

# MICHIGAN BIBLE SCHOOL

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## **“THE BOOK OF ACTS”**

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## I. AN OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

- a. This book begins with the ascension of Jesus and his instructions for the apostles to go into Jerusalem and to wait from the power on high (Acts 1:4,5).
- b. It continues by showing us the establishment of the church and the subsequent spread of the church (From Acts 2 on).
- c. The book gives us the early persecution against the church and depicts for us the boldness of the early church (cf. Acts 4:29).
- d. We find in this book the first Gentile to be converted and the taking of the gospel into Asia Minor and Europe, as well as some of the islands of the Mediterranean.
- e. Acts 2 is sometimes referred to as the “hub of the Bible”. Everything prior to Acts 2 points to the coming establishment of the church. Everything after Acts 2 points back to the establishment of the church.
- f. Acts teaches us how the church is to grow. It grew both numerically and spiritually by the teaching of the word throughout the world (Acts 16:4,5). Some “ideas” you will not find in the book of Acts pertaining to church growth –
  - i. Drama Teams
  - ii. Skits
  - iii. Games
  - iv. Specials
  - v. Preachers to cover various groups of people (The preachers in Acts served all the people.)

## II. THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK

- a. The book is addressed to Theopolis (Acts 1:1), as is the book of Luke (Lk. 1:3).
- b. The book of Luke ends with Christ after his resurrection prior to his ascension. The book of Acts begins in the same manner.
- c. The writer references his first work about the life of Christ (Acts 1:1).
- d. The author was a companion with Paul for a good portion of his journeys (Acts 16:10, notice the word “we” that is now used).
- e. The books of Luke and Acts were written by the same person. As early as 160 A.D., the Muratorian Fragment attributed the work to Luke. Iranaeus also attests to Luke’s authorship around 180 A.D. No one has successfully challenged either the authenticity of this book or its author.
- f. Luke is known as “the beloved physician” (Col. 4:14), and is with Paul during Paul’s last imprisonment (2 Tim. 4:11).

## III. THE DATE OF THE WRITING

- a. The book of Acts opens with the story of the ascension of Christ, which would place the first part of the book around 33 A.D.
- b. The book ends with Paul under Roman guard (Acts 28:30,31), which would have been around 62 A.D.

- c. Because of the abrupt ending of the book, with no explanation about the outcome of Paul's trial, it is believed the book was written shortly after this date.
- d. The book of Acts gives us a look at the first 30 years of the growth of the church.

#### IV. OUTLINES OF THE BOOK

- a. From Acts 1:8
  - i. To teach in Jerusalem and Judea (Acts 1-7)
  - ii. To teach in Samaria (Acts 8)
  - iii. To teach in the uttermost parts of the world (Acts 9-28)
- b. By two major characters
  - i. Peter (Acts 1-12)
  - ii. Paul (Acts 13-28)
- c. A larger outline
  - i. The beginning of the church (Acts 1,2)
  - ii. The first persecution (Acts 3-5)
  - iii. Stephen's defense (Acts 6,7)
  - iv. Early conversions (Acts 8,9)
  - v. Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10,11)
  - vi. Death of James and Peter's imprisonment (Acts 12)
  - vii. First missionary journey (Acts 13:1 – 15:35)
  - viii. Second missionary journey (Acts 15:36 – 18:22)
  - ix. Third missionary journey (Acts 18:23 – 21:26)
  - x. The arrest and trials of Paul (Acts 21:27 – 26:32)
  - xi. Paul's journey to Rome (Acts 27:1 – 28:31)

#### V. PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

- a. The book of Acts has several who would be considered major characters in the events of the book. These people were faithful preachers of the word who taught the truth even when their lives were in jeopardy.
- b. Peter
  - i. Usually known for denying Christ (Lk. 22).
  - ii. He also affirmed that Jesus was the Christ the son of the living God (Matt. 16).
  - iii. On Pentecost, he preaches the first gospel sermon (Acts 2).
  - iv. With John, he boldly preaches the word throughout the region of Jerusalem (Acts 3,4).
  - v. Dealt with Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5)
  - vi. Taught Cornelius, a Roman Centurion (Acts 10).
- c. Paul is best known in the book of Acts for his missionary journeys. To truly understand Paul, one must also read the writings of Paul that are also recorded for us in the Bible (Romans through Philemon).
- d. Stephen, one of the seven chosen in Acts 6, provides for us one of the greatest overviews of the history of the Jews while boldly proclaiming

God's word to an unappreciative audience. His boldness in proclaiming the truth led the Jews to stone him to death (Acts 7).

- e. We are introduced to Barnabas at the end of Acts 4. He is the one who welcomes Paul into the church (Acts 9:27), and who went with Paul on the first missionary journey (Acts 13). Even when he and Paul disputed over Mark, Barnabas remained faithful to Christ and rather than be discouraged, he and Mark traveled to Cyprus (Acts 15:39).

## VI. MAJOR CITIES

- a. Jerusalem – Capital city of Israel
  - i. It is here that the church is established (Acts 2).
  - ii. Here, Stephen is killed (Acts 7).
  - iii. A great persecution against the church here served to drive people away from the area into the uttermost parts of the world, where they continued to preach the word (Acts 8:4).
- b. Antioch – Capital city of Syria
  - i. In Antioch, the disciples were first called Christians (Acts 11:26).
  - ii. The first two missionary journeys began and ended here.
  - iii. The third missionary journey began here.
- c. Caesarea
  - i. Headquarters of Roman army; seat of Roman government
  - ii. Cornelius is converted here (Acts 10).
- d. Athens – Capital of Greece
  - i. This city was known for its many idols (cf. Acts 17:23).
  - ii. It was here that Paul preached his sermon at Mars' Hill (Acts 17).
- e. Corinth
  - i. Chief city of Achaia, the southern portion of Greece
  - ii. Paul meets Aquila and Priscilla here (Acts 18).
- f. Rome – Capital city of the Roman Empire
  - i. Paul appeals to Caesar, and must be taken to Rome (Acts 25:11; 26:32).
  - ii. It is here that Paul is last seen in the book of Acts, as he is under guard in his own hired house (Acts 28:30).

## VII. THE TEACHING OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

- a. That Jesus is both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36).
- b. That Jesus is our foundation (Acts 4:12).
- c. They taught the kingdom of God and Jesus Christ (Acts 8:12; 28:23,31).
- d. They taught that God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34).
- e. That Jesus is our Savior (Acts 13:23).
- f. That through Jesus comes the forgiveness of sins (Acts 13:38).
- g. That we must turn from the world and serve the living God (Acts 14:15).
- h. That Christians would be persecuted (Acts 14:22).
- i. That we must be willing to give up whatever hinders us in order to serve Christ (Acts 19:19).
- j. That we must teach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:20,27).

- k. That we must be willing to die for Christ (Acts 21:13).

#### VIII. AN OVERVIEW OF ACTS 1 AND 2

- a. Jesus meets with the apostles for 40 days after his resurrection (1:3).
- b. He instructs them to go into Jerusalem and there to wait for the promise from the Father (1:4-8).
- c. Jesus ascends to Heaven (1:9-11).
- d. While the apostles are waiting in Jerusalem, they appoint a new apostle, a disciple named Matthias (1:12-26).
- e. On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit comes upon the apostles and they are able to speak in languages which men can understand (2:1-13).
- f. They preach the sermon that convicts those present of having crucified Jesus (2:14-36).
- g. Those who gladly received the word were baptized into Christ (2:37-41).
- h. The church grew both spiritually and physically (2:42-47).

#### IX. THE POWER THAT CAME UPON THE APOSTLES

- a. Jesus had promised that he would build his church (Matt. 16:18).
- b. He had also told them that some of them would be alive when the kingdom came with power (Mk. 9:1).
- c. Jesus instructed the apostles that they would teach repentance and remission of sins to all nations beginning in Jerusalem (Lk. 24:46-48).
- d. He also told them that they were to go to Jerusalem and to wait from the power that would come from on high (Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:4).
- e. Jesus teaches them that this power from on high would come to them when the Holy Ghost is come upon them (Acts 1:5,8).
- f. The disciples went to Jerusalem (Acts 1:12).
- g. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Ghost came upon them (Acts 1:4).
- h. They taught people from all nations (Acts 1:5-11) the message of Jesus Christ.
- i. While instructing the people on what they needed to do to be saved, they taught them repentance and remission of sins (Acts 2:38).
- j. The apostles fulfilled the promise of the Father.

#### X. THE ASCENSION OF JESUS

- a. Acts 1:9-11 document for us the ascension of Jesus. Forty days after his resurrection, Jesus departs from this world as he told the apostles he would do in Jn. 14:1-3.
- b. While the ascension of Jesus is significant, the statement made by the angel is even more significant when we think about eternity. In Acts 1:11, the angel says, "...shall so come in like manner ...."
- c. We are told that Jesus will be coming back. Important to us, because –
  - i. It is that for which we look, our goal (1 Thess. 1:10; Tit. 2:13).
  - ii. It will fulfill the promise he made (Jn. 14:3).
  - iii. It will happen (1 Thess. 5:1-8).
  - iv. Every eye shall see him (Rev. 1:7).

- v. There will be no mysterious or secret return of Christ. Consider the noise that will be made when Christ returns (1 Thess. 4:16).
- vi. At his coming, we will be judged (Matt. 25:31-46).

## XI. THE CHOOSING OF A NEW APOSTLE

- a. The apostles, along with about 120 other Christians, were gathered in Jerusalem (Acts 1:14,15). It should be noted that among those present at this time and following Christ were his physical brethren, who had at one point not believed in Jesus (Jn. 7:5).
- b. Peter directs them in choosing another apostle. This was a fulfillment of prophecy necessity by the fact that Judas had betrayed Christ and then went out and hanged himself (Acts 1:16-20).
- c. Two men are put forth as possible replacements to fill the open office – Barsabas and Matthias (Acts 1:23).
- d. Matthias was chosen to replace Judas. His choosing was really done by God. The apostles were the instruments in the act. God was the one who selected Matthias (Acts 1:24-26).

## XII. THE HOLY SPIRIT COMES UPON THE APOSTLES

- a. The evidence that the Spirit had come upon them.
  - i. Two things preceded the Spirit's coming.
    - 1. There was a sound from heaven like a rushing mighty wind (Acts 2:2).
    - 2. There appeared on them cloven tongues like as of fire (Acts 2:3).
  - ii. When the Spirit came upon them, they began to speak with other tongues (Acts 2:4).
- b. What were these "other tongues"?
  - i. Obviously, there are many who believe these were babblings that no one could understand. Those who say they can speak in tongues today babble incomprehensibly and make people believe they have been endowed with the Holy Spirit.
  - ii. However, a close examination of Acts 2 will show us that tongues are not unrecognizable babbling.
    - 1. They spoke with tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:4). There are two significant words used in this verse:
      - a. Speak – This word means "to talk, that is to utter words".
      - b. Utterance – This word means "to enunciate plainly".
      - c. Both of these words help us to know that the apostles spoke words that men could understand.
    - 2. Those who were the listeners on this day heard the message in their own language (Acts 2:6), which they also called a tongue (Acts 2:8).

- iii. The tongues that were one of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:10) were a known language of man. Note that the people on the day of Pentecost stated they heard in the tongue “wherein we were born” (Acts 2:8).
- iv. Some will say that the miracle here was in the hearing and not in the speaking. Part of the reason for this is that there were only 12 apostles and at least 15 different groups who were present (Acts 2:9-11):
  1. Parthians
  2. Medes
  3. Elamites
  4. Dwellers in Mesopotamia
  5. Judeans
  6. From Cappadocia
  7. From Pontus
  8. From Asia
  9. From Phrygia
  10. From Pamphylia
  11. From Egypt
  12. From Libya
  13. From Rome
  14. Cretes
  15. Arabians
  16. When one examines this listing, please note that these people were Jews who had come to Jerusalem for Pentecost (Acts 2:5). There is nothing in this text to state that all of those present were actually born in the countries from which they came. Also, the number of actual languages needed could have been quite small. Consider the following:
    - a. The Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and Mesopotamians were all from the same area of the world – the Tigris / Euphrates river valley.
    - b. Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia are all provinces of Asia Minor.
    - c. It is possible that those from common areas could have spoken the same language.
    - d. And, since most everyone throughout the world spoke Greek at this time, it could be that the language with which one was born was Greek. This would also narrow down the number of languages needed.
- v. It is the case that the miracle on the day of Pentecost as refers to languages was in the speaking in tongues and not in the hearing. The apostles were all Galileans and would have all spoken the



same language. By a miraculous gift, they would speak to people in languages that were not native to the apostles.

### XIII. THE EARLY REACTION OF THE PEOPLE

- a. Some doubted what was happening, not being able to explain it (Acts 2:12).
- b. Others mocked saying that the apostles must be drunk (Acts 2:13).
  - i. First, one cannot become drunk on new wine. New wine is not alcoholic, but is the first squeezing from the grapes.
  - ii. Second, Peter reminds them that the apostles cannot be drunk, because it is too early in the day (Acts 2:15). Something these people would have fully understood.

### XIV. THE SERMON

- a. It begins by a quotation from Joel 2:28-32 showing that what is happening here is from God (Acts 2:14-21).
- b. The sermon continues with its theme being Jesus Christ (Acts 2:22-36).
  - i. Jesus worked great miracles among them (22).
  - ii. They crucified him (23).
  - iii. God raised him up (24).
  - iv. Both prophecy and the empty tomb testify to the resurrection of Jesus. David's tomb still has his bones in it; the tomb of Jesus is empty (25-32).
  - v. Jesus is now reigning at the right hand of God as both Lord and Christ (33-36).

### XV. THE RESPONSE OF THE PEOPLE

- a. They were cut to the heart and asked what they needed to do to be saved (Acts 2:37).
- b. Peter teaches them they need to repent and be baptized in order to obtain remission of sins (Acts 2:38).
- c. They were taught that the promise of salvation was for all generations (Acts 2:39).
- d. The people were further exhorted to save themselves (Acts 2:40).
- e. Many gladly received the word and were baptized (Acts 2:41).

### XVI. THE EARLY GROWTH OF THE CHURCH

- a. They continued steadfastly (that is, they were diligent in their service) in:
  - i. The teachings of the apostles.
  - ii. Fellowship.
  - iii. Breaking of bread (communion service, compare Acts 20:7).
  - iv. Prayers
  - v. All found in Acts 2:42.
- b. How did the church grow? (Acts 2:43-47)
  - i. The church continued to be with one another, built unity, and had all things common (43,44).

- ii. Those who had possessions sold these possessions so that those who had needs could be taken care of (45).
- iii. They continued in fellowship building a unity in purpose (46).
- iv. They praised God, and by living godly lives, they found favor with the people (47).
- v. The result of this type of example and teaching is that the Lord added to the church on a daily basis (47).
- vi. Those being saved were added to the church, not some denomination (47; Eph. 5:23).

#### XVII. AN OVERVIEW OF ACTS 3-5

- a. In this section of the book of Acts, we see the early spread of the church as well as the first persecution of the church.
- b. Initially, the church found favor with the people (Acts 2:47), but soon there was opposition from the leaders of the Jewish nation.
- c. The trouble began innocently enough. Peter and John healed a man who had been lame “from his mother’s womb” (Acts 3:2). In and of itself, this should have been a great thing, and it was as far as the people were concerned (Acts 3:9,10; 4:4).
- d. However, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees were upset because Peter and John taught the people and they taught of the resurrection. The Sadducees did not believe in angels, the spirit, or the resurrection (Acts 23:8).
- e. Because they could not deny that a great miracle was done and because they feared the people, they could do nothing with Peter and John except tell them to stop teaching in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:17).
- f. Peter and John and the rest of the church did not let these threats deter them in their service to God, but prayed for more boldness and continued to proclaim the word of God (Acts 4:29).
- g. While the people had unity and shared all that they had (Acts 2:45; 4:34-37), we now see the first problem within the church. Ananias and Sapphira lie to God and are struck dead (Acts 5:1-13).
- h. The church continued to grow physically and this again caused concern among the Sadducees (Acts 5:17), and Peter and John are arrested.
- i. Again, though, they cannot do anything with Peter and John except threaten them (Acts 5:40).
- j. The church continued to teach the word in the temple and from house to house.

#### XVIII. MIRACLES IN ACTS 3-5

- a. One title by which the book of Acts is sometimes known is “Acts of the Holy Spirit”. It gets this title because of the number of miracles recorded in the book.
- b. A miracle was not a natural event. It is by both definition and actuality a supernatural event. A careful study of the miracles of the Bible shows that a miracle superseded all natural laws. For instance, when the lame man in

Acts 3 was healed, he did not have to go through physical therapy or surgeries in order to be able to walk again. The strength immediately returned to his feet and ankles and he leaped up and walked (Acts 4:7,8).

- c. Some things about miracles.
  - i. Miracles were used to confirm the word (Mk. 16:20; Heb. 2:3,4).
  - ii. Miracles were not used to glorify those who performed the miracle. Peter gave credit to God for the fact that the lame man now walked (Acts 3:12-16).
  - iii. Miracles were temporary, and would only last until the word of God was completed in its written form (1 Cor. 13:8-10).
  - iv. Miracles could only be performed by certain individuals.
    - 1. Jesus (Jn. 2 and similar passages)
    - 2. The apostles (Matt. 10:8; Mk. 16:17-20).
    - 3. The seventy sent out in Lk. 10 (Lk. 10:9,17).
    - 4. Those upon whom the apostles laid their hands (Acts 8:18; 1 Cor. 12:1-11). A careful study of Acts 8 shows that those to whom the apostles gave the gift to work miracles could not give the gift to some other person.
  - v. A study of "Point iv" above helps us to understand why miracles no longer can be performed.
    - 1. Jesus is no longer on the Earth and therefore is not performing miracles here.
    - 2. The apostles have all died and therefore are not performing miracles anymore.
    - 3. The seventy have all died and, likewise, are not performing miracles anymore.
    - 4. Those upon whom the apostles laid their hands have also now died, so there is no one left alive upon the Earth who can perform miracles.
    - 5. Miracles were a special entity to accomplish a special purpose – the confirming of the word. Now that we have the completed word of God, we no longer need miracles.
- d. The miracles in Acts 3-5.
  - i. The healing of the lame man (Acts 3:1-8).
  - ii. The knowledge that Ananias and Sapphira had kept back part of the money and lied to God (Acts 5:1-9).
  - iii. Many signs and wonders were done (Acts 5:12).
  - iv. Many are healed. Some by Peter's shadow passing over them (Acts 5:15,16).
  - v. The angel of the Lord frees Peter and John from prison (Acts 5:19).

#### XIX. A LAME MAN IS HEALED

- a. The temple that is standing at this time is the temple originally built by Zerubbabel and restored by Herod the Great. By this time, the temple area covered about 26 acres. This area was surrounded by walls, and it is

believed that the gate called Beautiful mentioned in Acts 3 was located in the east wall to the temple area. It was common for beggars to gather at such places because of the number of people who would pass by during the day.

- b. As Peter and John were passing near this gate, the lame man asked them for financial help (Acts 3:3). Peter and John did not have money to give him, but offered him something much more valuable, the ability to walk (This man had been lame for more than 40 years [Acts 4:22]!).
- c. When he was healed, the lame man went into the temple area with Peter and John. He was walking, leaping, and praising God (Acts 3:8).
- d. All the people knew that this man was the beggar who normally was at the gate and yet now he walked. They were in awe of this event, and they came to Peter and John at Solomon's Porch (This porch was a part of the temple area located at the east side of the Temple) (Acts 3:11).

## XX. THE SERMON TO THE PEOPLE

- a. God, whose son you killed, has made this man whole (Acts 3:12-16).
- b. You did it though ignorance, but you still did it (Acts 3:17,18).
- c. There was now the need for them to repent and be converted (Acts 3:19).
- d. They were to follow Jesus Christ as Moses had said (Acts 3:20-23; cf. Deut. 18:18,19).
- e. They were to follow Jesus as the prophets had said. The Jews were certainly without excuse. They should have known about Jesus and followed him (Acts 3:24-26).

## XXI. PETER AND JOHN BEFORE THE LEADERS OF THE JEWS

- a. Peter and John are arrested (Acts 4:1-3).
- b. While the persecution is beginning, the church is still growing (Acts 4:4).
- c. When asked by what authority they taught their message, Peter and John tell the Jewish leaders that it is by the authority of Jesus (Acts 4:5-12). To the Jews, Peter tells them:
  - i. This is the same Jesus you crucified (vs. 10).
  - ii. This is the stone which you rejected (vs. 11)
  - iii. There is salvation in no other name (vs. 12).
- d. The Jewish leaders could not deny the miracle that now had this lame man walking (Acts 4:13-22).
  - i. Even though the Jews perceived Peter and John as being ignorant men, they recognized that they had been with Jesus (vs. 13).
  - ii. They could not deny the miracle because the man was standing before them (vs. 14).
  - iii. Peter and John are told to not preach in the name of Jesus anymore (vss. 15-20).
    1. This was done so that the teaching of Peter and John would not spread any farther (vs. 17).
    2. When told to not preach in the name of Jesus anymore, Peter and John respond by asking the Jewish leaders what

they should do. The Jewish leaders are asked to decide whether Peter and John should obey them or obey God (vss. 20,21).

3. As for Peter and John, they can only speak the things which they had seen and heard (vs. 20).
- iv. They could not deny this great miracle because the man was more than forty years old (vs. 22). They could not say that the man never really was lame. Everyone knew the man (Acts 4:10).

#### XXII. THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO THE THREAT OF THE JEWS

- a. Peter and John went back to their fellow Christians and reported all that had happened to them (Acts 4:23).
- b. The church, rather than becoming discouraged, prayed to God requesting more courage to boldly proclaim his word (Acts 4:24-31, esp. 29).
- c. The church –
  - i. Spoke the word with boldness (Acts 4:31).
  - ii. The church was of one heart and one soul (Acts 4:32).
  - iii. The church took care of those in need (Acts 4:34-37).

#### XXIII. THE DECEIT OF ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA

- a. Ananias and Sapphira sold a possession that they had and brought the money to the apostles (Acts 5:1-2).
- b. They had kept back part of the price, which in and of itself was not wrong (Acts 5:2,4).
- c. The problem was that they had tried to make it appear that the amount of money they had brought was all they had received for the possession (Acts 5:8).
- d. Because of their deceit, they were both struck dead (Acts 5:5,10).
- e. Peter said that they had lied to the Holy Ghost (Acts 5:3), and they had lied to God (Acts 5:4). Thus, Peter helps us to understand the Holy Ghost is also deity.
- f. Many became Christians and many were healed or had unclean spirits removed from them (Acts 5:11-16).

#### XXIV. PETER AND JOHN AGAIN BEFORE THE JEWISH LEADERS

- a. They are arrested again (Acts 5:17,18).
- b. The angel of the Lord frees them, and they go back to the temple to preach the word (Acts 5:19-21).
- c. The Jewish Council called for Peter and John to be brought forth. However, when they came to the prison, they found the prison secure but Peter and John were not there (Acts 5:21-24).
- d. When they learn that Peter and John are preaching again, they arrest them for the third time and bring them before the Council (Acts 5:25-27).
- e. The Council reminds Peter and John that they had already been warned once about preaching in the name of Jesus (Acts 5:28). Interestingly, the

work of Peter and John and the church was stated as “ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine”.

- f. The church’s response:
  - i. We must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29).
  - ii. God raised Jesus up whom you crucified (Acts 5:30).
  - iii. Jesus is now at the right hand of God exalted (Acts 5:31).
  - iv. Jesus expects Israel to repent in order to have forgiveness (Acts 5:31,32).
- g. As the Council was contemplating having Peter and John killed, Gamaliel, who would instruct Paul before Paul became a Christian (Acts 22:3), asked the Jewish Council to do nothing to these men (Acts 5:34-40).
  - i. Gamaliel reminds them that there had been others who had tried to raise a following, but that each had come to naught (vss. 34-37).
  - ii. He lets them know that if the church is only from man, then it will come to nothing. But, if it is from God, there is nothing man can do to stop it (vss. 38,39; cf. Matt. 16:19).
  - iii. The Council agreed with Gamaliel and beat Peter and John and released them (vs. 40).

#### XXV. PETER AND JOHN WERE GLAD TO HAVE SUFFERED FOR CHRIST

- a. After being threatened and beaten, they leave rejoicing that they had been counted worthy to suffer for Christ (Acts 5:41; cf. 1 Pet. 4:16; Jas. 1:2,3).
- b. They did not cease to preach Jesus Christ (Acts 5:42).

#### XXVI. AN OVERVIEW OF ACTS 6 AND 7

- a. After facing opposition and its first internal problems, the church continues to grow (3,000 souls – Acts 2:41; 5,000 souls – Acts 4:4; Believers were the more added – Acts 5:14).
- b. When chapter 6 begins, we find the church facing another problem that is quickly handled in a way that promotes more growth (“*and the number of the disciples multiplied*” – Acts 6:7).
- c. Then, persecution comes upon them again, this time to an individual – Stephen.
- d. Stephen’s defense in Acts 7 is a powerful and compelling condemnation of the Jews of the First Century. They were those who had been so blessed by God, yet they had killed the prophets of God and his son, Jesus Christ.
- e. This section ends with Stephen being stoned to death.

#### XXVII. THE GRECIAN WIDOWS

- a. There arose a murmuring among the brethren because the Grecian widows were being neglected (Acts 6:1). This would relate to the work that was being done in providing aid to those in need from the funds brought about by those who sold possessions and gave it to the apostles (Acts 2:44,45; 4:34-37). This complaint is a legitimate claim as the apostles did not deny that it was happening, but set about to resolve the problem (Acts 6:3).

- b. The term “Grecians” used in this passage is from a word that means a Greek-speaking Jew. At this point in the church, the word of God has not been spread to the Gentile world. This would take place starting in Acts 10. A close examination of Acts 11:19,20 will show that the Christians who had been scattered abroad because of Stephen’s persecution went to various places speaking to Jews only. Among those listed to whom they spoke were the Grecians, Jews who spoke Greek.
- c. The apostles realized that they could not take care of all the needs of the church themselves. They knew that if they were physically involved in seeing that the needs of these widows were taken care of they would not have the time to preach the word of God as they needed (Acts 6:2,4). {There is a great lesson for us today when we think about our elders. They are charged with watching out for our souls – Heb. 13:7,17; Tit. 1:9-11. We should understand that their primary responsibility is not in seeing that all the bills are paid or that the building is cleaned. Their responsibility is to labor in the word of God. And, those of us who are not elders should help them do so and encourage them to do so.}
- d. The apostles ask that seven men be chosen out to look after this work. But, not just any men, but those who fit the following qualifications (Acts 6:3).
  - i. Men of honest report (“Well reported of”)
  - ii. Men full of the Holy Ghost (“Spiritual”)
  - iii. Men full of wisdom (“Wise”) {It is later said of Stephen that the Jews could not resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spoke – Acts 6:10.}
- e. This pleased everyone and seven men are chosen (Acts 6:5).
  - i. Stephen
  - ii. Philip
  - iii. Prochorus
  - iv. Nicanor
  - v. Timon
  - vi. Parmenas
  - vii. Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch (A proselyte is one who is converted from one religion to another. Most of those in the Jewish faith were born Jews. Some people, however, chose to adhere to the Jewish faith, even though they were not born Jewish. See also Matt. 23:15; Acts 2:10; 13:43.)
- f. Of these seven men, we only Stephen and Philip do we have more information about. Stephen will be killed in Acts 7 and Philip will preach in Samaria and to the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8.
- g. From Acts 6:7, we find the result of this action in handling the problem rather than fighting about it was that –
  - i. The word of God increased.
  - ii. The number of the disciples multiplied.
  - iii. A great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

## XXVIII. THE JEWISH LEADERS TURN AGAINST STEPHEN

- a. Stephen did great wonders and miracles among the people (Acts 6:8).
- b. Those of the synagogue disputed with Stephen, yet they could not stand against the wisdom or spirit (Acts 6:9,10).
- c. Those who composed this synagogue were from various places and stations in life (Acts 6:9).
  - i. Libertines – These were individuals who had been made free men by the Romans. They would be Jews who were also Roman citizens.
  - ii. Cyrenians – These were from the city of Cyrene, a city in Libya in Africa. Simon, the Cyrenian, was compelled to carry Jesus' cross (Lk. 23:26). They were present at Pentecost (Acts 2:10), Some of these were converted to Christ and went out and preached the gospel (Acts 11:20).
  - iii. Alexandrians – These were from the city of Alexandria, named after Alexander the Great, and situated on the northern coast of Egypt. Alexandria was noted for its great library.
  - iv. Cilicia – This region was located northwest of Antioch of Syria, in an area just as one starts getting into Asia Minor. Paul was from the Cilician city of Tarsus (Acts 22:3).
  - v. Asia – This was the western most province of Asia Minor.
- d. Because they could not resist the words of Stephen, they had men lie about Stephen's teachings (Acts 6:11-14). Nothing that they charged Stephen with teaching was true.
- e. And when they brought him before the council, they beheld one whose face was "*as if it had been the face of an angel*" (Acts 6:15). They noted that there was something special about Stephen.

## XXIX. STEPHEN'S DEFENSE

- a. Acts 7 not only gives us Stephen's sermon to the Jews, but is also a great synopsis of the Old Testament. Stephen gives the Jews a history lesson to help them to understand that they were without excuse. They had been taught clearly and brought to this point by their fathers, yet they resisted and killed Jesus.
- b. Let us examine Stephen's sermon
  - i. Abraham obeyed God (Acts 7:1-8)
    1. He left his home in Mesopotamia and went where God instructed him, even though he did not know where he was going (cf Heb. 11:8-10).
    2. His seed was promised the land of Canaan.
    3. God said that Abraham's seed would dwell in a bondage (Egypt – Ex. 1) but they would be delivered (Moses – Ex. 3,4).
    4. God gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision (Gen. 17:9-14). This was a sign between Abraham, his seed, and God.



5. From Abraham came the twelve tribes of Israel.
- ii. Joseph obeyed God (Acts 7:9-16)
  1. Abraham begat Isaac; Isaac begat Jacob; Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs.
  2. Joseph's brothers sold him into Egypt where Joseph was delivered from his troubles and rose in favor with Pharaoh.
  3. Joseph helped his brethren in the time of famine and finally reveals himself to his brother.
  4. Jacob and his family move down to Egypt. Jacob dies and is buried in Sychem. He is buried in the sepulcher that Abraham had purchased for Sarah's burial (See Gen. 23).
- iii. Moses obeyed God (Acts 7:17-36)
  1. The children of Israel were oppressed in Egypt.
  2. Moses was born during this time of oppression, but was spared the wrath of Pharaoh.
  3. He was raised by Pharaoh's daughter.
  4. He killed an Egyptian while defending a Hebrew slave.
  5. He fled Egypt because he had killed this Egyptian.
  6. An angel of the Lord appeared unto Moses in the burning bush (cf. Ex. 3).
  7. Moses obeyed God and brought the children of Israel out of Egypt.
- iv. Moses prophesied of the Messiah to come (Acts 7:37; cf. Deut. 18:18,19).
- v. The children of Israel disobeyed God (Acts 7:38-43).
  1. They would not listen to Moses.
  2. They asked Aaron to make for them gods. Aaron erected a golden calf (cf. Ex. 32).
  3. The children of Israel worshipped false gods.
- vi. God is supreme (Acts 7:44-50)
  1. Your fathers had the tabernacle.
  2. David desired to build a house for God. David could not build the temple because he was a man of war (1 Chr. 28:3).
  3. Solomon built the temple (1 Kgs. 6-8).
  4. Yet, in reality, God does not dwell in temples made with hands. Heaven is his throne and the earth is his footstool.
  5. What can man give God? It is he who made everything.
- vii. The Jews continued to disobey God (Acts 7:51-53)
  1. They resisted the Holy Ghost, just as their fathers did.
  2. Their fathers had persecuted the prophets.
  3. Those of Stephen's day had betrayed and murdered Jesus.
  4. These Jews had received the law and had not kept it!

### XXX. THE JEWS KILL STEPHEN

- a. Stephen is often called the first Christian martyr. A martyr is someone who is willing to die for a cause. Stephen certainly was one willing to do this.
- b. When the Jews had received the words of Stephen that they had murdered Jesus and had not kept the law, they were cut to the heart and the gnashed Stephen with their teeth. The word “gnash” used here is a word that carries with it the idea of great pain or rage. One would think of how one grits their teeth when they are angry. Certainly, they were outraged with Stephen, and would only get more angry with him. Yet, according to the wording of Acts 6:54, they seem also to have actually bit Stephen in their rage.
- c. Stephen, being filled with the Holy Ghost, looks into Heaven and sees the glory of God and sees Jesus standing at the right hand of God. He announces this to those around him.
- d. When the Jews heard Stephen say this, they rushed upon him, took him out of the city, and stoned him. {At this point, we are introduced to a man named Saul, who is holding the garments of those stoning Stephen – Acts 7:58. Saul, of course, would later be Paul, the apostle of Jesus Christ.}
- e. Stoning was the method of death prescribed by God for blasphemy (Lev. 24:16). The one being stoned would be taken outside the city (Lev. 24:14), and the witnesses against the one being stoned would cast the first stones (Deut. 17:7). In my studies, I have found that person being stoned to death would normally be placed a place that was lower than those casting the stones. The stones would thus be cast down upon the one being stoned. After the witnesses had cast the first stones, the rest of the people would join in by throwing stones at the one being punished. This continued until the person was killed.
- f. While under Old Testament law one who blasphemed is to be stoned to death, Stephen’s death was not justified in that he had not blasphemed God. In fact, as Stephen is being killed, he makes two statements that show his trust and faith in God and his love for even his enemies.
  - i. Lord Jesus, receive my spirit (Acts 7:59).
  - ii. Lord, lay not this sin to their charge (Acts 7:60).
- g. With this last statement, Stephen dies, or as the Bible says, “*he fell asleep*”.

### XXXI. AN OVERVIEW OF ACTS 8 AND 9

- a. This section begins with the events surrounding the stoning of Stephen. Saul, who had held the garments of those who stoned Stephen, is now the great persecutor of the church.
- b. Those being persecuted are leaving the area, but they are continuing to preach the word (Acts 8:4).
- c. Up to this point, the activity of the church has been centered in and around Jerusalem. Now, we find the first preaching of the word in the region of Samaria, the central portion of Palestine. It was in this region that Jesus

had his discourse with the woman at the well, when he told her about a time when all would worship the same (John 4). Jesus' prophetic statements are being fulfilled with the coming of the church.

- d. Philip will be instrumental in the conversion of Simon the sorcerer and the Ethiopian eunuch.
- e. Chapter 9 gives us a good deal of information on the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, who would go from the persecutor of the church to a preacher for the church. His zeal for serving God will now be used in the correct way.
- f. The end of this section has Peter raising Tabitha from the dead.

#### XXXII. THE CHURCH IS SCATTERED

- a. Until this time, the church has been together in Jerusalem. With the continued persecution after Stephen's death, the church will scatter and go into the world to preach the word. Although oppressed, they do not waver from their charge to go teach (Acts 8:1-4).
- b. The persecutor at this time is Saul (Acts 8:1,3). Stephen has been buried and Saul begins to take Christians to prison.
- c. Saul is described as having consented to the death of Stephen. The word used here, "consenting", means "*to assent to, to be gratified with*". It is easy to understand that Saul was well pleased with these events. And although he apparently did not cast any stones physically, he was still guilty of the crowds' sin (compare Romans 1:32).
- d. Saul "made havock" of the church. This term means "*to soil, to insult, to maltreat*". It was Saul's aim to destroy the church. To the Jews, the church was a threat because they did not hold to Judaism and taught people to convert to Christ.
- e. It must be noted that Saul "made havock of the church", not by destroying church buildings. He did so by dragging men and women (humans) to prison. The church is not a building. The church is the people, the individuals who make up the respective congregations and the church as a whole.
- f. While persecution is not something we usually want in our lives, this particular persecution did a good deal to help the spread of the church. These people continued to preach the word wherever they went. Surely, all things do work together for good to those who love the Lord (compare Rom. 8:28).
- g. This section teaches us that if we remain faithful during adversity, the church will continue to prosper and many souls will have the opportunity to become Christians.

#### XXXIII. THE GOSPEL GOES INTO SAMARIA

- a. According to Acts 1:8, after Jerusalem and Judea, the gospel would go into Samaria. The Samaritans were a people not normally visited by those of Jewish background. As far as the Jews were concerned, there was not much on the Earth worse than being a Samaritan. Philip, not only goes into Samaria, he went into the capital city of this area, Samaria (Acts 8:5).

- b. Philip went into the area preaching Christ (Acts 8:5), and performing miracles (Acts 8:6,7).
- c. The result of this was the people listened to what he spoke and there was great joy in the city (Acts 8:8).
- d. It is important to understand that the miracles were not the message. The message was Jesus Christ, and because of the miracles, many listened to what was said.
- e. One of the individuals who heard Philip's message and obeyed it was Simon, who was a sorcerer (Acts 8:9). The next couple of verses indicate the power he had over the people, yet he, and many of them, obeyed the word of God.
- f. It is noted in Acts 8:12 that the people "believed" Philip. A careful study of this passage will help us to understand what belief really is.
  - i. Simon presented himself as "some great one" (Acts 8:9).
  - ii. From the least to the greatest, they gave heed to Simon (Acts 8:10,11).
  - iii. "*BUT when they believed Philip*" (Acts 8:12)
    - 1. They were baptized. (Acts 8:12)
    - 2. Simon was baptized (Acts 8:13)
  - iv. Note that when a person believes, they act on that belief. A person who merely talks about their faith, but does not obey Christ because of that faith, is a person that does not have true faith.
- g. What did these people believe?
  - i. They believed what Philip said about the kingdom of God, the church. Remember that Jesus had said that they would see the kingdom come with power (Mk. 9:1), and this happened in Acts 2. The church is so essential to us.
    - 1. There is only one (Eph. 4:4).
    - 2. Jesus is its head (Eph. 1:22,23).
    - 3. Salvation is only found in the church (Eph. 5:23; Acts 2:47).
    - 4. The kingdom will be delivered to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24).
    - 5. The church is God's family (1 Tim. 3:15).
    - 6. It is the pillar and the ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15).
  - ii. They believed what Philip said concerning Jesus. Too many today want to separate Jesus and the church, saying that we need Jesus, but we do not need any organization. However, the Bible clearly ties Jesus and his church together.
    - 1. He purchased it with his own blood (Acts 20:28).
    - 2. He loves it (Eph. 5:25).
    - 3. The church is subject to Christ (Eph. 5:24).
    - 4. It is in the church that we are reconciled to God (Eph. 2:16).
- h. After many were baptized into Christ, the word came to the apostles that the Holy Ghost had not been given to any of these. As the context will bear out, this is the miraculous indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

- i. Peter and John come into the area and prayed for the people, and then laid their hands upon them so they would receive the Holy Ghost (Acts 8:14,15).
- ii. Simon, who had at one time great power over the people because he “had bewitched them with sorceries” (Acts 8:11), saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands that the Holy Ghost came upon these people (Although it is not stated in this context what it was, there had to be something which he could behold that showed him the Holy Ghost came upon them.). (Acts 8:18).
- iii. It should be noted that Philip had the Holy Ghost in him as evidenced by his ability to work miracles. Yet, although Philip was present when these people were baptized, he could not lay hands on people and give them the Holy Ghost. In fact, Simon clearly noted that it was the apostles who had this power.
- iv. Simon wanted to buy this power from the apostles (Acts 8:18). Without going too far into this, we can easily understand how much “power” a person could have over people if they had, and misused, this kind of ability.
- v. Peter’s response to Simon was forthright and without apology.
  1. Thy money perish with thee (Acts 8:20).
  2. The gift of God cannot be bought with money (Acts 8:20).
  3. Simon had neither part nor lot with them (Acts 8:21).
  4. Simon’s heart was not right with God (Acts 8:21).
  5. Repent of your wickedness and pray to God for forgiveness (Acts 8:22).
  6. Simon was in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity (Acts 8:23).
- vi. Peter’s response to Simon helps us to understand what we must do when we sin after we become Christians. We are also taught to confess our sins that we may be cleansed (Jas. 5:16; 1 Jn. 1:9).
- vii. Simon shows us the heart of one who truly wants to go to Heaven (Acts 8:24).
  1. He wanted them to pray for him.
  2. He did not want to have the things of which they had spoken to him come upon him. One of the things spoken to the people was judgment to come (compare Acts 24:25).
- viii. On their way back to Jerusalem, the apostles continued to preach God’s word in the villages of Samaria (Acts 8:25).

#### XXXIV. THE CONVERSION OF AN ETHIOPIAN NOBLEMAN

- a. Philip is told by the angel of the Lord to go toward the south along the road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza (Acts 8:26). This road would eventually join up with the coastal highway that ran along the Mediterranean Sea coast all the way down into Egypt. From here, the eunuch would be able to go south down to Ethiopia.

- b. As he goes along this road, he comes into contact with the Queen of Ethiopia's chief treasurer (Acts 8:27). This man was reading from the book of Isaiah (particularly from chapter 53 – see Acts 8:32,33 + Isa. 53:7,8).
- c. Philip enquired as to whether the eunuch understood what he read and the eunuch replied that he could not unless someone helped him (Acts 8:30,31). The eunuch desired that Philip would come up and sit with him.
- d. Philip started with the same scripture and preached Jesus Christ unto the eunuch (Acts 8:35). While listening to this message, the eunuch asked if he could be baptized (Acts 8:36). We cannot teach Jesus Christ without preaching the necessity of being baptized to have our sins washed away (Acts 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21).
- e. Philip was willing to baptize the eunuch if he believed in Jesus. The eunuch responded with his confession that Jesus is the Son of God (Acts 8:37). Those who can be scripturally baptized must be willing and able to confess Jesus Christ. This is one reason why infants are not to be baptized.
- f. With the confession by the eunuch, they stopped the chariot and Philip baptized the eunuch. The result of this was that the eunuch went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:38,39). Philip is caught away by the Spirit and ends up in Azotus (Acts 8:40).
- g. Philip continued to preach the word and made his way to Caesarea.

#### XXXV. THE CONVERSION OF SAUL OF TARSUS

- a. Saul is still ready to destroy the church, and he asks for letters to travel all the way to Damascus in order to arrest Christians (Acts 9:1,2).
- b. While on this journey, several things happen to him.
  - i. A great light shone all around him (Acts 9:3).
  - ii. He heard a voice (Acts 9:4-6).
  - iii. He became blind (Acts 9:8).
- c. One of the false views taught from this text is that Saul was saved on the road to Damascus. This view helps support the faith only or grace only doctrines. However, a study of the context will show that Paul was not saved until he obeyed God's word.
  - i. Notice the conversation between Saul and Jesus.
    1. *"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"* (Acts 9:4)
    2. *"Who art thou, Lord?"* (Acts 9:5)
    3. *"I am Jesus whom thou persecutest"* (Acts 9:5)
    4. *"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"* (Acts 9:6)
    5. *"Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do"* (Acts 9:6)
  - ii. When we look at the last two statements in the conversation above, we find that Saul realized that there was something he had to do in order to be saved. Thus, Saul did not believe in faith only or grace only. It is also the case that Jesus knew there was something Saul must do in order to be saved. Jesus told Saul to go into the city

and there he would be told what he needed to do. On the road to Damascus, Saul was not told what to do to be saved. He did not get these instructions until he was in the city. Jesus did not believe in faith only or grace only.

- iii. After Saul's conversation with Jesus, he was taken to Damascus where he was three days without food and drink. During this time, he was praying (Acts 9:9,11).
- iv. Ananias had a vision in which he was instructed by the Lord to go and meet with Saul. Ananias, because he knew that Saul had come to persecute the church, was reluctant to go to where Saul was. However, Jesus assured him that Saul was his chosen vessel to the Gentiles (compare Gal. 2:8). (Acts 9:10-16)
- v. When Ananias came to Saul, he restored Saul's sight and baptized him (Acts 9:17,18). Acts 22:16 shows us that Ananias taught Saul concerning the need to be baptized to be saved.

#### XXXVI. THE BOLDNESS OF SAUL

- a. After his conversation, Saul went into the synagogues and preached the word of God. The people were amazed because they knew he had come to Damascus to arrest Christians. Saul was strong in his message and confounded the Jews and proved that Jesus was the Christ (Acts 9:19-22).
- b. The Jews, who had once encouraged Saul, now began to contemplate how they could kill him. However, their plot became known to Saul and the disciples in Damascus let him down over the wall in a basket. (Acts 9:23-25).
- c. Saul left Damascus and journeyed to Jerusalem where the church was also hesitant in accepting him. After Barnabas explained how Saul had been converted and that Saul had taught boldly in Damascus, the church accepted Saul. Saul boldly proclaimed the word of God in Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-29).
- d. As in Damascus, his preaching of the word caused those of the Grecians to plot to kill Saul. The brethren took Saul to Caesarea and sent him on to Tarsus, Saul's hometown (Acts 21:39).

#### XXXVII. PETER PERFORMS MIRACLES

- a. The church is at rest now and is growing. They "were multiplied" (Acts 9:31).
- b. Peter was traveling and came to Lydda, a city west of Jerusalem. Here, he came to the saints, but he also found a man named Aeneas who had been sick of the palsy for eight years (Acts 9:33). Peter healed him and many turned to the Lord (Acts 9:35). Palsy was a paralytic condition.
- c. While Peter is in Lydda, a lady name Tabitha (Dorcas) dies. This lady was a member of the church in Joppa and was known for her good works (Acts 9:36)
- d. Because they knew Peter was at Lydda, which was close to Joppa, they sent two men to get Peter. When Peter came to Joppa, he went to the

place where Dorcas' body lay and made everyone leave the room. After praying, he raised Dorcas from the dead (Acts 9:40,41).

- e. When he presented Dorcas alive, there were many who believed in the Lord (Acts 9:42).
- f. Peter stays in Joppa with Simon, a tanner (Acts 9:43).

#### XXXVIII. AN OVERVIEW OF ACTS 10 – 12

- a. In our last lesson, the gospel was preached for the first time to those in Samaria. To this point, we have seen the word taught in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. Many were scattered into other portions of the world and beginning in Acts 10, we will see the gospel taught to the Gentiles and into the “uttermost part of the earth”.
- b. Acts 10 and 11 give us the conversion of Cornelius and discussion in the church of this new part of their teaching. The Gentiles were not like the Jews. The Jews believed in God and at least attempted to worship him. The Gentiles believed in many gods and their worship generally involved itself in idolatry.
- c. James, the apostle, is killed by Herod in Acts 12, and Peter is arrested. Not long after this, Herod is struck dead by God because Herod presented himself as though he were a god (Acts 12:22).

#### XXXIX. CORNELIUS

- a. He was a centurion of the Italian band (Acts 10:1).
  - i. A centurion was a Roman officer who was over approximately 100 men.
  - ii. The Italian Band was a group of volunteer Roman soldiers, mostly from Italy. They were stationed in Caesarea.
- b. Cornelius was a centurion that the Jews respected (Acts 10:22). This was unusual in the days when most Roman soldiers were hated by the Jews. When we look at the description of Cornelius, it is not hard to understand why the Jews liked him.
  - i. A devout man (Acts 10:2).
  - ii. One that feared God (Acts 10:2,22).
  - iii. One whose house feared God (Acts 10:2).
  - iv. He gave much alms to the people (Acts 10:2).
  - v. He prayed to God always (Acts 10:2).
  - vi. A just man (Acts 10:22).
- c. Although a devout man, Cornelius was a lost man. We know this because Peter said he had been sent to Cornelius to tell him words by which he and his house could be saved (Acts 11:14).
- d. Cornelius prayed to God and his prayer was answered by God (Acts 10:4,22,31:11:13).
  - i. Cornelius was a Gentile living faithfully to God under the law of God for the Gentiles (Rom. 2:13-15).
  - ii. Cornelius was praying to know what he needed to do to be saved (Acts 10:5,6).



- iii. This passage does not indicate that everyone's prayers are heard and answered by God. The Bible clearly teaches that it is the prayer of a righteous man that avails much (Jas. 5:16), and that God's ears are open to the righteous (1 Pet. 3:12).

#### **XL. CORNELIUS AND PETER HAVE VISIONS**

- a. About the 9<sup>th</sup> hour of the day (about 3 p.m.), an angel appeared to Cornelius in a vision (Acts 10:3-8).
  - i. He told Cornelius that his prayer had come before God (vs. 4).
  - ii. He told Cornelius to send to Joppa for Peter and Peter would tell him what he needed to do (vss. 5,6).
  - iii. Cornelius sends two men to Joppa to get Peter (vss. 7,8).
- b. On the next day about the 6<sup>th</sup> hour of the day (about 12 noon), Peter was praying and saw a vision (Acts 10:9-22).
  - i. A vessel similar to a great sheet descended to Peter. There were unclean animals on this, and Peter was instructed to eat of the animals. Peter refused to eat because the animals were unclean. A voice told him that what God had cleansed, he should not call unclean. This happened 3 times (vss. 9-16).
  - ii. While Peter was thinking about this, the men from Cornelius came to Simon's house and enquired about Peter. The Holy Spirit told Peter to go with these men. (vss. 17-22).

#### **XLI. PETER TEACHES CORNELIUS**

- a. Peter travels to Cornelius' house with some of the brethren from Joppa. (Acts 10:23).
- b. When Peter arrived, Cornelius fell down at his feet and began to worship Peter (Acts 10:25-27). This example helps us to understand that we must not worship anyone or anything but God.
  - i. Peter told Cornelius to get up because he himself was only a man (Acts 10:26).
  - ii. John tried to worship an angel, and the angel told him not to do so because he was a servant just like John (Rev. 19:10).
  - iii. God said that those who worship images "change the glory of the uncorruptible God" (Rom. 1:23).
  - iv. Jesus instructs us to worship God, and none other (Matt. 4:10).
- c. Cornelius had prepared himself for the coming of Peter.
  - i. He had gathered others to hear the message Peter would bring (Acts 10:24,27).
  - ii. He had prepared himself to hear what was commanded him of God (Acts 10:33).
- d. Acts 10:34-43 gives us Peter's sermon to Cornelius.
  - i. God is no respecter of persons (vs. 34; Rom. 2:11).
  - ii. All who fear God and work righteousness are accepted by God (Or, as we might say it, "The gospel is for all.") (vs. 35).
  - iii. Jesus is the resurrected Savior (vss. 36-42).

- iv. All who obey him will be saved (vs. 43).

#### XLII. THE HOLY SPIRIT COMES UPON THOSE WHO HEARD THE WORD

- a. The Holy Spirit fell upon Cornelius and the others and was evidenced by their speaking in tongues. This caused astonishment among those who had traveled with Peter from Joppa (Acts 10:44-46).
  - i. This was an identical incident to what happened to the apostles at Pentecost (Acts 11:15).
  - ii. The purpose of the Spirit coming upon Cornelius and the others was to convince Peter and the other brethren that the Gentiles should be taught and allowed to become members of the church (Acts 11:16,17).
  - iii. This also convinced the church in general that God had granted the Gentiles “repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18).
  - iv. This event helped to break down a barrier of prejudice between Jews and Gentiles. Jesus came to reconcile both in the church through him (Eph. 2:16).
- b. Peter’s response was could any forbid water that these might not be baptized. Peter realized that the Gentiles not only needed to hear the word, but be allowed to obey the word. Everyone needs the opportunity to be saved. (Acts 10:47).
- c. Cornelius and the others were commanded to be baptized in water (Acts 10:48).

#### XLIII. THE JEWISH CHRISTIANS ARE CONVINCED THAT GOD WANTS THEM TO TEACH THE GENTILES

- a. When those of Jewish background heard that the Gentiles had been taught the word, they were upset with Peter (Acts 11:1-3).
- b. Peter explained to them the vision he had seen and the events surrounding the conversion of Cornelius (Acts 11:4-18).
- c. When the Jews heard this, they understood that the Gentiles should also be taught.
- d. They had to overcome years of tradition and prejudice to realize and fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. Jesus did say go into some of the world, but into all the world (Matt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15; Acts 1:8).

#### XLIV. THE CHURCH CONTINUES TO SPREAD

- a. Some of those who were scattered because of the persecution of Stephen went to Phenice, Cyprus, and Antioch. They taught Jesus unto the Jews only. A great number of people believed and became Christians (Acts 11:19-21).
- b. Barnabas was sent to Antioch, where he encouraged the brethren and continued to teach in that area. Many were added to the Lord (Acts 11:22-24).
- c. Barnabas went to Tarsus and brought Saul back with him. Barnabas and Saul taught in Antioch for a year (Acts 11:25,26).

- d. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch (Acts 11:26). Biblically, the only Christians are those who are members of the church of Christ (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16).
- e. While in Antioch, Agabus prophesies of a great famine. Those of Antioch determined to send relief to those of Judea, and they had Barnabas and Saul deliver their gift (Acts 11:27-30).

#### XLV. HEROD PERSECUTES THE CHURCH

- a. There are several Herods in the New Testament.
  - i. Herod the Great
    - 1. The first in a long line of Herods.
    - 2. He expanded the temple area.
    - 3. He was ruling when Christ was born (Matt. 2).
    - 4. He died in 4 B.C.
  - ii. Herod Archaelus
    - 1. He is the Herod in Matt. 2:22 that was ruling when Mary and Joseph came back from Egypt with Jesus.
    - 2. He was banished to Gaul in 6 A.D.
  - iii. Herod Antipas
    - 1. He is the Herod that John told him he could not have his brother's wife (Mk. 6).
    - 2. He was the one to whom Pilate sent Jesus during the trials of Jesus (Lk. 23).
    - 3. He was exiled in 39 A.D.
  - iv. Herod Philip
    - 1. He is mentioned in Lk. 3:1.
    - 2. He died in 34 A.D.
  - v. Herod Agrippa I
    - 1. It is he who had James killed and Peter imprisoned (Acts 12).
    - 2. In 44 A.D., he died a horrible death as described in Acts 12:20-23.
  - vi. Herod Agrippa II
    - 1. This is the one we know as King Agrippa and to whom Paul preached in Acts 26.
    - 2. He is the last of the Herods, and lived at least until 70 A.D.
- b. After James was killed, and because Herod saw that it pleased the Jews, Herod had Peter imprisoned (Acts 12:4-19).
  - i. When he was put in prison, the church continued to pray without ceasing for Peter (vs. 5).
  - ii. The angel of the Lord released Peter from prison (vss. 7-11).
  - iii. Peter went to a house where the church was praying, and he was finally admitted into the house. After telling them what happened, Peter goes to another place (vss. 12-17).

- c. The next day, when it was discovered that Peter had escaped, Herod had the guards examined. Because the guards had lost their charge, they were killed (vss. 18,19).

#### XLVI. HEROD'S DEATH

- a. On an occasion where those of Tyre and Sidon had come before Herod because Herod was not happy with them, Herod presented himself as a great one (Acts 12:20,21).
- b. The people viewed Herod as "the voice of a god, and not of a man" (Acts 12:22).
- c. Because Herod did not give God the glory, God had him eaten with worms, and Herod died (Acts 12:23).
- d. The word of God "grew and multiplied" (Acts 12:24).
- e. Barnabas and Saul return to Antioch, along with John Mark (Acts 12:25).

#### XLVII. AN OVERVIEW OF ACTS 13:1 – 15:35

- a. This section covers the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas.
- b. They would now enter into an area of the world that was primarily Gentile in background. Their work would further open the door to the teaching of the Gentiles.
- c. With the spread of the church, we now see more opposition with the Jews teaming with the Gentiles to oppress the church. How common it is that a common foe can bring even old enemies to work together?!
- d. It is on the return trip of this journey that we find the first elders appointed in the congregations (Acts 14:23).
- e. This journey covers a time frame of about 45 – 49 A.D.
- f. This journey begins in Antioch of Syria and ends in Antioch of Syria.

#### XLVIII. THE TRAVELS OF PAUL AND BARNABAS

- a. Antioch of Syria (Acts 13:1)
- b. Seleucia (Acts 13:4)
- c. Cyprus (Acts 13:4)
- d. Salamis on Cyprus (Acts 13:5)
- e. Paphos on Cyprus (Acts 13:6)
- f. Perga (Acts 13:13) -- John Mark leaves them here and returns to Jerusalem
- g. Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:14)
- h. Iconium (Acts 13:51)
- i. Lystra (Acts 14:8)
- j. Derbe (Acts 14:20)
- k. Lystra (Acts 14:21)
- l. Iconium (Acts 14:21)
- m. Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 14:21)
- n. Pisidia (Acts 14:24)
- o. Pamphylia (Acts 14:24)
- p. Perga (Acts 14:25)

- q. Attalia (Acts 14:25)
- r. Antioch of Syria (Acts 14:26)
- s. Jerusalem (Acts 15:2)
- t. Antioch of Syria (Acts 15:30)

#### XLIX. THE EVENTS OF THE JOURNEY

- a. The Holy Ghost chooses Paul and Barnabas to go on this work (Acts 13:1-4)
- b. They preached the word of God in the synagogues (Acts 13:5).
- c. At Paphos, they taught the word of God to Sergius Paulus, the deputy of the country (Acts 13:6-13).
  - i. There was a sorcerer whose name was both Barjesus and Elymas. He opposed Paul and Barnabas and tried to turn the head of Sergius Paulus so he would not listen to Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:8).
  - ii. In Acts 13:9, we find that Saul will now be known as Paul.
  - iii. Paul struck Elymas blind. This miracle served to produce the kind of faith in Sergius Paulus that he needed (Acts 13:12).
    - 1. He believed.
    - 2. He was astonished at the DOCTRINE of the Lord. The miracle brought him to a trust in the word of God.
  - iv. When Paul and Barnabas came to Antioch of Pisidia, they were given the opportunity to preach the word in the Jewish synagogue. The synagogue was a perfect place to teach, because the people were gathered to hear the word of God. It was customary to give visitors the opportunity to speak (Acts 13:14-41).
    - 1. God chose the Jews and brought them out of Egypt and through the wilderness (vss. 17,18).
    - 2. God helped the Jews to conquer the land of Canaan, gave them judges, and then kings, including David (vss. 19-22).
    - 3. From David, God according to his promise, raised up Jesus (vs. 23).
    - 4. John proclaimed Jesus; the Jews heard the word of salvation; the Jews did not listen to the word (vss. 24-27).
    - 5. The Jews fulfilled the word by condemning Jesus (vss. 27,28).
    - 6. Although the Jews had Jesus crucified, and he was buried in a tomb, God raised him up. Many people saw Jesus after his resurrection (vss. 29-31).
    - 7. With their own scriptures, Paul showed the Jews the truth of the resurrected Christ.
      - a. Acts 13:33 + Psa. 2:7
      - b. Acts 13:34 + Isa. 55:3
      - c. Acts 13:35 + Psa. 16:10
    - 8. Because he is the resurrected Messiah, forgiveness of sins comes through Jesus (vss. 32-38).

9. While Jesus and his word are superior to the law of Moses, some of the Jews will be hard hearted and a work will done in their area which they will reject (vss. 39-41).
- v. The Jews left the synagogue after hearing what Paul had to say, but the Gentiles wanted Paul to preach again on the next Sabbath. Many of those who had heard Paul followed Paul and Barnabas, and were further taught by them. When the next Sabbath day arrived, the whole city was gathered to hear the word of God (Acts 13:42-44).
- vi. It is at this point that we see Paul's emphasis shift from teaching those of Jewish background and to the teaching of those who are Gentiles. The Jews, when they saw the crowds gathered to hear Paul and Barnabas, were "filled with envy and contradicted Paul and blasphemed God. Paul's reaction was to move the Gentiles (Acts 13:45-47).
  1. Paul said the word should have been spoken to the Jews first.
  2. The Jews had rejected the word.
  3. The Jews had judged THEMSELVES unworthy.
  4. Paul would move to the Gentiles.
- vii. The Gentiles were extremely appreciative of this support from Paul, and that salvation would be preached to them. Many of them believed (Acts 13:47,48).
- viii. The Jews stirred up the leaders of the city and expelled Paul and Barnabas from the city. They move on to Iconium (Acts 13:49-52).
- ix. The preaching of the word met great opposition at Iconium. They preached for a long time in this area and performed miracles, yet from both the Jews and Gentiles there was the attempt to stone them. Paul and Barnabas moved on and continued to preach the word (Acts 14:1-9).
- x. Paul healed a man who had been lame all his life. The reaction of the people of Lystra was to declare that the gods had come down to Earth. Barnabas was deemed to be Jupiter (the chief god), and Paul was Mercury (the messenger of the gods). To stop the people from sacrificing unto them, they had to reason with them of who God is (Acts 14:8-18).
  1. We are men just like you (vs. 15).
  2. You should turn from your false worship to serve the living God (vs. 15).
  3. It is God who made all the heaven, the earth, the sea, and everything that is in them (vs. 15).
  4. The rains, season, and so forth testify to us that he is God (vs. 17).
- xi. After this event, the Jews who came from Antioch and Iconium stoned Paul and thought they had killed him. However, after the

stoning and as the disciples watched, Paul stood up and went back into the city. He continued to preach the gospel in the area (Acts 14:19-21).

- xii. On their return trip, they exhorted the brethren and taught them that they would suffer (Acts 14:22,23).
- xiii. They appointed elders in every church (Acts 14:23).
  - 1. Each congregation had elders.
  - 2. They did not appoint one elder or one man to rule over an area. They appointed elders.
- xiv. They continued on their journey until they came back to Antioch of Syria (Acts 14:24-28).

#### L. THE CONFERENCE IN JERUSALEM

- a. There were some who had come from Judea who taught that one could not be saved unless they held to the Jewish law of circumcision. Thus, teaching that the Old Law was still in effect, at least that part of it. Paul and Barnabas contended with them, and it was finally decided that they would go to Jerusalem and there discuss the matter with the apostles and the elders there (Acts 15:1-5).
- b. When they were all gathered together to discuss this matter, Peter reminded them that God had chosen him to take the message to the Gentiles. Peter also showed that God had taught them by the events with Cornelius that there was no difference between the Jews and the Gentiles. He wondered why they would put a burden (the Old Law) upon the Gentiles which the Jews could not keep (Acts 15:6-11).
- c. Paul and Barnabas give an account of their work among the Gentiles, including the miracles they were able to perform (Acts 15:12).
- d. James reminds them that the prophets of old agreed with what Peter had said (Isa. 54; Isa. 60; Amos 9). The prophecies of the Old Testament pointed to the fact that gospel would be for all mankind (Acts 15:13-22)
  - i. All men were the work of God from the beginning (vs. 18).
  - ii. We should not trouble the Gentiles who have turned to God (vs. 19).
  - iii. The Gentiles should stay away from anything that is associated with idolatry (vs. 20).
  - iv. This pleased all involved.
- e. A letter was written that would be delivered to the Christians in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia, who were from the Gentiles. This letter restated that which they had discussed in Jerusalem. The letter helped the Gentiles to understand that no greater burden would be placed upon them, and that all were equal in the church. This pleased the Gentiles greatly (Acts 15:23-29).
- f. Paul and Barnabas went back to Antioch with the letter. Two men, Judas and Silas who were prophets, also went with Paul and Barnabas. They exhorted the brethren. Judas returned to Jerusalem, but Silas chose to stay in Antioch (Acts 15:30-34).

- g. Many, including Paul and Barnabas, continued to preach the word in Antioch (Acts 15:35).
- LI. AN OVERVIEW OF ACTS 15:36 – 18:22
- a. In this section, we find the second missionary journey. In this case, Paul and Silas go back through the region of Asia Minor, but also take the gospel to the European continent.
  - b. We have recorded for us the conversions of Lydia, the Jailor, and the Corinthians.
  - c. Paul has a tremendous speech in Acts 17 to those gathered at Mars' Hill, the philosophers of the day.
  - d. The effectiveness of the church is found in one statement: *“These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also”* (Acts 17:11).
  - e. The dates of this journey are about 50 – 53 A.D.
- LII. A SHARP DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN PAUL AND BARNABAS
- a. After some time in Antioch, Paul and Barnabas have a desire to go back to the places where they were on their first journey and to see how these people are doing (Acts 15:36).
  - b. However, Barnabas wants to take Mark with them, and Paul objects. Mark had left them on the first journey and did not go with them to the work (Acts 15:38).
  - c. The contention was so sharp that Paul and Barnabas do not go on the second journey together. Barnabas and Mark go to Cyprus. Paul and Silas team up for the second journey (Acts 15:39,40).
  - d. While the disagreement was sharp, it did not discourage either of these people from doing the will of God. They both continued on their mission of spreading God's word throughout the world. One good note from this is that now there are two teams taking the gospel into the world.
  - e. While it is not recorded here, we do know that this dispute was handled correctly. Disagreements will happen, but how we deal with them becomes the key.
    - i. Paul mentions Barnabas as a worker together with him in the Kingdom (1 Cor. 9:6).
    - ii. Mark is with Paul in Col. 4:10.
    - iii. Paul asks for Mark to be brought to him (2 Tim. 4:11).
    - iv. Paul calls Mark a fellow laborer (Phile. 24).
- LIII. THE MACEDONIAN CALL
- a. When Paul and Silas come to Lystra and Derbe, they meet Timothy, a Christian whose mother was a Jew and whose father was a Greek (Acts 16:1). To avoid problems with the Jews, Paul had Timothy circumcised. This would eliminate a barrier in teaching the gospel to the Jews (Acts 16:3).
  - b. Paul, Silas, and Timothy continued to preach the gospel through Asia Minor and the churches increased in numbers daily (Acts 16:5).



- c. The Holy Ghost would not allow them to go into Asia or Bithynia, Roman provinces of Asia Minor (Acts 16:6,7). Instead, they went on to Troas.
- d. At Troas, Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia asking him to come over and help them (Acts 16:9). Paul knew that God had wanted them to go and preach the gospel to these people (Acts 16:10).
- e. They sailed from Troas and eventually came to Philippi, a chief city of Macedonia (Acts 16:12).

#### LIV. TWO WHO WERE CONVERTED AT PHILIPPI

- a. On the sabbath, Paul and the others go out by the river side where people would gather to pray. Here, they find Lydia and some other women. (Acts 16:14).
- b. Lydia was from Thyatira, a city of Asia Minor. She was a seller of purple (purple dye). She heard the word of God and was baptized into Christ (Acts 16:15).
- c. After her conversion, she invited Paul and his companions to her house (Acts 16:115).
- d. One of the statements that has bothered people for years is that God opened Lydia's heart. This has been viewed by some as God working on her heart separate from the word, thus in a miraculous way, and helping her to understand the gospel. A careful look at verses 13 and 14 will show that such was not the case.
  - i. Paul and his companions spoke the word of God to these women.
  - ii. It is distinctly said that Lydia heard them.
  - iii. It is after she heard them that it is said that the Lord opened her heart.
  - iv. It was the hearing of the word that opened her heart. Truly God's word is the power of God to salvation able to instill the faith of God into the hearts of people (Rom. 16:17,18).
  - v. The story of the Sower in Lk. 8 teaches us that it is those with good and honest hearts who will hear the word and keep it (Lk. 8:15).
- e. After Lydia's conversion, Paul and the others continue to preach throughout the area. On several occasions, they are followed by a woman who has the spirit of divination (Acts 16:16-18). She would declare that these men are the servants of the most high God. It would seem that one would not object to this, but it should be understood that people would know who this woman was and she would not be a good witness as to the credibility of Paul and the others. Eventually, Paul cast the evil spirit from her (Acts 16:18).
- f. When the masters of this lady saw that their means of making money by her was gone, they arrested Paul and Silas, beat them, and put them in jail (Acts 16:19).
- g. While in jail, Paul and Silas continued to praise God by both prayer and singing (Acts 16:25). The other prisoners took note of what these men were doing.

- h. A great earthquake happened and the doors of the prison were opened and the hands of the prisoners were loosed. The keeper of the prison, seeing the doors open, drew his sword to kill himself (remember what happened to the Roman soldiers in Acts 12:19). Paul stops him from doing so, by telling him that all the prisoners were still there (Acts 16:26-28).
- i. The jailor takes Paul and Silas from the prison, cleaned their wounds, and asked them what he needed to do to be saved (Acts 16:29,30). Again, we see the desired effects of a miracle in the jailor's asking for the truth from God.
- j. Many have used Paul's answer to "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house*" (Acts 16:31) to be a statement that means that all one has to do to be saved is believe. However, look at the context in light of the totality of Bible teaching.
  - i. Rom. 10:14 teaches us that we cannot believe unless we have heard.
  - ii. Rom. 10:17 says that faith comes by hearing God's word.
  - iii. After Paul tells them to believe, he teaches them the word of the Lord (Acts 16:32).
  - iv. In this teaching, they understood the need to be baptized and they were baptized in the "*same hour of the night*" (Acts 16:33).
  - v. After they were baptized, they are said to be believing (Acts 16:34).
  - vi. When one obeys the word of God, then it can be said that they believe. The jailor was saved because he obeyed all of God's word, including being baptized into Christ.
- k. When daylight came, the magistrates asked that Paul and Silas be released. After some discussion, they are freed, go to the house of Lydia, and then leave the city (Acts 16:36-40).

#### LV. AT THESSALONICA, BEREIA, AND ATHENS

- a. When they leave Philippi, they come to Thessalonica where, although some believed, they were met with great opposition from the Jews (Acts 17:5).
- b. The Jews take Jason and some of the brethren and accuse them of having turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6).
- c. After taking money from Jason, the Jews let them go. The brethren send Paul and Silas to Berea (Acts 17:9,10).
- d. At Berea, they continued to preach the word, and the Jews in Berea had a different attitude than the Jews in Thessalonica. These Jews searched the scriptures to see whether these things were so (Acts 17:11).
- e. Because some at Berea believed what Paul and Silas taught, the Jews from Thessalonica came to Berea and stirred up the people. Paul went to Athens and Silas and Timothy stayed at Berea (Acts 17:12-15).
- f. At Athens, Paul preached the gospel, which aroused the interest of the philosophers of the area. They wanted to hear this "new thing" from Paul (Acts 17:18,19). There were two groups of philosophers mentioned here.

- i. The Epicureans were adherents to the teachings of Epicurus, a Greek philosopher, who lived from 341-270 B.C. He taught that matter and space were all that existed. Nature provided reality rather than reason. Man's purpose was to pursue happiness.
  - ii. The Stoics' viewpoint of life was inherently negative. Nothing lies within man's power except imagination, desire, and emotion. Man yields to fate, and lives in harmony with nature. The Stoics did believe their was a universal morality rooted in a universal deity.
- g. Paul's sermon to these philosophers who had gathered on Mars' Hill (Acts 17:22-31) is designed to convince them of the true God.
  - i. He noted their statute to the unknown God (vs. 23).
  - ii. God made everything (vs. 24).
  - iii. God does not dwell in man-made temples (vs. 24).
  - iv. God does not need the worship thought up by man (vs. 25).
  - v. God gives everything life (vs. 25).
  - vi. God made of one blood all men, and set the bounds of their habitations (vs. 26).
  - vii. Men should seek God (vs. 27).
  - viii. We are the offspring of God (vs. 28).
  - ix. We must understand that God is not some man-made image (vs. 29).
  - x. God commands all men everywhere to repent (vs. 30).
  - xi. There will be a judgment of all (vs. 31).
- h. Some mocked, some said they would hear him again, and some believed (Acts 16:32-34).
- i. Some have taught that in the Old Testament times, God overlooked sin based on Acts 17:30. However, the context shows that God did not exact punishment upon them at that time, but will when Judgment Day comes. We have to remember that God cannot ignore sin. For more discussion on this issue, please read the paper attached starting on page 40.

#### LVI. FROM CORINTH TO ANTIOCH

- a. Paul leaves Athens and goes to Corinth, where he meets Aquila and Priscilla. Paul worked with them in the occupation of tent making (Acts 18:1-3).
- b. With Silas and Timothy, who had come from Macedonia, Paul reasoned with the Jews, but the Jews rejected the message. Paul again announces that he will go to the Gentiles (Acts 18:6).
- c. Paul worked in Corinth for 1 ½ years having been assured by God that no harm would come to him (Acts 18:9-11). Many of the Corinthians became Christians (Acts 18:8).
- d. The Jews brought Paul to the judgment seat of the local government where Gallio was the deputy of Achaia. It is known that Gallio ruled in 51 A.D. (Acts 18:12).
  - i. The Jews accused Paul of trying to get people to worship God in a way not in keeping with their law (Acts 18:13).

- ii. Paul would have defended himself, but Gallio told them that this was a matter that was a question of their own law. He refused to hear the case. (Acts 18:15,16).
  - iii. With this ruling, the Greeks beat Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue (Acts 18:17).
- e. Paul leaves Corinth and travels to Ephesus. Because he wants to get to Jerusalem while a crowd would be gathered there (due to a feast they would hold – Acts 18:21), he does not tarry long at Ephesus, but travels on to Caesarea and then to Antioch (Acts 18:21,22).

#### LVII. AN OVERVIEW OF ACTS 18:23 – 21:30

- a. This section of the book gives us the third missionary journey.
- b. This journey will go back over much of the area covered on the first two journeys. Many will be strengthened and many will be converted.
- c. Paul has a serious problem at Ephesus because of the craftsmen who made their money off the goddess Diana.
- d. He will also give his farewell address to the elders from Ephesus.
- e. This journey, unlike the first two, will end in Jerusalem because Paul is arrested here.
- f. The third journey was from 54 – 58 A.D.

#### LVIII. THE PREACHING OF APOLLOS

- a. Aquila and Priscilla were at Ephesus at this time, and while they were here a man named Apollos came to the city (Acts 18:24-26).
- b. Apollos was an eloquent but his knowledge of God's word was limited. He knew only of the baptism of John (Acts 18:25).
- c. Aquila and Priscilla took Apollos to them and taught him the word of God "more perfectly" (Acts 18:26).
- d. With this complete knowledge, Apollos went to Corinth and taught publicly that Jesus was Christ (Acts 18:28).
- e. Apollos is a perfect example of one who had a great zeal for God, and believed himself to be doing the will of God. Yet, he taught false doctrine. When Apollos was taught the truth, he yielded to the truth and taught the correct message.

#### LIX. PAUL AT EPHEBUS

- a. After Apollos left Ephesus, Paul comes to the city (Acts 19:1). Here, he finds twelve men who have been baptized in the baptism of John (Acts 19:3).
- b. When Paul asked them about the Holy Ghost, they replied that they had not heard of the Holy Ghost (Acts 19:2).
- c. When Paul instructed them concerning Jesus, they were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 19:4,5).
- d. One can be baptized incorrectly, and that baptism will be of no effect. Jesus said that we must be baptized by his authority (Matthew 28:19). We must obey the correct doctrine to be baptized correctly (Romans 6:17).

- e. The New Testament speaks of several baptisms.
  - i. Baptism of John – Matthew 3
  - ii. Baptism of fire – Matthew 3:11
  - iii. Baptism of the Holy Ghost – Matthew 3:11
  - iv. Baptism of suffering – Matthew 20:22,23
  - v. Baptism in water – Acts 8:36
- f. Of these baptisms, which is still valid today?
  - i. The baptism of John was valid until the baptism of Christ as seen in Acts 19:1-6. While John’s baptism was for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4; Acts 19:4), it did not offer the promise of the Holy Ghost. It was important for its time, but it was not intended to be permanent.
  - ii. The baptism of fire is shown in Matthew 3:12 to be that which takes place at Judgment for the wicked. It is therefore not that which saves, but that which punishes those who are evil.
  - iii. The baptism of the Holy Ghost only took place on two occasions – Pentecost in Acts 2, and on Cornelius in Acts 10. It was not promised to all men, nor did it ever save anyone.
  - iv. The baptism of suffering in its context refers to the crucifixion of Jesus and his suffering surrounding that. It is that which he would suffer, not us.
  - v. Baptism in water is that which is still valid today, and which will wash away our sins.
    - 1. Acts 2:38
    - 2. Acts 22:16
    - 3. 1 Peter 3:21
    - 4. Colossians 2:12
    - 5. Romans 6:3,4
    - 6. This baptism, both by definition and by what we see in Romans 6 and Colossians 2, is a burial in water (immersion). Neither sprinkling nor pouring are proper modes of baptism. The person being baptized must be immersed by the water. This shows the burial of the old man of sin rising to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4-6), to be a new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).
    - 7. It is this baptism that offers the promise of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38).
- g. Paul continued to preach in Ephesus for over 2 years (Acts 19:6-10).
- h. Through Paul, special miracles were performed. Miracles which involved handkerchiefs or aprons from Paul could be given to people and they would be healed or the demons would depart from them (Acts 19:11,12).
- i. Seeing this, certain vagabond Jews took it upon themselves to cast out demons (They professed to be exorcists.) (Acts 19:13).
- j. When they tried to cast out the evil spirit, the evil spirit said that he knew Paul and he knew Jesus, but he did not know them. The man with the evil spirit leaped on them and beat them up (Acts 19:13-16).

- k. This act of the vagabond Jews actually helped the spread of the gospel. The people could see the difference between Paul and these Jews. Many who were magicians, etc. came with their books and burned them. The value of these books is placed at 50,000 pieces of silver, but their value was much more in one way. These books could not easily be replaced. (Acts 19:17-19).
- l. The result was that the word of God grew and prevailed (Acts 19:20).
- m. While Paul made preparations to go back through Macedonia and Achaia, a riot breaks out in the city. This riot is caused by the silversmiths because their livelihood has been threatened by Paul's teaching. (Acts 19:21-25).
- n. The silversmiths stir up the city and take certain Christians captive. Paul wanted to go into the theatre and talk to the people, but was held back by friends. The city was in such an uproar that most of the people did not know why they were rioting. When the Jews tried to talk to the crowd, the crowd cried for two hours "Great is Diana of the Ephesians" (Acts 19:26-34).
  - i. Diana was the goddess of fertility, and her temple was in Ephesus.
  - ii. The Ephesians believed that the image of their goddess had fallen from Jupiter (Acts 19:35).
  - iii. The temple of Diana was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was 425' long, 220' wide, and 60' high. It served as a bank and was also a haven for criminals. The perimeter of 200 yards around the temple was a safe haven for criminals. Heraclitus, a philosopher of Ephesus, said the morals of the temple were worse than the morals of beasts and that the inhabitants of Ephesus were only fit to be drowned.
  - iv. The Ephesians believed that Diana was to be magnified because she was the one "whom all Asia and the world worshippeth" (Acts 19:27).
- o. The town clerk gets the attention of the people and reasons with them and finally puts an end to this riot (Acts 19:35-41).
  - i. He told the people that everyone knows Ephesus is the home of the great goddess Diana, and no man can speak against this.
  - ii. He said they had brought men into the theatre who are not guilty of the charges brought against them.
  - iii. He reminds them that if Demetrius and the others have something to bring against these men, there is a legal way to do it.
  - iv. He reminds them that everything must be done in a lawful assembly.
  - v. And, he says, they are in danger of being called into question for the deeds of the day. He is concerned that the Romans may come against them for their rioting.

#### LX. PAUL AT TROAS

- a. After leaving Macedonia, the group makes its way to Troas (Acts 20:1-7).

- b. Here, they wait until the first day of the week, and meet with the saints. They partake of the Lord's Supper and Paul preaches to them (Acts 20:7). It should be noted that the church met upon the first day of the week to take the Lord's Supper (Every week has a first day.).
- c. While preaching, a young man named Eutychus fell asleep in a window and fell to his death. Paul went down and raised him from the dead. Paul then returned to the preaching of the gospel (Acts 20:9-12).
- d. Paul and the others leave Troas and go to Ephesus (Acts 20:13-16).

#### LXI. THE CHARGE TO THE EPHESIAN ELDERS

- a. In Acts 20:18-35, Paul gives his final lesson to the elders from Ephesus.
  - i. He had kept back nothing that was profitable from them. He had taught them publicly and from house to house (vss. 18-20).
  - ii. He had taught them concerning repentance and faith (vs. 21).
  - iii. Paul knows that they will see him no more (vss. 22-25).
  - iv. He was free from the blood of all men because he had taught them "all the counsel of God" (vss. 26,27).
  - v. He warns them of wolves in sheep's clothing (false teachers) who would come in and work to destroy the sheep. These would come from without and from within the eldership (vss. 28-31).
  - vi. Paul encourages them by reminding them of the reward that awaits the faithful, and that they should be servants (vss. 32-25).
- b. After this, they pray together, and Paul departs from them (Acts 20:36-38).

#### LXII. PAUL IN JERUSALEM

- a. Paul and his companions leave Ephesus and continue their journey until they come to Caesarea. He they lodge with Philip, one of the seven (Acts 21:1-9). Philip had four daughters who also prophesied.
- b. While in Caesarea, Agabus, a prophet, tells Paul that if he goes up to Jerusalem, he will be arrested. Paul is concerned that his companions are crying about this. Paul is willing to die, if necessary for the cause of Christ (Acts 21:10-13).
- c. Paul continues his journey to Jerusalem (Acts 21:14-17).
- d. At Jerusalem, James and the elders are concerned because they believe Paul is getting away from his Jewish heritage. Paul had been accused of saying that the Jews should not circumcise their children nor keep the customs of the law (Acts 21:18-26). This passage has been a difficult passage for many to understand because it appears that Paul is holding to the law of Moses, a law that he had taught was no longer in effect (Ephesians 2; Colossians 2).
  - i. Circumcision was not in and of itself a religious practice. It could be practiced as a matter of religion, but it could be done and not be a matter of religion. It had become a sign to the Jews that they were Jews. They believed that Paul was telling them not to do this even as a matter of custom.

- ii. Paul declared that he had done nothing against the custom of his people (Acts 28:17). That is, Paul kept those things which were customs, neither right nor wrong in and of themselves. Paul would declare “and unto the Jews I became as a Jew” (1 Corinthians 9:20).
- iii. The four men with whom Paul entered the temple had taken a vow and had to accomplish the days of purification. While this appears to be the Nazarite vow, there is nothing in the context that would lead us to state this conclusively. However, if it were the Nazarite vow, it must be noted that the Nazarite vow was not commanded of the Jews. It was a voluntary action on the part of men (Numbers 6). People took this time to separate themselves unto the Lord. A similar practice is found in the church in 1 Corinthians 7:1-5.
- iv. That this was not a matter of religious practice is shown by the fact that this was not bound on the Gentiles (Acts 21:25). If this were considered a matter of religious practice, then James and the elders would have had to state that all men would have to do it.
- v. That the Jews understood that Paul was not keeping the Law of Moses (the religious law) is clearly shown in the reaction of the Jews when they see Paul in the temple (Acts 21:26-30).
  - 1. This is the man who teaches against the people (Jews).
  - 2. This is the man who teaches against the law (Law of Moses).
  - 3. This is the man who teaches against this place (Temple).
  - 4. They also believed he had dared to bring Greeks into the temple and polluted it.
  - 5. They physically took Paul from the temple and shut the doors behind him.

#### LXIII. AN OVERVIEW OF ACTS 21:31 – 26:32

- a. This portion of the book of Acts shows us Paul’s arrest and trials. Just as prophesied (Acts 21:11), Paul was arrested at Jerusalem.
- b. This will begin a series of trials that will finally get him on a boat to Rome itself.
- c. Before he starts his journey to Rome, he must first stand trial before the Jewish Council (Acts 23), Felix (Acts 24), Festus (Acts 25), and King Agrippa (Acts 26).
- d. In each case, Paul uses these “misfortunes” as opportunities to preach the word. Sadly, while at least one of the leaders trembled and another was almost persuaded, none were converted to Jesus Christ.

#### LXIV. PAUL’S ARREST AND HIS SPEECH TO THE PEOPLE

- a. As the people were preparing to kill Paul, word came to the Roman guard and they came to Paul’s rescue (Acts 21:31,32).
- b. While the chief captain was trying to understand what was going on and the people could not agree on what was happening, Paul asked the chief



- captain if he could speak to him. This amazed the chief captain because Paul spoke in Greek (Acts 21:33-37).
- c. The chief captain had supposed that Paul was that Egyptian who had made an uproar previously in the city (Acts 21:38).
  - d. Paul addresses the people in the Hebrew tongue (Acts 21:39,40).
  - e. Paul begins by telling them that he is a Jew of the city of Tarsus, and he had been taught by Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). He also tells them that he once persecuted the church of which he now speaks (Acts 22:4).
  - f. He then tells them of his conversion, including his talking to Jesus on the road to Damascus and being taught by Ananias while in Damascus (Acts 22:6-13).
  - g. Ananias taught Paul that Paul was the one God had chosen to preach his word. Ananias then taught Paul what he needed to do to be saved – wash away his sins in baptism (Acts 22:15,16).
  - h. Paul had been told by God to get out of Jerusalem because the people would not hear his word, yet Paul believed that the people knew he had persecuted the church and had consented to Stephen’s death. Thus, it seems that Paul believed they would accept him (Acts 22:18-20).
  - i. However, Paul was told that he would be sent far away to the Gentiles. When the people heard this portion of Paul’s message, they once again went into an uproar, and the chief captain took Paul and was about to scourge him to see exactly what was going on (Acts 22:21-24).
  - j. As the chief captain is preparing to scourge Paul, Paul tells him that he is a Roman citizen free born. The chief captain does not scourge Paul and loosens Paul from his bands. A Roman citizen could not be scourged. (Acts 22:25-30). The chief captain brings Paul before the Jewish council.

#### LXV. PAUL BEFORE THE JEWISH COUNCIL

- a. Paul declares that he has lived in all good conscience before God until this day (Acts 23:1). This shows that one can sincerely believe themselves to be right before God, yet be doing the wrong thing. Paul did not realize at the time that he was persecuting the church that he was actually violating God’s will. Many today are just like Paul. Sincerely believing themselves to be right, yet they are wrong before God. Right is only found in God’s word, and we are right only when we obey God’s word.
- b. Paul’s stand before the council is shortened because Paul declares that it is because of the resurrection that he has been brought before them. This immediately causes the Pharisees (who believed in the resurrection) and the Sadducees (who did not) to begin to battle each other (Acts 23:1-9).
- c. When the chief captain realizes that the council cannot agree and that the city is getting ready to kill Paul, he brings Paul back to the Roman garrison to protect Paul (Acts 23:10).
- d. Here, Paul receives a vision that he must preach the word in Rome (Acts 23:11).

#### LXVI. THE CONSPIRACY TO KILL PAUL

- a. More than 40 Jews take an oath that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. They devised a plan to have Paul brought down from the Roman garrison to the council. When this happens, they would kill Paul (Acts 23:12-15).
- b. Paul's nephew hears of this plot and reveals it to the chief captain. The chief captain has Paul moved to Caesarea under heavy guard. Here, Paul would give his defense before Felix (Acts 23:16-24).
- c. The chief captain sent a letter to Felix detailing his actions and letting Felix know that he had found nothing of which Paul was guilty. (Acts 23:25-30).
- d. Paul is safely escorted to Caesarea where Felix agrees to hear him (Acts 23:31-35).

#### LXVII. PAUL BEFORE FELIX

- a. When the Jews come to Caesarea, Tertullus makes an eloquent speech to Felix outlining their belief that Paul was a pestilent fellow, guilty of sedition, and one who profaned the temple (Acts 24:1-9).
- b. Paul defends himself by showing that they cannot prove anything they are saying. There is no evidence proving that he did anything wrong. (Acts 24:10-13).
- c. Paul continued his discussion by showing that he taught exactly what they believed including the resurrection of the just and the unjust (Acts 24:14,15).
- d. Paul calls for his accusers from Jerusalem to stand before him or else that those who are here in Caesarea show that Paul has done anything wrong (Acts 24:16-20).
- e. It was only for his teaching on the resurrection that he was brought before Felix (Acts 24:21-23).
- f. Felix and his wife Drusilla listen to Paul on several occasions for the space of two years. Felix trembles when he hears of righteousness, temperance, and the Judgment (Acts 24:24-26).
- g. Felix will hear Paul when there is a more convenient season (Acts 24:25). His real motive for keeping Paul in bonds is that he wanted to get money from Paul (Acts 24:26).

#### LXVIII. PAUL BEFORE FESTUS

- a. When Festus comes from Jerusalem to Caesarea, he brings with him Jews who are the accusers of Paul (Acts 25:1-7).
- b. Festus, who was wanting to please the Jews, asks Paul to go up to Jerusalem to be judged (The Jews desired this so they could kill Paul as he traveled – Acts 25:3). Paul refused to go to Jerusalem because he had not wronged the Jews. (Acts 25:8-10).
- c. Paul told Festus that he did not refuse to die if he had done anything worthy of death, but because he was innocent then no one should deliver him to those who want to kill him (Acts 25:11).

- d. Paul appeals to Caesar (Acts 25:11,12), a demand that Festus granted. This appeal is an appeal to the highest authority in the land, and one which a Roman citizen had the right.
- e. After Paul's appeal, Agrippa comes into the area and Felix talks to him about Paul's case. Agrippa wishes to hear Paul (Acts 25:-22).
- f. Festus had Paul brought before Agrippa. Festus also admitted that Paul had done nothing worthy of death, and he also knew that he had nothing to write to Caesar to say why this man was sent to Caesar (Acts 25:23-27). Festus hoped Agrippa could help him in what to write to Caesar.

#### LXIX. PAUL BEFORE AGRIPPA

- a. Paul, who recognizes Agrippa's knowledge of the customs of the Jews, tells Agrippa that he has been arrested because he taught the message that had been promised to their fathers (Acts 26:1-8).
- b. Paul again talks about his conversion. He had sought to destroy the church, but Paul heard the message from Jesus that he was to be the one who would take the message of God to the Gentiles (Acts 26:9-18).
- c. Paul's great statement is: "*Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision*" (Acts 25:19).
- d. Paul taught the people that they needed to repent, turn to God, and do works which showed they were penitent people (Acts 25:20).
- e. He again reminds Agrippa that he is called into question over things which Moses and prophets said should come. It should not have been a surprise to the Jews that Christ would suffer, and rise from the dead. Nor should they have not understood that Jesus would be the light unto the world (Acts 25:21-23).
- f. At this point, Festus has decided that Paul must be mad, yet Paul tells them that they should know these things because this was not done in a corner. That is, they did not try to hide the message but openly proclaimed it (Acts 25:24-26).
- g. Paul asks Agrippa if he believes the prophets, and Agrippa responds that he was almost persuaded to be a Christian (Acts 25:27,28). Agrippa understood that obeying the message Paul taught would make Agrippa a Christian, a follower of Christ.
- h. To show his great desire for the salvation of mankind, Paul tells Agrippa that he does not want him to be almost persuaded, but that he and all people would be completely persuaded to follow Christ (Acts 26:29).
- i. Agrippa also agrees with Festus that Paul is not guilty of the charges brought before him. But, because Paul has appealed to Caesar, Agrippa cannot set Paul free. Paul must journey to Rome (Acts 25:30-32).

#### LXX. AN OVERVIEW OF ACTS 27:1 – 28:32

- a. After Paul's trials before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa, Paul is finally sent to Rome, under the care of a centurion named Julius.

- b. Their journey began without incident and continued peacefully until they set sail from Crete. At this point, the ship met disaster, finally wrecking at the island of Melita (Malta).
- c. After a stay on the island, they continue their journey to Rome, where Paul is placed under guard in his own hired house. He is able to, and does, receive visitors with whom he discusses the gospel.

#### LXXI. FROM CAESAREA TO MELITA

- a. They set sail from Caesarea and stopped the next day at Sidon. Here, Paul was allowed to go ashore and refresh himself (Acts 27:1-3).
- b. The ship sailed between Cyprus and Asia Minor and came to Myra. At Myra, Paul and the others were put on a boat from Alexandria that was sailing to Italy (Acts 27:4-6).
- c. The journey continued but the winds did not favor them. They sailed under Crete and came to a place on Crete called “the fair havens” (Acts 27:7,8).
- d. The time for sailing now entered a dangerous time. Paul warned them that the journey would not go well, but the centurion believed the master of the ship and chose to continue the journey. The fair havens were not viewed as the place to winter in. Many wanted to sail to Phenice on the western end of Crete, a haven on the island of Crete (Acts 27:9-11).
- e. When the winds seemed to be favorable, they set sail, but were soon caught in a strong east wind (Acts 27:12-14).
- f. The ship was driven under the island of Clauda. The tempest was so bad, they attempted to tie the ship together and lighten the load. The people were afraid and some attempted to leave the ship. Paul told them to not leave the ship, and they would have no loss of life (Acts 27:15-26).
- g. After 14 days of this storm, Paul encourages those on board to eat. After eating, they pulled up the anchors, and allowed the ship to sail where it would (Acts 27:27-40).
- h. When the ship ran aground, the soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners, lest any of them escape. The centurion stops them, and all on board take whatever means they can to get to safety. Not one person was lost during this shipwreck (Acts 27:41-44).

#### LXXII. ON MELITA

- a. The people on Melita were friendly to those who had been shipwrecked. They built a fire for them, because it was rainy and cold (Acts 28:1,2).
- b. Paul was helping gather sticks, and when he put some on the fire a viper came out of the heat and bit Paul on the hand. Those on the island assumed that Paul must be some evil doer who had escaped the sea only to be killed on the island by a poisonous snake (Acts 28:3,4).
- c. Paul shook the snake off his hand and felt no harm. When he did not swell up or die suddenly, the people were amazed and thought he was a god (Acts 28:5,6).

- d. Publius, the chief man of the island, housed them for three days. While in the house, Paul healed the father of Publius. The fame of Paul spread and many who came and were healed (Acts 28:7-9).
- e. After 3 months, they sailed from Melita and continued their journey to Rome. (Castor and Pollux mentioned here were the twin sons of Jupiter, according to legend. This ship “protected” itself using the sign of these twins.) (Acts 28:10,11).

#### LXXIII. THE COMPLETION OF THE JOURNEY TO ROME

- a. The rest of the journey to Rome was uneventful. They sailed to Syracuse, a city on Sicily, then to Rhegium (they have now reached Italy) (Acts 28:12,13).
- b. From Rhegium, they sailed to Puteoli, where Paul found members of the church (Acts 28:13,14).
- c. The word of Paul’s coming spread, and the brethren came to meet him at Appii forum and the three taverns (Acts 28:15).
- d. When they arrived at Rome, the centurion gave the rest of the prisoners to the captain of the guard, but Paul had to dwell by himself with a Roman soldier (Acts 28:16).
- e. Paul now takes advantage of the situation and speaks to the chief of the Jews. Their conclusion is that they have no letters from Judea accusing Paul, but they would like to hear him again concerning the church (Acts 28:17-22).
- f. On the set day, Paul taught them concerning the kingdom of God and of Jesus Christ. Some believed the message of Paul (Acts 28:23,24).
- g. To those who did not believe Paul’s message, Paul applied the teaching of Isaiah concerning the fact that their hearts were wrong, their ears would not hear, and their eyes would not see (Acts 28:25-27).
- h. Paul left the Jews with a closing comment on the Gentiles and that the Gentiles would receive the message (Acts 28:28).
- i. Paul continued for two years to dwell in his own house, and he taught those who would come to him of the kingdom of God and Jesus Christ (Acts 28:29,30).

#### LXXIV. THE BOOK OF ACTS CHAPTER BY CHAPTER

- 1 – The ascension of Christ; the next apostle is chosen
- 2 – The church is established
- 3 – Repent and be converted
- 4 – We must speak what we have seen and heard
- 5 – Ananias and Sapphira; We must obey God rather than men
- 6 – The Grecian widows; Stephen’s arrest
- 7 – Stephen’s defense
- 8 – Conversions in Samaria; the Ethiopian Eunuch
- 9 – The conversion of Paul
- 10 – The conversion of Cornelius
- 11 – Peter’s account of Cornelius; The disciples are called Christians

- 12 – James is killed; Peter is imprisoned
- 13 – The first missionary journey begins
- 14 – Elders are appointed
- 15 – Gentiles who become Christians
- 16 – The conversion of Lydia and the Philippian jailor
- 17 – The noble Bereans; Paul on Mars' Hill
- 18 – The conversion of those at Corinth; the correction of Apollos
- 19 – 12 who are baptized correctly; Jesus, I know, Paul, I know, but who are you?
- 20 – The disciples meet upon the first day of the week; Paul and the elders from Ephesus
- 21 – Paul is arrested in Jerusalem
- 22 – Paul's defense before the Jewish people
- 23 – Paul before the Jewish council
- 24 – Paul before Felix
- 25 – Paul before Festus
- 26 – Paul before Agrippa, who almost became a Christian
- 27 – The journey to Rome begins
- 28 – At Melita; At Rome

#### LXXV. THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH

- a. As we have discussed the book of Acts, we have taken the time to notice the growth of the church.
- b. By the time we came to the end of the book, we saw congregations established from Jerusalem to Rome, and even one Eunuch converted from Ethiopia.
- c. The church went from about 3,000 souls (Acts 2:41), to about 5,000 souls (Acts 4:4), to such phrases as “and believers were the more added to the Lord” (Acts 5:14).
- d. The apostles and others went everywhere preaching the gospel (Acts 8:4) and in almost every place people were converted to Christ.
- e. For this study, we want to concentrate on what they did in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century that caused such a growth

#### LXXVI. WHAT SOME ARE USING TODAY TO BRING ABOUT “CHURCH GROWTH”

- a. Sadly, to too many in the church today, as long as the physical numbers grow, it does not matter how you get there. If something “worked” at Big Church A (whether a congregation of God's people or a denomination), many will plead that everyone needs to try it.
- b. Some things that have been tried and some that are still being used with the intention of bringing about church growth.
  - i. Bus programs
  - ii. Children's Church (also known as Junior Church, Children's Bible Hour)
  - iii. Bible Bowls

- iv. Drama groups
  - v. Praise and worship teams
  - vi. Skits
  - vii. Singing groups
  - viii. Awarding prizes (for bringing the most people, etc.)
  - ix. Special Days (Friends' Day, "Kiss-A-Pig Day")
  - x. Special programs (Gymnastics For Christ, Christkateers, Marriage Enrichment Seminars)
  - xi. Classes on finances, homemaking, crafts, etc.
- c. How many of these things will actually make us stronger Christians? How many of these things will actually convert someone to Christ? If we use these sort of things to win someone, what will it take to keep that person?
- d. While we are not opposed to using the means available to us to reach the souls of men, let us remember that all that we do must be authorized by God (Col. 3:17).

#### LXXVII. A LOOK AT SEVERAL VERSES IN ACTS

- a. *"But Peter standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice" (2:14)*
- b. *"And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people" (3:23)*
- c. *"For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (4:20)*
- d. *"And now, Lord, behold their threatenings; and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word" (4:29)*
- e. *"And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things" (5:11)*
- f. *"And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (5:42)*
- g. *"And the word of God increased" (6:7)*
- h. *"Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word" (8:4)*
- i. *"But when they believed Philip preaching ..." (8:12)*
- j. *"Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus" (8:35)*
- k. *"And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God" (9:20)*
- l. *"Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God" (10:33)*
- m. *"It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you ..." (13:46)*
- n. *"...and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God ..." (14:15)*
- o. *"...assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for the preach the gospel unto them" (16:10)*
- p. *"...and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (17:11)*

- q. *“And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God” (19:8)*
- r. *“And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house” (20:21)*
- s. *“For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (20:27)*
- t. *“And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come ...” (24:25)*
- u. *“Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, will all confidence, no man forbidding him” (28:31)*

#### LXXVIII. WHAT WILL MAKE THE CHURCH GROW?

- a. First and foremost, if the church is to grow physically, it must first grow spiritually. In Acts 2:42-47, we find the church growing spiritually as they continued in the things that would cause them to grow in this manner – doctrine, prayer, fellowship, and the Lord’s Supper (Always remembering the sacrifice of Christ). This spiritual growth caused them to go into all the world and teach the gospel.
- b. The next thing we see the church doing is going – whether house to house, publicly, or into the whole world. Wherever they were, they were teaching.
- c. Then, we note that everyone was a teacher. All worked together to aide the cause rather than be a hindrance to the cause.
- d. They taught the truth. Initially, none taught their opinions or a social gospel. They did not try to make people feel good just as they were. They taught them to change from sin to righteousness (compare the transition of the Thessalonians – 1 Thess. 1:9). There is no compromise in Christianity – we are either for Christ or we are against him.
- e. They faced adversity by continuing to teach the word of God. They understood that nothing should separate them from the love of God (Rom. 8:35-39), and that the salvation of souls is why we are here (Acts 21:13).
- f. They overcame personal fears to do the will of God. Consider Ananias who had to overcome his fear of Saul in order to go to him and teach him the truth (Acts 9 and 22).
- g. They prayed for boldness to continue to do the will of God (Acts 4:29).
- h. They were convinced that Jesus is the Christ. He is our King and we are his subjects (Acts 4:12; 13:38).

#### LXXIX. OTHER PASSAGES THAT TEACH US ABOUT THE WORD OF GOD

- a. *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16)*



- b. *“For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe”* (1 Cor. 1:21)
- c. *“For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord ...”* (2 Cor. 4:5)
- d. *“But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts”* (1 Thess. 2:4)
- e. *“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe”* (1 Thess. 2:13)
- f. *“And if any man obey not our word by this epistle ...”* (2 Thess. 3:14)
- g. *“...that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine”* (1 Tim. 1:3)
- h. *“If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained”* (1 Tim. 4:6)
- i. *“But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry”* (2 Tim. 4:5)
- j. *“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”* (Heb. 4:12)
- k. *“...and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls”* (Jas. 1:21)
- l. *“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby”* (1 Pet. 2:2)
- m. *“...and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith, which was once delivered unto the saints”* (Jude 3)
- n. *“...If any man shall add unto these things ...And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy ...”* (Rev. 22:18,19)
- o. *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Rom. 10:17)

#### LXXX. THE CONVERSIONS

- a. As we have studied the growth of the church, we have also had several examples given to us of people obeying the gospel of Jesus and becoming Christians.
- b. The term “Christian” applies only to those who have obeyed God’s plan of salvation. The disciples were called Christians (Acts 11:26).
- c. Because of the number of conversions shown in the book, this book can also be called the book of conversions.
- d. To be converted means to “return” or to “turn”. One who is converted is a changed person. They have reversed their course in life. They have turned from the world and to God (1 Thess. 1:9).

- e. As Christians, we are taught to reach out to those who have not obeyed the gospel (Mk. 16:15), and to work to convert those who have strayed from the truth (Jas. 5:19,20). Conversion is important to God.
- f. Since God is no respecter of persons (Rom. 2:11), then what he requires of one under his law, he would require of another under the same law. For instance, all of the children of Israel were to remember the Sabbath Day (Ex. 20:8).
- g. To God the keeping of all of his law is so important that if we fail in one area we are guilty of all (Jas. 2:10).
- h. Therefore, it is important for us, as we discuss conversion, to understand that we must keep all that God has taught us on this subject. If we are to be saved, we must obey all of his plan.

#### LXXXI. WHAT DID THOSE IN THE BOOK OF ACTS DO TO BE SAVED?

- a. In this portion of our study, we want to look at several of the accounts in the book of Acts in which we can see that the individuals became Christians. It will be our endeavor to note what is stated or shown in the context that they did. At the end of our study, we will put it all together.
- b. What did they do?
  - i. Acts 2 – Pentecost
    - 1. Heard (14-36)
    - 2. Believed (37)
    - 3. Repented (38)
    - 4. Baptized (38,41)
  - ii. Acts 4 – Jerusalem
    - 1. Heard (4)
    - 2. Believed (4)
  - iii. Acts 5 – Jerusalem
    - 1. Believed (14)
  - iv. Acts 8 – Samaria
    - 1. Believed (12)
    - 2. Baptized (12)
  - v. Acts 8 – Simon
    - 1. Believed (13)
    - 2. Baptized (13)
  - vi. Acts 8 – Eunuch
    - 1. Heard (34,35)
    - 2. Believed (37)
    - 3. Confessed (37)
    - 4. Baptized (36,38)
  - vii. Acts 9 and 22 – Saul
    - 1. Heard (22:14)
    - 2. Believed (9:11)
    - 3. Baptized (9:18; 22:16)
  - viii. Acts 10 – Cornelius
    - 1. Heard (33-43)

- 2. Baptized (47,48)
- ix. Acts 11 – Antioch
  - 1. Heard (20)
  - 2. Believed (21)
  - 3. Repented (Turned) (21)
- x. Acts 16 – Lydia
  - 1. Heard (14)
  - 2. Baptized (15)
- xi. Acts 16 – Jailor
  - 1. Heard (32)
  - 2. Believed (31)
  - 3. Baptized (33)
- xii. Acts 17 – Thessalonica
  - 1. Believed (4)
- xiii. Acts 17 – Berea
  - 1. Believed (12)
- xiv. Acts 17 – Athens
  - 1. Believed (34)
- xv. Acts 18 – Corinth
  - 1. Heard (8)
  - 2. Believed (8)
  - 3. Baptized (8)
- xvi. Acts 19 – Ephesus
  - 1. Heard (5)
  - 2. Baptized (5)

#### LXXXII. PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

- a. In order to understand a Biblical subject, we need to put the information together so we can get the complete picture.
- b. Since God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34), then one is not going to be saved in a different way than another under the same law system. Please examine the chart at the end of this lesson to see the totality of the teaching from the examples above. Looking at the whole picture, what did they do to be saved?
  - i. Heard the message of God – Acts 10:33
  - ii. Believed that message – Acts 8:12
  - iii. Repented (Changed their lives) – Acts 2:38
  - iv. Confessed the name of Jesus – Acts 8:37
  - v. Submitted to baptism – Acts 8:38; 9:18
- c. Since we are under the same law system as these people, then what must we do to be saved?

#### LXXXIII. WHAT DOES BAPTISM DO?

- a. Many object to baptism on the basis that it is a work and we cannot work our way to Heaven. Others object to its necessity stating only that it is an

outward expression of the inward man (they do it to show that a person is already saved).

- b. Still some use the act of baptism as an entrance into their particular religious group. In some cases, after being voted on and accepted, the group will then baptize the person, usually several days or even weeks after they have supposedly been saved.
- c. Regardless of what man says, we need to know what God says in his word. “*God forbid, yea, let God be true, but every man a liar...*” (Rom. 3:4).
- d. What does baptism do?
  - i. Remits sin (Acts 2:38). *If baptism is not essential, then one can be saved whose sins have not been remitted.*
  - ii. Washes away sin (Acts 22:16). *If baptism is not essential, then one can be saved whose sins have not been washed away.*
  - iii. Where we call on the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16). *If baptism is not essential, then one can be saved who has not called on the name of the Lord.*
  - iv. Kills the old man of sin (Rom. 6:3-6). *If baptism is not essential, then one can be saved who has not killed the old man of sin.*
  - v. Places us in the church (1 Cor. 12:13). *If baptism is not essential, then one can be saved who is not a member of the church for which Jesus died.*
  - vi. Places one in Christ (Gal. 3:27). *If baptism is not essential, then one can be saved who is not in Christ.*
  - vii. Where we are buried with Christ (Col. 2:12). *If baptism is not essential, then one can be saved who has not been buried with Christ.*
  - viii. Saves us (1 Pet. 3:21). *If baptism is not essential, then one can be saved without being saved.*
- e. Baptism is the one point with which many argue. Let us examine their objections.
  - i. Some say it is a work, something we do. However, baptism is something that is done to us. Read carefully the scriptures above and it will be easily seen that one does not baptize himself, but rather yields himself to be baptized. Even if it were a work, the Bible still teaches us that we must work out our own salvation (Phil. 2:12), that faith without works is dead (Jas. 2:24), that faith that is of any use is that which works through love (Gal. 5:6), and that we will be judged by our deeds (Rom. 2:6). Since baptism is commanded (Acts 10:48), then we must yield to the commandments of God.
  - ii. Some say that we are baptized because we are already saved. However, a careful study of the verses on baptism will show that one is not saved until after they are baptized. The steps prior to baptism are as important as baptism, but they only provide a

portion of the complete equation. Hearing + Believing + Repenting + Confessing + Being Baptized = Salvation.

- iii. Some require baptism but only as a means to enter their particular religious group. They have reduced it to some sort of initiation rite. While baptism does provide us entrance into the church, this is not so we can be a part of a religious group. The significance of baptism placing us into the church is that it places us where salvation is. Jesus will deliver the kingdom (church) to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24) because he is the Savior of the body (Eph. 5:23).

#### LXXXIV. WHAT DID THEY KNOW BEFORE THEY BECAME CHRISTIANS?

- a. Sometimes, that which keeps a person from becoming a Christian is they believe they do not know enough. They do not have the answers to all the questions that might be asked them.
- b. What does the Bible teach us that we need to know in order to be saved?
  - i. That we are lost (Acts 2:37). They asked what did they need to do to be saved. They recognized they could not continue in sin and please God.
  - ii. That salvation is in Christ (Acts 8:12).
  - iii. That salvation is in his church (Acts 8:12; 2:47). They understood there was only one church in which one could be saved.
  - iv. That God is (Heb. 11:6).
  - v. That in God is where we have the hope of salvation (Heb. 11:6).
  - vi. They must obey God's plan of salvation (Rom. 6:17).

## AN OVERALL LOOK AT THE EXAMPLES OF CONVERSION

<u>Reference</u>	<u>Hear</u>	<u>Believe</u>	<u>Repent</u>	<u>Confess</u>	<u>Baptism</u>
Acts 2	X	X	X		X
Acts 4	X	X			
Acts 5		X			
Acts 8 (Samaria)		X			X
Acts 8 (Simon)		X			X
Acts 8 (Eunuch)	X	X		X	X
Acts 9 & 22	X	X			X
Acts 10	X				X
Acts 11	X	X	X		
Acts 16 (Lydia)	X				X
Acts 16 (Jailor)	X	X			X
Acts 17 (Thess.)		X			
Acts 17 (Berea)		X			
Acts 17 (Athens)		X			
Acts 18 (Corinth)	X	X			X
Acts 19	X				X
<b>COMPOSITE</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>

It is important for us to understand that all are important to our salvation. Any one left out and we have not obeyed the complete plan which God put forth. If we do not follow all the directions, we cannot get the desired result.

Think of this:  $2 + 2 = 4$ . What if I leave out one of the 2's on the left side of the equation? Could I correctly argue that  $2 = 4$ ?

Can I leave out a part of God's plan of salvation and still be saved?

LXXXV. THEY TURNED THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN

- a. The distinguishing mark of the church when it began was that it was not like any other religion.
- b. There were Jewish religions and there were Gentile religions. There were those who taught their own doctrine (Matt. 15:8,9), and there were those who practiced idolatry (Acts 17:23).
- c. Even while faced with the enticement of these other religions, and while facing severe persecution, the church was still unique. It still taught the truth of God's word and never wavered even though many tried to get them to stop teaching the word of God (Acts 3, 4).
- d. The church came into an area and left its mark. Early Christians were not afraid to tell people what God wanted and to expect others to follow it. In love, they directly told people what they needed to hear.
- e. The work of the church troubled many, and their reaction was often one of animosity. While the world did not agree with the teachings of the church, they never doubted that Christians were in the area .
- f. The church wanted people to know who they were because they wanted the world to know what it needed to do to be saved.

LXXXVI. YOU HAVE FILLED JERUSALEM WITH YOUR DOCTRINE

- a. In Acts 5:28, the Jewish Council told the apostles that they had filled Jerusalem with their doctrine. This was not something about which the Jews were happy.
- b. The word "filled" used in this verse means "*to make replete, to cram, to level up (as a hollow), to furnish*". The idea of this word is that something is filled and can take no more. It has been stuffed till there is no more room.
- c. In the minds of their accusers, the apostles had not just taught their doctrine in Jerusalem, they had left no place in the city untouched. Throughout the whole city, the word of God had been taught.
- d. The apostles had been challenged with the same concept in both Acts chapters 4 and 5. In both instances, the apostles replied that they must obey God rather than men (Acts 4:20,21; 5:29). They were not concerned that they had made these people unhappy. They were only concerned with the teaching of the truth.
- e. The reason that the Jews were upset with the apostles is also stated in Acts 5:28. It was not because they just did not like some new doctrine being taught. It was not because they had some personal grudge against the apostles. Why, then, were the Jews upset with the apostles? Because they believed the apostles were going to hold them responsible for the death of Jesus ("*...intend to bring this man's blood upon us*" – Acts 5:28).
- f. The teaching of the truth naturally convicts. If the gospel is true, and it is, then everything contrary to the gospel is wrong. What people recognize is that the gospel does not allow us to be neutral.

- g. The church went in and preached the word at every opportunity. The result was a city filled with the truth and a people who knew the church was unique.

#### LXXXVII. THESE THAT HAVE TURNED THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN

- a. At Thessalonica, the Jews caused a disturbance because of the preaching of Paul and the others. After arresting Jason and other brethren, they noted that “*These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also*” (Acts 17:6).
- b. By this time, the reputation of the church had spread throughout the world. The church had worked so diligently that people far and wide knew who they were.
- c. “Turned upside down” is from a single word that means “*to drive out of home, to disturb, to trouble, to make an uproar*”.
- d. The doctrine that was taught was so disturbing to those outside the church that they believed their world had been greatly disturbed. Their nice little peaceful existence was now in an uproar. Again, the gospel forces people to make a decision, and is unsettling to many.

#### LXXXVIII. THIS THING WAS NOT DONE IN A CORNER

- a. When speaking to King Agrippa, Paul knew that both he and Festus would have knowledge of the church because the things taught and practiced by the church were not done in a corner (Acts 26:26). That is, it was not done in an area where no one would notice.
- b. Many Christians do not want their friends and co-workers to know they are Christians. In the worship services or around other Christians, they have no problem doing the right thing, but because they might face ridicule from those around them who are not Christians, they attempt to hide their Christianity.
- c. With the church, everything is out in the open for others to see. We have been taught to go into the world and teach the gospel to every creature (Mk. 16:15).
- d. The church must make certain that they are Christians at all times, whether it is popular or not (2 Tim. 4:2).

#### LXXXIX. WHAT THE CHURCH DID NOT DO

- a. It did not yield to the persecution (Acts 4 and 5).
- b. It did not change its doctrine to please others (Acts 4:20,21).
- c. It did not become like those around them.
- d. It did not worry about offending anyone (Acts 13:46).
- e. It did not teach people they could remain just as they are (Acts 14:15).

#### XC. WHY THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS UNIQUE

- a. It was built by Jesus Christ (Matt. 16:18).
- b. It was purchased by Jesus Christ (Acts 20:28).
- c. It is where the saved are (Eph. 5:23).



- d. It is where all are reconciled to God (Eph. 2:16).
- e. It is that which will be delivered to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24).
- f. It is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 3:10,11).
- g. It is the only one (Eph. 4:4).
- h. Its head is Christ (Eph. 1:22,23; Col. 1:18).

XCI. HAVE WE TURNED THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN?

- a. Have we even nudged it a little?
- b. Have we been afraid to offend someone?
- c. Are we concerned that we may be judging?
- d. Have we “overlooked” sin in order to keep peace?
- e. Have we fellowshiped those in error, whether within the church or without?
- f. Have we boldly proclaimed his word throughout the world without compromise?
- g. Have we fought the good fight? (Phil. 1:17; 2 Tim. 4:6; 1 Tim. 6:12; Eph. 6:12-17; 2 Tim. 2:3,4)

## **THE “PROBLEM” OF HANDMAIDS AND CONCUBINES**

By  
Charles Coats

### DEFINING THE PROBLEM

One of the more difficult situations to explain from the Old Testament record are the cases where faithful men of God had children by their handmaids or had more than one wife. When we think of David and Abraham, we think of men who had a strong allegiance to God, yet David had multiple wives and Abraham had a child by his handmaid.

The problem arises when one tries to reconcile these events with the teaching of God that from the beginning a man was to have only one wife (Gen. 2:24,25; Matt. 19:1-6). If one were to read commentaries or encyclopedias concerning religious matters, one will quickly find that man has had extreme difficulty in answering this problem.

To the best of my ability, I want to address the problem of the handmaids and concubines in light of what the Bible teaches. We must always remember that we can only teach what the Bible actually says. There are some things that are not revealed to us and we must not presume we know these things (Deut. 29:29). Please study very carefully what is said herein and examine it in light of Scripture.

### WHAT IS A HANDMAID AND A CONCUBINE?

A handmaid was a servant/slave girl. Today, we might think of her as a maid, yet without pay. Her master controlled her existence. From the Biblical record, we can see that the handmaid did what her master desired, even being used as a surrogate mother (cf. Hagar, Bilhah, Zilpah – Gen. 16 and 30). The handmaid could be banished if she came into disfavor (see Gen. 21). The term handmaid is sometimes used in the figurative and indicated a woman who has placed herself in subjection to one greater, whether a king or unto God (cf. 1 Sam. 1:11; 28:21).

A concubine was a woman who, by man’s law, became a wife. In some cases, another wife already existed (cf. Solomon – 1 Kgs. 11:3); in other cases, the term referred to a woman who entered the marriage after the first wife had died (cf. Keturah, Abraham’s second wife, who is called a concubine in Gen. 25:6 and a wife in Gen. 25:1). A handmaid could be a concubine (cf. Bilhah – Gen. 35:22), but not every handmaid was a concubine.

A concubine would best be understood as a secondary wife. The first wife was the favored or greater wife. All others were supposed to be lower in rank and therefore did not have as much right as the first wife.

### GOD’S VIEW OF MARRIAGE

God instituted the first marriage (Gen. 2:24,25). Jesus will later cite this passage and affirm that from the beginning God’s intention for marriage was for one man to be married to one woman for life (Matt. 19:1-6). Paul will also confirm this in 1 Cor. 7:2 --

*Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have **his own wife**, and let every woman have **her own husband**.*  
(Emphasis mine, c.c.)

God forbade Israelite kings from entering into multiple marriages because their hearts would be turned from God (Deut. 17:14-17). Certainly, we have seen the truth of this in the life of Solomon specifically (cf. 1 Kgs. 11:4).

Recognizing that man would sin, God placed several regulations in place to govern the situations that arose from this sin (cf. Ex. 21). These regulations did not sanction sin, but helped them to understand what to do in case of these sins. In Deut. 21:15-17, God gives regulations concerning an individual who had two wives. This regulation helped them to understand that the firstborn child was to be granted the right of the firstborn even if he was the offspring of the less favored wife. Again, this does not sanction multiple marriages, but regulates the rights of the children of such marriages.

God's will for marriage has always been one man married to one woman for life. The only reason allowed by God to sever this relationship during the lifetime of those married to one another is when fornication enters into the relationship (cf. Matt. 5:32; 19:9).

#### THE NECESSITY OF REPENTANCE IN GOD'S PLAN

When Adam and Eve sinned (Gen. 3), God called them into account for that sin. It has always been the case that God expects man to cease from sin and walk with him. In the days of Noah, God punished the wicked because they would not obey him (cf. 2 Pet. 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:19-21).

In the days of Job, Job offered sacrifices for his family in case they had sinned (Job 1:5). For the children of Israel, God instituted sacrifices that would remove their sins (Lev. 1-6). God bemoaned the fact that the children of Israel would not repent and come back to him (cf. Jer. 9:1; Amos; Matt. 23:37).

In the New Testament, God calls us to repentance (Lk. 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 1 Jn. 1:9). Forgiveness is conditional. We must repent to gain God's forgiveness. One who sins willfully has no more sacrifice for his sins (Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26ff). One who will not repent will not be saved.

#### SOME "ANSWERS" GIVEN TO OUR "PROBLEM"

Man has attempted to answer the problem of polygamy and the use of the handmaids for childbearing in different ways. In my study, three ways seem to be most prominent: (1) Avoid the question completely; (2) Try to show that God overlooked or tolerated some sin in his people; or, (3) Try to show that God judged them based on the amount of "light" they had. Let us examine these "answers" in light of Biblical teaching.

- (1) **AVOID THE QUESTION COMPLETELY.** This may be an easy way out, but it is not a Biblical approach. God desires for us to give an answer for the hope that is in us (1 Pet. 3:15). We are to proclaim the whole counsel of God to mankind (cf. Acts 20:27). Certainly, there are things that God has not

revealed to us, but what he has revealed, we must study (2 Tim. 2:15), and make available to everyone. We are to search the scriptures to see whether these things are so (cf. Acts 17:11).

- (2) TRY TO SHOW THAT GOD OVERLOOKED OR TOLERATED SOME SIN IN HIS PEOPLE. This view comes from the most common thinking on Acts 17:30. This passage teaches us that the times of ignorance previous to Paul's day was "winked" at by God. The term "winked at" means *to overlook, not take notice of, not attend to, not punish*. In the passage, this idea is contrasted to the present times in which Judgment Day is upon us. What Paul was trying to teach those on Mar's Hill is that God did not punish them on the spot in the past. However, a time of Judgment is coming for all mankind. One cannot continue in the sins of the past and expect to be acceptable to God in Judgment.

If God overlooked or tolerated sin as some people view this, i.e., God did not hold some in the Old Testament accountable for their sins, then God would have to be a respecter of persons. One might argue that God can do what God wants, however, the very nature of God does not allow God to lie (Heb. 6:18), nor to accept sin (Hab. 1:13). God also is not a respecter of persons (Deut. 10:17; Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11). What many have done by trying to teach that God tolerated sin is reduce God to the level of man. This we should never do.

- (3) TRY TO SHOW THAT GOD JUDGED THEM BASED ON THE AMOUNT OF "LIGHT" THEY HAD. There are two problems with this: 1. This again would make God a respecter of persons. Not all people would be judged the same. 2. This would mean that man is not truly accountable to God, and that we would do a disservice to man by teaching them the word of God. The logic of this position is that man would be better off if we did not teach them God's word at all. However, Rom. 1:18ff teaches us that we must seek God and that we are accountable for following God. The commission of Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:18-20, et.al) shows the need for the world to hear the word of God. Romans 1:16 expresses to us that God's word is God's power to salvation. Man will not be judged based on the amount of "light" that has been revealed, but on the entirety of the word of God. All are accountable to God.

#### SOME BACKGROUND TO POLYGAMY AND THE SURROGATE HANDMAIDS

The first example of polygamy in the Bible is found in Gen. 4:19-24, when Lamech took two wives at the same time. After this, we do not have a case of polygamy recorded until Esau took multiple wives (Gen. 26:34). This occurrence is said to be a grief to the parents of Esau (Gen. 26:35). Other prominent individuals who had multiple wives were Jacob (Gen. 29); David (2 Sam. 5); Elkanah (1 Sam. 1); and, Solomon (1 Kgs. 11).

In the cases of polygamy, each was a troubled time for the family. Rachel and Leah constantly fought for the favor of Jacob. David's wives came at a low point in the life of David. One of Elkanah's wives verbally shamed the other because the one could not bear children, and thus brought grief to Elkanah. Solomon's wives led him away from God. In no case of polygamy recorded in the Bible is polygamy viewed as a good thing.

It should also be noted here that polygamy was not the common practice of God's people. Noah, Isaac, Joseph, and Moses each only had one wife. The practice of polygamy came when moral low points were reached in the lives of men.

The use of handmaids to bear children for barren wives was a custom practiced in the area of the Mesopotamian valley as far back as 2000 B.C. Documents discovered in the archaeological research done at the city of Nuzi show that in the case of infertility a wife may offer her handmaid as a substitute, and that the child or children born to this handmaid would be considered the children of the wife. Abraham lived during this period of time and would have been familiar with this custom. Leah and Rachel were from this area and would also know of this custom.

In the Bible, only in two people's lives were handmaids offered to bear children for the wives who could not. Sarah gives Hagar to Abraham for the purpose of bringing a child into the world (Gen. 16). Rachel and Leah both offer their personal handmaids to Jacob for the purpose of bearing children when they could not (Gen. 30). In all of these cases, the offering of the handmaid was done because of a lack of faith or jealousy of the one offering. Sarah, who knew God had promised Abraham a seed line, tried to intervene in the process rather than waiting on God. Rachel offered her handmaid because she was jealous of her sister's ability to have children. Leah offered her handmaid when she realized she could not have children and that Rachel was giving her handmaid to Jacob.

While this might sound strange to us, remember that even today, people practice surrogate motherhood. When a person wants something bad enough, they will spare no expense and will often times do things, which are incompatible with God's word. Such was the case of Sarah, Rachel, and Leah.

In the cases of using the handmaids to bear children, unrest in the home was the result. Sarah despised Hagar and blamed Abraham for the whole thing even though she was the one who suggested the thing in the first place (Gen. 16:5,6). Sarah treated Hagar horribly. Rachel and Leah used their handmaids as pawns in a wicked game of gaining the favor of their husband.

God never allowed polygamy and the use of handmaids for bearing children. They were wrong then, and they would be wrong now.

#### AN OVERVIEW OF THE "PROBLEM" IN THE LIVES OF ABRAHAM, JACOB, AND DAVID

In this paper, I will only look at the problem of handmaids, concubines, and polygamy in the lives of three people – Abraham, Jacob, and David. It is in the lives of these three men that the biggest problem lies. All of these individuals died and went on to be with God in Paradise, yet they were at one time guilty of sin over the practices of polygamy and misuse of handmaids.

God describes himself as the God of the living, not of the dead. In teaching this, the Bible tells us that he is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Matt. 22:32), thus indicating that these three are living with him. When Lazarus dies in Lk. 16, he is taken to Abraham's bosom. In Heb. 11:32, David is listed among the faithful of whom the world was not worthy.

Please note the following review:

### ABRAHAM

1. Seed line promised (Gen. 12:2,3; 13:15,16; 15:4,5,18; 17:5-7)
2. Sarah has born no children (Gen. 16:1)
3. Sarah offers Hagar as a surrogate (Gen. 16:2)
4. Sarah despises Hagar (Gen. 16:4)
5. Hagar bears Ishmael (Gen. 16:15)
6. Sarah promised a son (Gen. 18:10)
7. Sarah bears Isaac (Gen. 21:1-8)
8. Hagar is banished (Gen. 21:9-21)
9. Sarah dies (Gen. 23:1)
10. Abraham marries Keturah and has children (Gen. 25:1-5)
11. Abraham dies (Gen. 25:7,8)

### JACOB

1. Marries Leah (Gen. 29:23-27)
2. Marries Rachel (Gen. 29:28)
3. Rachel offers Bilhah as a surrogate (Gen. 30:1-7)
4. Leah offers Zilpah as a surrogate (Gen. 30:9-13)
5. Rachel dies (Gen. 35:19)
6. Leah was buried in Machpeleh (Gen. 49:31)
7. Jacob dies (Gen. 49:33)

### DAVID

1. Marries Michal, Saul's daughter (1 Sam. 18:27)
2. Michal given by Saul to another man (1 Sam. 25:44)
3. Marries Abigail (1 Sam. 25:42)
4. Marries Ahinoam (1 Sam. 25:43)
5. Four other wives listed (2 Sam. 3:2-5)
6. Michal returned to David (2 Sam. 3:14)
7. Marries Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11:27)
8. David's last speech (1 Kgs. 2:1ff)
9. David dies (1 Kgs. 2:10)

A brief examination of each of these people shows that Abraham had a child by a handmaid only on the one occasion. He did not practice polygamy, having married Keturah after the death of Sarah.

Jacob did have two wives and did have children by two handmaids. For the record, the occasions with Bilhah and Zilpah in Gen. 30 are the only times Jacob had children by handmaids. Rachel died shortly after their return from Padanaram while giving birth to Benjamin (Gen. 35). Leah apparently died some time later.

David had many wives and concubines. David thus violated God's marriage law as well as God's specific law for kings (Deut. 17:14-17).

### HOW DO WE RECONCILE ALL THIS

On the points up to this point, I believe we would all be in agreement. That God's marriage law excludes multiple wives or using handmaids for childbearing is taught clearly in God's word. All would say that God expects man to repent when he does wrong, and walk once again with God. And, the facts surrounding David, Abraham, and Jacob are undeniable. Then, how do we reconcile the lives of these people with the fact that they all now dwell eternally with God? Did God "overlook" these sins?

One must remember when studying the Bible that we are not given all the details surrounding some events. Please take note of the following:

1. While we know a golden calf was built at the foot of Mt. Sinai, we are not given any details as to what tools were used to fashion it or how long it took to build it. We do not know how many people actually bowed and worshipped it.
2. Noah sinned by becoming drunk in Gen. 9, yet the Bible never records his repentance. However, he is listed as one of those examples of faith in Heb. 11.
3. Moses sinned by striking the rock in Num. 20, but his repentance is not recorded in God's word. However, God tells us that there was none like Moses in Israel after Moses' death (Deut. 34:10-12).

Even though some details are not given, we do not deny the facts that are given and draw the lessons from these stories based on what is given.

We must also remember that the interpretation of the Bible must be done by considering the totality of the teaching on the subject. If a person is said to be in Heaven, then it must be the case that this person lived in such a way as to please God, repenting of his or her sins in order to make their lives right with God. This we know because no sinful person will enter Heaven (Rev. 7:13ff; 21:27; 22:14,15). God's condition of forgiveness is that we confess our sins (1 Jn. 1:9; Jas. 5:16). In understanding these things, we can then resolve how Abraham, Jacob, and David could be in Paradise with God.

In the case of Abraham, remember that Abraham showed tremendous faith in God and willingly did what God asked him (Read Heb. 11). Abraham's sin with Hagar could easily be repented of, and we know that Abraham did not practice it again. While Abraham was a great man, he did have moments of weakness as humans sometimes do (Remember Abraham lied twice concerning Sarah – Gen. 12:11ff; 20:1ff). The Bible gives us the weaknesses and strengths of individuals. It does not "sugar coat" the people.

(NOTE: WEAKNESS DOES NOT EXCUSE SIN. WHAT ABRAHAM DID WAS WRONG AND HAD TO BE REPENTED OF.)

Jacob did wrong when he married two women and when he had children by the handmaids. Some might argue that God had a hand in all of this, but this is not the case. God could not deny his own laws to cause something to happen. The end has never justified the means. While God did not strike Jacob dead, one would never teach from the Bible's standpoint that God was pleased with what Jacob did. As with Abraham, the events surrounding the handmaids were never again repeated in Jacob's life. His polygamous marriage ended when Rachel died. Jacob lived approximately 47 years after the death of Rachel (cf. Gen. 25:26+35:28+47:28). He, therefore, was the husband of only one wife until the death of Leah. After the death of Rachel, Jacob's marital life was in keeping with God's law. Jacob lived 147 years and would have had ample time to repent of his sins.

David's case is resolved by noting David's final charge to his son, Solomon:

*I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man; And keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself (1 Kgs. 2:2,3).*

If there was ever an attitude that was right with God, it is this one. With David, as with others, we are given some of the low points in their lives as well as some of the good points. While David sinned (remember the case of Bathsheba?), he obviously repented or he would not have been in good standing with God. By the end of David's life, he had once again resolved to keep all the laws of God.

### SOME FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In discussing the problem of polygamy, concubines, and using handmaids as surrogate mothers, we have done a great disservice to God by not addressing the issue point blank. Trying to "hide our heads in the sand" says we do not wish to dig deep into God's word and give an answer on a Biblical question. Trying to say that God "overlooks" some sins in his people places God on the level with man. And, trying to say that God judges each person according to the amount of "light" they have makes God not only a respecter of persons, but a heinous God who condemns people by giving them more knowledge. Remember it was God who instructs us to go teach the world. If the world will be judged by the amount of "light" they have, then we would be better off not teaching them.

Some well-meaning people have tried to explain such issues as we have discussed by saying that God had a hand in all of it. That is, God was making this happen. If this is the case, then we have God making people do evil so good will come. And yet, we also have God teaching his people to shun evil and do good. Does anyone see a contradiction



here? God can do no evil nor does he cause people to do evil (Jas. 1:12-15). Some will say, "Then why do these people seem to prosper during the times they do evil?"

God does not tolerate sin, or reward people for their sin. However, it is a fact that people do sometimes prosper while they are sinful (cf. Lk. 12:13-21). It is also the case that God will help people even when they are sinful (God continued to feed the children of Israel during the wilderness wanderings even though they turned against him several times.). There are times when good will come for others even though someone has done something wrong (Moses getting water for the people – Num.20. What Moses did was wrong, but the people still received the water they needed.). God will not punish the righteous with the wicked.

God sends his sunshine and rain on both the just and the unjust (Matt. 5:45). Based on this, God teaches us to love our enemies, remembering that we should want the best for all men. When we understand that God does good for all mankind, we should go and do likewise (cf. Lk. 10 and the story of the good Samaritan).

When sinful people are doing that which is in keeping with God's will, the blessings that come from this will still come their way. God is faithful to his word (Heb. 10:23).

Do the wicked prosper materially? At times, yes. The real question is whether they will prosper eternally. The answer is no! (1 Cor. 6:9-11; Rev. 20:15; etc.)

I hope that this paper helps everyone in his or her study. Difficult questions are not to be feared, but are to be researched. Studying by looking at the total context of the Bible will give us the answers we need to lead the lives God desires for us.

## STUDY HELPS

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