

*A Study
on the Acts
of the Apostles*

Jesse C. Jones

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Bible Study Guides for the New Testament

Writing a book was not on my mind when this effort was initiated some years ago. In fact, it began when a member of my Sunday School class commented that his son had talked about committing suicide the previous week. As a result, I felt an urge to see what the Bible had to say about hope, with a view toward helping his son cope with his suicidal feelings. The result of that effort was an article entitled: “Hope and the Miraculous Three Pound Computer,” located in Chapter 6 of the book [After the Big Bang](#). My next writing endeavor was a fallout from a Sunday School class discussion about temptations, or trials, and their purpose in our lives. An article entitled “The Trials of Job” located in Chapter 7 of the same book resulted from that effort. After this I began to feel a prodding from the Lord to continue studying and writing. The chapters in this book document what I subsequently learned about two of God’s greatest and most marvelous creations: earth and mankind, who He made to exercise dominion over it.

Some of the material presented in these New Testament Bible Study Guides conflicts with commonly held viewpoints, and differs as well on the definitions

of some words used to explicate them. One thing I have learned through this effort is that the meaning of many of the words used in the Bible is not uniformly agreed to by expositors, and in many cases, not agreed to by the various versions of the Bible. For example, in the KJV of the old testament (OT), the word “soul” is used over 780 times. Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words notes that in over 400 of these uses, the Hebrew word used is misinterpreted. I mention this not to heap criticism on the KJV, for it is my personal Bible, and I love it dearly, but to point out the importance of consulting Hebrew and Greek sources, and good conservative lexicons, when trying to understand difficult scripture. The meaning of some words is not absolutely clear even then. Nevertheless, this is the process I have followed in this effort.

I am a retired engineer: my education and work experience sparked a great interest in details. I found that to understand the technical difficulties and problems that arise in the operation of complex machines, a good understanding of the details of the design is absolutely necessary. What is presented herein is an analysis of important details in God’s creation of the earth and man: his habitat and milieu. However, no description is completely adequate to portray

the unbelievable complexity and efficacy of tripartite man. Scientists and engineers have tried to duplicate the various subsystems in God's design of man for years, with limited success. Part of the problem is that we do not understand many of the operational details, but the greatest impediment is probably the fact that man is composed of three parts: spirit, soul, and body, two of which (spirit and soul) are immaterial, and are thus largely beyond the scope of scientific and medical analysis. The third part, the highly complex body, is strongly influenced by these two immaterial parts. God has given mankind a great challenge in trying to understand tripartite man. What better model could we find for our study than our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: spirit, soul and body in perfect relationship. When Jesus came to earth He emptied Himself, and was formed in the likeness and fashion of a man. Like us, He was a tripartite being, but without a sin nature. Thus, He was the perfect man, the ideal for all to emulate.

I read a book several years ago by Watchman Nee in which he made the observation that one of the primary ways God speaks to us is through our intuition. After that I began to try to follow the guidance I received in this manner, and what is presented herein is largely a result of that attempt. I hasten to

add that all readers will not agree with my conclusions. I have learned much about God's creation, and His design of man through this effort: that may be the primary purpose He had in mind. My hope is that readers will find new ideas in these words that drive them to the absolute authority: God's Word - the Bible.

As references I have used the King James Version (KJV), the New International Version (NIV), the New Living Translation (NLT), the Revised Version (RV), and Recovery Versions of the bible, as well as the Interlinear NIV Hebrew - English Old Testament (OT), and the Interlinear Greek - English New Testament (GNT). I have also used Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament, Moulton's Analytical Greek Lexicon, the Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon, and Webster's New World Dictionary for word interpretation. Unless otherwise noted, scripture passages quoted are from the KJV.

The John A. Dickson New Analytical Bible and Dictionary, Authorized King James Version, Chicago 1950, was a primary reference source. This Bible was given to my wife and I in 1957, and is one of my dearest treasures. It has

been rebound once, and is in need of a repair job at the present time. Thus, the reader can appreciate the usage it has had over these 62 years, most of which has been during the last 25 years. The book introductions have been generally quoted from this source, with changes (mostly grammatical) made only when considered necessary.

Finally, I want to recognize the lady that takes everything I have written, and makes the necessary changes for placing it on the internet. Ms. Sandra Crosnoe is the daughter of two of my, and my deceased wife's, dearest friends, Ted and Jimmie Crosnoe (also deceased). When God moved us (my wife and I), to a Methodist Church in Pasadena, Texas, in 1962, Ted, Jimmie, and their two daughters were among the group of several families in the church that were touched by God in a mighty way that led to a weekly Bible study, that resulted in many changed lives. As the years passed by, and the families went in different directions, we were not able to maintain the close relationship we had in Pasadena. We settled in Lubbock, Texas, in 1982, and I got the call to start writing on the Bible. Sometime after that Sandra was in Lubbock and we got together for dinner. When she learned of my involvement in writing on the Bible she immediately volunteered to help in making it available by publishing

it on the internet. She may not have known what she was getting into, for God has not ceased from giving me Bible subjects to study and write about. This series on the New Testament has been our greatest undertaking, and Sandra's help (as always) has been essential. She has corrected my grammar, argued with me on interpretation, prepared the pictorial cover pages, and generally polished the appearance of the various books in ways that I could never have accomplished on my own. Without her help, this (and other) documents would never have been made available to the general public. I do so appreciate all her work. I believe Ted and Jimmie will give her a "well done" when she joins them in heaven. Her personal website is [Finding Gems and Sharing Them](#).

These bible study guides are available at no charge to read, print, download and share on a platform called Scribd (no membership is required to read/download). They are all listed and linked as a group in [Bible Study Guides by Jesse C. Jones on Scribd](#). Upon completion, most of them will contain study questions in the Appendix. Other works available are listed and linked with [Books for Believers and Seekers](#). If you hit a pop-up page on Scribd asking you to become a member to read free, simply click the 'x' in the upper right corner to remove the pop-up and continue to our links on Scribd. My personal web-

site is [Revealed by Fire - Jesse's Studies](#) if you wish to see my latest articles and updates.

It is my sincere hope that these works will guide you to a personal ongoing relationship with Jesus and a life led and anointed by the Holy Spirit.

JESSE JONES

A Study on the Acts of the Apostles

The Book of Acts traces the history of the fledgling Christian church from its beginning through its growth to eventually influence the entire Roman empire. The Book of Acts records the history of the church from its beginning at Pentecost; through the period of persecution by the Jewish hierarchy, culminating in the stoning of Stephen; to the spreading of the Gospel to other regions; and finally to the establishment of the church in Rome through the missionary efforts of the Apostle Paul, and his companions.

The Book of Acts closes with the account of Paul's first imprisonment at Rome (62-63 AD). Luke, Paul's physician and fellow-traveller, may have written the book of Acts while with Paul in Rome during Paul's two year imprisonment (house arrest) there. The Book of the Acts of the Apostles is actually the second book written by Luke, while the first ("The Gospel According to St. Luke") documents the introduction of the Gospel by our Lord Jesus Christ. Luke dedicated both of these important books of the Bible to a friend named

Theophilus, who may have represented a group of people Luke wished to influence favorably in regard to the Gospel.

The book of Acts is really the story of the two giants of the early church, Peter and Paul. Peter's ministry was to the Jews, while Paul's was to the Gentiles, and both were used mightily by God in establishing the church, the body of Christ. Peter surfaces as the leader of the twelve disciples chosen by Jesus, and he was also one of the three who formed an inner circle around the Lord. His impulsive nature was both an asset, and a frailty: often precipitating a spiritual truth, while at times speaking before thinking. Of the twelve disciples Peter is the one in which spiritual powers were most often manifested: on one occasion Peter's mere shadow was thought to bring healing. He was undoubtedly the Lord's primary force in the early church through the stoning of Stephen, and it was the young man Saul, who held the coats of those throwing the stones, that would soon become God's designated leader, as the church emphasis turned to the Gentiles.

Saul became a force in early church development after his encounter with God on the road to Damascus. From there on he gradually began to be recognized as the great missionary, carrying the message of Jesus Christ to the Gentile world. He had a new mission: to evangelize the Gentiles. Asia Minor,

the Aegean Archipelago, Greece, and Rome became the parish of this great missionary. His special training in Jewish theology under the widely recognized teacher Gamaliel, coupled with the guidance he received from the scriptures after his conversion, equipped him to become the most influential merely human soul that ever walked among men. Paul was not only wise, but he was bold: the Jews tried to kill him from the time of his preaching in Damascus, shortly after his encounter with Jesus, until his final surrender to Caesar in Rome. To the end of his life Paul fought the good fight, finished the course, and kept the faith.

Receiving The Holy Spirit

Chapter 1 of the Book of Acts begins with the final instructions Jesus gives to His disciples. He tells them that they should not depart from Jerusalem for they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit *“not many days hence.”* This has led to confusion with some in the body of Christ since previously in John 20:22, during His first visitation with the disciples after His resurrection, Jesus *“breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.”* Compare these two statements with Acts 2:1-4, when on the day of Pentecost a number of Jesus’ disciples, including the twelve apostles, were gathered together “. . . *when suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”* I believe it is widely agreed among Bible expositors that Jesus was giving the “earnest,” or promise, of the Holy Spirit to the apostles in the passage from John, whereas in Acts 1:4-5, He was commanding the apostles to remain in Jerusalem, for they were to be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence.

Some confusion also exists about the use of the terms “receive,” and “be baptized.” A number of phrases are used in the NT to describe the experience of receiving the Holy Spirit: *“receive the Holy Spirit, baptized with the Holy Spirit, filled with the Holy Ghost, the gift of the Holy Ghost was poured out, the Holy Ghost fell on them, the Holy Ghost came on them, I send the promise of my Father upon you, and endued with power from on high.”* Many of these descriptive phrases sound a lot like those in the OT, but “*baptism*” of the Holy Spirit is never mentioned in the OT.

When the Apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit they received power and boldness for ministry. They were no longer timid and afraid, but stood up on the day of Pentecost and accused the men of Israel of crucifying Jesus, the Messiah, sent by God and approved by the miracles He performed. John 6:44 says that no man can come to Jesus unless God the Father calls him, and Acts 2:38-39 says that those who are “*called*” by the Lord our God, and who are baptized into Jesus Christ (into His death), can receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. In many cases in the book of Acts new believers who had been baptized for repentance of sins (John’s baptism), were later prayed for by the disciples so they could receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I spent a good portion of my life in the same condition as that of these new believers before

they received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I recognized that Jesus was the Son of God, and that He had forgiven my sins, but I did not *know* Him personally, and I had never really heard any teaching on baptism in the Holy Spirit. After I had a personal encounter with Jesus Christ everything changed. I had not realized that He wanted be part of my life, and to participate in the choices and decisions I made along the way. I received the Holy Spirit then, but I was unaware of it for some time because I was seeking evidence that He had in fact entered my life. The common belief at that time (1963), was that tongues was proof that a person had received the Holy Spirit. Later, I learned that speaking in other tongues was just one of the blessings that the Holy Spirit brings to the believer: all I had to do was to realize that I had received the Holy Spirit, and to let Him use my body (vessel) to minister the gift(s) that He saw fit. Luke 11:13 records the fact that our heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to those that ask and are ready to receive. I found out that when you are unaware that such a relationship is possible, you don't have to ask.

When Jesus ascended to heaven He established the church, which He identified as His body on earth. This mystical body was to *be Christ* on earth after He joined His Father in heaven, and this church body was to do the things He did, and greater things. To be able to do what Jesus did while on

earth the members of His body must be baptized with the Holy Spirit, for the Spirit is the source of the power (faith) necessary. It is through Jesus' earthly body that God works and, judging by the present condition of the world, the church has not been successful in standing, and holding ground, against Satan.

Jesus identified the Holy Spirit as the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, who would abide with us forever (John 14:16). In John 14:18, He further identifies the Holy Spirit as His Spirit, and in other scriptures the Holy Spirit is referred to as the Spirit of God. The work of the Holy Spirit in man is described in many scriptures, some of His attributes are listed below:

- 1) As our comforter He provides encouragement and alleviation of grief.
- 2) As our sanctifier He renews our minds and conforms us to the image of Christ.
- 3) He witnesses with our spirit that we are sons of God.
- 4) He gives us understanding of the Word of God.
- 5) He knows the mind of God, thus we have access to the mind of God through Him.
- 6) He sets us free from the law of sin and death.
- 7) He gives us power (faith) to be witnesses for Christ.
- 8) He causes us to bear fruit of the Spirit.

- 9) He brings to remembrance the words of Christ.
- 10) He guides us in prayer, worship, and praise.
- 11) The gifts of the Spirit in our lives come from Him.

Jesus Heads Home

Acts 1:6-11 documents Jesus' return to heaven, His original home. The apostles were still confused as to what was to transpire, and asked Him whether He would restore the kingdom to Israel? Jesus answer was: *"It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power [authority]. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."* After this Jesus was taken up by a cloud out of their sight, two men (angels) stood by them dressed in white garments who told those gathered there that Jesus would return in the same manner (in a cloud). This refers to Jesus' return for the rapture/resurrection which is described in 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

After this the crowd returned to Jerusalem, which was about a day's journey from the mount of Olivet, where Jesus was taken up into the cloud. There they gathered with the others that followed Jesus to appoint a replacement for

Judas, and wait for the promise of the Father: baptism with the Holy Spirit.

After they had prayed they selected Matthias by casting lots, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Filled With the Holy Spirit

Acts 1:5 states that John the Baptist baptized with water, but baptism with the Holy Ghost was soon to come. Matthew 3:11 says, *“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.”* This is exactly what happened on the day of Pentecost, when the disciples were gathered in one place (the upper room). Suddenly a mighty rushing wind filled the house where they were, and cloven (split or divided) tongues of fire appeared on each one. They were filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak in different tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance, thus fulfilling the prophecy that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit, and with fire. It has been questioned whether the word *“fire”* here refers to purification of the godly, who truly receive the baptism of the Spirit, or to the destruction of the wicked, who fail to receive. But the thought is one: the Divine presence will in fact, be twofold in its working, according as it is yielded to, or the reverse. It burns away sin out of the godly, and it consumes the ungodly if they cleave to

their sin, see [Isaiah 33:14](#). Of course, both of these results are initiated at this time, and continue over the life of the individual.

When the crowd representing many nations and tongues gathered in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost heard about this, they came to check it out, and they were dumbfounded: every man heard them speaking in his own native tongue. Some even accused the disciples of being drunk. But Peter, now filled with boldness by the power of the Holy Spirit, was no longer afraid of being identified with Jesus. He spoke to the crowd and stated that what they were seeing and hearing was that spoken of by Joel the prophet: who prophesied that God would pour out His Spirit on all flesh, sons and daughters would prophesy, young men would see visions, and old men would have dreams. And there will be wonders in heaven, and signs in the earth below: blood, fire, and smoke (Joel 2:30-31). The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before that great and notable day of the Lord (Matthew 24:29), and whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

At this point Peter stood up and began to preach to the crowd that had gathered there. He accused them of crucifying Jesus, who was delivered into their wicked hands by the determinate council and foreknowledge of God. But God, through the Holy Spirit, raised Him up, for it was not possible that death

could hold the Son of God. As it was prophesied: from the fruit of David's loins God raised up Jesus Christ to sit upon his (David's) throne (2 Samuel 7:12; Psalm 132:11; Luke 1:32; 2 Timothy 2:8). By my count there are 42 scripture verses that refer (in one way or the other), to David's connection to the birth and life of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I particularly like this quote from Jamison, Fausset, and Brown's Commentary: "*David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son?* — There is but one solution to this conundrum. Jesus, the Messiah, is at once inferior to David as his son according to the flesh, and superior to him as the Lord of a kingdom of which David is himself a subject, not the sovereign. The human and divine natures of Christ, and the spirituality of His kingdom—of which the highest earthly sovereigns are honored if they be counted worthy to be its subjects—furnish the only key to this puzzle" (Mark 12:37).

So Christ, seated on the throne of David at the right hand of God the Father, acts now to give the Holy Spirit to those that are called, and sanctify our lives acting as our mediator and intercessor. Jesus Christ is also our intercessor with the Father in support of our prayer requests.

As a result of Peter's powerful ministry those that received his word were baptized, and three-thousand souls were saved. They remained together and

had all things in common. They sold their possessions and goods, and divided them to every man who had need. They congregated in the temple and broke bread from house to house. They praised God, and had favor with all the people. God added to the church daily those that were saved.

In his book “My Utmost For His Highest,” Oswald Chambers has this to say about the Holy Spirit and the believer: “The Holy Spirit has been given; the Lord is glorified - our waiting is not dependent upon the providence of God, but on our own spiritual fitness. The attitude of receiving and welcoming the Holy Spirit into our lives is to be the continual attitude of a believer.”

NOTE: For a more detailed description of a newborn believer’s experience in receiving the Holy Spirit I recommend Chapter 6, “When Does God Give The Holy Spirit” in the book [“Bible Stumbling Blocks” by Jesse C. Jones, available on scribd](#) to read/download free and linked on the author’s website [jessecjones.-wordpress.com](#).

Healing of the Lame Man

As Peter and John approached the temple at the hour of prayer they were accosted by a lame man at the gate known as Beautiful. This man had been lame since birth and he was carried to the temple gate daily, where he would ask those passing by for alms. When he asked Peter and John, Peter responded by telling him that he had no silver or gold, but such as he had he would give, and he told the lame man to rise up and walk in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. He then took the lame man's right hand and helped him up, and his feet and ankle bones immediately received strength. He then began to leap with joy, and he walked into the temple with Peter and John. The people in the temple saw him walking and praising God, and they knew he was the lame man that sat at the gate Beautiful asking for alms. They were amazed and wondered what had happened to him, and a crowd gathered on the porch of the temple wondering how this could be. Peter made it abundantly clear that it was not any holiness or power from he or John that brought about the healing, but it was the glorified Son of God Jesus Christ, who they delivered up to Pilate for

crucifixion when Pilate was inclined to let Him go. He accused them of killing the Prince of life, who God raised from the dead, which was witnessed by Peter and John. But Peter went on to say that he knew they acted out of ignorance, and the things that Jesus suffered were a fulfillment of OT prophecies, necessary for the sins of mankind to be forgiven.

Peter went on to appeal to them to repent, and be converted, so their sins could be forgiven when the times of “refreshing” came. Use of the word “refreshing” seems unusual in this verse. An accurate understanding of the term “*times of refreshing shall come*,” seems to be a change from a previous (non)relationship with God, to a new (refreshing) relationship, based on repentance, and a quickened (enlivened) human spirit within those that are converted. We know this now as “salvation.” Peter went on to say that God would send Jesus Christ to those who were converted. We know that it is actually the Holy Spirit that comes into the believer’s life to renew his mind, and make him more like Jesus Christ (Romans 12:2). The Holy Spirit is actually the Spirit of Jesus Christ, which explains Peter’s statement.

Peter and John Imprisoned

This chapter continues with the ministry of Peter and John addressing a crowd of about 5000 men, that had gathered at the temple following the healing of the lame man. The authorities (priests, temple captain, and Sadducees) were upset, for the two apostles were preaching about Jesus, and His resurrection from the dead: so they arrested them. The next day the rulers, elders, and scribes, with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John (not the disciple), Alexander, and those who were kindred of the high priest, gathered together at the temple, and they asked Peter and John by what power, or by what name had they done this. Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, again boldly spoke up, telling them that it was Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom they had crucified, and whom God had raised from the dead, that was responsible for the lame man's healing. Peter added that Jesus was the chief cornerstone which they had rejected, but who was now the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other name under heaven. Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible gives this interpretation of this verse: "This is the stone which was

set at nought of you builders: the priests, elders, and Scribes; who were fond of being called builders, but made miserable work of it; despising and rejecting the stone of Israel, and instead of him as a foundation, built themselves, and others, on the traditions of the elders, and their own righteousness: but though Christ was rejected by them, both in person and in doctrine, and was ignominiously treated, and at last put to death, yet he was raised from the dead, and exalted at the right hand of God; and is the stone which is become the head of the corner; or the chief corner stone, that adorns, strengthens, knits, and keeps together, the whole building; in which Jews and Gentiles, saints in all ages and places, even all the elect of God, are united together.”

Now when the rulers saw that the apostles were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled. Peter and John had the man who was healed standing with them, so the rulers were afraid to do anything to them, realizing that the crowd was largely supportive of what had transpired. The Council of rulers then privately decided that all they could do was to try to keep the word from spreading about what God had done, so they threatened the apostles, and released them with a warning.

When Peter and John reported what had happened to the crowd gathered at the temple, there was a great move of the Holy Spirit: the place where they

were was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking the Word of God with boldness. They were of one heart and soul, and they all shared what they had. Many who had land and houses sold them and brought the proceeds to the apostles and distribution was made to all who had need. No one lacked for they had all things in common.

Ananias and Sapphira Conspire

Chapter 5 begins with a story about sin, and how it was dealt with when the early church was being established. As we noted in Chapter 4, those that had valuable holdings sold them and brought the proceeds to the apostles. A certain man named Ananias sold a possession, but brought only a portion to the apostles, claiming that was the full amount of the sale. But Peter, with discernment given by God (1 Corinthians 12:10), asked Ananias why Satan filled his heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land? “Was the land not yours to do whatever you decided to do with it, and if you sold it, was it not within your power to do whatever you desired with the proceeds? You have not lied to men, but to God.” Ananias, upon hearing these words, fell down at Peter’s feet and died: great fear fell on them that heard these words. Young men that were present then wrapped him up and took him out and buried him.

About three hours later Sapphira, the wife of Ananias, entered the place where they were, not knowing what had happened. Peter asked her whether

they had sold the land for the (false) amount that Ananias had given him earlier, and she answered yes. Peter then asked her why they had conspired to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? He then told her that the feet of those that buried her husband were at the door, and they are ready to carry you out as well. She then fell dead at his feet, and the young men buried her next to her husband. Acts 5:11 says, “*And great fear came upon all the church, as upon as many as heard these things.*”

Paul and John Imprisoned Again, But Delivered By An Angel

It was a time of great spiritual outpouring in the church. Many signs and wonders were wrought at the hands of the apostles, and they were in one accord in Solomon’s porch at the temple. Multitudes of believers, both men and women were added to the body. The great numbers forced them to bring the sick who came for healing into the streets and lay them on beds and couches, hoping that the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them and they would be healed. Multitudes of people from cities around Jerusalem came bringing the sick, and those vexed with unclean spirits, and they healed every one. The timing was critical for God’s plan to establish the church on solid footing, so God poured out His Spirit bountifully.

In more modern times we have seen and read about great outpourings of the Spirit, but I know of none that measure up to this. I was involved in the wonderful outpouring that occurred in Houston, Texas, in the 1960's and I witnessed many of those that received the Holy Spirit. I was blessed to be with six other men who all received the Holy Spirit at a Methodist men's retreat in the Fall of 1963. I did not know about the spiritual condition of the many others involved in this move of the Spirit, but I was totally ignorant regarding the spiritual teaching of the church when Jesus entered the small building where the seven of us were housed. I was not even comfortable trying to pray. I didn't know Jesus **personally**, and when I prayed (which was seldom), I didn't know if anyone heard me. But it was different this time, I became aware of His presence in the corner of the room, and He was communicating with my mind. His message seemed to be that He wanted to become part of my life, and share in the decisions that I made, and the actions I took. I had never considered that any such thing could be, and I never realized that Jesus could manifest Himself in that way in today's world. As He began talking to me I began to weep, something I had not done since childhood, when I would get hurt physically some way. As the time of prayer came to an end, I began to worry about what the others in the room would

think when they saw that I had been affected that way. To my surprise, and relief, we all had the same experience, all of us had sensed His presence, and each man had been given a message appropriate to his particular need. Some were going to quit smoking, some would quit drinking alcohol, I knew that my small-time gambling had to stop, but one of the men named John Sparks, a dear soul if I ever knew one, stated that he was going to be at the church every Wednesday morning at 6:00 AM to pray, and would be encouraged to see any of the men in the room join him. This suggestion of John's was the vehicle that God used to carry the message back to the home church, and generate the unbelievable outpouring that became a significant piece of the Houston outpouring.

I would like to add one other piece of information for the benefit of any present-day believers that may have this experience. All the men in that room were completely ignorant about the Holy Spirit, and it took awhile (days, months, even years), for some of us to realize what had happened. We were fortunate to have an experienced, Spirit-filled believer from Lubbock, Texas, come to Houston, and spend time explaining what had happened to us. We learned that we had received the Holy Spirit, so we began to seek speaking in tongues, which was the accepted proof of having the Holy Spirit at that time.

After many experiences of going behind the curtain after some Spirit-filled preacher/teacher spoke, to receive instruction on how to speak in tongues, I finally concluded that all the gifts of the Spirit are available to anyone who receives Him. He brings all His gifts and fruits with Him when He enters a body, and whether a particular gift is manifested in your life, or not, is how successful you are in turning your natural life into a spiritual life, through sanctification. God, through the Holy Spirit, decides when a gift is dispensed, depending on the need being addressed, and the level of faith operating in the life of the one receiving the gift.

For any reader interested in the encounter this group of seven men had with God, I recommend a book entitled: [“A Man of God,” by Jesse C. Jones available on scribd](#) to read/download free and linked on the author’s website jessecjones.wordpress.com.

When the word that the apostles who had been put in prison were free and standing in the temple teaching the people, the officers of the rulers brought them to the council. The high priest asked them if they had not been told that they should not preach in Jesus name. Peter and the other apostles answered, *“We ought to obey God, rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his*

witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to those that obey him.” When the officials heard this they immediately wanted to slay them, but one of the council, a man named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law who was highly regarded by the people, stood up and said, “Be careful what you plan to do to these men. If their teaching be of man it will come to nought, but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow it, and you may be found to fight against God.” At this the council ordered that the apostles be beaten, and let go with the warning that they should not speak in the name of Jesus. The apostles then departed rejoicing that they were worthy to suffer shame for the Name of Jesus, and they daily taught and preached Jesus as the Christ in the temple and every house.

Appointment of Deacons

The church was growing rapidly, and there arose some grumbling among the Grecian Jews that their widows were being neglected in the daily distributions being made. Then the twelve called all the disciples together and proposed that seven good men of honest report, filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom, be selected as deacons to perform this work. This would free the twelve for continuous prayer and ministry of the Word. Accordingly, they chose Steven, and man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Phillip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, whom they set before the apostles for prayer, and laying on of hands.

Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. And some in the synagogue became jealous, and began disputing with Stephen. But they were not able to stand against the wisdom and Spirit with which Stephen spoke. They then hired men to speak lies against Stephen, saying that they heard him say Jesus would destroy the temple, and change the customs which Moses established. And they stirred up the elders and scribes

so that they brought Stephen before the council and falsely accused him. And all those in the council looked steadfastly at Stephen, and witnessed his face which was like that of an angel.

The Stoning of Stephen

When Stephen was taken before the council for questioning, the high priest asked him if the things people were saying about him were true. Stephen then gave the high priest and members of the council a lesson in Jewish history, beginning with Abraham, and his departure from Ur of the Chaldees, in southern Babylonia. Stephen said, God brought Abraham out of the Chaldees, an unspiritual, idol worshipping land, to a new land that God eventually gave to the Jews, and promised He would give to Abraham. Abraham was the father of the Jewish nation, and through his descendant David, ultimately made Israel a strong and wealthy nation, but they continually failed spiritually, and God had to punish them repeatedly. After many attempts to get Israel to turn from sin and idol-worship, and recognize Him as the only true God, He sent His only Son Jesus to provide a path to salvation, and forgiveness of sin. But when Pontus Pilate, procurator of Judea, offered to pardon one of two prisoners before him, Jesus Christ or a robber named Barabbas, the Jewish crowd, induced by their priests, chose to crucify the Son of God. Acts such as this

precipitated Stephen's characterization of those in the council as being stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, always resisting the Holy Spirit.

When the crowd heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed their teeth in anger toward Stephen. But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, with Jesus standing on His right side. When Stephen described what he saw, the crowd rushed upon him, cast him out of the city, and stoned him. Stephen, just as Jesus did when dying on the cross, asked the Lord not to lay this sin to their charge.

The consequences of Stephen's death were profound. The persecution that followed resulted in widespread preaching of the gospel. Saul heard Stephen's preaching, and observed the events surrounding his death, and this undoubtedly had an influence on Saul's later conversion. The subsequent spreading of the gospel through Saul (then known as Paul), and his co-workers, led to breaking away from the Old Testament Jewish temple worship, and resulted in the recognition of Christianity as the new move of God.

The Gospel is Spread in Judaea and Samaria

Great sorrow spread throughout the church because of Stephen's death, and persecution of the church at Jerusalem increased dramatically. As a result, believers at Jerusalem were spread throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. Saul, who stood by consenting to Stephen's stoning, set about making havoc of the church, arresting believers and sending them to prison. Believers that were scattered from Jerusalem were preaching the Word, and Phillip (the deacon), went to the city of Samaria, and preached Jesus Christ to citizens there. Phillip's ministry was greatly blessed with deliverance and healing; unclean spirits came out of the possessed with loud voices. Many with palsy, and those who were lame were healed. There was great joy in that city, but there was a man named Simon who had been into sorcery, and he bewitched the people of Samaria, who thought he was a powerful man of God. But when Phillip came preaching the Jesus Christ, the people believed and were baptized. Simon also believed, and followed Phillip, amazed by the miracles and signs that were were done through his ministry.

When the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them so they could minister the Holy Spirit to these new believers. They had only been baptized into the name of Jesus at that time, so Peter and John laid their hands on them. and they received the Holy Spirit. When Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money to give him the power to pray for the Holy Spirit as well. Peter admonished Simon immediately for thinking that this power could be bought with money. He told Simon that his heart was not right in the sight of God, and told him to pray that he might be forgiven. Simon then asked that the apostles pray for him.

The question about whether a person has received the Holy Spirit, or not, must surely be one of the most perplexing questions in Christian churches of today, although it did not seem to cause any confusion among believers of the first century. The scripture seems clear about this, for Luke 11:13 says, “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?” But many individuals, who feel that they have received Jesus as Lord and Savior, come asking for prayer to receive the Holy Spirit, only to leave in doubt about receiving after being prayed for (often with the laying-on of hands). This

problem apparently never arose in the first-century church. We noted above that some in the book of Acts were baptized in the name of Jesus (Acts 8:15-17), and some received salvation through John's baptism for repentance (Acts 19:2), but they did not know about the Holy Spirit. They were later prayed for by Peter and John in one case, and by Paul in the other, and they received the Holy Spirit with evidence of speaking in tongues and prophesying. There was also a certain Jew named Apollos who was an eloquent speaker and fervent in the spirit, but he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, teaching the things of the Lord, and showing by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ. In this case Aquila and Priscilla took Apollos under their wing, and expounded the way of the Lord more perfectly, which we assume included Apollos receiving the Holy Spirit. What we note from the book of Acts about the first-century church is that there seems to be no questioning or doubt about having, or not having, the Holy Spirit. Incredulity associated with receiving the Holy Spirit appears to be a more recent development.

After the apostles had testified and preached the Word to the Samaritans they returned to Jerusalem where the Lord spoke to Phillip and told him to arise, and go to the south to Gaza, which is in the desert. While on the way he

encountered a man from Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians. He had charge of all her treasure, and he had been to Jerusalem to worship. When Phillip encountered him he was in a chariot reading the book of Isaiah. Phillip was drawn to him, and as he approached he asked the man if he understood what he was reading. At this the man asked Phillip to join him in the chariot. He was reading Isaiah 53:7-8, and he asked Phillip who it was that was referred to in the scripture. At this Phillip began to preach Jesus to him. As they continued on their way the man asked Phillip if he would baptize him. Phillip said, if you believe with all your heart I can baptize you. As soon as they saw water they both got out of the chariot and went down to the water's edge, and Phillip baptized the eunuch. Phillip was then caught away by the Spirit of the Lord, and the eunuch saw him no more.

At this point I want to share a little about my own experience in receiving the Holy Spirit in 1963, at a Layman's Retreat near Palestine, Texas, in the company of six other men from a Methodist church in Pasadena, Texas. We were all unexpectedly blessed by a Damascus Road experience which occurred in the small bungalow where we were housed during the retreat. We had returned from the morning session and were outside of our bungalow talking, when one of the men suggested that we go inside for prayer. There was no mention of the Holy Spirit; in fact, I think we were all pretty ignorant in that regard. My immediate reaction was, "Why is he messing up our bull session?" I did not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ at that time, and when it came to praying I always struggled. I suspect that the

other six men were in that same condition: believing **in** Christ (an objective experience), but not believing **into** Him (a subjective experience). Anyway, we all dutifully went into the bungalow and sat on our individual bunk beds as we were lead in prayer. There was no mention of the Holy Spirit during the entire prayer time. We were asked to begin confessing the things in our lives that we would like to be rid of into our cupped hands, in front of us. As the prayer session went on for awhile I unexpectedly began to weep - something that I never did (it was considered it unmanly). At about the same time I began to be aware of a strange and powerful source of light in the corner of the room behind me. I recognized immediately that the Lord had entered our room, but what I sensed was an indescribable presence that seemed to be communicating with my inner being, most of which I didn't mentally register until later. The one thing that registered with me was the fact that He wanted to be part of my life, and to share in my decisions and actions. I was amazed, because such a thing had never been considered possible by me - I didn't think God did such things. As the prayer time came to an end embarrassment about my tear stained face was replaced by surprise when I realized that all the men had shared the same experience. We all knew that something had changed in our lives, but we did not realize that we had received the gift of the Holy Spirit. However, this must have been what He was suggesting (Spirit to spirit), in wanting to be part of my life. All of us began confessing what we were going to do as a result of what had happened, e.g. quit smoking, quit gambling, starting a men's prayer group at church, etc. I did not understand all the things that changed in my life immediately, it took several months (maybe even years), but one thing did stand out that I now believe encompassed all the others: Jesus Christ knew me as a person, and wanted to come into my life to make me like Himself (in His image).

Fortunately, when we returned to Pasadena, a spirit-filled man from Lubbock, Texas, came to Pasadena to spend some time discussing what had happened to us, and teaching us about the Holy Spirit. This was the first time that the Holy Spirit had been mentioned, but I think that some in the group knew that something had entered our lives, for so much had changed. At that time the evidence of receiving the Holy Spirit was considered to be using tongues in personal prayer. As a result of the guidance we received at this meeting many of us began to

seek well known speakers who came to Houston, Texas, in the hope they could teach us how to release our tongues. For me this was fruitless: I never spoke in tongues as a result of the instruction we received at these meetings. However, several of our group did begin to release their tongues in this way. Unfortunately, they chose a very inappropriate time and place to do this and, as a result, our Methodist pastor encouraged us to leave the church: this new move of the Spirit was disrupting to some of the leading members of the church. There was certainly fault enough to go around on both sides of the dissension that arose: those that had been filled with the Spirit were overly exuberant and used poor judgment, while the older leaders of the church (including the pastor), were too closed-minded and could not bring themselves to believe this move was from God. But God had something better in mind; by spreading these men who were hungry for the Word of God out to touch others in the Houston area, the move of the Holy Spirit grew rapidly. Not too long after this time my job necessitated my family's move to New Mexico, where, in a short time, we had a Bible study and prayer group in our home, 12 miles south of Las Cruces, NM. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind about the fact that God raised this group, for my wife and I did nothing to spread the word about it. But we did join in in the blessings and Christian fellowship that characterized our gathering together.

NOTE: For anyone interested in greater detail about the events described above, I refer you to Chapter 1 of a book entitled: ["A Man of God," by Jesse C. Jones available on scribd](#) to read/download free and linked on the author's website jessecjones.wordpress.com.

Saul's Encounter With Jesus

Saul went to the high priest requesting letters to the synagogues in Damascus stating that if any could be found that were followers of “The Way,” he could bind them and bring them back to Jerusalem. On his way to Damascus a light from heaven shined all around him, and he fell to the earth.

Note: I have talked to several people that had an encounter with Jesus Christ, as well as my own experience mentioned in Chapter 8, and every one validates this same experience, Jesus appears as a powerful source of light.

He then heard a voice saying unto him, “*Saul, Saul, why persecutist thou me?*” Saul asked, “*Who art thou, Lord?*” And the Lord said, “*I am Jesus whom thou persecutist: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*” Jesus identified Himself, and added a Greek expression meaning: “You cannot win by opposing a greater power.” In other words Saul was in a losing battle by opposing the Lord. At this retort Saul trembled, and was astonished, and he asked the Lord what He would have him to do. The Lord said, “*Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must*

do.” The men who were traveling with Saul heard a voice but saw no man. When Saul arose from the ground he could not see, so his companions led him into Damascus. Saul could not see for three days, and he was without food or drink for all that time.

Now the Lord had spoken to a disciple in Damascus named Ananias, and told him to go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of a man named Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for he prayeth there, and has seen a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and laying hands on him, that he might receive his sight.

But Ananias objected because he had heard of the evil that Saul had inflicted on the saints at Jerusalem. The Lord reassured him saying, he is a chosen vessel to me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. So Ananias came to pray for Saul to receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Immediately, when he was prayed for, he received his sight, and arose and was baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Now Saul was with the disciples at Damascus for several days, and received food and was strengthened. He immediately began preaching that Jesus was the Son of God, and all that heard him were amazed because they knew of his reputation, and the fact that he came to Damascus to arrest believers and take

them back to Jerusalem. But Saul increased in strength, and confounded the Jews in Damascus, proving that Jesus was the Christ.

The biblical record describing the movements of Saul after his Damascus Road experience are very confusing, and difficult to follow. (What I have pieced together, primarily from Galatians 1, and Acts 9, is outlined here.) Saul stayed with the apostles at Damascus after his conversion for a few days, and then he went into Arabia. There is no mention of this visit other than the statement that he went there from Damascus. Galatians 1:16, might offer a clue about this trip, for in it Saul states that he was saved to preach the gospel to the heathen (Gentiles), and his very next words were that he did not go to Jerusalem where there were other disciples, but instead went to Arabia. We assume this must have been a short visit, for the next verse records his ministry in Damascus for a period of three years. After some time the Jews decided that they must kill Saul, for he had been their champion, but had turned to Jesus, and was very effective in proving that He was the Christ. The Jews watched the gates day and night in their attempt to arrest Saul, but the disciples at Damascus were aware of the plot against him, so they lowered him in a basket to escape Damascus, and go from there to Jerusalem. Saul desired to join the disciples at Jerusalem, but they were all afraid of him: they did not

believe that he had become a believer. Fortunately, Barnabas befriended him, and took him to the disciples and explained how he had encountered the Lord on the way to Damascus, and how thereafter he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. Thus, the disciples at Jerusalem accepted Saul, and he joined them in ministry, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputing the Grecian Jews in Jerusalem. But his ministry in Jerusalem was cut short (approximately two weeks), because the Jews in Jerusalem decided to arrest Saul, and kill him. When the brethren were made aware of this plot they brought Saul down to Caesarea, and sent him on to Tarsus, the place of his birth. As a young man Saul was taught by Gamaliel, the premier teacher of that time, who taught Saul the Scriptures and principles of Judaism. Saul apparently spent a considerable period of time in Tarsus (suggested to be 10 to 14 years), undoubtedly being prepared for his work as evangelist to the Gentiles. Then he was called by Barnabas to join him in Antioch, to begin his work as missionary to the Gentiles. Asia Minor, the Aegean Archipelago, Greece, and Rome became the parish of this greatest of Christian missionaries. His goal throughout his ministry was to “not know anything but Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”

Peter Heals The Sick and Raises The Dead

Sometime after this Peter visited the newly established churches, one of which was at Lydda. There he encountered a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden for eight years, and was sick of the palsy. Peter told him that Jesus Christ had made him whole, and that he should rise and make up his bed. He arose immediately, and those that saw him from Lydda, a small town near Joppa, an ancient seaport, turned to the Lord. Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha (Dorcas by interpretation). She was well-known for her good works and merciful deeds which she did. It came to pass that she became ill and died. Men from Joppa heard that Peter was at Lydda, so they sent two men to ask Peter to come with them to Joppa. Although the Bible does not mention this, they undoubtedly had heard about the miracles that occurred at Lydda, and they wanted Peter to come to Joppa and raise Dorcas from the dead. This is a great testament to the power of faith the friends of Dorcas had, believing that she could be raised from the dead. We know that faith is a gift of God (Romans 12:3), and the belief that follows brings about the the thing being prayed for (Mark 11:24).

Peter arose and went with the men of Joppa, and they took him to the upper chamber where Dorcus had been laid. Peter then asked that all the mourners that were present to leave the room, and then he kneeled down, turning to the body and said, "Tabitha, arise." She then opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. Peter gave her his hand and lifted her up, and when he had called the mourners back into the room, he presented her alive. This wonderful miracle was known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord as a result. Peter stayed in Joppa for many days after that with Simon the tanner.

Chapter 10

Peter Learns a Lesson

Now Peter was a strong believer that the gospel was for the Jews only, and that Jesus came to minister to the Jews, and not to the Gentiles. Peter was not an educated man, and was probably not trained in Jewish doctrine: there is no reason to believe that he would have been exposed to the many OT scriptures that prophesy about the Gentiles receiving the gospel. This was a point of contention between Paul and Peter that was seemingly resolved when Paul confronted Peter face-to-face in Antioch (Galatians 2:11-12). It bothered Paul that Peter had been inconsistent in his relationship with the Gentiles: dining with them at one time, but withdrawing from them when he was around those of the circumcision. This was at the time when Paul clearly understood that Peter's ministry was to the Jews, while his own ministry was to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:7-8).

In Acts Chapter 10, Peter is called to Caesarea by a man named Cornelius, a Roman centurion who was very devout, fearing God with his whole house. Cornelius had a vision of an angel from God who told him to send men to Joppa to fetch Peter, who was lodging with a man named Simon, a tanner by

trade. Accordingly, Cornelius sent three men to Joppa to fetch Peter and bring him to Caesarea. Before they arrived Peter went up to the housetop to pray, and became very hungry. Before food could be prepared for him he fell into a trance in which he saw heaven opened and a vessel descending to him containing all kinds of fourfooted beasts of the earth and creeping things, and fowls of the air. There came a voice unto him which told him to “rise, kill and eat.” But Peter said, “Not so Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.” And the voice called to him a second time saying, “What God has cleansed, that you should not call common.” And the voice called again the third time, after which the vessel was received up again into heaven. While Peter was trying to figure out what the vision could mean the men from Cornelius arrived at Simon’s house and asked if Peter lodged there. While Peter thought on the vision the Spirit told him that three men were there seeking him, and that he should accompany them, for He had sent them. Then Peter went down to the men and told them that he was the one that they were seeking, and asked them why they had come. They explained about Cornelius’ encounter with the angel who told him to send for Peter so he could hear his words, and he would know what to do. The next day Peter, and several men from Joppa, accompanied the three men back to Caesarea, where Cornelius

and his kinsmen and friends were waiting. When Cornelius saw Peter he fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter told him to stand up, for he was also a man.

When Peter addressed them he reminded them that it was unlawful for a Jew to keep company with those of another nation, but God had shown him that he should not call any man common or unclean. Peter then asked Cornelius why he had called him, and Cornelius responded by telling him about his encounter with the man in bright clothing who told him to send for Peter, who will speak to you about all the things God had commanded Peter to teach. When Peter opened his mouth he said, "I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation *those that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, are acceptable to Him. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, by preaching the gospel of peace ye know, that word was published throughout all Judaea and began in Galilee, after the baptism which anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him. And we are witnesses of all things which He did in Jerusalem; where they slew Him by hanging Him on a tree. God raised Him up on the third day, and He was widely seen; not to all people, but unto witnesses chosen

before of God, and even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead. To Him all the prophets give witness, that through His name whosoever believes into Him shall receive remission of sins. While Peter was still speaking the Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the word. Those of the circumcision were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit was also poured out on the Gentiles, for they heard them speak with other tongues magnifying God. Peter then asked: "Can any argue that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?" And he commanded that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

In this account Cornelius and his friends received the Holy Spirit before Peter had finished his preaching, and before any of those in the group were prayed over. This is not surprising to me, for when I received the Holy Spirit I was certainly not expecting any such thing to happen, nor were any of the other six men with me. In fact, we were so ignorant about the Holy Spirit that we did not even know what had happened to us until later when a Spirit-filled person came to minister to us. I think it is an appropriate time to address this subject and hopefully help others who are confused about when God gives the Holy Spirit.

R. A. Torrey in his book entitled: “What the Bible Teaches,” says a number of suggestive phrases are used to describe this event—“Baptized with the Holy Spirit, Filled with the Holy Ghost, The Holy Ghost fell on them, The gift of the Holy Ghost was poured out, Receive the Holy Ghost, The Holy Ghost came on them, Gifts of the Holy Ghost, I send the promise of my Father upon you, and Endued with power from on high,” are used in the New Testament to describe this one and same experience (see Acts 1:5, 4:8, 10:44-46, 11:15-17, 19:2; Hebrews 2:4; 1 Corinthians 12:4, 11, 13; and Luke 24:49).” All of these references state that when a believer is baptized, filled, fallen upon, come upon, endued by, gifted with, etc. the result is always the same: they have received the Holy Spirit in fullness, without measure.

I realize that this may be a difficult teaching for some to accept, for it certainly brings into question the suggestion that salvation insures receipt of the Holy Spirit. Luke 11:13 indicates that God will give believers the Holy Spirit when they ask for it. I think we need to be mindful that God certainly wants to give us the Holy Spirit, but according to Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Bible Words, “our asking must be in due recognition of His name (i.e., in accord with the divine will and purpose).” This seems logical, for God’s primary purpose in giving the Holy Spirit is to renew our minds, to sanctify us

and conform us to the image of Christ. He seemingly has a time and condition (a base line, or goal), that each of us must reach before He entrusts us with the Holy Spirit, for when we receive Him we are going to be a little crazy (in a good way), for awhile: it is like receiving a power surge, your life is going to change. The change that comes will affect those that receive in different ways, and the way that it affects you will enhance your uniqueness, for you will be gradually transformed into the person God had envisioned all along.

I now want to summarize the things given in God's Word that can happen to a person who receives the Holy Spirit.

The following is taken from Chapter 6, "When Does God Give The Holy Spirit" in the book ["Bible Stumbling Blocks" by Jesse C. Jones, available on scribd to read/download free and linked on the author's website \[jessecjones.wordpress.com\]\(http://jessecjones.wordpress.com\)](#).

The Holy Spirit:

1. Can tell you what to speak under trial.
2. Can come upon you.
3. Can fill you.
4. Can baptize you.
5. Can take various invisible and visible forms.
6. Can alert you.
7. Is the one Person of God for which blasphemy cannot be forgiven.

8. Will teach you all things.
9. Will imbue you with power.
10. Will cause you to bear fruit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance.
11. Will give gifts: word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongues.
12. Must not be lied to.
13. Can be received by obeying Christ.
14. Can be received by the laying on of hands.
15. Can release those oppressed by the devil.
16. Provides guidance.
17. Places overseers over the flock.
18. Conscience bears witness of.
19. Spoke through OT prophets.
20. Causes our hearts to pour out the love of God.
21. Gives power to abound in hope.
22. Compares spiritual things with spiritual things which natural man cannot understand.

23. Resides in our body: the temple of the Holy Spirit.
24. Cannot call Jesus accursed but calls Him Lord.
25. Seals the believer to the day of redemption.
26. Is distributed according to God's will.
27. Cannot be renewed if partakers fall away.
28. Enables gospel preaching.
29. Is not given by measure.
30. Must not be grieved.
31. As our comforter provides encouragement and alleviation of grief.
32. As our sanctifier renews our minds and conforms us to the image of Christ.
33. Gives us understanding of the Word of God.
34. Knows the mind of God, thus we have access to the mind of God through Him.
35. Sets us free from the law of sin and death.
36. Guides us in prayer, worship, and praise.

In his book "My Utmost For His Highest," Oswald Chambers has this to say about the Holy Spirit and the believer: "The Holy Spirit has been given; the Lord is glorified - our waiting is not dependent upon the providence of God,

but on our own spiritual fitness. The attitude of receiving and welcoming the Holy Spirit into our lives is to be the continual attitude of a believer”.

Ministry to Gentiles Resolved

When Peter returned to Jerusalem he was confronted by those of the circumcision for going to minister to Gentiles, and eating with them. He told them about the vision he had while he was praying on the housetop of Simon the tanner's house, and how God reminded him that anything He had cleansed should not be thought of as ceremonially unclean. This was to prepare Peter for his encounter with Cornelius, and his friends: who were considered unclean by the Jews, but were about to receive the Holy Spirit from God. Peter told them about how he accompanied Cornelius' three representatives back to Caesarea and, as he prepared to speak to the Group gathered there, they all began to manifest the Holy Spirit by speaking in tongues. When the Jews in Jerusalem that confronted Peter heard this they glorified God and said, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."

Now many of those that were scattered abroad due to the persecution that arose about the death of Stephen were preaching only to the Jews. But some that came from Cyprus and Cyrene came to Antioch, and preached the Lord Jesus to Grecians located there. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and

a great number believed, and turned to the Lord. When the church at Jerusalem heard about this they sent Barnabas to Antioch to report on these events. When he saw how God had worked in the lives of the believers at Antioch he was very glad. He exhorted them all that they should cleave unto the Lord, and many were added to the church as a result of Barnabas' influence. After this Barnabas departed for Tarsus, to seek Saul. When he found him he convinced Saul to return to Antioch with him, and they spent a year together ministering and teaching the people. It was in Antioch that believers were first called Christians.

Some time later prophets from Jerusalem came to Antioch, and brought word of difficult times in Judaea. As a result the disciples at Antioch sent relief to their brethren in Judaea via Barnabas and Saul.

Chapter 12

Peter is Released from Prison by an Angel

Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great, was made king of territories NE of Palestine by the emperor Gaius (Caligula), and Galilee and Peraea were added to his kingdom in AD 39. When Claudius became emperor in AD 41, he added Judaea and Samaria to Agrippa's kingdom. The king, as he was known during his rule, courted the goodwill of his Jewish subjects. His attack on the apostles, recorded in this chapter, may have been more favorably received by the Jews because of their recent acceptance of uncircumcised Gentiles. He killed James, son of Zebedee, and the brother of John, with the sword. And when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to take Peter and put him in prison, intending to deal with him after the Easter Passover.

Now Peter was well guarded with four sets of four soldiers, and he slept between two soldiers and was bound with two chains. It seems obvious that Herod was concerned about Peter's possible escape, probably through the action of Peter's many followers. But an angel of the Lord came upon Peter during the night, and a light shined in the prison cell. The angel told him to

rise up quickly, and the chains fell off his hands. Then the angel told Peter to gird himself, bind on his sandals, cast on his garment, and follow him. Now Peter thought that what was happening was a vision, and wasn't real; but when they passed the first and second ward, and came to the iron gate that led to the city, and it opened to them, he began to come to himself and realize that the Lord had sent an angel to free him from the prison. After he had passed one street the angel departed, and Peter continued on to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many were gathered praying. When Peter knocked at the door a young lady named Rhoda answered, and when she recognized him she ran to tell the group that Peter was at the door. Now Rhoda was so excited she failed to open the gate, so Peter could not enter the house. And the group could not believe that it was actually Peter at the gate, but thought it must be his angel. But Peter kept knocking; and when they opened the door and saw him they were astonished. Peter explained to the group that an angel from God had freed him from the prison, and he asked them to notify James and the brethren, while he proceeded on to another place.

Now as soon as it was daytime there was no small stir at the prison. When Herod could not find Peter he gathered the keepers, and commanded that they

be put to death. He then left for Caesarea, very upset with those from Tyre and Sidon. On a set day Herod sat on his throne, and made an oration to the people from Tyre and Sidon, who came to him asking for peace for their country, which was dependent upon the king's country. The people, seeking to appease him, gave a loud shout saying, "It is the voice of a God, and not of a man." Immediately, an angel of the Lord smote him, because he did not give God the glory: and he was eaten by worms. The narration of Herod's death in Gill's Exhibition of the Entire Bible says, ". . . a little after (the oration and the salutation of the people) the king looked up, and saw an angel sitting over his head, whom he immediately understood to be the cause of evil things that happened to him, and he gave up the ghost. The reason for the angel's smiting him was because he did not give glory to God; or as the Jewish historian says, because he reprov'd not the flatterers, nor rejected their impious flattery, but tacitly took that to himself, which belonged to God: and he was eaten of worms: Josephus only makes mention of pains in his belly, but these were occasioned by the gnawing of the worms."

Paul and Barnabas are Sent to the Gentiles

Now there were in the church at Antioch several prophets and teachers, and as they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit told them to separate Barnabas and Saul for the work to which they had been called. And after they fasted and prayed, they laid their hands on them, and were led by the Holy Spirit to send them to Seleucia, a city not far from the mouth of the Orontes River on the coast of Syria, and from there they sailed to Cyprus, an island in the Mediterranean. They preached the word of God at Salamis, a city on the East coast of Cyprus, and from there they went to Paphos, the Roman capital of the whole island. There they encountered a certain sorcerer named Elymas, who was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, who was a prudent man, interested in hearing the word of God. But Elymas sought to turn the deputy away from hearing the preaching of the gospel. So Saul (from this time on known as Paul), filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his eyes on Elymas and said, *“O full of subtilty and mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now behold,*

the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season.”

And immediately, there fell upon Elymas a mist, and a darkness; and he went about seeking someone to lead him by the hand. The deputy, seeing what was done to Elymas, received the teaching of Paul and Barnabas.

When Paul and those with him left Paphos they came to Perga, in Pamphylia, where John left them and returned to Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas traveled on to Antioch, in Pisidia, and they went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. After the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue asked them if they had a word of exhortation for the people gathered there. Then Paul stood up and reviewed the history of the Jewish people from the time of captivity in Egypt, to the appearance of Jesus with His salvation message, to His subsequent crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. Paul then told them of the glad tidings, how the promise, made to the fathers, had been fulfilled in the children through the sacrifice of Jesus, who was raised from the dead and who has been seen by many of His followers. Acts 13:38-39 says, *“Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.”* When the

meeting ended many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, and were persuaded to continue in the grace of God.

When the Jews left the sanctuary the Gentiles asked if they could hear the message the following sabbath. On the next sabbath almost the whole city gathered together to hear the word of God, but when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and they spoke against the words of Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Paul and Barnabas then responded saying, *“It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed”* (Acts 13:46-48). And the word of the Lord was published throughout the region. But the Jews stirred up men and women of the city, and expelled Paul and Barnabas out of their coasts. But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and went on to Iconium, filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

Oswald Chambers has this to say about Paul: “Christian workers fail because they place their desire for their own holiness above their desire to

know God. Paul was not conscious of himself. He was recklessly abandoned, totally surrendered, and separated by God for one purpose—to proclaim the gospel of God (see Romans 9:3).”

Paul and Barnabas Persecuted in Iconium

And it came to pass in Iconium that they both (Paul and Barnabas) went into the synagogue and presented the gospel, and a great multitude of Jews and Greeks believed. They were there for a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, and many signs and wonders were done through the grace of God. But unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles so that they were evil-minded toward the brethren, and the city was divided between those that believed the apostles, and those that believed the Jews. A plan was developed to stone Paul and Barnabas, but they became aware of it, and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of the region known as Lycaonia, a district of Asia Minor, where they preached the gospel. And there was a man in Lystra who had been a cripple from birth, and had never walked. He came to hear Paul speak, and Paul looked at him and perceived that he had faith to be healed. Thus, Paul said in a loud voice, “Stand upright on thy feet.” And he leaped and walked. The people then began to say, “The Gods have come to us in the likeness of men,” and they called Barnabas Jupiter, and Paul Mercurius. The priest of Jupiter came out of

their temple, prepared to sacrifice with the people, but Paul and Barnabas rent their clothes, and went among the people crying, “Sirs, why do you do these things, we are men of like passions with you. We preach that you should turn from these vanities unto the living God who made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein, and provided rain, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.” But their appeals did not restrain the people. Then came certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who influenced the people negatively toward the apostles, and they stoned Paul, and took him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. However, the disciples stood around him, and he rose up and came back into the city. The next day Paul and Barnabas departed to Derbe. After they taught many people there, and caused many to believe, they returned again to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, exhorting the people to continue in the faith through much tribulation, so they could enter into the kingdom of God. Before they left they appointed elders in every church and commended them to the Lord. They then left and traveled to Pisidia, Attalia, and finally sailed back to Antioch, where they gathered the church together and rehearsed all that God had done in opening the door of faith to the Gentiles.

It was Antioch, in Syria, that became the great center of evangelism. It was from this Gentile city that the great apostle Paul went forth to carry the gospel message to other Gentile cities. Luke, the author of Acts, was a companion to Paul, and was thus involved in this world-wide evangelism. Jerusalem was the other great city during the church age. It was at Jerusalem, the city of David, that Jesus offered Himself as the supreme sacrifice for sinful humanity. It was at Jerusalem that the prophecies of Christ's expiatory work and resurrection were fulfilled. It was at Jerusalem that the Holy Spirit descended, and it was here that Christian activities began. There are no other two cities that are thus related in the spread of the gospel as are Jerusalem and Antioch.

Dissension Over Circumcision Continues

Now certain men came down to Antioch from Judaea and taught the brethren, saying they must be circumcised in accordance with the law of Moses in order to be saved. When Paul and Barnabas disagreed with them it was determined that they, along with some other members of the brethren, should go up to Jerusalem, to consult with the apostles and elders about this problem. On the way they passed through Phenice and Samaria, and told them about how the Gentiles received the gospel, and they were overjoyed with this news.

When they came to Jerusalem they were received by the church, and the apostles and elders, and they told them of the blessings God had manifested in their ministries. But there was a sect of Pharisee believers that maintained the need for circumcising new believers to keep the law of Moses. As a result, the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. And after much disputation, Peter rose up and said to them, *“Men and brethren, you know how that a good while ago God made a choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should bear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth their hearts, bare*

them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as He did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yolk upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.” Then the multitude were silent, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, who described the miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles through their ministry.

When the multitude were silent, James, President of the Council, rose to address the group, reminding them that God had included the Gentiles when He stated that men might seek after the Lord in the reconstructed tabernacle. James stated further that his judgment was that Gentile converts should not be required to be circumcised: but that they should abstain from the pollution of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. All the elders and apostles were pleased with that judgment, and they decided to send chosen men from the Jerusalem church, along with Barnabas and Paul to Antioch, to inform the believers there that the only requirements for Gentile converts was for them to abstain from meats sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication. These requirements

were all documented in the epistle written from the church in Jerusalem to the church in Antioch.

Paul and Barnabas continued to stay in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, along with several others from Jerusalem. After some time Paul suggested to Barnabas that they take another missionary journey to all the places in which they had preached to see how the work was going. Barnabas was determined to take John Mark with them, but Paul did not think it was good, since he had departed from them before, when they were preaching in Pamphylia. The contention was so sharp that they departed asunder, with Barnabas and John Mark sailing to Cyprus, and Paul choosing Silas, and heading for Syria, and Cilicia, where they confirmed churches there.

This disagreement between Paul and Barnabas is disturbing to present-day believers. Most Bible students have Paul on a pedestal (rightly so), for he is considered to be the greatest of the apostles, and he stands above far above his brethren in intellect and influence. However, Barnabas was highly regarded by the early church, and he is the one who vouched for Paul, after his Damascus Road experience. He and Paul ministered together with great success during the first missionary journey, and they were commissioned together by the Council in Jerusalem to explain the decision regarding Gentile believers.

Barnabas is the one that rescued Paul from Tarsus, where he had returned after his conversion. Barnabas recognized that the conversion of Gentiles during the early movement in Antioch was of God, and he felt that it was an appropriate place for Paul, forgotten in Tarsus, to join him in ministering. It is interesting to note that in the early recording of the two, it was given as “Barnabas and Paul,” for Paul was Barnabas’ protege. Afterward, the mention of the two is given as “Paul and Barnabas.” Another fact in this “parting of ways,” is that John Mark was Barnabas’ cousin, and it is probably fair to say that Barnabas felt that John Mark was under his tutelage. Paul’s later testimonies to John Mark may indicate that he benefitted greatly from the guidance provided by his cousin Barnabas. Although their partnership was over, Paul’s and Barnabas’ friendship never ended. Paul’s remarks about Barnabas always show sympathy and respect, and Barnabas’ call of Paul from Tarsus, to join him in ministering at Antioch, was the beginning of Paul’s remarkable contribution to the early (and late) church. This must have often been on Barnabas’ mind.

Paul and Silas Delivered from Prison

As Paul and Silas traveled through Syria and Cilicia they came to Derbe, and Lystra, where the disciple Timothy was located. Timothy's mother was a Jewish woman but his father was a Greek. Paul decided to take Timothy with him on his missionary journey, but he circumcised him first, because the Jews in that territory knew that Timothy's father was Greek, and likely to oppose this Jewish practice. This seems contrary to Paul's previous inclination, and to the decision of the Jerusalem council, which he encouraged and supported. However, Timothy's mother was a Jew, and Paul knew that Jews in that territory were closely watching to see if Timothy would follow Moses' law, or would comply with the council's edict for Gentile converts. I believe Paul acted on the belief he expressed in 1 Corinthians 9:20, "*And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; . . . that I might gain them that are under the law.*"

As they proceeded on their journey they delivered the Jerusalem council's decrees regarding Gentile believers, and the number of churches increased

daily. Now when they had gone through Phrygia, and the region of Mysia, they considered going into Asia to preach the word, but that was forbidden by the Holy Spirit. After they came to Mysia they planned to go into Bithynia, a province in northwestern Asia Minor, but again the Spirit forbade preaching the word there. So they came down to Troas, a seaport in Mysia, and Paul had a vision in the night in which a man from Macedonia asked them to come there and help them. Macedonia is a country north of Greece, famous as the home of Alexander the Great. Paul and his helpers then immediately made preparations to go to Macedonia, believing that the Lord had called them there to preach the gospel. I believe there is a lesson here for believers in today's world when seeking guidance from God. We often have difficulty in waiting on the answer, and this causes us to jump the gun, and act before God shows His way. Even Paul, who certainly knew when God spoke to him, was apparently overly anxious to continue his journey, and had to be corrected by God twice.

Following the vision, they proceeded to Macedonia, passing through Samothracia and Neapolis, and then to Philippi, the chief Roman city in that part of Macedonia. On the sabbath they went to a nearby riverside where prayer was often offered. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple dye heard them talking, and went to hear the things Paul was saying. As a

result she received the Lord, and was baptized along with her household.

Afterward she asked them to stay at her house in Thyatira, one of the seven cities in Asia Minor in which churches mentioned in the book of Revelation were located.

As Paul and those with him went to the place of prayer, a certain damsel, possessed with a spirit of divination, followed them saying: "*These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way to salvation.*" She did this for many days and Paul, being grieved said to the spirit, "*I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.*" And the spirit immediately came out.

When her masters saw they could no longer profit from the manifestations of the Satanic spirit within her, they brought Paul and Silas to the magistrates, saying these Jews are teaching customs that are not lawful for us to receive, nor to observe since we are Romans. As a result the crowd rose up against them, and the magistrates tore off the disciples clothes, and commanded that they be beaten. After they had laid many stripes on them they took them to the prison, and the jailor placed them within the inner prison, and made their feet fast in stocks. At midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing praises unto God, and the other prisoners heard them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, the foundations of the prison were shaken, and all the doors

within the prison were opened, and the prisoners were loosed from their bonds. When the keeper of the prison woke up and saw that the prison doors were opened, he took out a sword and would have killed himself, assuming that all the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried out with a loud voice saying, "*Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.*" When the keeper saw that the prisoners were all still there he came to Paul and Silas and fell on his knees, asking how he could be saved. And they answered, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*" The keeper then took them and washed their stripes, and he and his household were baptized. He then brought them into his house and sat meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house. When morning came the magistrates sent word that Paul and Silas should be released, and go in peace. But Paul said unto them, "*They have beaten us openly, uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come and fetch us out.*" When the magistrates heard this they feared, for they did not realize that they were Romans. So the magistrates came and let them out, desiring that they would depart out of the city. And when they went out of the prison they entered Lydia's house and comforted the brethren, after which they departed.

Paul Preaches in Macedonia

When Paul, Silas, and Timothy left Philippi they proceeded on to Thessalonica, where a synagogue of the Jews was located. And Paul went to the synagogue for three sabbath days and reasoned with them from the scriptures. He introduced them to Jesus by telling them about how He suffered and died, and rose again from the dead. And some of them believed: many of the devout Greeks and quite a few of the leading women. But the Jews that did not believe were envious, and they hired certain lewd men to draw a crowd, and get the city in an uproar, even assaulting the house of Jason, Paul's host in Thessalonica, apparently looking for the disciples. When they did not find Paul and Silas, they seized Jason and some of the converts, and accused them of harboring seditious agitators. They were released after giving some security (possibly a promise for good behavior).

Paul and Silas were then sent to Berea by the brethren, and Paul (following his normal procedure) went to the synagogue of the Jews and reasoned with them about Jesus Christ. Now the Bereans were more open-minded than

those in Thessalonica, and they received the word with all readiness of mind, searching the scriptures to validate the message of Paul. Unfortunately, the Jews in Thessalonica got word of the ministry ongoing in Berea, and they came and stirred up the people there. As a result the brethren immediately sent Paul away, but Silas and Timothy remained in Berea.

The brethren responsible for conducting Paul brought him to Athens, and shortly after that he was joined by Silas and Timothy. Silas and Timothy came to Paul with all speed—He probably wanted their company and aid in dealing with so great a sphere as Athens. It is added that he "waited for them" there, as if unwilling to do anything till they came, for the city of Athens was given wholly to idolatry. Paul was disputing with the Jews in the synagogues, and in the marketplace with devout people daily. Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans and Stoics encountered him saying, "What will this babblers say?" and to others it seemed that Paul was describing strange Gods, for he preached unto them Jesus, and His resurrection. So they took Paul to the Areopagus, there to describe this new doctrine to them. The Areopagus (often referred to as Mars Hill) is a rocky height in Athens opposite the western end of the Acropolis. The Council of Areopagus met there to consider matters of morals and religion, thus it was natural for a preacher of a new doctrine to be

questioned by this group. So Paul began to tell them that he recognized that they were very religious, for he had seen the objects of their worship, and had found an altar with the inscription, "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD." He added that they (in ignorance) were worshipping the God who he declared unto them: the One that created the world and all things in it. He is Lord of heaven and earth, the One who gives all life, and breath, and all things, who dwells not in temples made with hands, *"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed [their appointed seasons], and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord [God], if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us: For in Him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, for we are also His offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at [overlooked]; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead."*

When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said we will hear thee again of this matter. So Paul departed from among them, but some believed: among which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

Paul Departs From Athens and Comes to Corinth

Paul left Athens and came to Corinth, where he encountered Priscilla and Aquila, tentmakers by trade, who had recently come from Italy as a result of Claudius' command that all Jews must depart from Rome. Since he was also a tentmaker Paul stayed and worked with them in their trade, and reasoned with the Jews and Greeks in the synagogue every sabbath.

When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia Paul was pressed by the urgency of the message, and he testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. But they strongly opposed him, and blasphemed (spoke evil of God), strongly opposing Paul's message. Paul then shook his raiment, and said: "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles." After that he departed and entered the house of a man named Justus, whose house was close to the synagogue. And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house, and many of the Corinthians also believed and were baptized.

Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, and told him to not be afraid, but to speak the word with boldness, for he had many people in Corinth. By this God was referring to Ephesians 1:4-5, in which it is said that God chose those predestined to become His adopted children before the foundation of the world. Paul was thus encouraged, and he continued there for 1 1/2 years teaching the word of God among them.

When Gallio was the deputy [proconsul] of Achaia in AD 52-53, the labors of Paul in Corinth stirred up the Jews there, and they brought him to the judgment seat, claiming that Paul was teaching contrary to the law of Moses. But Gallio refused to hear the case, declaring that matters involving religious laws or customs were not in his jurisdiction. In the riot caused by Paul's preaching, the Greeks then took Sosthenes, ruler of the synagogue at Corinth, and beat him because he was a believer himself, and he allowed Paul to preach the gospel. But again Gallio refused to sit in judgment because it was a religious matter. Paul continued to minister at Corinth for some time after this, but then he took his leave of the brethren, and sailed into Syria with Priscilla and Aquila. When they arrived in Ephesus he left Priscilla and Aquila, and, as was his habit, he entered the synagogue there to reason with the Jews. They wanted him to stay longer, but he felt that it was important to attend an

upcoming feast in Jerusalem. However, he told them that he would return to minister there if it was God's will. Paul then sailed from Ephesus.

When he landed at Caesarea he visited the brethren there, and then left for Antioch. After spending some time there, he left and went to Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening the disciples there. And a Jew named Apollos, who was born in Alexandria and was an eloquent man, mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus and began to teach the things of the Lord. He taught diligently about the Lord, but he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, and when Priscilla and Aquila heard him they expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. And later, when he went to Achaia, the brethren in Ephesus wrote to those receiving him so that they gladly accepted him. And he was mighty in convincing the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

Paul's Ministry in Ephesus

When Paul came to Ephesus he found some (about 12) believers and he asked them, “Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?” They answered by saying that they had never even heard about any Holy Spirit. So Paul then asked them what they were baptized into, and they answered, into John’s baptism. Paul then told them that John’s baptism was unto repentance, but that they should believe into Him (Jesus Christ), that would follow the teaching of John. When they heard this they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus, and Paul laid his hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Notice that the scripture uses the phrase: “. . . *baptized in [into] the name of the Lord Jesus.*” This is distinguished from other books in the Bible which use the phrase: “. . . baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” It could be just a characteristic of the different scribes, however it could also be a result of the use of the word “into,” as given in Acts 19:5 GNT, rather than “in,” as given in the KJV. The comment from the Recovery Version of the NT on John 3:16 is

helpful in understanding the difference between these two prepositions.

“Believing into the Lord is not the same as believing (in) Him. To believe (in) Him is to believe that He is true and real, but to believe into Him is to receive Him and be united with him as one. The former is to acknowledge a fact objectively, the latter is to receive a life subjectively” These new believers had been converted through the ministry of John the Baptist, which led to water baptism for the forgiveness of sin through repentance, but they were made aware of the One coming after him that was greater than himself, who would baptize them with fire and the Holy Spirit. They were prepared for baptism into Christ, but probably would not have understood about baptism in (or into) the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

After this Paul began to speak in the synagogue, persuading them concerning the kingdom of God. This continued for about three months, after which unbelieving Jews began to speak evil of the Way before the multitude. Paul then separated the disciples and began to teach them in the school of a man named Tyrannus. And he stayed there for two-years, so that all the people in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul so that handkerchiefs and aprons brought from Paul would heal diseases, and evil spirits were cast

out. Then some of the vagabond Jews tried to follow suit by calling evil spirits to leave saying, “*We adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preacheth.*” And there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jew and chief of the priests, which tried this, but the evil spirit answered them, and said, “*Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?*” And the possessed man leaped on them and overcame them, so that they fled out of the house naked and wounded. This event became widely known, and the name of the Lord was magnified as a result. Many of those that believed came to confess their deeds, and those that practiced magical arts brought books and burned them. The word of the Lord prevailed, and fear of the God was greatly magnified.

After this Paul determined to go to Jerusalem, and then Rome. So he sent Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia to minister, but he stayed in Asia for a season, and there arose a stir about the Way. A man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines for Diana, Roman goddess of the Moon, called together workmen who were in like occupations, and told them that their craft was in danger because of Paul’s teaching that there were no gods made with hands. Thus, many potential customers in Asia had been turned away, and the temple of Diana was beginning to be despised. The entire city was in an uproar, and the crowd caught Gaius and Aristarchus, two of Paul’s

helpers, and brought them to the theatre. There was much disagreement for some called for one thing, and some another. So the Jews drew Alexander out of the crowd, and when he tried to silence the crowd so he could speak they drowned him out with the chant, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." This went on for about two-hours, when finally the town clerk settled the crowd, and said, "Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how the city of Ephesians is a worshiper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter? Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, you ought to be quiet, and do nothing rashly. For you have brought together these two men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess. Wherefore, if Demetrius, and the craftsmen with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another. But if ye enquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly. For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give account of this concourse." When he was through speaking the crowd dispersed.

Paul's Eventful Third Missionary Journey

After the dust settled at Ephesus, Paul departed for Macedonia, where he exhorted the disciples as he proceeded on to Greece, where he stayed for three months. When he prepared to leave for Syria he received word that the Jews laid wait for him, so he decided to return through Macedonia. They sailed from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and arrived at Troas after five days sailing. In Troas they joined the others traveling with them, and they stayed there for seven days. Paul preached to them on the first day of the week as they came together to break bread. Although they were planning to leave the next day, Paul's preaching continued until midnight. And a young man named Eutychus was sitting in a window listening when he fell asleep. He then fell from the window, which was at the third story, and he was taken up dead. But Paul fell on Eutychus, embracing him, and then turned to the attendees, saying trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. Paul then returned to break bread, and after eating, talked a long while unto morning, after which he

departed. They brought the young man back into the group alive, and they were very much comforted.

As they prepared to leave Troas by boat, Paul, for some unknown reason decided that he would walk to Assos, and meet them there. Assos is a seaport of NW Asia Minor, located a few miles from Troas. At Assos they joined Paul, and traveled on to Miletus, bypassing Ephesus, for Paul wanted to be at Jerusalem for the day of Pentecost. When they arrived at Miletus, Paul called the elders in the church at Ephesus, and asked them to come to him. When they arrived he made his memorable farewell speech to this church, which was undoubtedly close to his heart. He reminded them of the manner in which he had been with them in all seasons, serving the Lord in all humility, with tears, and trials from the plots of the Jews trying to arrest him. He was faithful in declaring unto them those things that were profitable to them, teaching them publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and Greeks repentance toward God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, behold I go bound in spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will befall me there. Paul went on to say that he did not count his life dear, but he only wished to finish the ministry he had been given by the Lord Jesus to testify of the gospel of the grace of God. He ended his speech by reminding those that were overseers to

feed the church of God, which Jesus purchased with His own blood.

“Therefore watch, and remember the three years that I did not cease to warn every one night and day (with tears) about grievous wolves that will enter among you, not sparing the flock. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, it is more blessed to give than to receive.” And when he finished speaking he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. They all wept sorely, and fell on Paul’s neck, and kissed him, worrying most of all for the words he spoke, that “they would see his face no more.”

Paul Persists in Going to Jerusalem

After they finally were able to take their leave of the Ephesian brethren, they boarded a ship that took them as far as Patara, a city southwest of Lycia. There they boarded another ship that took them to Tyre, where the ship unloaded. They found disciples in Tyre, and tarried there for seven days. The disciples at Tyre gave Paul guidance through the Spirit that he should not go up to Jerusalem, but he was not to be deterred. As they prepared to leave, the disciples with their wives and children accompanied them to the outskirts of the city, where they all knelt and prayed. They then took ship from Tyre to Ptolemais, and abode with them there one day. From there they proceeded to Caesarea, and stayed at the house of Philip, the evangelist, which was one of the seven deacons previously selected by the apostles. Paul's company stayed there for many days during which a prophet from Judaea named Agabus, came with a message for Paul. He took Paul's girdle, and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "Thus saith the Holy Spirit, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the

Gentiles.” When the company gathered there heard this, they besought Paul not to go to Jerusalem. But Paul answered, “What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not only to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” And when Paul would not be persuaded, they ceased warning him saying, “The will of the Lord be done.” After this they (Paul’s traveling companions plus some of the Ceasarean disciples) gathered their belongings and headed for Jerusalem. They also took with them an elderly disciple named Mnason of Cyprus, with whom they would lodge.

The brethren from Jerusalem greeted them gladly, and the next day Paul and his companions went to see James; and all the elders were there. James lauded Paul’s success in leading many to the Lord, and described the thousands of Jews that believed and are zealous of the Law. Paul ascribed all his success to God, and to God they gave praise. God had honored him more than any of the apostles, but they did not envy him; on the contrary, they glorified the Lord. However, James and the elders of the church at Jerusalem, asked Paul to gratify these law believing Jews, by some minimal compliance with the law of Moses. They did not grasp the fact that the religion Paul preached, did not destroy the law, but fulfilled it. He preached Jesus Christ, the end of the law for

righteousness, as well as repentance, which makes great use of the law. The Jesus Paul preached could not gain their esteem and affection, because he did not render the same respect as they did to ceremonial observances. In their view Paul taught that they should forsake Moses, and not circumcise their children nor follow the Mosaic customs.

To satisfy the multitude of Jews that continue to live by the law James and the elders suggested that Paul take four men that had been selected, and join himself to them. These four men would then shave their heads in accordance with the OT Nazarite law described in Numbers 2:13-21. Thus, the Jews would assume that all the things they had heard about Paul's teaching regarding Moses ceremonial laws would amount to nothing, and Paul would be considered to be orderly, and one that keeps the law. Surprisingly, Paul agreed with this devious plan, and took the men and purified himself with them and entered into the temple, to signify accomplishment of the days of purification, until an offering should be made for every one of them. When a waiting period of seven days was almost finished Jews from Asia saw Paul in the temple, and they stirred up all the people and laid hands on him crying out, Men of Israel help: "This is the man, that teacheth men everywhere against the people and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the

temple, and hath polluted this holy place.” And all the city was moved, and the people together took Paul, and drew him out of the temple, and shut the doors. They were all set to kill him when the prefect of the temple got word of what was happening and gathered men and ran down unto them. When the crowd saw the officials they stopped beating Paul, and when the prefect came near he commanded that Paul be bound with chains; and he immediately began to interrogate Paul. But there was considerable confusion, and when the prefect could not determine what had happened, he ordered that Paul be brought into the castle. Paul then identified himself and asked if he could speak to the gathering of people that had followed them into the castle, and the prefect gave him permission. Paul stood on the stairs and beckoned with his hand to silence the crowd.

It is hard to defend Paul in this matter. He could be charged with dissimulation in this situation, just as he accused Peter in Galatians 2:13-14. However, we need to be mindful about how God evaluates our actions: He judges our motives. And in this case Paul was undoubtedly following his stated belief of “being a Jew so that he might gain a Jew” (1 Corinthians 9:20). The worthiness of Peter’s motive was not as obvious: he appeared to have been trying to hide his association with the Gentiles from the Jews, and his purpose

appears to be due to his fear of the Jews. In Paul's situation God caused the scheme to blow up in their faces. The Jerusalem leaders advice, and Paul's compliance with it, were brought to naught. Paul undoubtedly learned a lesson from this misguided plan - even gifted men like Paul can be misled when caught up by crowd hysteria. But in case any reader might overreact to Paul's response here, let me ask, "What would the NT Bible be without the many contributions of Paul?" Dickson's New Analytical Bible says, "He was destined to become the greatest of the apostles, and in intellect and influence to stand far above his brethren." God gave him wisdom about unbelievable things He has prepared for those that love Him, and if you have not taken advantage of the opportunity to read and study some of the greatest literature ever written, you have certainly shortchanged yourself, and limited your spiritual judgment.

Paul Testifies Regarding His Conversion

Paul began to speak to the crowd in the Hebrew tongue, and they began to respond by becoming quiet and less boisterous. He then described how he was born in Tarsus, but was brought up in Jerusalem under the teaching of Gamaliel, and taught according to the strict law of Jewish fathers, and to be zealous toward God. He persecuted those of the “Way,” to the death, binding and delivering both men and women unto prison. He told them how he went to the high priest for letters granting him authority to go to Damascus, to arrest those of the “Way” in that city, and to return them to Jerusalem to be punished. But on the way, as he neared Damascus, a great light suddenly shone around him, and he heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? And I asked, “Who art thou Sir?” The KJV gives this as “Who art thou Lord?” But the GNT seems more logical since we assume that Saul did not know the Lord until He identified Himself. And he said, “I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.” Those that were with me saw the light, and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice that spoke. I then asked, what

shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, “Arise, and go to Damascus, and there you will be told all that you are appointed to do.” I could not see for the glory of the light, so those that were with me led me into Damascus. When I arrived there a man named Ananias came and prayed for me and to receive my sight, and told me that I will begin to know God’s will, and see Jesus and hear His voice, and will be His witness to all men of what I have seen and heard. He then told me to arise, and be baptized, and wash away my sins. When I returned to Jerusalem, and was praying in the temple, I was in a trance and saw Him again, and he said to make haste, and leave Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me. When I suggested that my reputation as defender of the Jewish law was well known and would work in my favor, He again told me to depart, because I will send you afar in ministry to the Gentiles.

When the crowd heard this they immediately raised their voices, saying that Paul should not be allowed to live, and they tore off their clothes and threw dust into the air. And the chief captain commanded that he should be brought into the castle, and be examined by scourging, but as they bound (GNT says stretched) him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion, “Is it lawful for you scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?” When the

centurion heard that, he told the chief captain, saying, “Take heed what thou doest, for this man is a Roman.” After the chief captain confirmed that Paul was a free born Roman citizen, he became afraid, for he had bound him. He immediately released Paul’s bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and he brought Paul before them.

The Plot Against Paul and God's Encouragement

Paul pleads his case before the council, but Ananias, the high priest, commanded those that stood near him to smite him on the mouth. Then Paul said to him, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for you sit there to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?" And those that stood by asked, "Revilest thou God's high priest?" Paul responded that he did not know that Ananias was the high priest, for it was written that no one should speak evil of the ruler of the people.

Then Paul perceived that there were both Sadducees and Pharisees in the crowd, so he cried out, "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question." When he said this a dissension arose between the two groups, and the scribes that were of the Pharisees arose and said: "We find no evil in this man, and if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God." And there arose a great dissension because the Sadducees did not believe in resurrection, nor angels, nor spirits. The chief captain, fearing that Paul would be torn apart

by the two opposing factions, commanded that the soldiers take Paul into custody, and bring him to the castle. During the following night the Lord stood by him and said, “Be of good cheer Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also in Rome.”

The next day a group of more than forty Jews banded together entered in a conspiracy supporting a curse saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. Then they went to the chief priests and elders and told them of the curse, asking them to have the chief captain to bring Paul before them tomorrow, falsely acting as if they needed to enquire something more from him, and we will be prepared to kill him. But the son of Paul’s sister* heard of their plan, and he entered the castle and went to tell Paul. Then Paul called one of the centurions and told him to bring the young man to the chief captain for he had something to tell him. After the young man had told the chief captain about the plot, the captain told two of the centurions to go and make ready two hundred soldiers, threescore and ten horsemen, and two hundred spearmen to leave for Caesarea at the third hour of the night and take Paul to Felix, the governor. And Claudius Lysias, the chief captain, wrote a letter to Felix telling him how he had rescued Paul from the Jews because he was a Roman, and he understood that what they were accusing him of was

related to Jewish law, and not anything worthy of execution, or imprisonment under Roman law. So he had sent Paul to Felix to let his accusers plea their case against him to the governor. The soldiers then left for Caesarea to deliver the epistle to the governor and present Paul before him. After Felix had read the letter he asked what province Paul was from, and when he understood that Paul was from Cilicia he said that he would hear from him and his accusers. He then sent Paul to Herod's judgment hall.

* Although the English word commonly used in Acts 23:16 in most Bibles is "*sister*," it is at least arguable that Luke's intent was somewhat different. This is the only place in God's word where we are told that Paul had a sister, although there are at least two places (unrelated to Paul), in the book of Romans in which the English word "kinsmen" is used. Jay P. Green's Interlinear Greek -English New Testament defines the Greek word used here as: "a sister; near kinswoman, or female relative; a female member of the Christian community."

Paul Appeals to Felix, the Governor

After five days Ananias the high priest came with the elders and Tertullus, an orator, who informed the governor against Paul. As seems to be common in this time Tertullus began by complimenting Felix, saying “very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence. We accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness.” He then began to accuse Paul of being a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes, who has also gone about profaning the temple. He also blamed Paul for causing the escalation of this hearing before Felix. Then Paul was called forward to present his defense. He began by pointing out that the time he had been in Jerusalem to worship was only twelve days, and the Jews had not found him disputing with any man, nor raising up the people in the synagogues nor in the city. And they cannot prove the things they now accuse me of, but they call the manner in which I worship heresy. I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: and I have

hope toward God, which they themselves also look for, that there will be a resurrection of the dead: of both the just and the unjust. My conscience is devoid of any offence toward God, or toward men. I came to Jerusalem after many years of serving my nation, and Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple with neither multitude, nor with tumult. Let them say if they have found any evil doing within me while I appeared before the Sanhedrin. Except for this one thing which I was judged for when I appeared before them, and also being judged for here: resurrection of the dead. When Felix heard this he delayed further examination of Paul since he had some understanding of the Way. Felix was too well-informed to yield any answer to the declamatory statements of Tertullus. He saw that the prisoner was not a common leader of sedition and he knew something as to the life of the sect of Nazarenes.

Felix then directed a centurion to keep Paul, but allow freedom to have his acquaintances to minister, or come to him. After several days Felix came with his wife Drusilla, a Jewess, to hear Paul concerning faith in Jesus Christ. When Paul began talking about righteousness, temperance, the judgment to come, Felix became terrified, and told Paul to go his way for a time: until he had the time to commune with him more often. Felix was hoping that Paul would give him money to release him, so he met with him often for a period of two-years.

After that time a successor named Porcius Festes came, and Felix wishing to show favors to the Jews, left Paul bound.

The Jews Accuse Paul Before Festus

Festus came to Jerusalem to replace Felix, and he first entered the province through Caesarea, and from there he came to Jerusalem. Once there, the high priest and other principal men of the Jews informed him about Paul, asking that he be brought to Jerusalem. Their plan was to lay in wait to kill him. But Festus determined that Paul should be kept in Caesarea, where he himself would go shortly. And he added that any of the Jews that were prepared to testify against Paul should accompany him. When he had tarried about eight to ten days he went back to Caesarea, and the next day he sat on the judgment seat and commanded that Paul be brought before him. And the Jews that came down with Festus laid many grievous complaints against Paul, none of which they could prove. And Paul, defending himself, said that neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar had he sinned. But Festus wanted to curry the favor of the Jews, so he asked Paul if he would go to Jerusalem to be judged. Paul immediately answered that he should

be judged before Caesar's judgment seat, since he had done no wrong, and Festus very well knew it.

After a number of days king Agrippa and his wife Bernice came to Caesarea to greet Festus. When they had been there for awhile, Festus brought Paul's cause before the king saying, there is a certain man left in bonds by Felix, who the chief priests and the elders of the Jews are asking to be judged. I have advised them that the Romans will not deliver a death sentence to any man until he has had the opportunity to confront his accusers face to face, and answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him. When this man's accusers stood before him they had no meaningful accusations, but only raised questions having to do with their own religious beliefs, and about Jesus, who is dead, but whom Paul affirms is alive. Since I did not feel qualified to enquire about these things I asked him if he wanted to go to Jerusalem to be judged by emperor Augustus. He agreed to this, and I have kept him here until I might be able to send him to Caesar. Agrippa responded to this by saying he would hear the man himself, on the morrow. On the next day king Agrippa and his wife came to the place of the hearing with great pomp and circumstance and they were joined by the chief captains, and principal men of the city. At Festus' command Paul was brought forth, and he introduced Paul by describing him as

the man that the Jews pleaded about both here and in Jerusalem, crying that he should be put to death. But when he determined that Paul had done nothing worthy of death, and that Paul himself had appealed to Augustus, he was determined to send him to Jerusalem. He then asked king Agrippa if he could suggest anything to include in writing to Augustus that would support sending Paul to him. Festus was concerned that he had no charges worthy of death with which to condemn Paul.

In evaluating this series of events I conclude that politics has changed very little in the past 2,000-years. There appears to be a lot of pandering and back-slapping with all the politicians we have encountered, and many of their decisions are made by focussing on their personal interest, “looking good to the boss.” They really did not know what to do with Paul, since he had not broken any Roman law, but they did not want to offend the Jews. So they “kicked the can down the road,” pushing the decision to an ever higher level, and stuck on how to defend their failure to “bite the bullet.” Sadly, we have a lot of that in 2018 America.

Another thing that surprises me is the continuing extreme hatred the Jews seem to have for anyone preaching or teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. In just about every place that Paul ministered, they turned on him. They often

tried to kill him, and at least on one occasion, they thought they were successful. But the really surprising thing about this disagreement is its staying power: some Jews even today do everything in their power to oppose teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Of course many Jews have accepted Jesus Christ, and have become witnesses to His death and resurrection. At the very beginning God claimed the Jewish nation as His own, and said He would bless them that bless Israel, and He would curse them that curse Israel (Genesis 12:3). Surprisingly, God still claims the Jewish nation as His own, and even says that at the end He will save one-third of the Israelites in all the land (Zechariah 13:8-9). God keeps His promises in spite of the failures of mankind.

Paul Testifies Before King Agrippa

King Agrippa gave Paul permission to speak, and Paul began by complimenting king Agrippa on being an expert concerning the customs and questions regarding the Jews. Paul then began to describe his life from his start in Jerusalem, in the sect of the Pharisees: the strictest sect of the Jewish religion. He then went on to what he had been accused of: the hope and promise made by God to our fathers: the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He admitted that he had done many things against the teaching of Jesus in Jerusalem, where he imprisoned many of the saints, after receiving authority from the chief priests. When they were put to death he was there supporting it, as he did when Stephen was stoned, and he stood by holding the coats of those throwing stones. He punished the believers in the synagogues, and compelled them to blaspheme, and he pursued them even into other cities, such as Damascus. He was on the way to Damascus to arrest believers when a great light from heaven, stronger than that of the sun, appeared to him, and those that travelled with Him. And when they had all fallen to the earth in

fear, he heard a voice speaking in the Hebrew language, saying, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? it is hard for you to kick against the pricks (meaning you cannot win against a greater force).” And Paul asked, who are you Lord? and He said, “I am Jesus, the One you are persecuting. Stand to your feet, for I have come to make you a minister and a witness of the things you have seen, and the things I will show you. I will deliver you from the Jews and the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me.”

True to the vision, Saul then set to work preaching that those in Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout the coasts of Judaea, and finally to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works fit for repentance. For this cause the Jews seized Paul in the temple and made plans to kill him. But with the help of God he continued to witness to the small and great, preaching nothing more than the things the prophets and Moses said would come: that Christ would suffer, and that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and show light to the people, and to the Gentiles. Festus then rose and with a loud voice claimed that Paul was mad from too much learning. Paul then answered that he was not mad, but spoke the words of truth and

soberness that he believed king Agrippa well knew. They were not hidden from him, not having been done in a closet. Paul then asked king Agrippa to confirm that he believed the prophets, and in response the king said that he was almost persuaded to become a Christian. Paul responded that he would be overjoyed if everyone that had heard him that day would become a Christian.

At that point the king, and those that accompanied him rose up and went aside and talked between themselves, saying, “This man has not done anything that is worthy of death or of bonds.” And Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed to Caesar.” This comment by king Agrippa is interesting because it was Festus that asked Paul if he wanted to appeal to Caesar (Acts 25:9, 20). If king Agrippa knew this his comment would have amounted to a subtle slap in Festus’ face. Even if he did not know this fact, his comment seems to be somewhat critical of the manner in which Paul had been handled.

Paul's Eventful Trip To Rome

When it was finally determined that Paul should be sent to Rome, he and certain other prisoners were turned over to a centurion of Augustus' band, named Julius. They boarded a ship at Caesarea and sailed to Sidon, where Julius gave Paul liberty to visit friends who cared for him. When they had launched from Sidon they sailed to Myria, a city of Lycia. There the centurion found a ship going to Italy, and the passengers were loaded, and set sail. But the weather was bad and the wind was so strong they had difficulty maneuvering the ship, so they sailed many days at a very slow pace, finally coming to a place called The Fair Havens, close to Lasea, a city located on the island of Crete, in the Mediterranean Sea. But for unforeseen delays they might have reached the Italian coast before the stormy season (the end of September and beginning of October). Navigation of the open sea was now dangerous, and all hope of completing the voyage during that sailing season was abandoned. The next question was, whether they should winter at Fair Havens, or move to Port Phenice (Phoenix), a harbor about forty miles to

westward. Paul assisted at the consultation and strongly urged them to winter where they were. He recognized that the voyage would likely end in injury and significant loss to the ship and its cargo, but also in the lives of those on board. But the centurion believed the owner of the ship, and the helmsman more than he did the things spoken by Paul. In addition, the port was not fit for wintering, so they proceeded to Phoenix, a haven of Crete, hoping to winter there. When they started a south wind blew softly, and they thought it confirmed their decision, but not long afterward a tempestuous wind started, and they could no longer control the ship, so they free-wheeled it and let the ship be borne along by the storm. On the next day they were tossed about exceedingly by the tempest, so they decided to lighten the ship by throwing cargo overboard. On the third day they began to throw the ships tackle overboard. When they had not seen the sun nor the stars in the sky for many days, and the tempest continued, all hope of being saved was lost. But again Paul stepped forward and told them that the night before an angel of God, to whom Paul belonged and served, stood by him and reassured him that there would be no loss of life, but the ship would be lost. The angel told him that he must be brought before Caesar, and that God had given him all that sailed with him; but they must be cast upon a certain island. When the fourteenth night

came upon them and they were driven up and down by the storm, the shipmen determined that they were approaching land, so they took soundings, which indicated that the ship was going aground. The sailors then began to cast anchor and to get into the rescue boats. Paul told the centurion that if they do not abide in the ship, they cannot be saved. At that, the sailors cut the ropes supporting the rescue boats and let them fall away from the ship.

As the day was approaching Paul besought them all to take meat, for this was the fourteenth day that they had fasted, and had taken nothing to eat. He encouraged them to eat for their health's sake. And he took bread, and gave thanks to God in the presence of all of them, and when he had broken it he began to eat. Then they all joined him with good cheer, and they also began to eat. In all, there was 276 souls within the ship. When they had finished eating they lightened the ship even more by disposing of the cargo of wheat. When daylight came they discovered a creek, with a shore to which they decided to try to force the ship. Then they took up the anchors, hoisted the mainsail, and made for shore. Falling into a place between two seas, they drove the vessel, and the prow stuck firmly. The mindset of the soldiers was that they should kill all the prisoners, lest any swimming out might escape. But the centurion, having determined to save Paul, kept them back from their purpose, and

commanded those who could swim to jump overboard first, and go to land.

Following them, the rest used boards and anything else they could find to get to land. And it so happened that all were saved, just as the angel had promised.

Chapter 28

Paul Finally Arrives in Rome

The island on which they landed was called Melita (Malta). And the people of the island welcomed the visitors, and they kindled a fire for them to warm up because of the rain and the cold. Paul gathered a bunch of sticks, but when he placed them on the fire a viper came out, and wrapped around his hand. When the islanders saw the viper hanging from Paul's hand they assumed that Paul was a murderer who had been saved from the sea, but God would not allow to continue to live. When Paul shook the viper from his hand into the fire, he suffered no harm, but the islanders continued to expect him to swell up and fall down dead. But when he continued to show no adverse effects from the snake, they changed their minds, and assumed that he was a god.

The chief of the island was a man named Publius, who received the shipwreck courteously, and provided lodging for them for three days. Publius' father was sick with a fever, and dysentery, so Paul went in to him and prayed, and laid hands on him, and healed him. After this, others on the island with diseases came, and were healed through the ministry of Paul. As a result, the

islanders honored the shipwrecked, and when they set sail they provided the things necessary for the trip. They had been on the island three months when they departed in a ship of Alexandria, whose sign was Castor and Pollux (the Twin Brothers), that had wintered in the island. They stopped for three days in Syracuse, followed by a one day stop in Rhegium, a city on the coast of Italy opposite of Messina in Sicily, and then to Puteoli, a seaport in Italy where they found brethren with whom they tarried for seven days. From there they proceeded on to Rome where they met brethren that had heard of them, and who came to meet them. Some came as far as the marketplace at Appius, and the Three Taverns. And when Paul saw them he thanked God, and took courage. When they came to Rome the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was allowed to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.

After three days Paul called the leaders of the Jews together and said unto them: "Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people or customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go because there was no cause of death in me, but when the Jews spoke against it, I was constrained to appeal to Caesar; not that I had

anything to accuse my nation of. I am here not as their accuser, but as my own defender, and this not of choice but of necessity.” Paul’s purpose in mentioning this was to avoid irritating the Jews to whom he was speaking. He did not know what information against him had reached their community. They said they had received no letters from Judaea concerning him, and none of the brethren that came spoke of any harm done by him. But they wanted to hear what Paul thought about the Nazarene sect, for it was being spoken against everywhere. They appointed him a day to present his thinking on this subject, and many came to his place of lodging to hear him expound and testify about the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from the law of Moses, and out of the prophets. Some believed and some did not. They departed after Paul had quoted Isaiah, the prophet, speaking unto their fathers: “Go unto this people, and say, Hearing you shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing you shall see, and not perceive: for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted [turn again], and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it. And when Paul had said these words, the Jews departed,

with great disagreement among themselves. And Paul dwelt two years in his own rented house, and received all that came in unto him, teaching the things that concern Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

Questions from The Acts of the Apostles

Chapter 1

1. Identify the times Jesus appeared to the Apostles and others after His crucifixion.
2. Explain what happened when Jesus breathed on His disciples in John 20:22 compared to what was predicted in Acts 1:5.
3. What happened to Judas, and who replaced him?

Chapter 2

1. Explain the relationship between David and Jesus.
2. Explain the meaning of verse 39 as compared to Hebrews 4:2.
3. What is the significance of being “baptized.”

Chapter 3.

1. What does the word “repent” mean, and why is it necessary for salvation?
2. What does verse 21 refer to?
3. Why is the word “soul” used in verse 23?

Chapter 4

1. What does verse 12 say about religious beliefs?

Chapter 5

1. What was the sin of Ananias and his wife?
2. Explain verse 13.
3. What was Gamaliel's argument regarding Peter and the other apostles?

Chapter 6

1. What caused the uprising against Stephen?

Chapter 7

1. Who do you think recorded the message that Stephen gave in this chapter?

Chapter 8

1. Why did those that received salvation by Phillip (were baptized into the Lord Jesus), fail to receive the Holy Spirit at that time (see verse 15)?
2. What prophet was Phillip referring to when he talked to the eunuch?
3. What requirement for baptism did Phillip give the eunuch?

Chapter 9

1. How could Saul preach the gospel "*straightway*" after he had just been saved (see verses 20 and 21) ?
2. How did Saul overcome the fear that the Jews had of him?
3. Explain why the miracles of Phillip and Peter do not seem to be prevalent in today's world.

Chapter 10

1. Is it OK to argue with God about a task He has asked you to undertake?
2. Why do you think that Peter “commanded” the gathering with Cornelius to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus?

Chapter 11

1. What basis did they that were of the circumcision have to confront Peter about his visit with those gathered with Cornelius?
2. What changed their minds?
3. Why you think Barnabas went to Tarsus to get Paul?

Chapter 12

1. Explain the death of James by command of Herod, and Peter’s instruction to the brethren “*to go and shew these things unto James,*” later, when he had been delivered from prison.
2. What was the principle reason that God smote Herod?

Chapter 13

1. What is the meaning of the phrase “*a man after my own heart*” in verse 22?
2. Explain the meaning of verse 23.
3. What is the meaning of the phrase “*and saw corruption*” in verse 36, and “*saw no corruption*” in verse 37?
4. What is the meaning of the phase “*as many as were ordained to eternal life . . .*” in verse 48.

Chapter 14

1. How did Paul “perceive” that the crippled man had faith to be healed?
2. What caused the apostles to tear their clothes and run among the people when the priest of Jupiter came with gifts?
3. Do you think Paul was dead after being stoned (see verse 19)?

Chapter 15

1. Do you believe that God brought about the breakup of Paul and Barnabas? If so, why.

Chapter 16

1. What was the significance of being a Roman (see verse 37)?

Chapter 17

1. Explain the meaning of verse 29.

Chapter 18

1. What vow caused Paul to shave his head (see verse 18)?

Chapter 19

1. Why did the disciples at Ephesus fail to receive the Holy Spirit when baptized into John’s baptism?
2. What lesson should we learn from the experience of the seven sons of Sceva?

Chapter 20

1. Why do you believe Paul wanted to walk to Assos and there meet the disciples sailing from Troas?
2. Why do you think that Paul was so deadset about going to Jerusalem?

Chapter 21

1. Why was Paul encouraged to shave his head (see verse 26)?
2. What was Paul accused of by the Jews in Jerusalem?

Chapter 22

1. What freed Paul from being scourged by his captors in Jerusalem?

Chapter 23

1. What saved Paul from the chief priests and council?
2. What saved Paul from the conspiracy of 40 Jews intent on killing him.

Chapter 24

1. What was the result of Paul's appearance before the governor Felix?
2. Why did Felix keep Paul in custody for two years?

Chapter 25

1. Can you identify the political aspects of Paul's treatment by Felix and Festus leading up to his judgment in Jerusalem?

Chapter 26

I. Analyze king Agrippa's comments in verse 28, and verse 32.

Chapter 27

I. Does this storm indicate anything regarding God's plans for Paul?

Chapter 28

I. What is the purpose of telling the Jews at Rome that "*Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive.*" if their heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, and the salvation of God has been given to the Gentiles?

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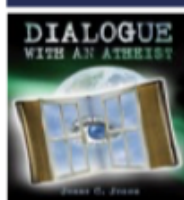
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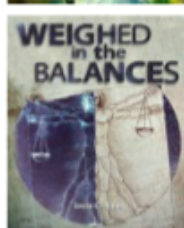


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