sent the elders, Judas and Silas, to accompany Paul and Barnabas back to Antioch. They held a congregational meeting *plethos* and read the letter. Judas and Silas also preached then returned to Jerusalem.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Why didn't James have the ekklesia vote?
2. Why did James say he decided the result and not include the congregation?
3. Why didn't Paul and Barnabas report how often the Holy Spirit came to both Gentile and Jewish believers during their first missionary journey?
4. Did the Scripture of Amos James quoted really support his decision?
5. Why didn't James say clearly Gentiles didn't have to be circumcised to join the ekklesia?
6. Why didn't James say there had to be evidence of the Holy Spirit's indwelling before a person could join the ekklesia?
7. Why wasn't baptism mentioned?

## EXTRA CREDIT

Why was the entire congregation silent after Peter gave his testimony? Why did they continue to be silent after Barnabas and Paul gave their testimony? Did they really believe that God would save the entire world without using the Chosen People as his agent?

## Part Six - Paul's Second Missionary Journey (51-54 AD)

### PERICOPES 26-30

Paul's second missionary journey began by re-visiting cities he had visited on his first journey but traveling west across Asia Minor and then entering Macedonia in Europe sailing across the Aegean Sea. He spent 18 months in Corinth where he wrote First and Second Thessalonians.

At first Barnabas and Paul were to travel together. John Mark had joined his uncle at Antioch, so Barnabas wanted to take his cousin with them to Cyprus perhaps to see relatives. But Paul refused. He was upset John Mark had deserted them before. So Barnabas and John Mark went to Cyprus, while Paul took Silas or Silvanus north through Syria and Cilicia. At this point, the Book of Acts takes on a more Gentile flavor.

Then they went north to Troas where Paul had a vision of a man calling him from Macedonia. Many think this was Luke and that Luke joined them perhaps before and later in Philippi which was apparently Luke's hometown. Philippi also had a famous school of medicine. The first so-called "*we passages*" by Luke in Acts begin here. Luke apparently is now traveling with Paul and Silas.

Here is a map showing all Paul's missionary travels, including his second missionary journey.



## PERICOPE 26

### Lystra and a Vision

<sup>15:36</sup> After a while Paul said to Barnabas: Let's go back to every city where we spread the Lord's word. We'll visit the believers to see how they're doing.

<sup>37</sup> Barnabas wanted to take John Mark along. <sup>38</sup> However, Paul didn't think it was right to take a person like him along. John Mark had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to work. Acts 13:13. <sup>39</sup> Paul and Barnabas disagreed so sharply *paroxysmos* <sup>2X</sup> that they parted ways *apochorizo* <sup>2X</sup> *apo allelon*—one from the other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed to the island of Cyprus.

<sup>40</sup> Paul chose Silas and left after the believers *adelphos*—brothers entrusted *paradidomi* handed over him to the Lord's care *charis*. <sup>41</sup> Paul went through the provinces of Syria and Cilicia and strengthened the churches.

Luke doesn't say whether Paul stopped at his hometown of Tarsus in Cilicia on the way.

### Timothy Joins Paul in Lystra

<sup>16:1</sup> Paul arrived in the city of Derbe and then went to Lystra where a disciple named Timothy lived. Timothy's mother was a Jewish believer, but his father was Greek. <sup>2</sup> The believers in Lystra and Iconium spoke well of Timothy. <sup>3</sup> Paul wanted Timothy to go with him. So he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in those places and because he knew that Timothy's father was Greek.

<sup>4</sup> As they went through the cities, they told people about the decisions that the apostles and spiritual leaders in Jerusalem had made for the people. <sup>5</sup> So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew in numbers every day.

### Paul Has a Vision

<sup>16:6</sup> Paul and Silas went through the regions of Phrygia and Galatia because the Holy Spirit kept them from speaking the word in the province of Asia.

<sup>7</sup>They went to the province of Mysia and tried to enter Bithynia but the **Spirit** <of Jesus> wouldn't allow this. <sup>8</sup>So they passed by Mysia and went to the city of Troas.

<sup>9</sup>During the night Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia. The man urged Paul: Come to Macedonia to help us. <sup>10</sup>As soon as Paul had seen the vision, we immediately looked for a way to go to Macedonia. We concluded that God had called us to tell the people of Macedonia about the Good News.

Some conclude from the *we* used in these sentences that Luke joined Paul, Silas, and Timothy at this point. Others feel Luke is copying words from a travel diary given him. There is no Greek word translated *we* in the King James Version according to [www.blueletterbible.com](http://www.blueletterbible.com).

## COMMENT

Luke does not explain why Paul did not want John Mark to accompany them. But it seems it would have been quite awkward for Barnabas not to take him if John Mark had already traveled the 300 miles north from Jerusalem to see his uncle. Their argument was apparently quite severe.

Paul then chose Silas to come on the trip. Paul may have had to contact Silas in Jerusalem, as he was an elder in the Jerusalem church. Barnabas and John Mark returned to Cyprus perhaps to again visit relatives. Paul and Silas traveled to Asia Minor to re-visit some of the house churches they had founded there.

Paul found Timothy in Lystra, a city where Jews had attempted to stone him and had dragged him out of the city leaving him for dead. **Acts 14:19**. Paul circumcised Timothy because his father was Greek and he did not want to offend any. Paul publicized the letter the church at Jerusalem had written to encourage Gentile believers to enter the faith.

Paul went through the cities in the Roman provinces of Phrygia and Galatia because the Spirit wouldn't let them enter the province of Asia. They went to the province of Mysia and went to the city of Troas. While Paul was in Troas, he saw a vision of a man in Macedonia calling him to help him. Paul obeyed the vision and immediately took a boat across the Aegean Sea to the island of Samothrace. The next day they sailed to the city of Neapolis. Then they went to the city of Philippi, a city established for retired Roman soldiers.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Paul's decision to circumcise Timothy seems strange. He had fought so hard not to require Gentiles to be circumcised. Why did he circumcise Timothy?
2. Why did the Holy Spirit not want Paul to evangelize in the province of Asia?. This was the Roman province where the prophet John later pastored the seven churches in the Book of Revelation.
3. Paul goes to Philippi to minister. This will be the church that supports him financially the most. Why would a retired Roman soldiers' city be so anxious to accept the Gospel?
4. The "we" passages in Acts are mysterious. Does this indicate Luke joined them there? Was Luke the man from Macedonia calling Paul in a vision?
5. Troas was a pivotal port between the land masses of Asia Minor and Europe. Why was it significant that Luke joined them there?

## PERICOPE 27

### Paul and Silas in Philippi

<sup>16:11</sup> So we took a ship from Troas and sailed straight to the island of Samothrace. The next day we sailed to the city of Neapolis, <sup>12</sup> and from there we went to the city of Philippi. Philippi is a leading city in that part of Macedonia, and it is a Roman colony. We were in this city for a number of days.

Many say that Philippi was Luke's hometown because of his calling it *a leading city*. The capital of Macedonia was Thessalonica.

<sup>13</sup> On the day of rest—a holy day, we went out of the city to a place along the river where we thought Jewish people gathered for prayer. We sat down and began talking to the women who had gathered there.

<sup>14</sup> A woman named Lydia was present. She was a convert to Judaism from the city of Thyatira and sold purple dye for a living. She was listening because the Lord made her willing to pay attention *prosecho*-attentive to what Paul said *kyrios*-Lord *dianoigo*-opened *kardia*-heart. <sup>15</sup> When Lydia and her family were baptized, she invited us to stay at her home. She said: If you're convinced that I believe in the Lord *krino*-judged *pistos*-faithful, then stay at my home. She insisted *parabiazomai* <sup>2x</sup>. So we did.

<sup>16</sup> One day when we were going to the place of prayer, a female servant met us. She was possessed by an evil *python*-divination <sup>ix</sup> spirit *pneuma* that told fortunes. She made a lot of money for her owners by telling fortunes.

<sup>17</sup> She used to follow Paul and shout: These men are servants of the Most High *hypsistos* God *theos*. Luke 8:28. They're telling *katangelo*-showing you how you can be saved *hodos*-way *soteria*-salvation. <sup>18</sup> She kept doing this for many days. Paul became annoyed, turned to the evil spirit, and said: I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.

As Paul said this, the evil spirit left her. <sup>19</sup> When her owners realized that their hope of making money was gone, they grabbed Paul and Silas and



dragged them to the authorities in the public square. <sup>20</sup>In front of the Roman officials, they said: These men are stirring up a lot of trouble in our city. They're Jews, <sup>21</sup>and they're advocating customs that we can't accept or practice as Roman citizens.

<sup>22</sup>The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas. Then the officials tore the clothes off Paul and Silas and ordered the guards to beat them with sticks. <sup>23</sup>After they had hit Paul and Silas many times, they threw them in jail and ordered the jailer to keep them under tight security. <sup>24</sup>So the jailer followed these orders and put Paul and Silas into solitary confinement with their feet in leg irons.

<sup>25</sup>Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God. The other prisoners were listening to them. <sup>26</sup>Suddenly, a violent earthquake shook the foundations of the jail. All the doors immediately flew open, and all the prisoners' chains came loose.

<sup>27</sup>The jailer woke up and saw the prison doors open. Thinking the prisoners had escaped, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself. <sup>28</sup>But Paul shouted as loudly as he could: Don't hurt yourself! We're all here!

<sup>29</sup>The jailer asked for torches and rushed into the jail. He was trembling as he knelt in front of Paul and Silas.

<sup>30</sup>Then he took Paul and Silas outside and asked: *Sirs, what do I have to do poieo to be saved sozo?* <sup>31</sup>They answered: Believe *pisteuo* in the Lord Jesus *christos*-Christ and you and your family *oikos*-house will be saved *sozo*. <sup>32</sup>They spoke the Lord's word to the jailer and everyone in his home.

<sup>33</sup>At that hour of the night, the jailer washed Paul and Silas' wounds. The jailer and his entire family were baptized immediately. <sup>34</sup>He took Paul and Silas upstairs into his home and gave them something to eat. He and his family were thrilled *agalliao*-rejoiced to be believers *pisteuo* in God.

<sup>35</sup>In the morning the Roman officials sent guards who told the jailer: You can release those men now. <sup>36</sup>The jailer reported this order to Paul by saying:

The officials *strategos*-magistrates 10x have sent word to release you. So you can leave peacefully now.

<sup>37</sup> But Paul told the guards: Roman officials have had us beaten *dero* publicly *demosios* 4x without a trial *akatakritos* 2x and have thrown *ballo* us in jail *phylake*, even though we're *hyparcho*-being Roman *rhomaiois* citizens. Now are they going to throw us out secretly *lathra?* There's no way they're going to get away with that. Have them escort us out !

<sup>38</sup> The guards reported to the officials what Paul had said. When the Roman officials heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were afraid *phobeo*. <sup>39</sup> So the officials went to the jail and apologized *parakaleo* to Paul and Silas. As the officials escorted Paul and Silas out of the jail, they asked *erotao* them to leave *exerchomai* the city.

<sup>40</sup> After Paul and Silas left the jail, they went to Lydia's house. They met with the believers, encouraged them, and then left.

## COMMENT

Paul and Silas come to Philippi, a city where many retired Roman soldiers lived. On the Sabbath near the river, they meet Lydia, a Gentile God-fearer from Thyatira, a city in the province of Asia. She sold purple dye, a color only wealthy and important people wore. She listened deeply to Paul and was baptized together with her family. Then she invited them to stay in her home.

One day when Paul and Silas were going to a place of prayer, they were accosted by a slave girl with an evil spirit. She shouted at Paul saying: *These are servants of the Most High God telling people about the way of salvation.* Paul was annoyed and said: *In the name of Jesus Christ, come out of her.* The evil spirit did, and the girl could no longer prophesy.

Her owners were furious at this loss of income. Stirring up a large crowd, they took Paul and Silas to the city magistrates accusing them of being Jews who teach practices Romans do not follow. The magistrates had them beaten with rods and then threw them in jail. At midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns as the other prisoners watched them.

Suddenly there was a violent earthquake that shook the jail. The doors of the jail flew open and the shackles on the prisoners fell off. The jailor woke up and seeing the doors open thought all

the prisoners had escaped. So he drew his sword to kill himself. However, Paul shouted: *We're all still here! Don't hurt yourself!*

The guard was going to kill himself because in Roman law a guard who allowed his prisoner to escape was liable to the same penalty the prisoner would have suffered. (*Code of Justinian* 9.4.4). This jailer was about to commit suicide and so avoid the shame of a public execution. He was certain that his prisoners had escaped.

Lighting torches, the jailor went into the prison. He trembled as he knelt before Paul and Silas saying: *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?* They replied: *Believe in the Lord Jesus and you and your family will be saved.* Then they preached the Gospel to everyone in the jailor's house. Even though it was late, the jailor washed the wounds of Paul and Silas and gave them food.

In the morning, the magistrates told the jailor to release the prisoners. But Paul sent a message to the magistrates they were Roman citizens, and it was against the law to beat citizens without a trial. The magistrates were horrified and fearful at what they had done and apologized profusely. Then they asked them to leave the city.

Lydia's house church became one of Paul's biggest financial supporters from then on.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Why was Lydia, a Gentile God-fearer, so receptive to Paul's preaching about Jesus?
2. Why was Lydia, a wealthy woman and single, living in a city where many retired Roman soldiers lived?
3. How did the jailor know about salvation? Had Paul preached to him before?
4. Since magistrates feared what they had done to Paul, he could have stayed in the city. Why did he leave?

# PERICOPE 28

## Paul and Silas in Thessalonica

<sup>17:1</sup> Paul and Silas traveled through the cities of Amphipolis and Apollonia and came to the city of Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue. <sup>2</sup>As usual, Paul went into the synagogue. On three consecutive days of rest—holy days, he had discussions about Scripture with the synagogue members.

<sup>3</sup>He explained and showed them that the Messiah had to suffer, die, and come back to life, and that Jesus, the person he talked about, was this Messiah. <sup>4</sup>Some of the Jews were persuaded to join Paul and Silas, especially a large group of *sebo*-devout <sup>10X</sup> Greeks <who had converted to Judaism> and the wives of many prominent men.

<sup>5</sup>Then the Jews became jealous. They took some low-class characters who hung around the public square, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They attacked Jason's home and searched it for Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd.

<sup>6</sup>When they didn't find Paul and Silas, they dragged Jason and some other believers in front of the city officials. They shouted: Those men who have made trouble all over the world are now here in Thessalonica <sup>7</sup>and Jason has welcomed them as his guests. All of them oppose the Emperor's decrees by saying that there is another king, whose name is Jesus.

<sup>8</sup>The crowd and the officials were upset when they heard this. <sup>9</sup>But after they had made Jason and the others post bond, they let them go. <sup>10</sup>Immediately when night came, the believers sent Paul and Silas to the city of Berea.

## Paul and Silas in Berea

<sup>17:10</sup> When Paul and Silas arrived in the city of Berea, they entered the synagogue. <sup>11</sup>The people of Berea were more open-minded than the people of Thessalonica. They were very willing to receive God's message and every

day they carefully examined the Scriptures to see if what Paul said was true. <sup>12</sup> Many of them became believers, and quite a number of them were prominent Greek men and women.

<sup>13</sup> But when the Jews in Thessalonica found out that Paul was also spreading God's word in Berea, they went there to upset and confuse the people. <sup>14</sup> The believers immediately sent Paul to the seacoast, but Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea.

## COMMENT

Thessalonica was the capital of Macedonia. Paul was there three weeks teaching in the synagogue before trouble broke out. Many Gentile God-fearers joined Paul. Many Jews became jealous, rounded up a crowd of rowdies, formed a mob and attacked Jason at whose home Paul and Silas were staying. Then they took Jason and some other disciples to the magistrates claiming they taught Caesar was not a king but Jesus was a king. The officials made Jason post bond so that if Paul reappeared in the city, Jason would be imprisoned. That night the disciples sent Paul and Silas to Berea.

In Berea, Paul and Silas found people more open-minded. After Paul spoke, the people searched the Scriptures to see if what Paul said was true. Many became believers in Jesus. But when the Jews in Thessalonica found out Paul was there, he was sent to the seacoast alone while Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Here again Paul experiences the same thing again and again. Some believed but many didn't. And those that didn't believe caused Paul trouble. Since Paul did most of the talking, he was the one unbelieving Jews attacked. Why did it take the Jews three weeks before they caused Paul trouble?
2. *Kyrios Kaisar* or King Caesar was a common greeting derived from the third name of Emperor Julius Caesar. Why could Christians not say this greeting? What was their greeting?
3. Paul ended up writing two letters to the Thessalonians - believed to be the earliest of his letters written. What does this say about the number of believers in Thessalonica?
4. What particular Scriptures were the Bereans looking at when proof texting Paul?
5. Paul was now probably at a low point as he was taken to Athens and left there alone. How did he keep himself going?

# PERICOPE 29

## Paul in Athens

<sup>17:15</sup> The men who escorted Paul took him all the way to the city of Athens. When the men left Athens, they took instructions back to Silas and Timothy to join Paul as soon as possible.

<sup>16</sup> While Paul was waiting for Silas and Timothy in Athens, he saw that the city had statues of false gods everywhere. This upset him *pneuma*-spirit *paroxyno*-stirred 2X. <sup>17</sup> He held discussions *dialegomai*-disputed in the synagogue with Jews and converts to Judaism.

Luke will use the word *dialegomai* 10X in Acts 17:2, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8, 9; 20:7, 9; 24:12, 25 – the most of any Biblical writer.

He also held discussions every day in the public square with anyone who happened to be there. <sup>18</sup> Some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers had discussions with him. Some asked: What is this babbling fool *spermologos* seed-picker IX trying to say? Others said: He seems to be speaking about foreign gods. The philosophers said these things because Paul was telling the Good News about Jesus and saying that people would come back to life.

Some of them thought Paul was talking about a new god named Resurrection.

<sup>19</sup> Then they brought Paul to the city court, the Areopagus, and asked: Could you tell us these new ideas that you're teaching? <sup>20</sup> Some of the things you say sound strange to us. So we would like to know what they mean. <sup>21</sup> Everyone who lived in Athens looked for opportunities to tell or hear something new and unusual.

Areopagus Hill was its Greek name. It was also referred to as "Mars Hill" as this was the Roman name given to the Greek god of war.

<sup>22</sup> Paul stood in the middle of the court and said:

Men of Athens, I see that you are very religious. <sup>23</sup>As I was going through your city and looking closely at the objects you worship, I noticed an altar with this written on it: *To an unknown god*.

I'm telling you about the unknown god you worship. <sup>24</sup>The God who made the universe and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth. He doesn't live in shrines made by humans, <sup>25</sup>and he isn't served by humans as if he needed anything. He gives everyone life, breath, and everything they have.

<sup>26</sup>From one man he has made every nation of humanity to live all over the earth. He has given them the seasons of the year and the boundaries within which to live. <sup>27</sup>He has done this so that they would look for God, somehow reach for him, and find him. In fact, he is never far from any one of us.

<sup>28</sup>Certainly, we live, move, and exist because of him. As some of your poets have said: We are God's children.

<sup>29</sup>So if we are God's children, we shouldn't think that the divine being is like an image made from gold, silver, or stone, an image that is the product of human imagination and skill.

<sup>30</sup>God overlooked the times when people didn't know any better. But now he commands everyone everywhere to turn to him and change the way they think and act. <sup>31</sup>He has set a day when he is going to judge the world with justice, and he will use a man he has appointed to do this. God has given proof to everyone that he will do this by bringing that man back to life.

<sup>32</sup>When the people of the court heard that a person had come back to life, some began joking about it, while others said: We'll hear you talk about this some other time.

<sup>33</sup> With this response, Paul left the court. <sup>34</sup> Some men joined him and became believers. With them were Dionysius, who was a member of the court, and a woman named Damaris and some other people.

Dionysius and Damaris are people that we do not read about again in the New Testament. However, the very early church historian, Eusebius, wrote that Dionysius became the first bishop of the church at Athens, and another early church figure claimed that Damaris was Dionysius' wife.

## COMMENT

Even though Paul is all alone and at a low point, he is still able to talk to these highly educated philosophers. He begins at their level, talking about their altar to an unknown god. Let me tell you about this unknown god, he begins.

The God who created heaven and earth doesn't live in shrines made by humans. He is the one who gives humans everything they need to live. From one man, he created all men, and he created creation. He did this so that men would look for him and find him. As your own poets have said: In him we live and move and have our being. We didn't create God, he created us.

In the past, God overlooked our ignorance. But now he commands everyone to turn to him and repent of their wickedness. He has set a day when he will judge everyone in the world using a man he will choose. He proved this by raising this man from death to life.

When the Athenians heard this, some thought Paul was talking about a new god named Resurrection. Some started laughing but others said: We'll listen to you later. But some became believers and joined him.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Why did the Athenians like new ideas?
2. How does Paul appeal to their own interests?
3. How does Paul differentiate **YHWH** from idols?
4. Why does Paul talk about a judgment day? Peter referred to this when talking to Gentiles. **Acts 10:42**. Gentiles seem to be disturbed about this.
5. Why does the idea of resurrection from the dead seem impossible to the Athenians?
6. Paul begins with the one true God as everyone's creator and ends with God as everyone's judge. Why is this so effective with Gentiles?



# PERICOPE 30

## Paul in Corinth

<sup>18:1</sup> After this, Paul left Athens and went to the city of Corinth. <sup>2</sup> In Corinth he met a Jewish man named Aquila and his wife Priscilla. Aquila had been born in Pontus, and they had recently come from Italy because <Emperor> Claudius [41-54 AD] had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to visit them, <sup>3</sup> and because they made tents for a living as he did, he stayed with them and they worked together.

<sup>4</sup> On every day of rest—a holy day, Paul would discuss <Scripture> in the synagogue. He tried to win over Jews and Greeks who had converted to Judaism.

<sup>5</sup> But when Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul devoted all his time to teaching God's word. He assured the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah.

<sup>6</sup> But they opposed him and insulted him. So Paul shook the dust from his clothes and told them: You're responsible for your own <spiritual> death. I'm innocent. From now on I'm going to people who are not Jewish.

<sup>7</sup> Then he left the synagogue and went to the home of a man named Titius Justus who was a convert to Judaism. His house was next door to the synagogue. <sup>8</sup> The synagogue leader Crispus and his whole family believed in the Lord. Many Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptized.

<sup>9</sup> One night the Lord said to Paul in a vision: Don't be afraid to speak out. Don't be silent. <sup>10</sup> I'm with you. No one will attack you or harm you. I have many people in this city.

<sup>11</sup> Paul lived in Corinth for a year and a half and taught God's word to them.

This was the longest time Paul has spent in one place so far.

<sup>12</sup> While Gallio was Governor of Greece, the Jews had one thought in mind. They attacked Paul and brought him to court. <sup>13</sup> They said: This man is

persuading people to worship God in ways that are against Moses' Teachings.

<sup>14</sup> Paul was about to answer when Gallio said to the Jews: If there were some kind of misdemeanor or crime involved, reason would demand that I put up with you Jews. <sup>15</sup> But since you're disputing words, names, and your own teachings, you'll have to take care of that yourselves. I don't want to be a judge who gets involved in those things. <sup>16</sup> So Gallio had them forced out of his court.

<sup>17</sup> Then all the governor's officers took Sosthenes, the synagogue leader, and beat him in front of the court. But Gallio couldn't have cared less.

### **Paul's Return Trip to Antioch**

<sup>18</sup> After staying in Corinth quite a while longer, Paul left for Ephesus. Priscilla and Aquila went with him. In the city of Cenchrea, Aquila had his <Paul's> hair cut, since he <Paul> had taken a vow.

From Cenchrea they took a boat headed for Syria <sup>19</sup> and arrived in the city of Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. Paul went into the synagogue and had a discussion with the Jews. <sup>20</sup> The Jews asked him to stay longer but he refused. <sup>21</sup> As he left, he told them: I'll come back to visit you if God wants me to.

Jews often made vows for various reasons. At the end of the vow, the person who made it would cut his hair and offer it as a burnt offering, along with a sacrifice, on the bronze altar in Jerusalem. **Numbers 6:1-21.** Paul, according to one view, had his hair cut in Cenchrea, and took it with him to Jerusalem, where he ceremonially burned it in the fire in the Court of the Women. No one knows.

Paul took a boat from Ephesus <sup>22</sup> and arrived in the city of Caesarea. He went to Jerusalem greeted the church and went back to the city of Antioch.

### **COMMENT**

Paul ends his second missionary journey by staying 18 months in Corinth. He started in the north of Macedonia and has ended up in the far south. Corinth was a city built on an isthmus. Ships sailing around the bottom of Achaia encountered severe storms so a better way of

traveling east/west was to have the ships put on wooden logs and dragged/rolled 3 ½ miles across the isthmus.

Corinth then was a seafaring town with all its boisterous and perverse amusements, such as drunkenness and prostitution, with a population of 200,000. It was the largest city in Greece, the capital of the Roman province of Achaia, and a Roman colony. Its temple to Aphrodite had 1,000 temple prostitutes.

Paul was still alone but he met two Jews who had recently left Rome as Christians were driven from the city because of their disputes with the Jews. Paul worked with Priscilla and Aquilla as tentmakers making awnings for the shops in the city. On the Sabbath, when he wasn't required to work, Paul taught in the synagogue. But when Silas and Timothy arrived, Paul taught every day.

Soon some Jews drove him from the synagogue. So Paul moved next door to the home of Titius Justus. Many followed him including the synagogue president Crispus and his whole family. Paul won many converts and founded a house church there. God encouraged Paul in a vision saying: *I'm with you and I have many believers in this city.*

So Paul stayed in Corinth 18 months, the most he had stayed in one city so far. Yet Luke tells us very little of what Paul did in Corinth. It was here he wrote his first two Letters to the Thessalonians.

The Jews attempted to have Paul tried by Governor Gallio, charging him with teaching contrary to Jewish ways. But Gallio was not interested in Jewish disputes. Then Gallio's officers beat up the synagogue leader Sosthenes, but the Governor didn't interfere.

Finally, Paul decided to return to Antioch. He sailed to Cenchrea and then to Ephesus. He left Priscilla and Aquilla in Ephesus where the Jews asked him to stay longer but he refused. *If God wants me to return, I will, he promised.* Paul sailed to Caesarea and then went to Jerusalem where he reported to James how his missionary journey went. Then he returned to Antioch.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Why does God give Paul a vision in Corinth?
2. Why does Paul stay 18 months in Corinth?
3. Why does Paul report to James in Jerusalem before returning to Antioch? What is his purpose in doing so?
4. Why doesn't Luke tell us how James received Paul's report of his missionary activities?

# Part Seven - Paul's Third Missionary Journey (54-58 AD)

## PERICOPES 31-34

Paul's third journey began as did his second journey traveling north through Syria and into Cilicia and across Asia Minor to Ephesus, a large city of 250,000 people in the Roman province of Asia.

He will stay the longest in Ephesus – two years and three months, then go west to Macedonia and Acacia where he stays in Corinth.

Here is a map of Paul's third missionary journey.



## PERICOPE 31

### Paul Goes to Galatia and Phrygia

<sup>18:23</sup> After spending some time in Antioch, Paul went through the regions of Galatia and Phrygia where he strengthened the faith of all the disciples.

### Apollos Tells Others about Jesus in Ephesus

<sup>18:24</sup> A Jew named Apollos, who had been born in Alexandria <Egypt>, arrived in the city of Ephesus. He was an eloquent speaker and knew how to use the Scriptures in a powerful way. <sup>25</sup> He had been instructed in the Lord's way and spoke enthusiastically. He accurately taught about Jesus but knew only about the baptism John performed.

<sup>26</sup> He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him home with them and explained God's way to him more accurately.

### Apollos Goes to Corinth

<sup>18:27</sup> When Apollos wanted to travel to Greece <Achaia>, the believers in Ephesus encouraged him. They wrote to the disciples in Greece to tell them to welcome him. When he arrived in Greece, God's kindness *charis* -grace enabled him to help the believers a great deal. <sup>28</sup> In public Apollos helped

them by clearly showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah and that the Jews were wrong.

Apollos was so effective at instructing the Corinthian believers, and refuting Jewish objectors, that he developed a strong personal following in Corinth. **1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:4**

### **Paul Meets Disciples of John the Baptist at Ephesus**

<sup>19:1</sup> While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the interior provinces to get to the city of Ephesus. He met some disciples in Ephesus <sup>2</sup>and asked them: Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers? They answered him: No we've never even heard of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>3</sup>Paul asked them: What kind of baptism did you have? They answered: John's baptism. <sup>4</sup>Paul said: John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. John told people to believe in Jesus, who was coming later. **Luke 3:16**

<sup>5</sup>After they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup>When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came to them, and they began to talk in other languages and to speak what God had revealed. <sup>7</sup>About twelve men were in the group.

### **Paul First Ministers to Jews in Ephesus**

<sup>19:8</sup> For three months Paul would go into the synagogue and speak boldly. He had discussions with people to convince them about God's kingdom. <sup>9</sup>But when some people became stubborn, refused to believe, and had nothing good to say in front of the crowd about the way of Christ, he left them.

### **Paul Now Ministers to Jews and Gentiles for Two Years**

<sup>19:9</sup> He took his disciples and held daily discussions in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. <sup>10</sup>This continued for two years so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the Roman province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.

<sup>11</sup>God worked unusual miracles through Paul. <sup>12</sup>People would take handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched Paul's skin to those who were sick. Their sicknesses would be cured, and evil spirits would leave them.

### **Some Jews Attempt to Exorcise Evil Spirits Using Jesus and Paul's Name**

<sup>19:13</sup>Some Jews used to travel from place to place and force evil spirits out of people. They tried to use the name of the Lord Jesus to force evil spirits out of those who were possessed. These Jews would say: I order you to come out in the name of Jesus, whom Paul talks about. <sup>14</sup>Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish high priest, were doing this.

<sup>15</sup>But the evil spirit answered them: I know Jesus and I'm acquainted with Paul, but who are you? <sup>16</sup>Then the man possessed by the evil spirit attacked them. He beat them up so badly that they ran out of that house naked and wounded. <sup>17</sup>All the Jews and Greeks living in the city of Ephesus heard about this. All of them were filled with awe for the name of the Lord Jesus and began to speak very highly about it.

### **Many Believers Burn Their Magic Books**

<sup>19:18</sup>Many believers openly admitted their involvement with magical spells and told all the details. <sup>19</sup>Many of those who were involved in the occult gathered their books and burned them in front of everyone. They added up the cost of these books and found that they were worth 50,000 silver coins. <sup>20</sup>In this powerful way the word of the Lord was spreading and gaining strength.

### **Paul Decides to Travel Through Macedonia and Acacia and Return to Jerusalem**

<sup>19:21</sup>After all these things had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem by traveling through Macedonia and Greece.

He said: After I have been there, I must see Rome.

<sup>22</sup>So he sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he stayed longer in the province of Asia.

## Demetrius Attempts to Discredit the Followers of the Way

<sup>19:23</sup> During that time a serious disturbance concerning the way of Christ broke out in the city of Ephesus.

<sup>24</sup> Demetrius, a silversmith, was in the business of making silver models of the temple of Artemis. His business brought a huge profit for the men who worked for him. <sup>25</sup> He called a meeting of his workers and others who did similar work.

Demetrius said: Men, you know that we're earning a good income from this business, <sup>26</sup> and you see and hear what this man Paul has done. He has won over a large crowd that follows him not only in Ephesus but also throughout the province of Asia. He tells people that gods made by humans are not gods.

<sup>27</sup> There's a danger that people will discredit our line of work and there's a danger that people will think that the temple of the great goddess Artemis is nothing. Then she whom all Asia and the rest of the world worship will be robbed of her glory.

## The Silversmiths Begin a Riot

<sup>19:28</sup> When Demetrius' workers and the others heard this, they became furious and began shouting: Artemis of the Ephesians is great. <sup>29</sup> The confusion *sygchysis* <sup>IX</sup> spread throughout the city, and the people had one thought in mind *homothymadon*—one accord—as they rushed into the theater. They grabbed Gaius and Aristarchus, the Macedonians who traveled *synedemas* <sup>2X</sup> with Paul, and they dragged the two men into the theater with them.

<sup>30</sup> Paul wanted to go into the crowd, but his disciples wouldn't let him.

<sup>31</sup> Even some officials who were from the province of Asia *asiaarches* <sup>IX</sup> and who were Paul's friends sent messengers to urge him not to risk going into the theater.

<sup>32</sup> Some people shouted one thing while others shouted something else. The crowd was confused. Most of the people didn't even know why they had



come together. <sup>33</sup>Some people concluded that Alexander was the cause, so the Jews pushed him to the front.

Alexander motioned with his hand to quiet the people because he wanted to defend himself in front of them. <sup>34</sup>But when they recognized that Alexander was a Jew, everyone started to shout in unison: Artemis of the Ephesians is great. They kept doing this for about two hours.

<sup>35</sup>The city clerk finally quieted the crowd. Then he said: Citizens of Ephesus, everyone knows that this city of the Ephesians is the keeper of the temple of the great Artemis. Everyone knows that Ephesus is the keeper of the statue that fell down from Zeus. <sup>36</sup>No one can deny this. So you have to be quiet and not do anything foolish. <sup>37</sup>The men you brought here don't rob temples or insult our goddess. <sup>38</sup>If Demetrius and the men who work for him have a legal complaint against anyone, we have special days and officials to hold court. That's where they should bring charges against each other.

<sup>39</sup>If you want anything else, you must settle the matter in a legal assembly. <sup>40</sup>At this moment we run the risk of being accused of rioting today for no reason. We won't be able to explain this mob. <sup>41</sup>After saying this, he dismissed the assembly.

### Paul Leaves for Macedonia

<sup>20:1</sup>When the uproar was over, Paul sent for the disciples, encouraged them, said goodbye, and left for Macedonia. <sup>2</sup>He went through that region and spoke many words of encouragement to the people. Then he went to Greece <sup>3</sup>and stayed there for three months.

## COMMENT

Remember that in **Acts 16:6** the Holy Spirit had kept Paul from ministering in the province of Asia. Now he is allowed to keep his promise to the Ephesian elders. But on his way, he meets 12 disciples of John the Baptist. He asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit. They said they hadn't and had only received the baptism of John. Paul explained the baptism of Jesus, baptized them, and they then received the Holy Spirit.

When Paul reached Ephesus, he went into the synagogue and taught for three months. But when the Jews rejected him, he taught daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus for the next two years where he was well received. Like Peter earlier in **Acts 15:14-16**, God performed miracles through Paul where people would take articles of clothing that had touched Paul's skin to sick people to cure them or to exorcise evil spirits.

Seven sons of a Jewish high priest Sceva attempted to exorcise evil spirits using the name of the Lord Jesus whom Paul talks about. The evil spirit would reply: *I know Jesus and I know Paul, but who are you?* Then the spirit attacked them so that they ran out of the house naked. Many heard about the miracles and so burned their magic books and occult apparatus. So Ephesus became a great Christian center.

Paul now decided to end his third journey by traveling through Macedonia and Acacia before returning to Jerusalem. But he said: *I must see Rome*. Little did he know.

Then the silversmiths rioted in the Ephesian theatre, so Paul knew it was time to leave. He left for Macedonia and stayed three months in Acacia in Corinth.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. The Holy Spirit finally allows Paul to go to the Roman province of Asia where Ephesus is. Why did the Holy Spirit prevent him from going there before?
2. Why doesn't Paul talk more about the Holy Spirit in his preaching as Peter did at Pentecost? **Acts 2:38**
3. Luke doesn't talk much about Paul ordaining elders and setting up house churches. Why not?
4. Paul stays in Ephesus the longest time before there is a big riot. How is he able to stay there so long?
5. Why does Paul now want to return to Macedonia and Acacia before concluding his third missionary journey at Jerusalem?

## PERICOPE 32

### Paul in Troas

<sup>20:3</sup> When Paul was going to board a ship for Syria, he found out that the Jews were plotting to kill him. So he decided to go back through Macedonia. <sup>4</sup> Sopater, son of Pyrrhus from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia accompanied Paul.

These men were carrying the collection for poor Jews in Jerusalem that Paul was gathering. **2 Corinthians 8:1-34**

<sup>5</sup> All these men went ahead and were waiting for us in Troas. <sup>6</sup> After the Festival of Unleavened Bread, we boarded a ship at Philippi. Five days later we joined them in Troas and stayed there for seven days.

### Paul Preaches Until Midnight and Then Heals a Man Who Falls Out the Window

<sup>20:7</sup> On Sunday *heis*-first *sabbaton*-day after Sabbath we met to break bread.

This is the first mention of Christians meeting on the first day of the week.

Paul was discussing <Scripture> with the people. Since he intended to leave the next day, he kept talking until midnight. <sup>8</sup> Many lamps were lit in the upstairs room where we were meeting.

<sup>9</sup> A young man named Eutychus was sitting in a window. As Paul was talking on and on, Eutychus was gradually falling asleep. Finally, overcome by sleep, he fell from the third story and was dead when they picked him up. <sup>10</sup> Paul went to him, took him into his arms and said: Don't worry. He's alive. <sup>11</sup> Then Eutychus went upstairs again, broke the bread, and ate. Paul talked with the people for a long time, until sunrise, and then left. <sup>12</sup> The people took the boy home. They were greatly relieved that he was alive.

How casually Luke discusses this. Paul has brought a dead man back to life.

## Paul's Trip to Miletus

<sup>20:13</sup>We went ahead to the ship and sailed for the city of Assos. At Assos, we were going to pick up Paul. He had made these arrangements, since he had planned to walk overland to Assos. <sup>14</sup>When Paul met us in Assos, we took him on board and went to the city of Mityle. <sup>15</sup>We sailed from there. On the following day we approached the island of Chios. The next day we went by the island of Samo, and on the next day we arrived at the city of Miletus.

<sup>16</sup>Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus to avoid spending time in the province of Asia. He was in a hurry to get to Jerusalem for the day of Pentecost, if that was possible.

## COMMENT

With Paul having been in Corinth three months, we begin with Paul preparing to board a ship directly back to Caesarea Maritima and then to Jerusalem. But he found out the Jews were planning to kill him, so he walked north to Macedonia. He had several companions carrying the collection for the poor in Jerusalem who went ahead. Then we [presumably Luke] and Paul boarded a ship at Philippi. This sail took five days, rather than one day as before.

They met at Troas and stayed one week. On the night before they were supposed to leave, Paul talked until midnight. A young man Eutychus who was sitting in a window fell out and died. Paul rushed out and simply said: Don't worry. He's alive. He took the young man back upstairs. Eutychus ate a meal. Paul continued speaking for the next six hours and then left. Luke and others then boarded a ship for Assos. Paul walked overland to Assos. He met them there and they sailed for Mitylene, and finally arrived at Miletus. From Miletus, he sent messengers to the elders at Ephesus.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Luke says the Jews were attempting to kill him at Corinth. But he doesn't say why except that he had been there three months where he had written his Epistle to the Romans. What was going on?
2. The reason for this pericope is that Paul raises a man from death to life. I believe this is the only time he does this. Why doesn't Paul portray the crowd listening to him preach showing amazement when he raises the dead?
3. Why does Paul want to get to Jerusalem by Pentecost?

## PERICOPE 33

### Paul Says Farewell to the Spiritual Leaders from Ephesus

<sup>20:17</sup> From Miletus Paul sent messengers to the city of Ephesus and called the spiritual leaders of the church to meet with him in Miletus <sup>18</sup> When they were with him, he said to them:

You know how I spent all my time with you from the first day I arrived in the province of Asia. <sup>19</sup> I humbly served the Lord, often with tears in my eyes. I served the Lord during the difficult time I went through when the Jews plotted against me.

<sup>20</sup> I didn't avoid telling you anything that would help you and I didn't avoid teaching you publicly and from house to house. <sup>21</sup> I warned Jews and Greeks to change the way they think and act and to believe in our Lord Jesus.

### Paul Tells the Elders the Spirit Has Told Him He Will Endure Imprisonment and Suffering

<sup>20:22</sup> I am determined to go to Jerusalem now. I don't know what will happen to me there. <sup>23</sup> However, the Holy Spirit warns me in every city that imprisonment and suffering are waiting for me. <sup>24</sup> But I don't place any value on my own life. I want to finish the race I'm running. I want to carry out the mission I received from the Lord Jesus — the mission of testifying to the Good News of God's kindness *charis*-grace.

<sup>25</sup> Now I know that none of you whom I told about God's kingdom will see me again. <sup>26</sup> Therefore, I declare to you today that I am not responsible for the spiritual death of any of you. <sup>27</sup> I didn't avoid telling you the whole plan *boule*-counsel Of God.

### Paul Gives Instructions To Be Alert

<sup>20:28</sup> Pay attention *prosecho* to yourselves and to the entire flock *poimnion* <sup>5x</sup> in which the Holy Spirit has placed you as bishops *episkopos*-overseers <sup>7x</sup> to be

shepherds *poimaino* for God's church *ekklesia* which he acquired with his own blood. <sup>29</sup>I know that fierce wolves will come to you after I leave, and they won't spare the flock. <sup>30</sup>Some of your own men will come forward and say things that distort the truth. They will do this to lure disciples into following them.

<sup>31</sup>So be alert *gregoreo* ! Remember *mnemoneuo* that I instructed *noutheteo*-warn <sup>8x</sup> each of you for three years, day and night, at times with tears in my eyes.

<sup>32</sup>I am now entrusting *paratithemi* you to God and to his message *logos*-word that tells how kind *charis*-grace he is. That message can help you grow *epoikodomeo*-build you up <sup>8x</sup> and can give you the inheritance that is shared by all of God's holy people.

<sup>33</sup>I never wanted anyone's silver, gold, or clothes. <sup>34</sup>You know that I worked to support myself and those who were with me. <sup>35</sup>I have given you an example that by working hard like this we should help the weak. We should remember the words that the Lord Jesus said: *Giving gifts is more satisfying than receiving them.*

The precise saying of Jesus to which Paul referred here is not found in the Gospels. It may have come down to Paul by oral or written tradition, or he may have been loosely summarizing Jesus' teaching found in **Luke 6:38**.

<sup>36</sup>When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down and prayed *proseuchomai* with all of them. <sup>37</sup>Everyone cried a lot as they put their arms around Paul and kissed him. <sup>38</sup>The thought of not seeing Paul again hurt them most of all. Then they took Paul to the ship.

## COMMENT

This tender scene shows Paul's deep concern for the elders he leaves behind. In all three of his missionary journeys, Paul has fought spiritual battles to preach the Gospel and to save people from spiritual death. Many times it seems as if Paul will not survive, and his enemies will conquer him. But God has used his Holy Spirit to give Paul the strength he needs to survive. God will also give these elders that same strength they need, if they pray.

Now the Holy Spirit is telling Paul that he is awaiting more suffering and imprisonment. But he is confident that God is with him and will enable him to do the job he must do. Like Jesus, he wants to do what the One Who Sent Him wants.

He warns them they will be attacked by fierce wolves. So be alert, Paul says. Work hard and help those weak in God's strength.

## **THINGS TO THINK ABOUT**

1. Paul says he has taught them the whole counsel of God. What is this?
2. Paul warns them that these elders must be alert. What are they to be alert for?
3. Paul says he is entrusting them to God. What does he mean?
4. How did Paul survive remaining three years in one place?

# PERICOPE 34

## Paul Returns to Israel

<sup>21:1</sup> When we finally left them, we sailed straight to the island of Cos. The next day we sailed to the island of Rhodes and from there to the city of Patara. <sup>2</sup>In Patara, we found a ship that was going to Phoenicia, so we went aboard and sailed away. <sup>3</sup>We could see the island of Cyprus as we passed it on our left and sailed to Syria.

We landed at the city of Tyre, where the ship was to unload its cargo. <sup>4</sup>In Tyre we searched for the disciples. After we found them, we stayed there for seven days. The Spirit had the disciples tell Paul not to go to Jerusalem.

<sup>5</sup>When our time was up, we started on our way. All of them with their wives and children accompanied us out of the city. We knelt on the beach, prayed *proseuchomai*, <sup>6</sup>and said goodbye to each other. Then we went aboard the ship, and the disciples went back home.

## Paul in Caesarea Maritima

<sup>7</sup>Our sea travel ended when we sailed from Tyre to the city of Ptolemais. We greeted the believers in Ptolemais and spent the day with them. <sup>8</sup>The next day we went to Philip's home in Caesarea and stayed with him. He was a missionary and one of the seven men who helped the apostles <sup>9</sup>Philip had four unmarried daughters who had the ability to speak what God had revealed.

<sup>10</sup>After we had been there for a number of days, a prophet named Agabus arrived from Judea. <sup>11</sup>During his visit he took Paul's belt and tied his own feet and hands with it. Then he said: The Holy **Spirit** says: This is how the Jews in Jerusalem will tie up the man who owns this belt. Then they will hand him over to people who are not Jewish.

<sup>12</sup>When we heard this, we and the believers who lived there begged Paul not to go to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup>Then Paul replied: Why are you crying like this and



breaking my heart? I'm ready not only to be tied up in Jerusalem but also to die there for the sake of the Lord, the one named Jesus.

<sup>14</sup>When Paul could not be persuaded, we dropped the issue and said: May the Lord's will be done.

## COMMENT

Paul's ship arrives in Tyre and they find the disciples. During their seven-day visit the Holy Spirit tells the disciples to tell Paul not to go to Jerusalem.

Now that the ship had unloaded its cargo it sailed to Ptolemais. Again, Paul found disciples including Philip who had been the original seven Greek-speaking Jews who had helped the apostles in the early days. **Acts 6:1-6**

A prophet named Agabus **Acts 11:28** used a sign act to show that Paul would be imprisoned in Jerusalem and handed over to Gentiles. The believers begged Paul not to go to Jerusalem. Paul was adamant so the disciples stopped begging.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Paul's ship first lands at Tyre where the cargo is unloaded. Paul meets disciples who tell him the Spirit has told them Paul should not go to Jerusalem. But Paul still insists on going. Why does Paul insist on going to Jerusalem?
2. By the year 58 AD, there is a considerable group of disciples in Caesarea Maritima where the palace of the Roman Governor was. In time, the Bishop of Caesarea would supersede the Bishop of Jerusalem. Philip, one of the original seven deacons was there. But these disciples told Paul not to go to Jerusalem. Why did Paul still insist on going there?

# PERICOPE 35

## Paul Reports on His Missionary Travels to James

<sup>21:15</sup> After that, we got ready to go to Jerusalem. <sup>16</sup> Some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us. They took us to Mnason's home, where we would be staying. Mnason was from the island of Cyprus, and was one of the first disciples. <sup>17</sup> When we arrived in Jerusalem, the believers *adelphos* brethren welcomed us warmly *asmenos* gladly 2x.

<sup>18</sup> The next day Paul went with us to visit James. All the spiritual leaders *presbyteros* were present. <sup>19</sup> After greeting them, Paul related everything God had done through his work with non-Jewish people.

<sup>20</sup> When the spiritual leaders *presbyteros* heard about everything, they praised *doxazo* God. They said to Paul: You see brothers *adelphos* how many thousands *myrias* of Jews *ioudaios* are now believers *pisteuo* and all of them are deeply committed to Moses' Teachings.

<sup>21</sup> But they have been told that you teach all the Jews living among non-Jewish people to abandon Moses. They claim that you tell them not to circumcise their children or follow Jewish customs. <sup>22</sup> What should we do about this? They will certainly hear that you're in town.

Notice there is no mention of thousands of Gentiles becoming Christians.

## The Elders Set Paul Up and Send Him to the Jerusalem Temple

<sup>23</sup> So follow our advice. We have four men who have made a vow to God. <sup>24</sup> Take these men, go through the purification ceremony with them and pay the expenses to shave their heads. Then everyone will know that what they've been told about you isn't true. Instead, they'll see that you carefully follow Moses' Teachings.

<sup>25</sup> To clarify this matter we have written non-Jewish believers a letter with our decision. We told them that they should not eat food sacrificed to false gods,

bloody meat, or the meat of strangled animals. They also should not commit sexual sins.

Why do the elders repeat this? Paul was there when the letter was first written.

## COMMENT

Paul is received warmly by the elders in the church of Jerusalem. Paul tells them the results of his work among the Gentiles. But the elders only remark on his work among the Jews. And they report he is rumored to have told Jews not to circumcise their children or follow traditional Jewish customs. So they are worried Jews in Jerusalem will attack Paul. To avoid this, they suggest Paul pay the way for Jews going through a purification ceremony at the Temple. Then they insult Paul by referring to James' letter to Gentiles telling them their only obligations as Christians.

The elders at the church in Jerusalem appear to be setting Paul up for a fall. Remember this is Pentecost when many diaspora Jews come to Jerusalem. All of Paul's enemies will be at the Temple.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. James, the administrator of the church is said to be there with church spiritual leaders. The year is 58 AD and James is not killed until 62 AD. Why is James' role here not recorded?
2. Where are the 11 apostles? Luke has told us that only James Zebedee has been killed. **Acts 12:2**
3. What about the collection from the churches Paul has brought. Why doesn't Luke mention this? It seems it was one of Paul's main reasons for going to Jerusalem. **Romans 15:25-27; I Corinthians 16:1-4**

## Part Eight – Paul, a Prisoner, Is Now Taken to Rome (58-61 AD)

### PERICOPE 36-45

This last part covers Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea Maritima for two years and his trip to Rome.

Luke has to be very careful in narrating this portion for it discusses Paul's treatment by the Roman authorities.

During the riot in the Temple in Jerusalem, Paul is in the custody of a Roman officer in Jerusalem, the leader of a thousand. He seems to conduct himself in a very proper manner.

But, when it comes to the two governors of the Roman province while Paul is in jail in Caesarea Maritima, this seems to be a different story. Are these governors acting appropriately by holding Paul in prison for a long time?

Finally, Paul appeals to the Emperor in Rome, the right of any Roman citizen. From there on, Paul seems to be treated well.

Here is a map showing Paul's journey to Rome.



# PERICOPE 36

## Paul Goes to the Jerusalem Temple and a Riot Ensues

<sup>21:26</sup>The next day, Paul took the men and went through the purification ceremony with them. Then he went into the Temple courtyard to announce the time when the purification would be over and the sacrifice would be offered for each of them.

<sup>27</sup>When the seven days were almost over, the Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul in the Temple courtyard. They stirred up the whole crowd and grabbed Paul. <sup>28</sup>Then they began shouting:

Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches everyone everywhere to turn against the Jewish people, Moses' Teachings, and this Temple. He has even brought Greeks into the Temple courtyard and has made this holy place unclean.

<sup>29</sup>They had seen Trophimus from Ephesus with him in the city earlier and thought Paul had taken him into the temple courtyard.

These were probably Jews from Ephesus where Paul had spent 3 ½ years.

## A Mob Forms in the Temple Courtyard

<sup>21:30</sup>The whole city was in chaos and a mob formed *kineo*-riot 8x. The mob grabbed *epilambanomai* Paul and dragged *helko* 8x him out of the Temple courtyard. The courtyard doors were immediately shut.

<sup>31</sup>As the people were trying to kill *apokteino* Paul, the officer *chiliarchos*-commander in charge of the Roman soldiers *speira*-cohort 7x received a report that all Jerusalem was rioting *sygcheo* 5x. <sup>32</sup>Immediately, he took some soldiers *stratiotes* and officers *hekatontarches*-centurions and charged *katatrecho* 1x the crowd. When the crowd saw the officer *chiliarchos* and the soldiers, they stopped beating *typto* Paul.

<sup>33</sup>Then the officer *chiliarchos* went to Paul, grabbed him, and ordered him to be tied up with two chains. The officer asked who Paul was and what he had done. <sup>34</sup>Some of the crowd shouted one thing, while others shouted something else. The officer couldn't get any facts because of the noise and confusion, so he ordered Paul to be taken into the barracks.

<sup>35</sup>When Paul came to the stairs of the barracks, the crowd was so violent *bia*<sub>4x</sub> that the soldiers had to carry him. <sup>36</sup>The mob was behind them shouting: Kill him!

## COMMENT

Now what the Holy Spirit had told the disciples happened. Some diaspora Jews, probably from Ephesus, thought Paul had brought a Gentile into the Temple – at least, that was their excuse. They began shouting, saying Paul was making the Temple unclean, so a mob formed and a riot ensued. They grabbed Paul and took him out of the Temple. Immediately, the Levites closed the Temple doors.

A Roman commander of a thousand men was told there was rioting. He brought troops, charged the crowd and seized Paul, binding him with chains. He attempted to learn why the crowd was against Paul, but there was so much confusion and shouting he took Paul to the army barracks. The crowd was so violent the soldiers had to carry Paul. The mob were shouting: *Kill him!*

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Did the elders in the Jerusalem ekklesia anticipate this would happen when they sent Paul to the Temple, or even worse was this a premediated plan?
2. What was the crowd going to do with Paul after they dragged him out of the Temple?
3. Why did the Roman soldiers charge the crowd and stop the beating of Paul?

## PERICOPE 37

### Paul Speaks in His Own Defense

<sup>21:37</sup>As the soldiers were about to take Paul into the barracks, he asked the officer: May I say something to you? The officer replied to Paul: Can you speak Greek? <sup>38</sup>Aren't you the Egyptian who started a revolution not long ago and led four thousand terrorists into the desert?

<sup>39</sup>Paul answered: I'm a Jew, a citizen from the well-known city of Tarsus in Cilicia. I'm asking you to let me talk to the people. <sup>40</sup>The officer gave Paul permission to speak. So Paul stood on the stairs of the barracks and motioned with his hand for the people to be quiet. When the mob was silent, Paul spoke to them in the Hebrew language.

In those days, the city where one was born was important. Tarsus was one of the three chief cities of learning in the Roman Empire together with Athens and Alexandria. It had 200,000 inhabitants and was a free city in the Empire. Paul's respectful manner to the officer, his credentials, and his speech of educated Greek, caused the officer to allow him to speak to the crowd. Paul spoke to the crowd in Aramaic.

<sup>22:1</sup>Brothers and fathers, listen as I now present my case to you. <sup>2</sup>When the mob heard him speak to them in Hebrew, they became even more quiet. Then Paul continued:

<sup>3</sup>I'm a Jew. I was born and raised in the city of Tarsus in Cilicia and received my education from Gamaliel here in Jerusalem. My education was in the strict laws handed down by our ancestors. I was as devoted to God as all of you are today.

<sup>4</sup>I persecuted people who followed the way of Christ. I tied up men and women and put them into prison until they were executed. <sup>5</sup>The chief priest and the entire council of our leaders can prove that I did this. In fact, they even gave me letters to take to the Jewish community in the city of Damascus. I was going there to tie up believers and bring them back to Jerusalem to punish them.

<sup>6</sup>But as I was on my way and approaching the city of Damascus about noon, a bright light from heaven suddenly flashed around me. <sup>7</sup>I fell to the ground and heard a voice asking me: Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me? <sup>8</sup>I answered: Who are you, sir? The person told me: I'm Jesus from Nazareth, the one you're persecuting. <sup>9</sup>The men who were with me saw the light but didn't understand what the person who was speaking to me said.

<sup>10</sup>Then I asked: What do you want me to do, Lord? The Lord told me: Get up! Go into the city of Damascus and you'll be told everything I've arranged for you to do. <sup>11</sup>I was blind because the light had been so bright. So the men who were with me led me into the city of Damascus.

<sup>12</sup>A man named Ananias lived in Damascus. He was a devout person who followed Moses' Teachings. All the Jews living in Damascus spoke highly of him. <sup>13</sup>He came to me, stood beside me, and said: Brother Saul, receive your sight. At that moment my sight came back and I could see Ananias.

<sup>14</sup>Ananias said: The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will, to see the one who has God's approval, and to hear him speak to you. <sup>15</sup>You will be his witness and will tell everyone what you have seen and heard. <sup>16</sup>What are you waiting for now? Get up! Be baptized *baptizo* and have your sins *hamartia* washed away *apolouo* <sup>2x</sup> as you call *epikaleo* on his *kyrios* name *onoma*.

<sup>17</sup>After that, I returned to Jerusalem. While I was praying *proseuchomai* in the Temple courtyard, I fell into a trance *ekstatis* <sup>18</sup>and saw the Lord. He told me: Hurry *pseudo* <sup>6x</sup>! Get out of Jerusalem immediately *tachos* <sup>8x</sup>. The people here won't accept *paradechomai* <sup>5x</sup> your testimony *martyria* about me.

Note that Paul says he saw a vision of Jesus in the Temple itself.

<sup>19</sup>I said: Lord, people here know that I went from synagogue to synagogue to imprison and whip those who believe in you. <sup>20</sup>When Stephen, who witnessed about you, was being killed, I was standing there.



I approved of his death and guarded the coats of those who were murdering him.

<sup>21</sup> But the Lord told me: Go! I'll send *exapostello* you on a mission. You'll go far away *makran*<sub>IOX</sub> to people who aren't Jewish.

<sup>22</sup> Up to that point the mob listened. Then they began to shout: Kill him! The world doesn't need a man like this. He shouldn't have been allowed to live this long. <sup>23</sup> The mob was yelling, taking off their coats, and throwing dirt into the air.

### The Commander Takes Paul into the Barracks to Torture and Question Him

<sup>22:24</sup> So the officer ordered the soldiers to take Paul into the barracks and told them to question *anetazo*<sub>2X</sub> Paul as they whipped *mastix*-scourged<sub>6X</sub> him. The officer wanted to find out why *epiginosko*-know the people were yelling at Paul like this. <sup>25</sup> But when the soldiers had Paul stretch out to tie him to the whipping post with the straps, Paul asked the sergeant *hekatontarches*-centurion who was standing there: Is it legal *exesti* for you to whip *mestizo*-scourge<sub>IX</sub> a Roman *rhomaios* citizen who hasn't had a trial *akatakritos*-uncondemned?

<sup>26</sup> When the sergeant heard this, he reported it to his commanding officer. The sergeant asked him: What are you doing? This man is a Roman citizen. <sup>27</sup> The officer went to Paul and asked him: Tell me, are you a Roman citizen? Paul answered: Yes. <sup>28</sup> The officer replied: I paid a lot of money to become a Roman citizen. Paul replied: But I was born a Roman citizen.

<sup>29</sup> Immediately, the soldiers who were going to question Paul stepped away from him. The officer was afraid *phobeo* when he found out *epiginosko* that he had tied up a Roman citizen.

It was not only illegal to scourge a Roman citizen, but it was also illegal even to tie up a Roman citizen without first giving him a trial.

## COMMENT

Paul will now give his conversion testimony for the first of three times. So we have an account of Paul's conversion four times in this book. Each time there are minor changes.

Paul was on his way to Damascus to arrest Followers of the Way as authorized by the Chief priest. But Paul encountered a bright light and he fell to the ground. A voice asked: *Why are you persecuting me?* Paul asked: Who are you? The voice replied: *I'm Jesus from Nazareth.* Paul asked: *What do you want me to do?* The voice answered: *Go to Damascus and you'll be told what to do.*

I was led to the city because I was blind. A Jew named Ananias came and said: *Brother Saul, receive your sight.* My sight returned. Ananias said: *The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will, see the just one, and hear his voice. You will be his witness. Get up and be baptized so our sins will be washed away calling on the name of the Lord.* Then I went to Jerusalem. In the Temple, I fell into a trance and saw him. He said: *Go! I will send you far away to the Gentiles.*

Until now the people listened. But when Paul said Gentiles, they grew violent again so the soldiers again took him into the barracks. The commander ordered Paul be scourged and questioned. As they tied him down, Paul asked: *Is it lawful to beat a Roman citizen?* The centurion told the commander and the ropes were taken off Paul.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Paul says he had a trance and saw Jesus in the Temple. How did the crowd react to that?
2. When Paul said Jesus told him he would witness to Gentiles, the crowd reacted angrily. Why was that?

# PERICOPE 38

## Paul in Front of the Sanhedrin

<sup>22:30</sup> The officer *chiliarchos* wanted to find out exactly what accusation the Jews had against Paul. So the officer released <loosed his restraints> Paul the next day and ordered the chief priests and the entire Jewish council Sanhedrin to meet. Then the officer brought Paul and had him stand in front of them.

<sup>23:1</sup> Paul stared *atenizo* at the Jewish council and said: Brothers, my relationship with God has always *politeuomai* lived <sup>2x</sup> given me a perfectly clear *agathos*-good conscience *syneidesis*.

<sup>2</sup> The chief priest Ananias ordered the men standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth. <sup>3</sup> Then Paul said to him: God will strike you, you hypocrite! You sit there and judge me by Moses' Teachings and yet you break those teachings by ordering these men to strike me!

<sup>4</sup> The men standing near Paul said to him: You're insulting God's chief priest. <sup>5</sup> Paul answered: Brothers, I didn't know that he is the chief priest. After all, Scripture says: Don't speak evil about a ruler of your people. **Exodus 22:28**

<sup>6</sup> When Paul saw that some of them were Sadducees and others were Pharisees, he shouted in the council: Brothers, I'm a Pharisee and a descendant of Pharisees. I'm on trial because I expect that the dead will come back to life. <sup>7</sup> After Paul said that, the Pharisees and Sadducees began to quarrel, and the men in the meeting were divided. <sup>8</sup> The Sadducees say that the dead won't come back to life and that angels and spirits don't exist. The Pharisees believe in all these things.

<sup>9</sup> The shouting became very loud. Some of the experts in Moses' Teachings were Pharisees who argued their position forcefully. They said: We don't find anything wrong with this man. Maybe a spirit or an angel actually spoke to him. <sup>10</sup> The quarrel was becoming violent and the officer was afraid that

they would tear Paul to pieces. So the officer ordered his soldiers to drag Paul back to the barracks.

### Jesus Speaks to Paul

<sup>23:11</sup>The Lord *kyrios* stood near *ephistemi* Paul the next night and said to him: Don't lose your courage. You've told the truth about me in Jerusalem. Now you must tell the truth about me in Rome.

### COMMENT

The Roman commander wanted to find out why the crowd hated Paul so much so he brought him before the Sanhedrin. But all he found out was that Jews were divided in their religious opinions. So he brought Paul back to the barracks.

### THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. When Paul said that he had a clear conscience before God, what did he mean?
2. Why did the chief priest Ananias have his servant strike Paul? Note Jesus was also struck by the chief priest's servant. **John 18:20-23**
3. The Roman commander had three options: (1) If Paul had committed no crime, he could release him. (2) If Paul had committed a religious crime, the Sanhedrin could try him. (3) If Paul had committed a civil crime, the provincial governor could try him. Which of these did the Roman commander choose and why?
4. What is the Roman commander's opinion of Jews at this point?

## PERICOPE 39

### Paul is Taken to the Roman Governor Felix at Caesarea Maritima

<sup>23:12</sup> In the morning the Jews formed a conspiracy. They asked God to curse them if they ate or drank anything before they had killed Paul. <sup>13</sup> More than forty men took part in this plot.

<sup>14</sup> They went to the chief priests and leaders of the people and said: We've asked God to curse us if we taste any food before we've killed Paul. <sup>15</sup> Here's our plan: You and the council must go to the Roman officer *Chiliarch* on the pretext that you need more information from Paul. You have to make it look as though you want to get more accurate information about him. We'll be ready to kill him before he gets to you.

<sup>16</sup> But Paul's nephew heard about the ambush. He entered the barracks and told Paul. <sup>17</sup> Then Paul called one of the sergeants *Centurion* and told him: Take this young man to the officer *Chiliarch*. He has something to tell him.

<sup>18</sup> The sergeant *Centurion* took the young man to the officer and said: The prisoner Paul called me. He asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you. <sup>19</sup> The officer *Chiliarch* took the young man by the arm, went where they could be alone and asked him: What do you have to tell me?

<sup>20</sup> The young man answered: The Jews have planned to ask you to bring Paul to the Jewish council tomorrow. They're going to make it look as though they want more accurate information about him.

<sup>21</sup> Don't let them persuade you to do this. More than forty of them are planning to ambush him. They have asked God to curse them if they eat or drink anything before they have murdered him. They are ready now and are expecting you to promise that you will bring Paul. <sup>22</sup> The officer *Chiliarch* dismissed the young man and ordered him not to tell this information to anyone else.

<sup>23</sup>Then the officer summoned two of his sergeants and told them: I want 200 infantrymen, 70 soldiers on horseback, and 200 soldiers with spears. Have them ready to go to Caesarea <Maritima> at nine o'clock tonight. <sup>24</sup>Provide an animal for Paul to ride and take him safely to Governor Felix. <sup>25</sup>The officer wrote a letter to the governor with the following message:

<sup>26</sup>Claudius Lysias sends greetings to Your Excellency, Governor Felix:  
<sup>27</sup>The Jews had seized this man and were going to murder him. When I found out that he was a Roman citizen, I went with my soldiers to rescue him.

<sup>28</sup>I wanted to know what they had against him. So I took him to their Jewish council <sup>29</sup>and found their accusations had to do with disputes about their own laws. He wasn't accused of anything for which he deserved to die or to be put into prison.

<sup>30</sup>Since I was informed that there was a <assassination> plot against this man, I immediately sent him to you. I have also ordered his accusers to state their case against him in front of you.

<sup>31</sup>So the infantrymen did as they had been ordered. They took Paul to the city of Antipatris during the night. <sup>32</sup>They returned to their barracks the next day and let the soldiers on horseback travel with Paul. <sup>33</sup>When the soldiers arrived in the city of Caesarea with Paul, they delivered the letter to the governor and handed Paul over to him.

<sup>34</sup>After the governor had read the letter, he asked Paul which province he was from. When he found out that Paul was from the province of Cilicia, <sup>35</sup>he said: I'll hear your case when your accusers arrive. Then the governor gave orders to keep Paul under guard in Herod's palace.

## COMMENT

The commander is informed by Paul's nephew that Jews plan to assassinate Paul as he is taken to the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. So the commander sends Paul by night by horseback the 75 miles to Caesarea Maritima where the governor of Judah's palace is. Governor Felix holds Paul in custody until members of the Sanhedrin arrive to accuse Paul.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Since Paul hasn't committed a crime under Roman law and is simply being held in protective custody, why doesn't the Tribune Claudius Lysias in Jerusalem simply release him?
2. The fact that a Roman citizen is in danger forces Tribune Claudius Lysias to treat Paul with great respect. He arranges an elaborate guard to protect him. Will the Roman governor treat him with similar respect?
3. What new information are we given in the Tribune's letter to the Governor that we haven't had before?

# PERICOPE 40

## Paul Presents His Case to the Roman Governor Antonius Felix (52-60 AD)

<sup>24:1</sup> Five days later the chief priest Ananias went to the city of Caesarea with some leaders of the people and an attorney *rhetor* IX named Tertullus. They reported to the governor their charges against Paul.

<sup>2</sup>When Paul had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him. He said to Felix:

Your Excellency, through your wise leadership we have lasting peace and reforms that benefit the people. <sup>3</sup>We appreciate what you've done in every way and in every place, and we want to thank you very much. <sup>4</sup>I don't want to keep you too long. Please listen to us. We will be brief.

<sup>5</sup>We have found this man to be a troublemaker *loimos*-pestilence 3x. He starts quarrels *kineo*-mover 8x *stasis*-sedition 9x among all Jews throughout the world. He's a ringleader *protostates* IX of the Nazarene *nazoraïos* sect *hairesis*-heresy.

Luke will use this term *nazoraïos* 7x in Acts and 2x in his Gospel. Mark uses the word IX, Matthew 3x, and John 3x. This couples Christianity with Messianic uprisings the Romans persecuted vigorously such as the Zealots conducted.

<sup>6</sup>He also entered the Temple courtyard in a way that violates our tradition *bebelloo*-profane 2x. So we arrested him.

[Who has gone about to profane the Temple whom we took and would have judged according to our law. But the chief captain Lysias came upon us and with great violence took him away out of our hands. **Acts 24:6-7 KJV**]

<sup>8</sup>When you cross-examine him, you'll be able to find out from him that our accusations are true.

<sup>9</sup>The Jews supported Tertullus' accusations and asserted that everything Tertullus said was true.

<sup>10</sup>The governor motioned for Paul to speak. Paul responded:



I know that you have been a judge over this nation for many years. So I'm pleased to present my case to you. <sup>11</sup>You can verify for yourself that I went to Jerusalem to worship no more than twelve days ago.

<sup>12</sup>No one found me having a discussion with anyone in the Temple courtyard or stirring up a crowd in the synagogues throughout the city.

<sup>13</sup>These people cannot even prove their accusations to you.

<sup>14</sup>But I'll admit to you that I'm a follower of the way of Christ that they call a sect. This means that I serve our ancestors' God and believe everything written in Moses' Teachings and the Prophets. <sup>15</sup>I hope for the same thing my accusers do, that people with God's approval and those without it will come back to life. <sup>16</sup>With this belief I always do my best to have a clear conscience in the sight of God and people.

<sup>17</sup>After many years I have come back to my people and brought gifts for the poor and offerings for God. <sup>18</sup>My accusers found me in the Temple courtyard doing these things after I had gone through the purification ceremony. No crowd or noisy mob was present.

<sup>19</sup>But some Jews from the province of Asia were there. They should be here in front of you to accuse me if they have anything against me.

<sup>20</sup>Otherwise, these men who are accusing me should tell what I was charged with when I stood in front of their council. <sup>21</sup>They could accuse me of only one thing. As I stood among them, I shouted: I'm being tried in front of you because I believe that the dead will come back to life.

<sup>22</sup>Felix knew the way of Christ rather well so he adjourned the trial. He told them: When the officer *Chiliarch* Lysias arrives, I'll decide your case. <sup>23</sup>Felix ordered the sergeant *Centurion* to guard Paul but to let him have some freedom and to let his friends take care of his needs.

<sup>24</sup>Some days later Felix arrived with his wife Drusilla who was Jewish. He sent for Paul and listened to him talk about faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>25</sup>As Paul discussed the subjects of God's approval, self-control, and the coming

judgment, Felix became afraid *ginamai emphobos* and said: That's enough for now. You can go. When I find time, I'll send for you again.

<sup>26</sup>At the same time, Felix was hoping that Paul would give him some money. For that reason, Felix would send for Paul rather often to have friendly conversations with him.

<sup>27</sup>Two years passed. Then Porcius Festus [59-62 AD] took Felix's place <as Governor of Judea>. Since Felix wanted to do the Jews a favor, he left Paul in prison.

## COMMENT

Paul is taken by the Roman soldiers under cover of night by horseback from Jerusalem to Caesarea Maritima where the governor of Judea's palace is. The Sanhedrin is invited before Governor Felix to accuse Paul. They can only claim Paul disturbs the peace of Rome by his religious disputes among the Jews. Paul claims he has done nothing wrong, but he does admit he is engaged in religious disputes with the Sanhedrin.

As Governor Felix understands the doctrine of the Followers of the Way, he sees no crime but keeps Paul in jail hoping for a bribe. Like Herod Antipas with John the Baptist, he liked to listen to Paul talk. **Mark 6:20**. Two years passed, but Felix left Paul in prison. Then, a new governor named Festus took over.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. The Jews, including the chief priest, came to Caesarea very quickly, in five days. Why are they in such a hurry to have Paul judged guilty?
2. Tertullus says Paul is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect which is outside Judaism which Rome tolerates as an old established religion. This is the primary charge that Felix never addresses. Why?
3. The chiliarch Claudius Lysias never comes to Caesarea to testify. Why not?
4. The Jews accuse Paul of bringing a Gentile into the inner precincts of the Temple. One Bible commentator says Felix has previously crucified leaders of uprisings for disturbing the peace of Rome.
5. Paul mentions that he has brought back gifts for the poor. **Verse 17**. Is this why the governor looks for a bribe?

6. Paul pointed out the diaspora Jews from Asia were the ones who accused him of desecrating the Temple and they were not present as witnesses. This was illegal under both Jewish and Roman law. Why didn't Felix address this?

7. The Sanhedrin could not even accuse Paul of a crime before their own court. Why not? What was Paul's crime - the belief in the resurrection of the dead?

## **EXTRA CREDIT**

Paul spends two years in prison in Caesarea with relative freedom. Why didn't he write any letters to the churches while he was there?

## **EXTRA, EXTRA CREDIT**

Since Paul spends two years in Caesarea, why don't people from the church in Jerusalem visit him?

# PERICOPE 41

## Paul Appeals to Go to Rome and Be Tried

<sup>25:1</sup> Three days after Festus took over his duties in the province of Judea [59-62 AD], he went from the city of Caesarea to Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup>The chief priests and the other important Jewish leaders informed Festus about their charges against Paul. They were urging <sup>3</sup>Festus to do them the favor of having Paul brought to Jerusalem. The Jews had a plan to ambush and kill Paul as he traveled to Jerusalem.

<sup>4</sup>Festus replied that he would be returning to Caesarea soon and would keep Paul there. <sup>5</sup>He told them: Have your authorities come to Caesarea with me and accuse him there if the man has done something wrong.

<sup>6</sup>Festus stayed in Jerusalem for eight or ten days at the most and then returned to Caesarea. The next day Festus took his place in court and summoned Paul. <sup>7</sup>When Paul entered the room, the Jews who had come from Jerusalem surrounded him. They made a lot of serious accusations that they couldn't prove. <sup>8</sup>Paul defended himself by saying: I haven't broken any Jewish law or done anything against the Temple or the Emperor.

<sup>9</sup>But Festus wanted to do the Jews a favor. So he asked Paul: Are you willing to go to Jerusalem to be tried there on these charges with me as your judge? <sup>10</sup>Paul said: I am standing in the Emperor's court where I must be tried.

I haven't done anything wrong to the Jews as you know very well. <sup>11</sup>If I am guilty and have done something wrong for which I deserve the death penalty, I don't reject the idea of dying. But if their accusations are untrue, no one can hand me over to them as a favor. I appeal my case to the Emperor [Nero in Rome].

<sup>12</sup>Festus discussed the appeal with his advisers and then replied to Paul: You have appealed your case to the Emperor so you'll go to the Emperor.

## COMMENT

Festus summons the Sanhedrin from Jerusalem. Again they accuse Paul only of being a troublemaker and being involved in Jewish religious disputes. But the governor wanted to do the Sanhedrin a favor. He asked Paul if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem to be tried on charges there with Festus as his judge. Paul knew immediately what the Sanhedrin was planning so he said: *I appeal my case to Emperor Nero in Rome.* Festus said: *All right. To Rome you will go.*

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Remember that although the Roman governor could nullify almost anything the Sanhedrin did, the governor's primary job was to keep the peace so the tax moneys and agricultural produce could flow smoothly to Rome. But the Sanhedrin could intimidate the governor as they did with Pontius Pilate. Why didn't they become more forceful?
2. Why didn't Governor Festus call the Chiliarch to testify?
3. How could members of the Sanhedrin assassinate Paul if Roman soldiers were guarding them?
4. Festus knew that convicting a Roman citizen of a crime was serious and he really didn't want to do this. Why didn't he simply release Paul and tell him not to remain in Judea?
5. When Festus sends Paul to Rome, he has no crime to accuse him of except disturbing the peace. Is this enough to send him before the Emperor? Wouldn't he be criticized for doing this?

## PERICOPE 42

### Paul Testifies Before King Agrippa II

<sup>25:13</sup> Later King Agrippa and Bernice came to the city of Caesarea to welcome Festus. <sup>14</sup> Since they were staying there for a number of days, Festus told the king about Paul's case.

Festus said: Felix left a man here in prison. <sup>15</sup> When I went to Jerusalem, the chief priests and the Jewish leaders brought me some information about him and asked me to condemn him.

<sup>16</sup> "I replied to them: That's not the Roman way of doing things. A person can't be sentenced as a favor. Before he is sentenced, he must face his accusers and have a chance to defend himself against their accusation.

<sup>17</sup> So the Jewish leaders came to Caesarea with me. The next day I immediately convened court and summoned the man. <sup>18</sup> When his accusers stood up, they didn't accuse him of the crimes I was expecting. <sup>19</sup> They were disputing with him about their own religion and about some man named Jesus who had died. But Paul claimed that Jesus is alive. <sup>20</sup> Their debate about these things left me puzzled. So I asked Paul if he would like to go to Jerusalem to have his case heard there.

<sup>21</sup> But Paul appealed his case. He asked to be held in prison and to have His Majesty the Emperor decide his case. So I ordered him to be held in prison until I could send him to the Emperor. <sup>22</sup> Agrippa told Festus: I would like to hear the man. Festus replied: You'll hear him tomorrow.

<sup>23</sup> The next day Agrippa and Bernice entered the auditorium with a lot of fanfare. Roman army officers *chiliarchos* and the most important men of the city entered the auditorium with them. Festus gave the order and Paul was brought into the auditorium.

<sup>24</sup>Then Festus said:

King Agrippa and everyone who is present with us! All the Jews in Jerusalem and Caesarea have talked to me about this man you see in front of you. They shout that he must not be allowed to live any longer. <sup>25</sup>However, I don't think that he has done anything to deserve the death penalty.

But since he made an appeal to His Majesty the Emperor, I have decided to send him to Rome. <sup>26</sup>But I don't have anything reliable to write our Emperor about him. So I have brought him to all of you, and especially to you, King Agrippa. Then I'll have something to write after he is cross-examined. <sup>27</sup>I find it ridiculous to send a prisoner to Rome when I can't specify any charges against him.

<sup>26:1</sup> Agrippa said to Paul: You're free to speak for yourself.

Paul acknowledged King Agrippa and then began his defense.

<sup>2</sup>King Agrippa, I think I'm fortunate today to stand in front of you and defend myself against every charge that the Jews brought against me. <sup>3</sup>I say this since you are especially familiar with every custom and controversy in Judaism. So I ask you to listen patiently to me.

<sup>4</sup>All the Jews know how I lived the earliest days of my youth with my own people and in Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup>They've known me for a long time and can testify if they're willing that I followed the strictest party of our religion. They know that I lived my life as a Pharisee.

<sup>6</sup>I'm on trial now because I expect God to keep the promise that he made to our ancestors. <sup>7</sup>Our twelve tribes expect this promise to be kept as they worship with intense devotion day and night. Your Majesty, the Jews are making accusations against me because I expect God to keep his promise. <sup>8</sup>Why do all of you refuse to believe *krino*-thing *apistos*-incredible that God can bring dead people back to life?

<sup>9</sup>I used to think that I had to do a lot of things to oppose the one named Jesus of Nazareth. <sup>10</sup>That is what I did in Jerusalem. By the authority I received from the chief priests, I locked many Christians in prison. I voted to have them killed every time a vote was taken. <sup>11</sup>I even went to each synagogue, punished believers, and forced them to curse the name of Jesus. In my furious rage against them, I hunted them down in cities outside <Jerusalem>.

<sup>12</sup>I was carrying out these activities when I went to the city of Damascus. I had the power and authority of the chief priests. <sup>13</sup>Your Majesty, at noon while I was traveling, I saw a light that was brighter than the sun. The light came from the sky and shined around me and those who were with me. <sup>14</sup>All of us fell to the ground and I heard a voice asking me in Hebrew: Saul, Saul ! Why are you persecuting me? It's hard for a mortal like you to resist God. <sup>15</sup>I asked: Who are you, sir?

This is new information. All those with Paul fell to the ground so this light was not only a vision seen only by Paul, but was a real event. Moreover, Jesus spoke Aramaic demonstrating he was the God of the Hebrews.

The Lord answered: I am Jesus, the one you're persecuting. <sup>16</sup>Stand up! I have appeared to you for a reason. I'm appointing you to be a servant and witness of what you have seen and of what I will show you.

<sup>17</sup>I will rescue you from the Jewish people and from the non-Jewish people to whom I am sending you. <sup>18</sup>You will open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light and from Satan's control to God's. Then they will receive forgiveness for their sins and a share among God's people who are made holy by believing in me.

<sup>19</sup>At that point I did not disobey *apeithes* the vision *optasia* I saw from heaven *ouranios*, King Agrippa. <sup>20</sup>Instead, I spread the message that I first told to the <Jewish> people in Damascus and Jerusalem and throughout the whole country of Judea. I spread the same message to non-Jewish people.



Both groups were expected to change the way they thought and acted and to turn to God. I told them to do things that prove they had changed their lives. <sup>21</sup>For this reason the Jews took me prisoner *syllambano* in the Temple courtyard and tried to murder *diacheirizo* <sup>2x</sup> me.

<sup>22</sup>God has been helping *epikouria* <sup>ix</sup> me to this day so that I can stand and testify *martyreo* to important and unimportant people. I tell them only what the prophets and Moses said would happen. <sup>23</sup>They said that the Messiah would suffer *pathetos* <sup>ix</sup> and be the first to come back to life and would spread *katangelo* light *phos* to Jewish and non-Jewish people.

<sup>24</sup>As Paul was defending himself in this way, Festus shouted: Paul you're crazy *mainomai*-beside yourself <sup>5x</sup>. Too much education *gramma* is driving you *peritrepo* <sup>ix</sup> crazy *eis*-mad. <sup>25</sup>Paul replied: I'm not crazy *mainmai*, Your Excellency Festus. What I'm saying is true *aletheia* and sane *ix*-sober <sup>3x</sup>.

<sup>26</sup>I can easily speak to a king who knows *epistamai* about these things. I'm sure that none of these things has escaped his attention. None of this was done secretly *lanthano* <sup>6x</sup>. <sup>27</sup>King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you believe them.

<sup>28</sup>Agrippa said to Paul: Do you think you can quickly persuade *peitho* me to become a Christian *christianos*? <sup>29</sup>Paul replied: I wish to God that you and everyone listening to me today would quickly and completely become as I am, except for being a prisoner.

<sup>30</sup>The king, the governor, Bernice, and the people who were sitting with them got up. <sup>31</sup>As they were leaving, they said to each other: This man isn't doing anything for which he deserves to die or be put in prison. <sup>32</sup>Agrippa told Festus: This man could have been set free if he hadn't appealed his case to the Emperor.

## COMMENT

Governor Felix is only too happy to have King Agrippa II join him to hear Paul. The governor has no charge against Paul to send to Emperor Nero, except that he disturbs the peace and is

an agitator. How similar is this to the charge the Sanhedrin presented to Governor Pontius Pilate 26 years before against Jesus. **Luke 23:2**

With great ceremony as the Romans like to do, King Agrippa II appears with his sister Bernice. Paul is invited to speak. Paul tells his story much as before. Festus is perplexed seeing Paul's talk as mystical Judaism. King Agrippa, on the other hand, is familiar with the Christian story but sits calmly. All conclude there is no reason to send Paul to Rome. But since he has appealed to the Emperor, he will go to Rome.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. If there are no legitimate witnesses that Paul has done something wrong, why will the governor allow Paul to be sent to Rome to appear before the Emperor? Won't this just make Governor Festus look foolish?
2. Paul is a Pharisee. Why doesn't he simply say that it is the chief priest and the chief priests who are Sadducees who are infighting? This would clearly make the case about religious divisions within Judaism.
3. Did Paul make a mistake in appealing to Caesar in Rome? Wouldn't Governor Festus have released him?
4. Festus could have called Claudius Lysias as a witness to explain why he charged the rioting Jews. This would have freed him from any involvement. Why didn't he?

# PERICOPE 43

## Paul Sails for Rome

<sup>27:1</sup> When it was decided that we should sail to Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were turned over to an army officer *hekatontarches*-Centurion. His name was Julius and he belonged to the Emperor's *sebastos*-Augustus <sup>3x</sup> division *speira*-cohort <sup>7x</sup>. <sup>2</sup>We set sail on a ship from the city of Adramyttium. The ship was going to stop at ports on the coast of the province of Asia. Aristarchus, a Macedonian from the city of Thessalonica went with us.

<sup>3</sup>The next day we arrived at the city of Sidon. Julius treated Paul kindly and allowed him to visit his friends and receive any care he needed. <sup>4</sup>Leaving Sidon, we sailed on the northern side of the island of Cyprus because we were traveling against the wind. <sup>5</sup>We sailed along the coast of the provinces of Cilicia and Pamphylia and arrived at the city of Myra in the province of Lycia.

<sup>6</sup>In Myra the officer Centurion found a ship from Alexandria that was on its way to Italy and put us on it. <sup>7</sup>We were sailing slowly for a number of days. Our difficulties began along the coast of the city of Cnidus because the wind would not let us go further. So at Cape Salmone, we started to sail for the south side of the island of Crete. <sup>8</sup>We had difficulty sailing along the shore of Crete. We finally came to a port called Fair Harbors. The port was near the city of Lasea.

## Paul Prophesies a Shipwreck

<sup>27:9</sup> We had lost so much time that the day of fasting day of Atonement had already past. Sailing was now dangerous, so Paul advised them:

<sup>10</sup> Men, we're going to face a disaster and heavy losses on this voyage. This disaster will cause damage to the cargo and the ship and it will affect our lives.

<sup>11</sup> However, the officer *Centurion* was persuaded by what the pilot and the owner of the ship said and not by what Paul said. <sup>12</sup> Since the harbor was not a good place to spend the winter, most of the men decided to sail from there. They hoped to reach the city of Phoenix somehow and spend the winter there. Phoenix is a harbor that faces the southwest and northwest winds and is located on the island of Crete.

<sup>13</sup> When a gentle breeze began to blow from the south, the men thought their plan would work. They raised the anchor and sailed close to the shore of Crete.

### A Powerful Storm and a Shipwreck

<sup>27:14</sup> Soon a powerful *typhnikos*-tempestuous IX wind *anemos* called a northeaster *Euroclydon* IX blew from the island. <sup>15</sup> The wind carried *synarpazo*-caught 4X the ship away, and we couldn't sail against *antophthalmeo* IX the wind. We couldn't do anything, so we were carried along *epididomi*-driven by the wind.

<sup>16</sup> As we drifted to the sheltered side of a small island called Cauda, we barely got control of the ship's lifeboat. <sup>17</sup> The men pulled it up on deck. Then they passed ropes under the ship to reinforce it.

Fearing that they would hit the large sandbank off the shores of Libya, they lowered the sail and were carried along by the wind. <sup>18</sup> We continued to be tossed so violently by the storm that the next day the men began to throw the cargo overboard.

<sup>19</sup> On the third day they threw the ship's equipment overboard. <sup>20</sup> For a number of days we couldn't see the sun or the stars. The storm wouldn't let up. It was so severe that we finally began to lose any hope of coming out of it alive.

### Paul Prophecies Again

<sup>27:21</sup> Since hardly anyone wanted to eat, Paul stood among them and said:

Men, you should have followed my advice not to sail from Crete. You would have avoided this disaster and loss. <sup>22</sup>Now I advise you to have courage. No one will lose his life. Only the ship will be destroyed.

<sup>23</sup>I know this because an angel from the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood by me last night. <sup>24</sup>The angel told me: Don't be afraid Paul. You must present your case to the Emperor. God has granted safety to everyone who is sailing with you.

<sup>25</sup>So have courage men! I trust God that everything will turn out as he told me. <sup>26</sup>However, we will run aground on some island.

### **The Shipwreck**

<sup>27:27</sup>On the fourteenth night we were still drifting through the Mediterranean Sea. About midnight the sailors suspected that we were approaching land. <sup>28</sup>So they threw a line with a weight on it into the water. It sank 120 feet. They waited a little while and did the same thing again. This time the line sank 90 feet. <sup>29</sup>Fearing we might hit rocks, they dropped four anchors from the back of the ship and prayed for morning to come.

<sup>30</sup>The sailors tried to escape from the ship. They let the lifeboat down into the sea and pretended they were going to lay out the anchors from the front of the ship. <sup>31</sup>Paul told the officer and the soldiers: If these sailors don't stay on the ship, you have no hope of staying alive. <sup>32</sup>Then the soldiers cut the ropes that held the lifeboat and let it drift away.

### **Paul Prophesies a Third Time**

<sup>27:33</sup>Just before daybreak Paul was encouraging everyone to have something to eat and said:

This is the fourteenth day you have waited and have had nothing to eat. <sup>34</sup>So I'm encouraging you to eat something. Eating will help you survive, since not a hair from anyone's head will be lost.

<sup>35</sup>After Paul said this, he took *lambano* some bread, thanked *eucharisto* God in front *enopion* of everyone *pas*-all, broke *klao* it, and began to eat. <sup>36</sup>Everyone was encouraged and had something to eat. <sup>37</sup>There were 276 of us on the ship. <sup>38</sup>After the people had eaten all they wanted, they lightened the ship by dumping the wheat into the sea.

<sup>39</sup>In the morning they couldn't recognize the land, but they could see a bay with a beach. So they decided to try to run the ship ashore. <sup>40</sup>They cut the anchors free and left them in the sea. At the same time they untied the ropes that held the steering oars. Then they raised the top sail to catch the wind and steered the ship to the shore.

<sup>41</sup>They struck a sandbar in the water and ran the ship aground. The front of the ship stuck and couldn't be moved while the back of the ship was broken to pieces by the force of the waves.

<sup>42</sup>The soldiers had a plan to kill the prisoners to keep them from swimming away and escaping. <sup>43</sup>However, the officer Centurion wanted to save Paul, so he stopped the soldiers from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and swim ashore. <sup>44</sup>Then he ordered the rest to follow on planks or some other pieces of wood from the ship. In this way everyone got to shore safely.

## COMMENT

Paul is put under the guard of a Centurion. He apparently had several companions among whom was Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica. They sailed to the city of Myra where they changed for a ship from Alexandria, Egypt apparently carrying wheat for Rome. They had trouble sailing because of the wind but finally reached Fair Harbors on the island of Crete.

At this point in the year, sailing had become dangerous. Paul advises the Centurion that a disaster was about to happen, damaging the cargo and their lives. But the Centurion agreed with the pilot and owner of the ship and sailed on for the harbor was not a good place to spend the winter. The men hoped to only sail to the harbor of Phoenix, still on the island of Crete.

At first things went well, but soon a powerful northeaster blew called an euroclydon *euroklydon* ix. Things got worse and the sail was hauled down as the ship was carried along by the wind.

Now the sailors threw the ship's cargo and equipment overboard. It became so severe the men feared for their lives. Paul then prophesied again saying: No one will die. Only the ship will be lost. An angel told me this.

On the 14th night the sailors suspected land was near so they threw weights in the water and it convinced them land was near. Anchors were dropped out to stop the ship from moving closer to land during the night. Everyone prayed for morning. Then the sailors attempted to escape from the ship but the soldiers cut the ropes to the lifeboat.

In the morning, Paul prophesied for a third time urging everyone to eat to build up their strength. Then they lightened the ship throwing the rest of the wheat cargo into the sea. They saw a bay with a beach so they ran the ship ashore setting the sails. The ship struck a sandbar. The centurion ordered those who could swim to jump overboard and the rest would follow riding on wood from the ship. Everyone got to shore safely.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Paul prophesies three times. What does this say about who is guiding the ship?
2. Why did the centurion want to save Paul? **Acts 27:43**
3. Why did Paul say to the officer and the soldiers: *If the sailors leave the ship, you'll have no hope of staying alive?* **Acts 27:31**

# PERICOPE 44

## Paul Safe on the Island of Malta

<sup>28:1</sup> When we were safely on shore, we found out that the island was called Malta. <sup>2</sup>The people *barbarous* -barbarians not of Greek culture who lived on the island were unusually kind *philanthropia* <sup>2x</sup> to us. They made a fire and welcomed all of us around it because of the rain and the cold.

<sup>3</sup>Paul gathered a bundle of brushwood and put it on the fire. The heat forced a poisonous snake out of the brushwood. The snake bit Paul's hand and wouldn't let go. <sup>4</sup>When the people who lived on the island saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other: This man must be a murderer *phoneus* <sup>7x</sup>. He may have escaped *diasozo* <sup>8x</sup> from the sea *thalassa*, but justice *dike* <sup>4x</sup> won't let him live *zao*.

<sup>5</sup>Paul shook the snake into the fire and wasn't harmed. <sup>6</sup>The people were waiting for him to swell up or suddenly drop dead. But after they had waited a long time and saw nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god.

<sup>7</sup>A man named Publius, who was the governor of the island had property around the area. He welcomed us and treated us kindly, and for three days we were his guests. <sup>8</sup>His father happened to be sick in bed. He was suffering from fever *pyretos* <sup>6x</sup> and dysentery *dysenteria* <sup>ix</sup>. Paul went to him, prayed *proseuchomai*, placed his hands on him, and made him well *iaomai*.

<sup>9</sup>After that had happened other sick people on the island went to Paul and were made well *therapeuo*. <sup>10</sup>They showed respect for us in many ways and when we were going to set sail, they put whatever we needed on board.

## Paul Sails from Malta to Rome

<sup>28:11</sup> After three months we sailed on an Alexandrian ship that had spent the winter at the island. The ship had the gods Castor and Pollux carved on its front. <sup>12</sup>We stopped at the city of Syracuse and stayed there for three days.



<sup>13</sup>We sailed from Syracuse and arrived at the city of Rhegium. The next day a south wind began to blow, and two days later we arrived at the city of Puteoli. <sup>14</sup>In Puteoli we discovered some believers *adelphos*—brethren—who begged us to spend a week with them.

The travelers are still 130 miles from Rome.

<sup>15</sup>Believers in Rome heard that we were coming, so they came as far as the cities of Appius' Market and Three Taverns to meet us. When Paul saw *eido* them, he thanked *eucharisto* God *theos* and felt *lambano*—took—encouraged *tharsos*—courage ix.

## COMMENT

How thankful they must have been to have been saved. There were 276 men on the ship so Governor Publius was very kind to extend his hospitality to them. Paul again performs miracles in God's name. They were on Malta three months. Then they sailed to the city of Syracuse, staying there three days. Then they sailed to the city of Rhegium, staying overnight. Then they sailed to Puteoli, where brethren begged them to stay a week. Finally, they reached the city of Three Taverns where brethren came from Rome to meet them. Paul was grateful he had reached his goal and thanked God.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Who paid for the food of 276 men while they were on the island? It is fortunate there is this much extra food during the winter on the island.
2. What is Luke's purpose in calling attention to the pagan gods at the head of the next boat?
3. When brethren met Paul and his companions, remember Paul was still under guard. This means the brethren also entertained the centurion and any soldiers he had with him. What does this say about the hospitality of these believers?
4. Why was Paul so encouraged when believers came to meet him? He had never been in Rome before.

# PERICOPE 45

## Paul in Rome

<sup>28:15</sup> So we finally arrived in the city of Rome. <sup>16</sup> After our arrival, Paul was allowed to live by himself, but he had a soldier who guarded him.

[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. Acts 28:15 KJV ]

<sup>17</sup> After three days Paul invited the most influential *protos*-chief Jews in Rome to meet with him.

Scholars estimate that there were 65,000 Jews in Rome at this time. This was a city of over 1 million people. Half of Roman subjects died by age 5. If they reached age 10, half died by age 50. The population of the entire empire was 60-70 million.

When they assembled, he said to them:

Brothers I haven't done anything against the Jewish people or violated the customs handed down by our ancestors. Yet, I'm a prisoner *desmios* from Jerusalem and I've been handed over *paradidomi* to the Roman authorities. <sup>18</sup> The Roman authorities cross-examined me and wanted to let me go *apolyo* because I was accused of nothing for which I deserved to die.

<sup>19</sup> But when the Jews objected, I was forced to appeal my case to the Emperor. That doesn't mean I have any charges to bring against my own people. <sup>20</sup> That's why I asked to see you and speak with you. I'm wearing these chains because of what Israel hopes *elpsis* for.

<sup>21</sup> The Jewish leaders told Paul: We haven't received any letters from Judea about you and no Jewish person who has come to Rome has reported or mentioned anything bad *poneros* about you. <sup>22</sup> However, we would like *axioo*-desire <sup>7x</sup> to hear what you think. We know *gnostos* that everywhere *pantachou* <sup>7x</sup> people are talking against *antilego* <sup>10x</sup> this sect *hairesis* <sup>9x</sup> <the Followers of the Way>.

<sup>23</sup>On a designated day a larger number of influential Jews than expected went to the place where Paul was staying. From morning until evening, Paul was explaining *diakmarytromai* God's *theos* kingdom *basileia* to them. He was trying to convince *peitho* them about Jesus from Moses' Teachings and the Prophets.

<sup>24</sup>Some of them were convinced *peitho* by what he said, but others continued to disbelieve *apisteo*.

<sup>25</sup>The Jews, unable to agree among themselves, left after Paul had quoted this particular passage to them:

How well the Holy Spirit spoke to your ancestors through the prophet Isaiah: <sup>26</sup>The Spirit said:

Go to these people and say: You will hear clearly but never understand. You will see clearly but never comprehend. <sup>27</sup>These people have become close-minded and hard of hearing. They have shut their eyes so that their eyes never see. Their ears never hear. Their minds never understand. And they never turn to me for healing. **Isaiah 6:9-10**

<sup>28</sup>You need to know that God has sent his salvation *soterios*<sub>5x</sub> to people who are not Jews. They will listen *akouo*.

Paul rented a place for two full years and welcomed anyone who came to him. He spread his message about God's Kingdom and taught very boldly about the Lord Jesus Christ. No one stopped him.

## COMMENT

Paul rented a place, although a Roman soldier accompanied him wherever he went. Paul waited three days, then invited the most influential Jews in Rome to meet with him. He told them that he hadn't done anything wrong, but the Jews handed him over to the Romans simply because he was a member of the Followers of the Way.

*Yet this sect believes the messages of the Hebrew prophets in the Scriptures and does not violate the customs of the Chosen People. Since the Jews objected to my release from the Romans, I was forced to appeal to the Emperor to try my case. This doesn't mean I have charges against the Jews.*

The Jews told Paul that they had not received any letters from the Jewish community in Judea and no Jewish person we know has said anything bad about you. *But we know that everyone is talking against your sect -- The Followers of the Way.*

Paul set a day and the Jews came to hear Paul explain the doctrines of The Followers of the Way. Some were convinced what Paul said was true, but others rejected him. All of them left when Paul said to them: *The Holy Spirit spoke to your ancestors through the prophet Isaiah: None of you will believe God. But know this: God will speak to Gentiles and give them his salvation. They will listen to him.*

Paul rented a place to live and welcomed those who came to see him teaching boldly about the Lord Jesus Christ. No one stopped him from preaching Jesus.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Describe how Paul's story parallels Jesus' story.
2. Why didn't Paul also quote God's description of the Servant of YHWH?

[ Now the Lord says: You are not just my servant who restores the tribes of Jacob and brings back those in Israel whom I have preserved. I have also made you a light to the nations so that you would save people all over the world. **Isaiah 49:6** ]

Wouldn't this verse have been more effective?

3. Paul really sidesteps the primary doctrine of the Followers of the Way: Jesus of Nazareth is the anointed servant of YHWH, the Davidic Messiah, whose death makes possible the reconciliation of wicked humans with a holy God. Believe in Jesus and you will be saved from spiritual death. Is Paul being truthful with these Jews?

# EPILOGUE

Luke had two years in Caesarea and two years in Rome to write his two volumes: The Gospel According to Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. He had of course the freedom to venture out and interview people, although Paul didn't as he was under house arrest.

As I prepared this study using the *GOD's WORD*© translation and constantly comparing it to the King James translation, I soon realized how difficult it was for the *GOD's WORD* translators to put the words of these two books into common American English. Luke used many rare words and some very complicated sentences so he could be precise in what he said as a lawyer and a doctor would appreciate. I have not identified all of them, but I have portrayed many.

This leads me to the conclusion that Luke was writing to Theophilus, a very educated man and most likely the Roman lawyer who would represent Paul before Emperor Nero.

Luke is telling the story of early Christianity as it evolved out of 2,000 years of Judaism. For the story of Jesus is the story of the Covenant of Redemption.

This is a Covenant cut by the three members of the Holy Trinity before creation was created. God the Father would send God the Son in human form to earth to reveal God as never before and tell the Gospel about the kingdom of God that would come.

God the Son would minister on earth for 3 ½ years in his humanity empowered by the Holy Spirit through his constant prayer and then die on the cross to serve as the sacrificial atonement for the sins of all humanity. God would raise him back to life on the third day and he would appear to his disciples, his witnesses, and they would watch as he returned to heaven.

His witnesses would know where Jesus was today—that he is alive today sitting at the right hand of God the Father interceding for fallen humanity.

These witnesses of Jesus included, first, the twelve Jews led by Cephas Peter and then another diaspora Jew named Saul (Paul), to whom Jesus personally appeared. They traveled from Jerusalem throughout Judea, Samaria, and then throughout the Roman Empire from Syria to Asia to Europe and finally to the center of the Roman Empire in Rome.

God equipped these apostles and disciples with the Holy Spirit, enabling them to speak boldly of God's goodness in providing salvation, not only to members of his Chosen People who believed, but also to Gentiles, as had been prophesied by the Hebrew Prophets for more than 2,000 years.

The small house churches grew rapidly despite the reluctance of many of the Chosen People to embrace the faith. Eventually, the Christian churches grew and Gentiles formed the majority. Although many Roman emperors persecuted the Christians by 380 AD the Roman Empire declared their formal religion was the religion of the Bishops of Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch.

The Pew Research Foundation [2011] reports Christian adherents today total 2.2 billion, consisting of 31% of world religious groups.

Americas	804, 000, 000	United States 246,800 [80% population]
Europe	565, 500, 000	
Sub-Sahara Africa	516, 500, 000	
Asia-Pacific	285, 100, 000	
Middle East—N. Africa	12, 800, 000	

NOTE: In 2020, the Christian population in the U.S. is estimated at 205 million.