



ACTS

“A NEW BEGINNING”

A Teaching and Class Study Guide

ACTS 1-28

WITH CLASS QUESTIONS FOR EACH LESSON

By

Reg Ginn

INTRODUCTION TO ACTS-- "A NEW BEGINNING"

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth..." (Genesis 1:1). Great and wonderful things were done by the Creator as He spoke into being the physical world into which He would place the first couple. In that world all their physical needs would be met, because their physical environment was *perfectly* made. We continue to marvel at the unfathomable wisdom and skill displayed by the Godhead in the *first beginning*.

The wonders of the *first beginning* are surpassed only by those of the *new beginning* of God's spiritual order as recorded in the book of Acts. The study of the church as it began on that memorable Pentecost and as it spread throughout the known world through the untiring efforts of Peter, Paul, and many other faithful saints, is an inspiration to every serious Bible student. Through their work unparalleled opportunities are now offered to the world for such things as: "a **new covenant**," "a **new and living way**," "**new creatures**," "one **new man**," "**newborn babes**," "a **new commandment**," "a **new name**," "a **new song**," "and "**new heavens and a new earth**." Each of these **new** creations is *better* than its earlier counterpart and offers *new hope* to a sin-plagued world.

The book of Acts is the divine record of numerous "**first**" persons and events as it unfolds the exciting story of salvation received by **first-century** converts to Jesus Christ. The lessons in this study place noticeable emphasis on these "**firsts**."

This teaching and study guide is intended for use by both teachers and students. Scripture references are usually cited rather than quoted, so reference to one's Bible is necessary to the study of each lesson. An outline format is followed to conserve space.

Appreciation is offered to every source from which lessons have been drawn. Much of the material is original [including the arrangement of lessons]; some originated in the work and thought of other persons. Those sources used most often are cited in the bibliography.

Questions for each lesson are included. These questions will provide opportunities for personal review of the material and for class participation to enhance reasonable comprehension of the lesson. Additional questions, of course, may be added by the teacher or raised for discussion by class members to reach a fuller understanding of the material presented in each lesson.

May every Christian strive to better understand, appreciate, and cherish the New Testament church for which Jesus shed His saving blood. It is my desire that these classnote lessons will contribute in a small way to the achievement of that goal. --Reg Ginn

Scripture Reference Abbreviations:

KJV-- King James Version

NKJV-- New King James Version

ASV-- American Standard Version

RSV-- Revised Standard Version

Conf.-- Confraternity [Catholic] Version

ACTS-- "A NEW BEGINNING"

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ACTS-- "A NEW BEGINNING"
An Outline

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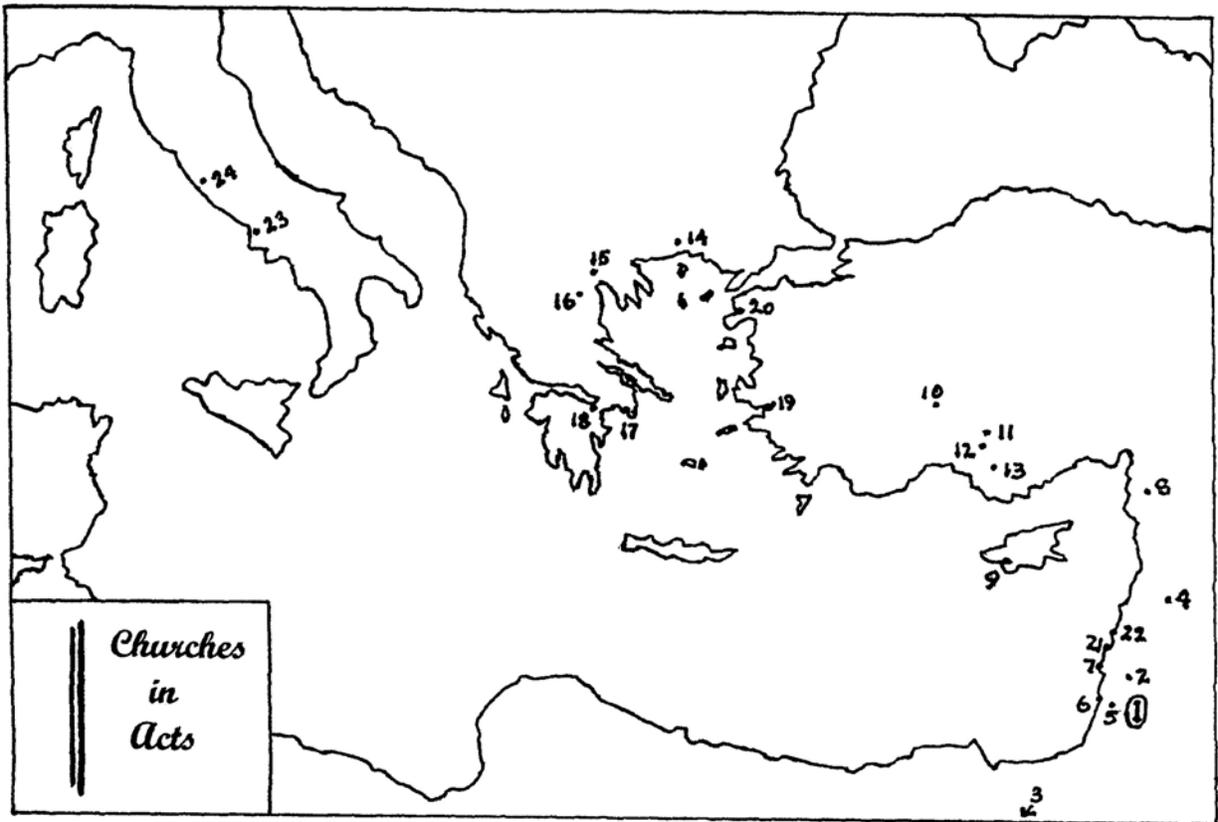
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- 1- Jerusalem
- 2- Samaria
- 3- Ethiopia
- 4- Damascus
- 5- Lydda
- 6- Joppa
- 7- Caesarea
- 8- Antioch (of Syria)

- 9- Cyprus (Paphos)
- 10- Antioch (of Pisidia)
- 11- Iconium
- 12- Lystra
- 13- Derbe
- 14- Philippi
- 15- Thessalonica
- 16- Berea

- 17- Athens
- 18- Corinth
- 19- Ephesus
- 20- Troas
- 21- Tyre
- 22- Ptolemais
- 23- Puteoli
- 24- Rome

Nature and Need

I. The Church-- Nature and Need

A. Does the church have *intrinsic* value or only *extrinsic* value? *Intrinsic* value “belongs to the constitution, nature or essence of a thing; essential; inherent.” *Extrinsic* value “pertains to, or derives from, things outside; extraneous.” Many view the church as something valuable within itself; others see it only as a means to something more important. What is *your* assessment of the New Testament church?

1. Is the church an organ of social reform? A cultural preservation organ to maintain traditional values? A force for family and societal stability? A spiritual facilitator?
2. OR, is the church an essential part of God’s scheme of redemption for a lost world? Is it an entity identified with the people of God in this present time? A body politic [“organized for government”]? A group of people to which *all saved* persons must be related?

B. We will assume that:

1. The Bible is God’s direction to man about all religious activity;
2. *Only* the Bible is a reliable record of God’s direction to man;
3. The church’s value is determined from Biblical teaching about it;
4. That value is derived from Biblical statements and figures of comparison.

C. *Biblical statements* to consider:

1. Matthew 16:18-- The “church” is the result of Jesus’ divine purpose.
 - a. The “church”[Greek--*ekklesia*] is God’s “called out” people. [Also see Acts 7:38 and Acts 19:41 for other applications of the term.]
 - b. In Greek cities, an “ecclesia” was: (a) a group called together; (b) composed only of qualified citizens; (c) charged with particular tasks in the conduct of city business.
 - c. The New Testament church [“ecclesia”] is also: (a) people called together by the gospel (2Thes.2:14; 1Pe.2:9); (b) composed only of those with heavenly citizenship (Phil. 3:20; Eph.2:19); (c) charged to conduct the Lord’s business [the salvation of souls] (1Timothy 4:16).
2. Acts 20:28-- The church was purchased with the precious blood of Christ. Its value is reflected in the *purchase price* (1Peter 1:19).
3. Hebrews 12:23-- church members are “enrolled in heaven” by God. Enrollment is *essential* to eternal salvation (Revelation 20:15).

4. Ephesians 5:23-- Jesus is the head of His body, the church. Its significance corresponds to the significance of its Head. Christ is the Savior of His body, the church. His singular concern for the church reflects its value to Him.

D. *Biblical figures* that suggest the intrinsic value of the New Testament church:

1. The church is the *family of God* (Eph. 2:19; 1Tim.3:15). This figure is based on the importance of the father and child relationship.

2. The church is the *bride of Christ* (Ephesians 5:32). This figure springs from the value of the marital relationship between husband and wife.

3. The church is the *temple of God* (Ephesians 2:20,21). The church is valued by the value of worship to God.

4. The church is the *kingdom of God and Christ* (Ephesians 5:5). Its value is no less important than that of citizenship in a special kingdom.

5. The church is the *vineyard of God* (Matthew 20:1ff). The worth of the church is coextensive with the value of the work [saving souls] done in it.

E. In the light of Biblical statements and figures applied to the church, how much value should be attached to it? Can its rightful place in God's scheme of redemption be ignored by thoughtful people?

Introduction

QUESTIONS

1. Read Acts 1:1-3 and Luke 1:1-4. Notice the *similarities* between the two passages:
 - (a) Both passages are addressed to the same individual. Who is he?
 - (b) Both passages refer to “(all) things” that have to do with what?
 - (c) Both passages refer to a special relationship between Jesus and what group of men?
 - (d) Both passages indicate that the author was not an apostle. How does each do this?
2. Paul is thought to have been released from his first imprisonment [recorded in Acts] in 63 A.D. Acts was probably written or concluded by Luke before what significant event took place? [See Acts 28:30,31.]
3. What are some of the titles that have been assigned to this book of the Bible? Which one[s] is [are] most appropriate?
4. Who are the two most prominent apostles in Acts? How many of the apostles are mentioned by name in the book [See 1:13.] In what circumstances are the apostles mentioned collectively? [See 1:14; 2:14; 8:1; 8:14.]
5. What is the last reference to the “apostles” in Acts? [See 16:4.] Which apostle, besides Peter and Paul, is called by name after chapter one? [See 8:14.]

Lesson 1: Nature and Need

QUESTIONS

6. Where do we learn the truth about the true value of the church? [See 2Peter 1:3,4.]
7. By what two basic means are we taught of the nature and need of the church?
8. Explain how each scripture tells whether the church has *intrinsic* or *extrinsic* value:
 - a. Matthew 16:18--
 - b. Acts 20:28--
 - c. Hebrews 12:23--
 - d. Ephesians 5:23--

9. Certain Bible figures stress the value God places on the church:

- a. Ephesians 2:19-- How does this figure relate the church to *family values*?
- b. Ephesians 5:32-- How is the church related to *marital relationships*?
- c. Ephesians 2:20,21-- How is the church related to the value of *worship*?
- d. Ephesians 5:5-- What does this figure say about the nature of our *citizenship*?
- e. Matthew 20:1,2-- How is the church related to the value of God's *work*?

The Church-- Promises Kept

1. The Church-- Promises Kept

- a. The church in Acts was not the result of a substitute plan for the kingdom of God [See chart on page 136.]
 - (1) It was an integral part of God's plan for man's redemption (Ephesians 3:10,11).
 - (a) People are added to it by that eternal plan (Ephesians 1:3-5; 5:27).
 - (2) Time or circumstance cannot defeat the fulfillment of God's purpose (Mt.16:18).
 - (a) Many obstacles arose: wickedness before the flood; rebellions of Israel prior to entering the promised land; the idolatrous ways of *both* kingdoms; Herod's plan to kill Jesus; Christ's temptations; the crucifixion; the unbelief of the disciples after the resurrection, etc.
- b. Despite all obstacles, God's promise *must be fulfilled if any are to be saved from sin!*

2. Many prophecies about the church were made in the Old Testament:

- a. Isaiah 2:1-4-- *When:* "latter days;" *Where:* Jerusalem; *Composition:* all nations; *Government:* "his" ways/paths/law/word; *Nature of citizens:* God will rule obedient people; *Environment:* "swords into plowshares" [spiritual peace].
--This same prophecy is repeated in Micah 4:1-5.
- b. Daniel 2:31-45-- The image and its meaning: *When:* the days of those [Roman] kings; *Durability:* never be destroyed; *Government:* ruled only by God; *Influence:* would break and consume all other efforts to control men's hearts.
- c. Ezekiel 34:20-31-- the "spiritual house of Israel" would enjoy God's protection and prosperity. In return, the kingdom would be obedient to God.
- d. Amos 9:11-- Israel would be restored to God's favor; the "tabernacle" to be rebuilt.

3. Other prophecies of the church are found in the New Testament:

- a. Matthew 3:1-3-- "at hand;" repeated to the twelve (Mt.10:7), the seventy (Lk.10:9).
- b. Matthew 6:10-- the disciples taught to pray for its coming.
- c. Matthew 16:18-- Christ promised to *build* it.
- d. Matthew 18:1-3-- the disciples were *not yet* in it.
- e. Mark 9:1-- it was to "come" in *that generation*.
- f. Acts 1:6-8-- its coming attended by Spirit's power to enable apostles' witnessing.

4. All prophecies were fulfilled, or fulfillment was set in motion, in Acts 2!

- a. A closer study will be made of the fulfillment when we consider Acts 2, which records the establishment of the church in Jerusalem.
- b. Other passages in the New Testament written *after* Acts 2 always speak of the church or kingdom as *having already been established* [See Col. 1:13; Hebrews 12:28; Revelation 1:9, etc.].

5. The church came into the world “in the fullness of time...” (Gal. 4:4; Eph. 1:10). Extensive preparations had been made by God for the establishment of the church and the fulfillment of expectations generated by the prophecies. For instance, many church historians cite a number of developments within the Roman Empire that were conducive to the reception and spread of Christ’s kingdom among people who were under the influence of Rome:
- a. Nations of the Empire became conscious of a “universal God.”
 - b. The Romans encouraged the assimilation of conquered peoples into a somewhat homogeneous society within the Empire. This tended to focus on a unity more extensive than that within local states and cities.
 - c. Individual worth was emphasized within the workings of Roman law and courts.
 - d. Participation in local government by Roman subjects within the provinces enhanced the acceptance of local church government within an overall unity.
 - e. The establishment of peace within the borders of the Empire greatly increased the opportunities for travel to spread the gospel.
 - f. *Koine Greek* was the language in general use. It proved to be of short duration and therefore “froze” the meanings of words used in the written New Testament.
 - g. Culture and thinking were somewhat unified by the permeating influence of Roman soldiers who sometimes saw duty in many locations throughout the Empire. This caused an emphasis on the sameness and equality of all peoples as taught in the gospel of Jesus.
 - h. The strategic city-centers of culture and commerce proved to be valuable tools for the use of Christians in establishing bases of influence for the spreading of the truth.
 - i. A splendid and well-traveled system of highways and sea routes facilitated travel by preachers over long distances.
 - j. Greater uniformity in dress and manners, political and legal institutions, language, and other usually diverse practices encouraged a unity in diversity, which was the appeal of the gospel to all peoples of the world.

[Lars Qualben, A History of the Christian Church, pp.10-14]

Lesson 2: **The Church-- Promises Kept** QUESTIONS

1. **Some diminish the importance of the church by claims that it is only a temporary substitute for the eternal kingdom. How do we know that the church is not a “last-minute-stand-in”? [See Ephesians 3:8-12]**
2. **God’s plan for the church was accomplished despite many obstacles. Name some of them. [See Gen. 3:15; Heb. 2:9,10; Matt.16:18.]**
3. **Are the church and the kingdom the same or different institutions? [See Matt.16:18,19; Col. 1:13,14; Acts 2:47.]**

Old Testament Prophecies About the Church:

4. **Read Isaiah 2:1-4 and Micah 4:1-5. What do the prophets say about:**
 - (a) **The “Lord’s house”? [See 1Timothy 3:15.]**
 - (b) **The time and place of the kingdom’s establishment? [See Hebrews 1:1,2.]**
 - (c) **The composition of the kingdom?**
 - (d) **The government of the kingdom?**
 - (e) **The prevailing lifestyle of its citizens?**
5. **Read Daniel 2:31-45. What does this prophet say about:**
 - (a) **The parts of the image and four great kingdoms?**
 - (b) **The time when God’s kingdom would begin?**
 - (c) **The durability of God’s kingdom?**
6. **Read Ezekiel 34:22-31. What was God’s promise about:**
 - (a) **The leadership of His people?**
 - (b) **The supply of blessings to His people?**
 - (c) **The knowledge of God as Israel’s Father? [See Hebrews 8:10-12.]**

Lesson 2: The Church--Promises Kept

QUESTIONS

New Testament Promises About the Church:

7. What is the main point or promise about the church in each of these scriptures:

(a) Matthew 3:1-3--

(b) Matthew 6:10--

(c) Matthew 16:18--

(d) Mark 9:1--

(e) Acts 1:6--

(f) Colossians 1:13--

(g) 1Thessalonians 2:12--

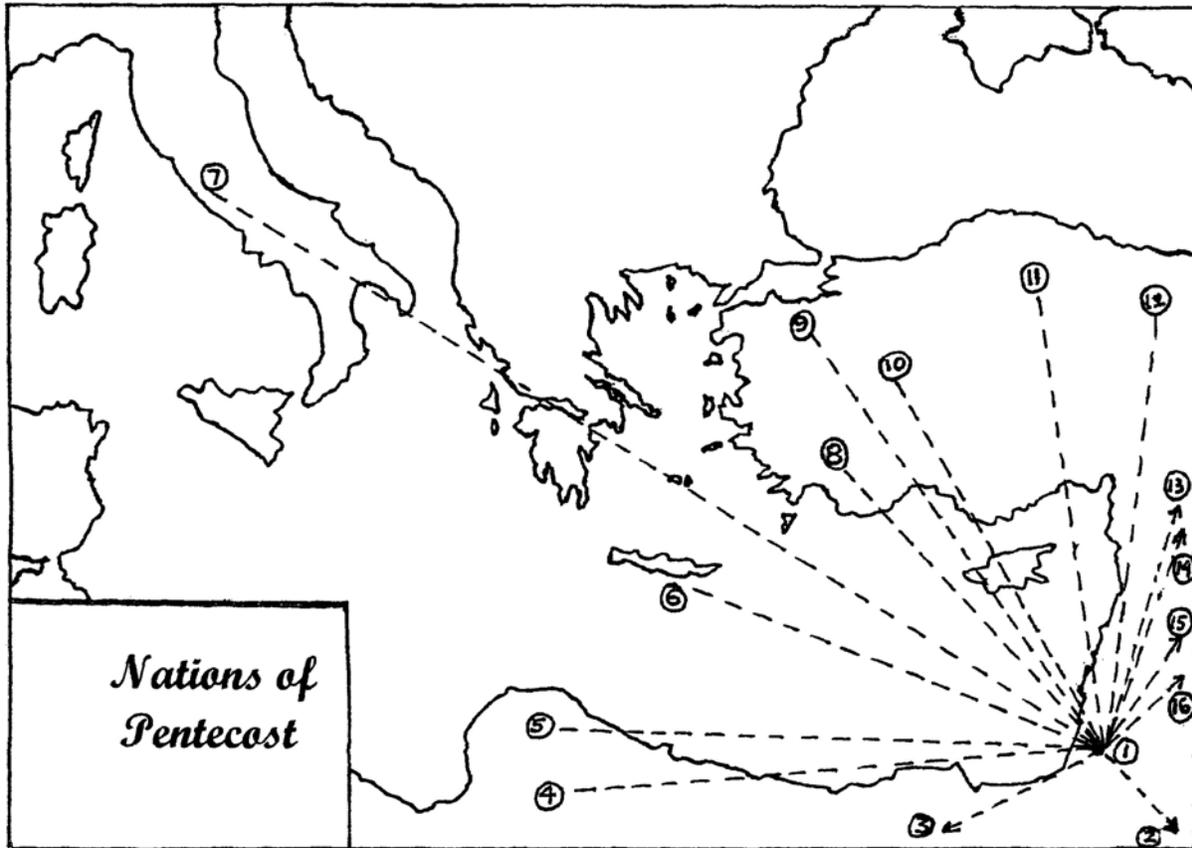
(h) Revelation 1:6,9--

1. This chapter is one of *preparing the witnesses* for their great task [See verse 8].
2. Preparation was necessary because of the greatness of the task they would undertake: preaching heaven's remedy for sin and man's obedience to the gospel. They would labor under the greatest commission ever given to man (Matt.28:18-20; Mk. 16:15,16; Luke 24:46,47; John 20:23).
3. Preparation was necessary because of the great authority they would exercise. See Matt. 16:18,19; 18:18. Heaven would be behind their work.
4. Preparation was necessary because of their humanity. They were, as all men are, guilty of: sin [e.g., Peter's denials of Jesus]; misunderstandings [e.g., the request for James and John to sit in places of honor in the kingdom]; discouragements [e.g., on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:20,21)].
5. **THE PREPARATION OF THE WITNESSES:**
 - a. They were given a commandment to obey (1:2). Evidently, the Great Commission was given on the day of ascension (Luke 24:46,47). Also, their minds were opened to understand the scriptures about Christ in the Law, prophets, and psalms (Lk.24: 44,45). This definiteness of their task and the clarity of understanding that task made possible a more intense devotion to, and a more successful completion of, the work they were assigned to do.
 - b. They were given many proofs of Christ's divinity (1:3) He appeared often during the forty days following His resurrection. This generated confidence in Jesus as Lord (John 20:27-29). The resurrection was the greatest of all signs of God's power residing in Jesus (Romans 1:4). There was no doubt left after they witnessed the resurrection of their Leader.
 - c. They were taught concerning the kingdom of God (1:3). They had earlier heard much about the "kingdom of God (33 times in Luke) and/or "kingdom of heaven" [emphasized by Matthew]. There had been parables or plain teaching about this kingdom/church. This was to be their *business* as apostles, so information was crucial. Yet, they still had false ideas about the kingdom without the Spirit's guidance.
 - d. They were promised the Holy Spirit (1:4,5). They would be baptized in the Spirit and come under His complete influence. They knew their weaknesses and failures as men. This promise gave them great confidence and joy (Luke 24:52). It specified

“clothed with power” (Lk.24:49); “teach you all things” and “bring to your remembrance” (John 14:26); “guide you into all truth” (John 16:13).

- e. Their misunderstandings were corrected (1:6,7). “Will you restore the kingdom to Israel?” was based on a *political* desire to restore David’s kingdom. “At this time” emphasized how little trust the apostles had in God’s control over the affairs of men. It revealed also their lack of confidence in God’s ability to set up a kingdom without an earthly king (John 18:36).
- f. They were challenged to their real mission (1:8). Success was dependent not on the calendar but on *power* from God to do their work: to be His witnesses throughout the whole world! That was task enough. It was to be a big job, but they were to have big help from above to do it!
- g. Their witness was made complete (1:9-11). The ascension: (1) gave closure to the Lord’s appearances; (2) stressed the ultimate glorification of Christ; (3) gave the final blow to any expectation of an *earthly* throne for the Messiah; (4) fulfilled prophecies of exaltation; and, (5) made possible the Spirit’s coming to equip them to be adequate witnesses (John 16:7). They now could be witnesses of Jesus’ *glorification* as well as to His *resurrection* (See Acts 2:33.).
- h. Their individual hearts were prepared to serve (1:12-14). Other preparations were useless without proper attitude of heart. Sincerity is essential for deep commitment to any task (John 16:1,2). They were now “of one accord” [in answer to Jesus’ prayer--John 17:20,21] and could be steadfast in prayer and supplication [they had been taught to pray, “Thy kingdom come” (Matt.6; Luke 11)].
- i. They were strengthened in their sense of being instruments in a divine work (1:15-20). Judas had fulfilled two Old Testament prophecies: Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8. He, by God’s own plan, had fallen into “iniquity” and had vacated his “office.” By God’s plan also this office must now be filled. They made no defense of one of their “own number,” but his sin was matter-of-factly stated. The whole scheme of things was far bigger than any of them individually or all of them together. It was God’s doing!
- j. Their number was replenished under divine control (1:21-26). Certain requirements were stipulated for replacing Judas [the same would be necessary for any present-day apostles]: (1) a witness of Jesus’ work from its beginning; (2) a witness of His resurrection and, (3) a witness of His ascension. A “lot” was used to determine *God’s choice* between two candidates with essential qualifications. One had a better “heart.” *Which should it be?* God alone knows hearts, so they wanted Him to choose. This would assure a proper replacement of Judas and make for a stronger union of these witnesses in their faith that God, not men, was the foundation upon which their own success as apostles would depend.....**THE WITNESSES WERE READY!!**

1. The apostles were directed not to embark on their great mission of bearing witness of Jesus until they had been adequately equipped. What promise had been made to them about beginning their work? 1:4,5 [Also, see Luke 24:48,49]
2. What special blessing would be given to the apostles through the fulfillment of that promise? 1:8
3. What additional promise was made to the apostles to assure them that Jesus would indeed “be with you always” (Matt.28:20)?
4. Jesus’ disciples engaged in what characteristic behavior following the ascension of the Lord into heaven? 1:14
5. How many disciples followed the Christ at this time? 1:15 [See also 1Cor. 15:6.]
6. Two statements made earlier by David about his own enemies would also apply one day to Judas as the enemy of Jesus. What were the statements? 1:16,20. What specific action of Judas is cited by Peter? 1:16
7. What does Peter say about the consequences to Judas of his deceit and disloyalty? 1:18,19. [See also Matthew 27:3-10.]
8. What task must now be undertaken by the disciples in Jerusalem? 1:22
9. What qualification(s) must be met by Judas’ replacement? 1:21,22,24. Who were the two men first “chosen”? 1:23,24
10. Upon whom did the disciples depend for the final selection of another apostle? 1:24
What was the method use for that selection? 1:26



THE NATIONS OF PENTECOST

- | | |
|--------------|-----------------|
| 1. JERUSALEM | 9. ASIA |
| 2. ARABIA | 10. PHRYGIA |
| 3. EGYPT | 11. PONTUS |
| 4. LYBIA | 12. CAPPADOCIA |
| 5. CYRENE | 13. PARTHIA |
| 6. CRETE | 14. MEDIA |
| 7. ROME | 15. ELAM |
| 8. PAMPHYLIA | 16. MESOPOTAMIA |

Lesson 4: **The First Overwhelming**
The First Impact

(Acts 2:1-13)

1. In this lesson [chapter 2], having examined the *preparation* made for the kingdom of God, we will observe its *production* as God operated through the apostles.
2. The *production* of the church depended upon:
 - a. An overwhelming of the witnesses [those prepared in chapter one] by the power of the Holy Spirit;
 - b. A significant impression being made on the gathering of lost people in Jerusalem;
 - c. An inspired message about Jesus as the Jews' Messiah;
 - d. A favorable response to the message by honest-hearted hearers;
 - e. Complete obedience to the message by devout seekers of truth.
3. Notice the *overwhelming* by God's power and the *impact* made on the people (2:1-4).
4. **THE FIRST OVERWHELMING** by the Spirit's power opened the way for a receptive hearing of the Spirit's message.
 - a. The Holy Spirit was active during Old Testament days and during the time of Jesus on earth. Many spokesmen were under the control of the Spirit in their teaching [See Nehemiah 9:30.] and in their exercise of divine power [See Luke 9:1,2; 10:9,17.]. However, none had been "baptized" ["overwhelmed"] by the Spirit to the extent that would occur with the apostles on this occasion. This was to be a *new* and *greater* phase of the eternal plan for man's salvation from sin. [See Hebrews 10:20.]
 - b. The Holy Spirit was to be a dominant influence in the New Testament church from Pentecost onward:
 - (1) As the source of guidance for God's witnesses. He directed Philip to contact the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:29); He sent Peter to Cornelius' house (Acts 11:12); He moved Agabus to foretell a famine (Acts 11:28); He chose the apostles to the Gentiles (Acts 13:2); He guided the decisions [pronouncements] of the conference about the Law at Jerusalem (Acts 15:28); He directed Paul to preach in Europe (Acts 16:6-10) and forewarned him of adversity he would suffer at Jerusalem (Acts 20:23). Numerous additional incidents emphasize the "hands-on" involvement of God's Spirit in the affairs of the early church.
 - (2) As the overseer of the work done by leaders and workers in the new kingdom. Seven men "full of the Holy Spirit" were selected to serve as the first [deacons] in the Lord's church (Acts 6); Stephen and Barnabas, valued for their labors,

were also “full of the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:55; 11:24); elders were made shepherds over local churches by the directions given by the Spirit (Acts 20:28).

- (3) There are more than forty references to the Holy Spirit in the first thirteen chapters of Acts. For that reason, the book has been called “the gospel of the Holy Spirit.”
 - (4) We should acquire a new appreciation for the role and impact of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in the church today as we observe matters involving the Spirit in the early church in Acts. We are warned not to “grieve” the Spirit [by inappropriate conduct] (Ephesians 4:30) nor to “quench” the Spirit [by failure to satisfy our responsibilities as Christians] (1Thessalonians 5:19). Both matters are of concern to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- c. The *overwhelming* in Acts 2 is like a *great drama* that portrays one of history’s most important events. Along with the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, the events of Acts 2 are unsurpassed in their significance for lost men and women.
- (1) *The main players:*
 - (a) The apostles, but not the 120 disciples mentioned in 1:15.
Those who were “filled with the Spirit” spoke the gospel message (2:4), and it was Peter and the “eleven” who did the speaking on that occasion (2:14).
The 120 disciples did not participate in a leading role.
 - (b) The Holy Spirit was not seen [except in the manifestation of fire and the behavior of the witnesses]. Nor was He heard except through the sound of wind and the words of the apostles. This is not surprising, since He is a “Spirit” not possessed of physical attributes (Luke 24:39).
 - (2) *The setting:* The apostles were gathered in Jerusalem [as instructed in Acts 1:4] for the Feast of Pentecost.
 - (a) This feast was fifty days after Passover and was one of three great Jewish celebrations. Feast of Tabernacles was the third.
 - (b) It was also called “Feast of Weeks” [“fifty” was a “week of weeks”], “Feast of Harvest,” and “Feast of Firstfruits,” since it marked the close of grain harvest.
 - (c) All Jewish males were required to participate, the weather usually was good, and no work was carried on, so *large numbers* were assured for the **FIRST AUDIENCE** to hear the gospel of Christ preached by the apostles.
 - (3) *The opening scene:*
 - (a) A sound like a mighty wind filled the house occupied by the apostles;
 - (b) The sight of tongues like fire appeared above the apostles to signify that they alone were the objects of what was happening;
 - (c) An action of the apostles when they spoke in languages they had not learned but were given to them by the Spirit’s overwhelming influence over their minds.

(4) *WHAT AN ATTENTION-GETTER !* Surely, the audience to this drama would be awe-struck by what was happening right before their eyes and ears!

5. THE FIRST IMPACT OF THE STRANGE EVENTS OF PENTECOST (Acts 2:5-13)

- (a) **Who were in this audience? Devout men from many nations [See the map, “The Nations of Pentecost,” p. 15.]. They are “good” prospects for the gospel. Even the “churched” may be better prospects for our teaching efforts than we sometimes think.**
- (b) **These people were attracted by a sound like wind, but an even stranger sound awaited their ears (vs. 6). Each man heard preaching in his own language or dialect. We can’t know how many languages were involved or how they were distributed among the apostles. The men of many nations were at first “confounded” [confused] (vs. 6) at what they heard; then they were “amazed” and they “marvelled” [wondered greatly] (vs. 7) at whom they heard [Galileans] speaking in many languages and dialects; finally, they were “amazed and perplexed” [puzzled] (vs. 12) from having no satisfactory answer to their questions about transpiring events.**
- (c) **Two reactions were produced in this audience to the drama that unfolded:**
- (1) **“What meaneth this?” Some, at least, had a spiritual desire to understand these remarkable events that were taking place.**
 - (2) **“These men are filled with new wine.” This was the carnal and thoughtless reaction of others to avoid confronting a spiritual uncertainty. New wine was very intoxicating. Third-hour drinking (vs. 15) was said to be done only by the most wicked or foolish men. It is always easy to dismiss what is uncertain or unknown to us with easy solutions based on our own experiences.**

6. See the Addendum on “The Holy Spirit in Acts,” pp. 20-21.

Lesson 4: The First Overwhelming (Acts 2:1-13) **QUESTIONS**
The First Impact

- 1. What was the “Day of Pentecost”? 2:1 [See Exo. 23:14-17 and Lev. 23:15,16.] Upon what day of the week did Pentecost always fall?**
- 2. What attention-getting phenomenon first occurred in Luke’s account of the events of this important occasion? 2:2**
- 3. What happened next to this important group of men? 2:3 Who were these men? 2:1-4 [Look carefully at 1:15 and 1:26 in reaching your conclusion.]**
- 4. A third thing happened which brought forth a most unusual response from the apostles. What happened, and what did the apostles do as a result? 2:3,4**
- 5. In addition to the general population, what special class of men were then “dwelling” in Jerusalem? 2:5 Where had they come from [specifically]? 2:9-11**
- 6. What amazing experience happened to the multitude following the remarkable things that had happened to the apostles? 2:6-8, 11.**
- 7. Was their experience a “miracle of the ear” or was it a “miracle of the tongue”? How do you know?**
- 8. Two attitudes surfaced among the multitude about the strange behavior of the apostles. What were those attitudes?**

Addendum:

The Holy Spirit in Acts

The Holy Spirit is a “Holy” Spirit, one of the Godhead, and is employed by the Father to accomplish certain physical and spiritual activities. “Holy” means “separate, set apart, devoted to a special purpose.”

Things classified as “holy” in the Scriptures:

A city-- Matthew 4:5

Prophets-- Luke 1:70

The Scriptures-- Romans 1:2

A kiss-- 2Corinthians 13:12

Women-- 1Peter 3:5

Angels-- Matthew 25:31

A covenant-- Luke 1:72

The Law-- Romans 7:12

Children-- 1Corinthians 7:14

Men-- 2Peter 1:21

In ACTS, the Spirit is called the “Holy Ghost” [KJV], the “Holy Spirit” [ASV], or simply “the Spirit” or “my Spirit” [e.g., Acts 6:10 KJV and ASV]. There are at least fifty-five references to these terms in Acts, more than anywhere else in the Bible.

Actions of the Spirit toward men in Acts:

He spoke to men-- 1:16; 8:29; 13:2; 21:11

He witnessed-- 20:23; 5:32

He “caught away” Philip-- 8:39

He sent forth-- 13:4

He judged-- 15:28

He forbade-- 16:6

He allowed not-- 16:7

He made overseers-- 20:28

Action of men toward the Spirit in Acts:

They resisted-- 7:51

Evidence of the Spirit’s influence on men in Acts:

Coming on the apostles-- 1:8; 2:1-4

Baptizing the apostles-- 11:15,16

Given to the apostles and Cornelius-- 15:8

Causing men to be full of the Spirit-- 6:3;
7:55; 11:24

Falling on the apostles-- 10:44; 11:15

Received by the Samaritans-- 8:15,17

Filling men-- 13:9; 4:8; 2:4

Being a gift, or giving a gift, to the
obedient-- 2:38

The Holy Spirit in Acts

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit:

- * A figure or sign of God's involvement and control-- 2:17-21; 8:18-19; 10:45-47
- * Always promised, never commanded-- 1:1, 4, 5; 2:17-21
- * Received by Jewish flesh [the apostles, Acts 2] and Gentile flesh [Cornelius, Acts 10].
This satisfied the promise to "all flesh" [Joel 2].
- * The effects of Spirit baptism:
 - On the apostles-- (1) They bore witness, 1:8; (2) They spoke with untaught tongues, 2:1-4; (3) They worked miracles, 3:1-9; 13:9-12; 20:8-10; 28:3-6; (4) They imparted the Spirit to others, 8:18.
 - On Cornelius and family-- (1) They spoke in tongues, 10:46; (2) They glorified God, 10:46.

Many Bible characters were "filled with the Spirit" or were "full of the Spirit":

- * Included are: Zecharias and Elizabeth, John the Baptist, Jesus, Peter, Stephen, Paul, Barnabas, and many others.
- * These expressions indicate the possession of supernatural gifts.
- * Acts 6:3 and Ephesians 3:19 possibly refer to the "fruit of the Spirit" as in Galatians 5:22,23, or to the truth that is imparted by the Spirit (John 6:63).

Gifts of the Holy Spirit were of two kinds:

1. Extraordinary gifts such as: (1) Baptism of the Spirit, 10:45; 11:17; (2) Gifts by the laying on of the apostles' hands, 8:14-24; 19:6. Nine gifts are described in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11.
2. Ordinary gifts such as: (1) All blessings via natural law, Job 26:13; Psalm 104:30; (2) All blessings through spiritual law [expressed in the gospel], Eph.1:3; Romans 1:16,17; John 14:16,17.

See the Chart, "The Spirit Poured Out," p. 26.

The First Sermon

The First Responses

1. THE FIRST SERMON-- 2:14-36

- a. Peter explained a physical mystery with a spiritual explanation (14-21).
- b. He utilized their prophet Joel to unfold what was happening.
- c. He could have personalized their criticism and debated its validity; instead, he used it as an opening to common ground that would appeal to the sincere element in the audience who had questioned the meaning of events [vs.12].
 - (1) In our teaching efforts, we must always defend the *whole* truth, but we must never “major in minors” in a way that fails to address others’ basic spiritual needs.
- d. Joel’s prophecy was used as a text to answer the question, “What meaneth this?”
- e. Verses 17-21 are designed to reveal the role of the Holy Spirit in present events.
 - (1) Joel had included significant information in his prophecy:
 - (a) It would be fulfilled in “the last days.”
 - (b) God’s Spirit would be “poured out” on mankind.
 - (c) “All flesh” would receive this gift of the Spirit.
 - (d) Sons and daughters would “prophesy” [speak by the Spirit]. See verse 18.
 - (e) Young and old would “see visions” and “dream” by the Spirit’s power.
 - (f) Great wonders and signs would occur before the “day of the Lord” came.
 - (g) Salvation would be available to all “callers” on the “name of the Lord.” See the chart, “The Spirit Poured Out,” p. 26.
- f. Verses 22-36 reveal the role of JESUS in these events: “*Hear these words.*”
 - (1) Jesus of Nazareth [vs. 22] was the sermon topic. He was familiar to many of those there either directly or indirectly.
 - (2) Jesus was approved by God [vs. 22] to the Jews by the “signs” [His works] and “wonders” [the effects produced in witnesses] done in their midst.
 - (3) Jesus was crucified [vs. 23] by lawless men in compliance with the counsel and foreknowledge of God.
 - (4) Jesus was raised [vs. 24] by God’s power over death; this crucial issue was to be given special attention and proof (vs. 24-32).
 - (a) David had prophesied of his descendant, Jesus Christ (vs. 30), that:
 - [1] His soul would not be left in Hades (vs. 27);
 - [2] His body would not be left to corruption in the grave (vs. 27);
 - [3] He would be raised to sit on His throne (vs. 30);
 - [4] His resurrection had been witnessed by the apostles (vs. 32).
 - (b) Witnesses of Jesus’ resurrection could be multiplied (1Corinthians 15:6).

- (5) Jesus had ascended into heaven (vs. 33-35).
- (6) Jesus had been seated in exaltation at God's right hand of power (vs. 33-35).
 - (a) His enemies would be made His "footstool" (vs. 35).
 - (b) The promise of the Spirit's help had been given to Him (vs. 33). [See Jn.7:39.]
- (7) Jesus has been made "Lord." He is the Supreme Lawgiver (vs. 36).
- (8) Jesus has been made the "Christ." He is the Messiah, anointed by God to suffer and save (vs. 36).

2. THE FIRST RESPONSES-- 2:37-47

a. *The immediate responses:*

- (1) Honest hearts [consciences] were pricked by what they had heard. The Spirit always convicts through His word and not directly, as some contend.
- (2) They pleaded for relief from their guilt. "What shall we do?" For the first time in history, an answer could be given. This is the most important question ever asked until that moment!
- (3) They received the word (vs. 41) to repent and be baptized (vs. 38). They were receptive to the appeal of interested persons (vs. 40) to "save themselves" by obedience and to come out from among the world of sin (vs. 40).
- (4) They were baptized (vs. 41) in response to the apostles' instruction. "Then" clearly defines the role and timing of baptism in their salvation.
 - (a) "For remission of sins" and "save yourselves" are certainly related to the benefits of responding to the apostolic demand for their obedience.
- (5) They were added by the Lord to Himself and to His body/church because of their obedience to the gospel message they had heard (vs. 47).

b. *The continuing responses:*

- (1) Worship and service (vs. 42) were steadfastly pursued. Teaching, fellowship [sharing] all things (4:32-37), breaking bread, and prayers were the fruition of their new dedication to Christ.
 - (a) They shared wealth on a timely basis at first; later, a treasury was instituted to meet any needs that might arise.
- (2) Fear [awe and respect] (vs. 43) filled every soul, believers and nonbelievers alike.
- (3) They were together (vs. 44) in mind and commitment, which again fulfilled Jesus' prayer for unity [See 1:14.].
- (4) They had all things common (vs. 44). They were willing to share whatever was needed by anyone. Needs had come out of the delay of many to return to their homelands. [See 2:9-11.]
- (5) They were glad and thankful for all of God's blessings, esp. the spiritual (vs.46).
- (6) They praised God openly (vs. 47).
- (7) They found favor (vs. 47) because they exhibited traits admired by others, such as generosity, happiness, etc.
- (8) They received all others who were added daily to the Lord (vs. 47). There were no limits on their fellowship with other saints. Opportunities grew with numbers.

The First Sermon

The First Responses

1. What did Peter say in answer to the charge of the apostles' drunkenness? 2:15
2. Peter's explanation of strange behavior involved an ancient prophecy of Joel. What had caused the unusual things seen and heard by the multitude? 2:17,18
3. The ultimate outcome of God's work in these strange events is stated by Joel. What was to be possible for lost men? 2:21
4. Why should devout men "dwelling in Jerusalem" receive Peter's words about Jesus being made "Lord and Christ" by God? 2:22
5. Peter cited one fact about Jesus that was familiar to the Jews. Another was likely a surprise to them. What were these two facts about Jesus' death? 2:23
6. Why was it apparent that David's remarks about death and Hades could not possibly have been personal references? 2:25-29
7. Why did David know that his prophecy about death and Hades was actually about the Jews' Messiah? 2:30,31
8. David's prophecy was reason enough to believe in Christ's resurrection, but what was another reason just as compelling? 2:32
9. How did Peter connect the resurrection, ascension, and Lordship of Christ? 2:33-36
10. *Three* things were required of those who responded to Peter's sermon. What? 2:36,38

The First Sermon

The First Responses

11. *Two* things were promised to all who met the three requirements. What? 2:38

12. How did God “call” people to be saved on Pentecost? 2:36-38 How does God call people to be saved today? 2:39 [Also, see 2Thessalonians 2:14.]

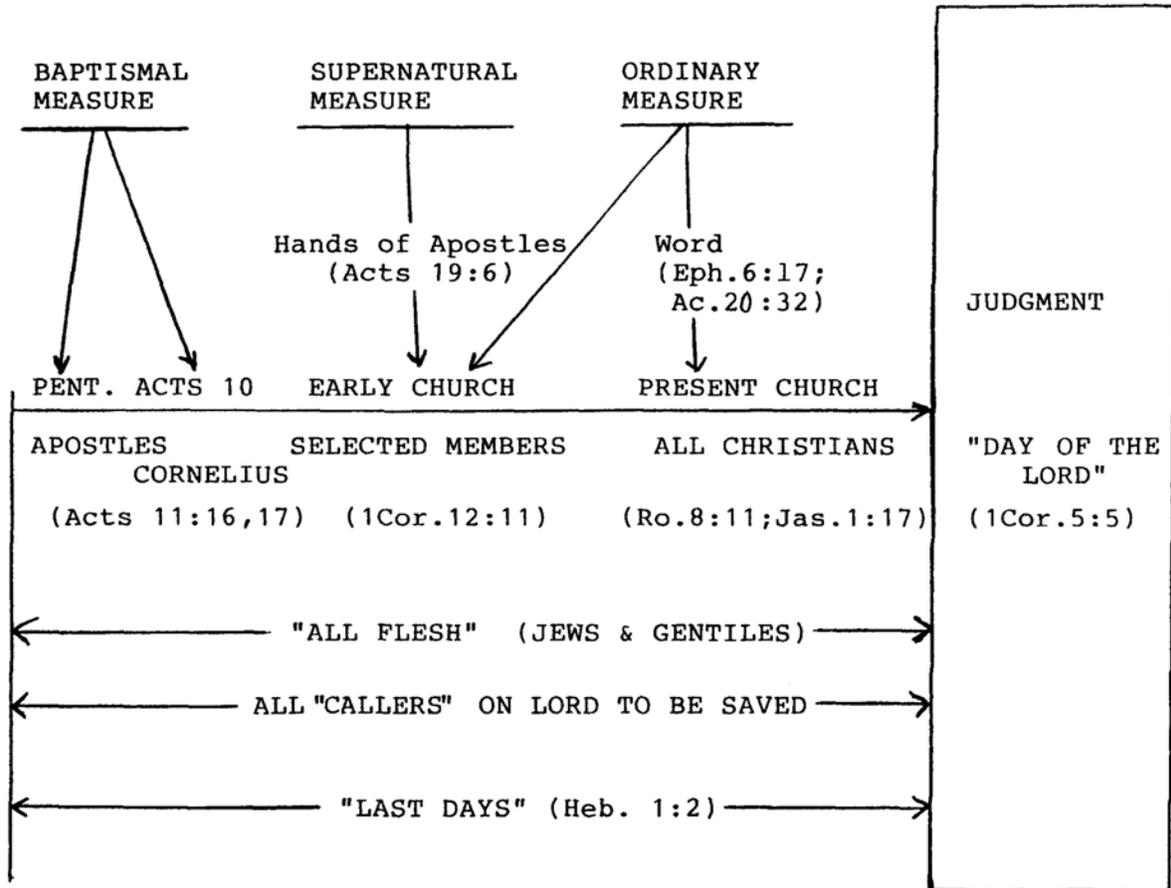
13. Notice two versions of Acts 2:40:
“Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” [King James Version]
“Be saved from this perverse generation.” [New King James Version]
Which version gives the better view of salvation? How do you know? [See Philippians 2:12,13.]

14. How many were baptized on the Day of Pentecost? 2:41 *Two* answers, please!]

15. How many people joined the church on the Day of Pentecost? 2:41 How many saved people should join the church in this modern age? 2:47

16. Was the obedience of saved people completed on the Day of Pentecost? 2:42 How long do you think those people remained concerned about things having to do with service and public worship? [See Hebrews 10:25, 35-39.]

THE SPIRIT POURED OUT
(Joel 2:28-32)



1. Signs had been performed earlier (Acts 2:43), but this is the first *specific* sign described in detail. It is also the first sign to arouse Jewish opposition [See Acts 2:43.] about the resurrection (vs. 14,15] and its implications (vs. 20,23). This opposition resulted in great boldness in preaching God's word (Acts 4:31).
2. The *facts* described in this chapter are simple:
 - a. Peter and John encountered a lame man as they made their way to the temple.
 - b. Instead of alms, Peter healed the man in the name of Jesus.
 - c. Many marvelled at this healing and ran to the apostles.
 - d. Peter preached "Jesus" to this multitude, urging them to repent and turn to the Lord.
 - e. The sermon was evidently interrupted by Jewish leaders before it was completed.
3. Several *interesting*, although *incidental*, things are mentioned in this chapter:
 - a. Peter and John are close associates in the gospel (vs. 1). Some see this as an unlikely union, suggesting that John was a **thinker** and a man of **dreams**. Peter was a man of **action**. There had been some possible irritation expressed by Peter toward John in John 21:15-23 about action and inaction and their relation to love for Christ. Peter possibly considered his action[cutting off the servant's ear] in the betrayal more love-centered than a mere question by John about love. If this is true, Pentecost had removed all envy and distrust-- they were truly "of one accord" (Acts 2:46).
 - b. Peter and John went to the temple just as they had done *before* Pentecost. Their purpose is unclear, but it *is* clear that early Jewish converts were often allowed to keep Jewish customs, even those with a religious basis [e.g., Paul's activities in Acts 21:17-26] as long as these customs were not taught and practiced as being in any way related to salvation by faith in Christ.
 - c. This incident occurred at the *Beautiful Gate* of the temple. The entire temple was a beautiful edifice. However, Albert Barnes cites Josephus' description of this particular gate as made of Corinthian brass, very costly, and of especially beautiful construction. Perhaps Luke intended a contrast between the physical appeal of the old Law and the spiritual emphasis of the gospel.
 - d. The beggar was laid daily at the temple gate at the hour of prayer (vs.1,2). No doubt this was a good time and place to beg alms. Success in any business, it is said, depends on *three* things: "(1) location, (2) location, and (3) location."

- e. The feet and “ankle bones” of the cripple were strengthened (vs. 7). Luke as a physician would have been precise about such a medical diagnosis-- he did not simply say, “feet and legs.”
 - f. Solomon’s porch was an impressive and suitable location for this important event. It consisted of several covered porticos inside the outside wall of the temple. It was a common gathering place for many activities. It was huge-- 1500+ feet long and 900+ feet wide [about the size of 23+ football fields]-- and could accommodate large crowds [J. W. McGarvey, citing from Josephus].
4. Peter’s *sermon* was possibly more “Hebrew” than the one in Acts 2 had been. This audience was probably mostly local residents of Jerusalem, since Pentecost was over and some time had passed [“day by day,” Acts 2:47]. Both sermons addressed “men of Israel.” Acts 2 speaks to the “house of Israel” and refers to Joel and David as prophets. Both refer to the “Christ” [anointed one]. However, notice the special Hebrew references in this sermon:
- a. God is “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (vs. 13).
 - b. God is “the God of our fathers” (vs. 13) and “the God of your fathers” (vs. 25).
 - c. Jesus is a “*servant*” (vs. 13,26), as characterized in Isaiah.
 - d. The hearers and associates were “brethren” (vs.17) and “your brethren” (vs. 22).
 - e. Prophets were referenced frequently: “all the prophets” (vs. 18,24); “holy prophets” (vs. 21); “a prophet like Moses” (vs. 22); “sons of the prophets” (vs. 25).
 - f. Moses (vs. 22) and Samuel (vs. 24) were listed specifically.
 - g. The Seed promise to Abraham, made to “our fathers,” was quoted (vs. 25).
 - h. Disobedient were warned about being destroyed from among “the people” (vs. 23).
 - i. The audience was composed of “sons of the prophets and of the covenant” (vs. 25).
 - j. Christ had been sent “first to you” (vs. 26).
5. Peter’s sermon established these points:
- a. The Jews should not be surprised at the power of God to heal, since He had raised the crucified Jesus from the dead (vs. 11-15).
 - b. Faith in Christ [in the persons of the apostles] made the miracle possible (vs. 16).
 - c. Israel’s “ignorance” of Jesus had been foretold by their prophets (vs. 17,18).
 - d. All should repent and turn [to Jesus] for forgiveness of sins [plural] for the suffering inflicted on Jesus as well as for all personal sins (vs. 19).
 - e. Blessings had been promised by the prophets only to obedient Jews (vs. 20,21).
 - f. Obedience had long before been enjoined on the Jews by their prophets (vs. 22-24).
 - g. Israel enjoyed special opportunities for salvation (vs. 25,26).
6. Notice the *contrasts* presented in this sermon:
- a. You delivered Jesus up [to die]...God glorified Him [to live forever] (vs. 13).
 - b. You denied His release... A heathen ruler sought His release (vs. 13).

- c. You crucified the Holy and Righteous One... You released a murderer (vs. 14).
- d. He gave you life [as the Prince of Life]... You took away His life (vs. 15).

7. The sermon was apparently interrupted before its completion. [See Acts 4:1-3]

8. This chapter illustrates *three important patterns* that would be observed by the church throughout Acts and for the remainder of New Testament activity:

a. The pattern for benevolence (vs. 3-6). No “silver and gold” was offered to an unbeliever from the Lord’s treasury, although there was plenty available to supply the needs of believers [See Acts 2:44,45].

- (1) The objects of benevolence by the church [collective] were saints (Acts 11:28-30).
- (2) The objects of benevolence by church members [individuals] were saints and sinners alike (Galatians 6:10).
- (3) The purpose of benevolence was relief of needs not conversion.

b. The pattern for miracles (vs. 7-16).

- (1) They were obvious and certain to have occurred (vs. 9,10).
- (2) They completely filled the need being addressed (vs. 8, 16).
- (3) Their purpose was to: get attention for teaching that would follow (vs. 10); give credence to the miracle-workers (vs. 12; also see Mark. 16:20); give glory to God. [See Acts 4:21.]
- (4) The faith of the recipient was not essential to a miracle’s performance. [See Acts 20:9-12.]
- (5) Performing miracles was secondary to preaching the gospel . [See John 14:12.] Doubtless, there were others in the crowd who could have been healed but were not.

c. The pattern for obedience (vs. 17-19; Compare Acts 2:36-38).

- (1) The words used were *different*, but the obedience was the *same*!
- (2) “Know assuredly” + “repent” + “be baptized” = “remission of sins” and “gift of the Holy Spirit.”
- (3) “Be not ignorant” [of Christ] + “repent” + “turn again” [to God] = “sins blotted out” + “seasons of refreshing.”
- (4) The terms in each pair correspond and are equivalent in meaning.
- (5) *These same requirements were made necessary for every sinner throughout Acts,* as the records of the several conversions demonstrate!

1. What was the apostles' destination on this occasion? Why? 3:1
2. Why do you think the lame beggar at the temple gate was a suitable "candidate" for healing by the apostles at this time? 3:2
3. Peter declared to the lame man that he had no "silver and gold." Was that literally true? 3:6 [Consider also, Acts 2:44,45 and Acts 6:1-3.]
4. How does the description of the lame man's healing support the fact that Luke was the author of Acts? 3:7,8 [Also, see Colossians 4:14.]
5. How dramatic was the manifestation of healing in the lame man? 3:8,9 Why was this important to a *FIRST SIGN*? 3:10,11
6. To whom did Peter attribute the power of the miracle? 3:12,16 Whose faith in the risen Jesus made this miracle possible? 3:6,8,16
7. What attribute of Jesus made the Jews' treatment of Him so ironic and so outrageous? 3:15 How did that same attribute make the action of the Jews altogether futile?
8. What part did ignorance play in the Jews' guilt? In their forgiveness? 3:17,19
9. Compare the terms of forgiveness in Acts 3:19 with those in Acts 2:38. How are they alike and how are they different?
10. What warning had Moses given to the Jews about receiving or rejecting their Messiah? 3:22,23
11. What special opportunity were these Jews in danger of wasting? 3:23,25,26

The First Opposition

The First Full Fellowship

The First Discipline

THE FIRST OPPOSITION (4:1-31)

1. This chapter records the events that interrupted Peter's sermon that he began to preach in chapter three.
2. A group of [chief priests] [who were Sadducees], other Sadducees, and the captain of the temple guards who were responsible for the peace and sanctity of the temple "came on them."
3. These opponents were "sore troubled" for two reasons: (a) the apostles were teaching people in a gathering that might cause a turmoil which would not be tolerated by the Romans and which would be a challenge to Sadduceean control of the populace, and (b) they proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection of the dead, to which the very materialistic Sadducees were especially sensitive. They opposed any doctrine that espoused a spirit world.
4. Peter and John were jailed overnight and held for trial, but the sermon nevertheless had an impact: *many* believed, and the number of disciples rose to be *5000 men* (vs. 4).
5. The apostles were tried by the Sanhedrin court [council] (vs. 5-7).
 - a. It was ordinarily composed of seventy-one members, including the high priest, who was its official president. Its membership consisted of rulers, elders, scribes and others in political favor with the high priest. In this instance, Annas [the *de facto* high priest], Caiaphas [the *de jure* high priest appointed to the office by Roman authorities], John and Alexander [whose credentials are not revealed], and "as many as were members of the family of the high priest" were included in the group. It was clearly a stacked court! Twenty-three members usually comprised a quorum, so these judges undoubtedly were hand-picked to assure a predetermined verdict.
 - b. The seriousness with which this situation was regarded was reflected in the authority of this court. It technically held the power of life and death in its determinations, and there was no appeal from its decisions.
 - c. The setting of the meeting was impressive: robed leaders, law students who would be gathered around in an effort to learn more about the conduct of Jewish law, the

president [high priest] seated in the middle of a semicircle, and the lowly defendants standing in the center of the proceedings. This was an physical arrangement designed to intimidate those who were being tried by this august body.

- d. The initial question raised was, “By what *power* or in what *name* have you done this?” The rulers hoped that the apostles would furnish evidence against themselves, since they had no evidence of their own by which the defendants might be tried.
 - e. The Law required a “prophet” or “dreamer” to be executed if a teaching led the people away from God. (Deuteronomy 13). These opponents saw a “duty” to cause harm to the cause of Jesus as a “prophet” from among the people. [See Acts 3:22.]
6. Peter took the offensive, being guided by the Holy Spirit (vs. 8-12).
- a. He presented the simple *facts* of the matter in question: a good deed had been done, a needy recipient had been the object of the deed, and a man had been made whole. The presence of the healed man was *proof that a miracle had been performed*.
 - b. He charged the Jewish authorities with the crime of Jesus’ crucifixion.
 - c. He made the claim that God had raised Jesus from the dead.
 - d. He asserted that Jesus’ power was responsible for the evident miracle.
 - e. He implied that these leaders, whose duty it was to assure the well-being of their nation, had deliberately rejected Jesus, who was the very cornerstone of God’s plan for Israel’s destiny.
 - f. Salvation, both *national* and *personal*, depended altogether on Christ. [See Matthew 22:37,38]
7. The response of the Sanhedrin to the accusations (vs. 13-22).
- a. The actions of the apostles were unexpected:
 - (1) Their response was very bold from men who were on trial.
 - (2) The defendants were untrained in religious, political, and social skills.
 - (3) Their abilities were perceived as being related to association with Jesus.
 - (4) Their defense was underscored by the physical presence of the *healed man*.
 - b. The council was unable to answer Peter’s evidence. The defendant had become the prosecutor. The prosecutors were now on the defensive!
 - c. A private conference was advisable; the Sadducees were in a dilemma (vs. 16,17).
 - (1) They had to do *something*-- their political and religious control of the people were both at stake in this confrontation with a miracle.
 - (2) They could not *accept* the miracle, for acceptance required a belief in a supernatural, risen Christ. Their materialism rejected all miraculous matters related to Moses’ Law, while it sought to appear to “accept” God and His rule over the nation. It had become a clear choice between Christ’s leadership or theirs.

- (3) They could not *deny* the miracle, because it was manifest to everybody (vs. 16). Denial would mark them as stupid or dishonest and would risk their political influence with the people who accepted the miracle. They were caught between their religion and their politics!
 - (4) The rulers decided to attempt suppression by threat. The success of this tactic would depend on whether the apostles would submit to their authority without any question.
 - (5) The apostles' response created *another dilemma* (vs. 19,20). They were presented with another clear choice between right and wrong-- "judge ye."
 - (6) Such answers were totally unexpected from ordinary men, but these were *not ordinary!* They were "*filled with the Holy Spirit*" (vs. 8).
 - (7) The only viable option for the court seemed to be to make more threats. Punishment for the apostles was not now politically or religiously popular with the "people." The minority for once had to be mindful of the majority's position on this matter at hand.
8. The response of the disciples to the opposition of the Jewish leaders: Prayer! (vs.23-31).
- a. They prayed with *one accord* . [See Acts 1:14; 2:1; 2:46.]
 - b. They prayed with *the conviction of God's absolute power* (vs. 24).
 - c. They prayed with *the conviction of the futility of man's opposition to God's plan*:
 - (1) David's prophecy (Psalm 2) stated the spiritual truth of this fact (vs. 25,26).
 - (2) The practical application of this truth was seen in the crucifixion (vs. 27,28).
 - (3) The actions of their opponents really had accomplished God's plan; hence, their opposition was actually beneficial, not harmful, to that plan.
 - d. They prayed for *courage to continue* doing the very things that had caused the opposition: preaching and working miracles of confirmation (vs. 29,30).
 - e. They prayed for *God to handle the situation*-- "look on their threatenings." They made no request for the threats to cease or for their enemies to stop their opposition.
 - f. The immediate result of their prayer was that God's control of the situation was confirmed by the Holy Spirit (vs. 31).
 - g. The long-range result of their prayer was that they continued to "speak the word of God with boldness" (vs. 31).

THE FIRST FULL FELLOWSHIP (4:32-37)

1. They had "all things in common" in chapter 2:44,45, but here is a *full commitment*. They were "of one heart and soul" and nobody claimed any possession as his own. Their motivation for such generosity was from *within*.
2. The commitment was *complete*. "Houses" and "lands" were sold as the ultimate expression of love and concern for the needs of their brethren.

3. They added their *witness* to that of the apostles by their deep commitment to sharing among themselves. The people around them saw that their commitment was real. They added strength to the preaching and brought the favor of those who observed their behavior (vs. 33).
4. This was voluntary, not political, communism [goods held in common]. They did not *create* the need,; they simply *met* the need as it arose.
5. A *positive* example of the effects of religion on a man's heart is seen in Barnabas' action (vs. 36,37). He was a "good man" (Acts 11:24) whose conviction moved him to sell a field and give all the receipts to help other people.

THE FIRST DISCIPLINE (5:1-11)

1. A *negative* example of religion's effect on a man's heart is recorded here.
2. Ananias and Sapphira sold a possession, as Barnabas had done, but they kept a part of the proceeds for themselves.
3. Ananias' sin was the representation of the part as being the whole of the receipts.
4. Peter charged him with *lying* and *hypocrisy* (vs. 3,4)
5. The lie was not only wrong in itself, but it had serious implications. Ananias had lied to the Holy Spirit [in the persons of the apostles] and had deliberately tested the ability of the Spirit to detect and punish sin. The Spirit's integrity was involved in the outcome of this incident.
6. Sapphira was equally guilty (vs. 9), and she received the same punishment as Ananias.
7. The consequence of this disciplinary action was significant: *great fear* [respect for authority] came on all church members and on those outside as well.
8. Discipline is still needed today in the church. [See 1Corinthians 5.] It will have a similar effect on the church and will let the world know that we are not just "playing at religion." All members need to learn to appreciate the role of church discipline and to support its administration.

Lesson 7: The First Opposition (Acts 4:1- 5:11) QUESTIONS

The First Full Fellowship

The First Discipline

- 1. Why would the Sadducees and other Jewish leaders have been “greatly disturbed” about what the apostles were teaching concerning Jesus? [Two reasons] 4:1,2**
- 2. Verses 1-3 are an interruption of the flow of events that began in chapter three. What are we told about the results of the apostles’ sermon(s) despite the interruption? 4:4**
- 3. What indicates that the apostles might not receive a fair hearing by the court convened to hear the charges against them? 4:5,6**
- 4. How did Peter immediately put their act of healing in the best possible light as he began to defend what they had done? 4:9**
- 5. How important was Jesus to Israel’s welfare, both spiritually and politically? 4:11,12**
- 6. Two things forced the Jewish leaders to realize that the influence of Jesus over these events was something they had to reckon with. What were they? 4:13,14**
- 7. Rather than attempt to discount this miracle just performed, the leaders chose instead to take what course of action? 4:15-18**
- 8. Peter’s answer to the leader’ order to suppress evidence in this matter caused another dilemma for those leaders. What was the problem raised for them? 4:19,20**
- 9. What did the other disciples do when told of the serious threats made against those who were dedicated to preaching Jesus? 4:23,24**

The First Opposition

The First Full Fellowship

The First Discipline

10. What larger picture than the immediate circumstances did the disciples see in what had been done to Jesus and was now being done to them? 4:27,28

11. How did the disciples demonstrate the total commitment they had to the cause of Christ [besides their teaching]? 4:34,35

12. Two men are introduced to illustrate the different effects that may come from the same gospel. Who were these men and what did they do so differently? 4:36- 5:2

13. Ananias and Sapphira were guilty of two sins. What were they? 5:2-4 One of these sins was serious enough to warrant serious and immediate consequences. Which one, and why? 5:9

14. What effect did harsh discipline have upon those who witnessed it? 5:11 Will spiritual discipline have a similar effect in the church and in the world today? [See 1Corinthians 5:5-8.]

1. Opposition to the gospel and its messengers appeared in chapter four, but the chapter ended without physical violence to Peter and John. They struck no deal with the Sanhedrin council, which may or may not have expected them to do more preaching.
2. Two powerful weapons continued to be leveled against Satan: *signs and wonders* and the *unity of believers*. [See John 17:21.]
3. Multitudes of believers were obedient to the gospel and were “added to the Lord” [compare to 2:47], although “the rest” (?) avoided close company with the apostles, knowing that even their thoughts could be known and punished.
4. Great numbers of the sick were healed [“all healed”--NKJV] in Jerusalem; also included were those brought from other cities. Some were placed in the streets in hope that Peter’s shadow might fall on them for their healing. This reflects an eastern superstition that good and bad men could cause good and bad effects on people by unusual means. Peter was highly regarded by the common people (vs. 12-16). We are not told whether or not the expectation of the crowd was satisfied in this matter.
5. Persecution was renewed against all of the apostles (vs. 17,18).
 - a. The Sadducees and the high priest were jealous of the position and popularity of the apostles.
 - b. The apostles were jailed but released by an angel during the night.
 - c. The apostles were told by the angel to resume their preaching of “the words of life.” This “word” included the resurrected life of Jesus and the way of life offered to all. It was the same message that they had preached earlier.
 - d. “Angels” [messengers] often appear in Acts, causing heavenly intervention in the affairs of men. They worked in conjunction with the Holy Spirit (e.g., Philip, chapter 8; Peter, chapters 10 and 11; Cornelius, chapter 10; Herod, chapter 12; and Paul, chapter 27).
6. Preparations were made for the apostles’ trial (vs. 21 ff.).
 - a. The high priest summoned the *full* Sanhedrin council, an unusual action. The “council and senate [ASV]” were to try the apostles, evidently intending to stop their preaching once and for all. Everything was ready for the trial-- except the defendants [the apostles]! They were gone (vs. 22,23).
7. The captain of the temple and the chief priests [heads of the twenty-four courses of priests who served in the temple] were perplexed. They seemingly were most concerned about the effect that this situation would have on them and their positions. They likely

had little or no concern about the truths the apostles had been preaching (vs. 24).

8. The apostles were discovered and brought before the council without violence (vs. 26; also, see 4:21.).
9. **THE TRIAL** before the Sanhedrin (vs. 27-32).
 - a. Three charges were leveled against the apostles: (1) They had violated the orders of the council in “filling Jerusalem with this teaching;” (2) They had taught “your doctrine” [a reference to the resurrection]; (3) They had accused the Jewish leadership of crucifying an innocent man.
 - b. The apostles’ defense to these charges made four points: (1) They must obey God and not man, which was the same position they had occupied before; (2) God had *raised* the murdered Jesus [NKJV]; (3) God had *exalted* Jesus as the Savior; (4) The apostles and the Holy Spirit were *witnesses* of this monumental event [See Acts 1:8.].
 - c. This was the same sermon as Peter and the others had preached in Acts 2 and 3:
 - (1) Christ crucified----- Acts 2:23----- Acts 3:14,15----- Acts 5:30
 - (2) Christ raised----- Acts 2:32----- Acts 3:15----- Acts 5:30
 - (3) Christ exalted-----Acts 2:33----- Acts 3:20,21----- Acts 5:31
 - (4) Christ witnessed----- Acts 2:32----- Acts 3:15----- Acts 5:32
 - (5) Christ forgives----- Acts 2:38----- Acts 3:19,26----- Acts 5:31
 - d. The “Apostles’ Creed” is stated in Acts 5:29: “We must obey God rather than men.”
 - e. “We are witnesses” was more than words to them; their *lives* showed their loyalty!
10. **THE OUTCOME OF THE TRIAL** before the Sanhedrin (vs. 33-41).
 - a. When the Sadducees “heard this” [the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus]-- they were “cut to the heart” and were “minded to slay [ASV]” the apostles (vs. 33). When the Pentecost converts “heard this” [Jesus was Lord and Christ]-- they were “pricked in their heart” and asked, “What shall we do?” (Acts 2:37).

What made such a great difference in these two groups of people?
 - b. Gamaliel [Paul’s teacher (Acts 22)] intervened in their plans. He was: (1) A Pharisee [a minority number in the Sanhedrin]; (2) a teacher of the Law; (3) honored by all; (4) enjoyed a lot of influence in the council.
 - c. Gamaliel urged caution by the council: don’t fight God if the apostles prove to be genuine.
 - (1) He cited two imposters, Theudas and Judas, unknown to us but well-known to members of the Sanhedrin;
 - (2) He compared these to the apostles as suspected imposters and claimed that their status would eventually become known without any action by the council;
 - (3) Gamaliel’s advice usually proves to be risky-- error doesn’t often go away of itself [See Matthew 15:13,14.], but this was his alternative to violence.
 - d. The apostles were beaten, probably with forty [actually thirty-nine] lashes in the Jewish manner. This was the FIRST VIOLENCE against the apostles and their gospel, and it violated the very Law the Sanhedrin claimed to defend [See Deuteronomy 25:1-3.]. This is reminiscent of what their leaders had earlier done to Jesus.

e. The apostles were again threatened and released.

11. THE EFFECT OF THIS VIOLENCE on the apostles (vs. 41,42):

a. They “rejoiced” to suffer for “His name” [NKJV]; ” “the name” [ASV]; “the name of Jesus” [Confraternity].

(1) This “name” includes all that He is to man and all that He does to make our suffering, like theirs, worthwhile.

b. They continued to preach in the temple [publicly] and in homes [privately]. Compare to Acts 2:46.

Lesson 8: **The First Violence** (Acts 5:12-42) **QUESTIONS**

1. What thought is here repeated to emphasize the importance of unity among brethren? 5:12 [See also, Acts 1:14; 2:1; 2:46; 4:32; Ephesians 4:3.]
2. What is said about the continued numerical growth of the church? 5:14 [See Acts 2:47; 4:4; 6:1.]
3. The apostles' "signs and wonders" (vs.12) apparently focused mainly on healings at this time. How impressed were the multitudes with their power to heal? 5:15 Do you think their expectation was based on experience or superstition?
4. What message were the apostles told to preach following their imprisonment for preaching a risen Christ? 5:20 [See also, Acts 2:32; 3:15; 4:10,33.]
5. This command from God about preaching was in direct conflict with the orders from Jewish leaders (Acts 4:18). Which instruction did they follow? 5:21, 25, 28
6. Even after the apostles had been loosed from prison and then recaptured, what were the Jewish leaders still eager to avoid? Why? 5:26
7. What were the three accusations brought by the council against the apostles and their preaching? 5:28
8. What basic *motivation* would always determine what the apostles would preach? 5:29
What basic *message* would always be their theme in preaching? 5:31
What basic *confidence* would always encourage them in their preaching? 5:32
9. Who was the man who intervened to prevent the council from resorting to the ultimate violence [death] against the apostles? 5:34 What else do we know of him? Acts 22:3
Why did the council listen to him instead of their own violent emotions? 5:34,40

10. Gamaliel's advice to the council not to kill the apostles was based on what frequently faulty principle? 5:38,39
11. What violence was directed against the apostles, even though they escaped from death at the hands of their opponents? 5:40
12. Violence against the truth is never successful (Psalm 100:5). What effect did opposition and violence toward the apostles have on this occasion? 5:42

The First Organization & The First Martyr

THE FIRST ORGANIZATION (Acts 6:1-7)

1. An exciting situation is described in chapter 6:1. The disciples were “multiplying.” This should be no surprise in view of the preaching being done [See Acts 5:42.]. We often fail to grasp the direct relationship between the two!
2. But-- there was good news and bad news. The situation soured and threatened the unity that had prevailed since the beginning of the church. A rift developed between the Hellenist Jews [those with a foreign background] and the Hebrew Jews [those with more local roots]. The fairness of the daily distribution of goods [See Acts 4:35.] was challenged. Some were thought to enjoy an advantage over others because of their national origins.
3. The “murmuring” was considered by the apostles to be serious. [See 1 Corinthians 10:10.] Murmuring is “a low muttered complaint...grumbling.” Complaining is not in itself wrong but should be open and in search of a resolution. Murmuring can grow into rebellion and sharp division. Fortunately, the apostles learned of the dissension in time before irreparable damage was done.
4. *The solution to the problem-- Organize!* God has always seen the need for His work to be properly overseen. This organization was divinely prescribed to meet the need from which the problem had sprung. The wisdom of organizing was cited by Jesus in Luke 16:8. “Men of the world act with better judgment oftentimes with respect to worldly affairs than do disciples of Jesus with respect to spiritual affairs” (H. Leo Boles). In all organizing, we must remain within the guidelines established by scripture.
5. The apostles set the guidelines for this process of organizing as to: (a) who does the selecting; (b) the number to be selected; (c) the qualifications to be met by those selected; (d) who would appoint to the work; (e) the authority behind these qualifications (vs. 3).
6. Unity was preserved by: (a) handling the problem promptly; (b) using good judgment and sensitivity toward all who were involved. All seven men selected bore Grecian names, which must have gone far toward placating the Grecian church members who were upset with what they perceived to be unfair treatment.

7. *The result of the proposed organization--* (a) the whole multitude was “pleased” (vs. 5); (b) the word increased [in its effectiveness] (vs. 7); (c) the disciples multiplied greatly (vs. 7); (d) a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith (vs. 7). Priests and officials are among the last we would expect to be swayed by the truth. This shows the impact of the gospel on Judaism in these early days of preaching.
8. A death struggle between Judaism and Christianity was at hand. Threats alone would not stem the tide of change in Jerusalem. “Open war” awaited some incident that would set it off, much like the attack on Pearl Harbor [Second World War], the sinking of the Lusitania [First World War], and the capture of the Alamo [Mexican War].

THE FIRST MARTYR (Acts 6:8- 7:60)

1. Stephen’s boldness became the detonator for an explosive situation. He “disputed” with Hellenists from the very synagogue of which he possibly had been a member, making this an extremely sensitive debate. This was Judaism’s *first attempt* at open debate; its proponents could not contend with the wisdom and inspired truth Stephen presented.
2. These Jews resorted to dishonesty. It is always ironic that people will enlist lies in defense of what they claim to be the “truth” (vs. 11,13).
3. Two charges were brought to the council against Stephen: (a) he spoke against the temple; (b) he spoke against the Law of Moses (vs. 13). Both accusations had some validity but were misstated, since Jesus’ mission did not include the physical destruction of the temple, and He had come to *fulfill*, not *destroy*, the Jews’ Law (Matt.5:18).
4. Stephen was unruffled by these events. His face appeared like that of an “angel.” Was it physically changed in its characteristics, or did it simply show the features of a determined messenger with great conviction?
5. Stephen’s *defense* turned into a vigorous *offense* (vs. 7:2-53)!
6. Stephen summarized Jewish history from Abraham to their own time. He established *four* points to answer the charges made against him (vs. 1):
 - (a) God had controlled Israel’s history to fulfill His promises to Abraham. Four examples this control were cited:
 - (1) Abraham himself displayed God’s control. He never realized the fulfillment of the promises (vs. 5). but he was given the seal of circumcision to assure him of their eventual realization (vs. 8);
 - (2) The patriarchs, who became the foundation of a great nation (vs. 11-14) after being delivered to nationhood by mighty acts of God (vs. 36);
 - (3) Joseph, who preserved the nation in spite of extremely serious obstacles (v.9,10);
 - (4) Moses, who became a powerful leader of the nation through the personal endorsement of God (vs. 20-34).

- (b) Israel had consistently rejected God's guidance:
 - (1) Joseph was rejected by the other patriarchs (vs. 9);
 - (2) Moses was rejected in Egypt (vs. 24-29) and in the wilderness (vs. 39-41);
 - (3) The Prophets' call to faithfulness was rejected by the nation despite warnings of an impending captivity by another nation (vs. 42,43).
 - (c) Israel had received undeserved favors from God:
 - (1) Deliverance from Egypt (vs. 34);
 - (2) Preservation in the wilderness (vs. 39-41);
 - (3) Reception of the Law (vs. 38);
 - (4) Tabernacle worship (vs. 44);
 - (5) Permission for a temple (vs. 47).
 - (d) The Jews had always abused God's blessings to them:
 - (1) They violated the Law (vs. 39-43, 53);
 - (2) They assumed that God's Presence was with them as long as they had a "dwelling place" for Him. Theirs was a "localized" God (vs. 48-50).
 - (e) The rejection of Christ followed their usual pattern of disobedience:
 - (1) They were given many prophets to guide them into the proper paths (vs. 37);
 - (2) They killed the prophets for trying to guide them (vs. 52);
 - (3) Now they had murdered the last and greatest of all the prophets (vs. 52).
7. Stephen's ultimate defense was: "It is YOU, not CHRIST, who:
- (a) "Destroyed this place." You have misused the temple of God;
 - (b) "Changed the customs." You have violated the Law God gave for you to follow.
8. The results of Stephen's defense:
- (a) The Sanhedrin was "cut to the heart;"
 - (b) They lost control and gnashed at Stephen with their teeth. This was a strange way for "respectable" leaders to end a meeting!
 - (c) Stephen received heaven's support. He saw Jesus *standing* at God's right hand;
 - (d) Stephen was stoned to death by his opponents.
9. There is a parallel between the death of Stephen and the death of Jesus:
- (a) Both were killed for condemning the Jews' disobedience to God (Matt. 23:14,27 and Acts 7:51);
 - (b) Both were condemned by the Jews without any proof of their guilt;
 - (c) Both were murdered under the pretense that their accusers were keeping the Law;
 - (d) Both looked to God for support. Jesus said, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit" (Luke 23:46). Stephen said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59).
 - (e) Both asked that their murderers be forgiven of their sin.
10. A great persecution began aafter this event. The Jews had set their course and could not retreat.
- (a) The church was scattered abroad. Imagine how the apostles felt [as humans] when this happened.

- (b) The church was “laid waste” but not destroyed.
- (c) There was prison and even death ahead for both men and women members of the young church.

11. This proved to be a *great test* for the church, but God would also use this trial to execute the *remainder* of His eternal GRAND PLAN: *Jesus would become the Savior of all who would become obedient to His gospel!*

Lesson 9: **The First Organization &** (Acts 6:1- 8:4) QUESTIONS
The First Martyr

1. Who were the “Hebrews”? The “Hellenists”? [Consult a Bible dictionary, if necessary.]
2. What was the “daily distribution”? 6:1 [See also Acts 2:44,45; Acts 4:34,35.]
3. What two basic kinds of “church work” are specified in the chapter? 6:2 Why was it thought best to separate these two responsibilities? 6:2-4
4. Three sure signs of *progress* were proclaimed by Luke following the satisfactory solution of this first major crisis among Jerusalem brethren. What are they? 6:7
5. What two general charges were made against Stephen by his opponents? 6:11 These general accusations were followed by what specific complaints? 6:13,14
6. What *first* great man had God used to initiate His plan for Israel? 7:2,5 What means did God use to make a great nation from this one man? 7:8
7. What *second* great man did God use to preserve His plan for Israel? 7:9 How did this happen? 7:9-15
8. What *third* great man did God use to realize His plan to make a great nation? 7:20 What role was this man to have in the fulfillment of God’s plan? 7:35
9. What *fourth* great man did God use to complete His plan to bless all those who would be in His nation? 7:37
10. Israel was consistent in its response to God’s agents of grace. What did they “always” do? 7:51,52

The First Organization & The First Martyr

- 11. How did the members of the Jewish council react to Stephen's message? List their specific reactions. 7:54,57-59**

- 12. What two requests did Stephen make of God as he was under attack from these violent enemies of the truth? 7:59,60 Of what other servant of God does this most remind us? [See Luke 23:34 and Luke 23:46.]**

Jewish Churches in Distant and Near Places

1. The church was “scattered” by a great persecution, which implemented God’s plan to start the process of “going into all the world” with the gospel [See Mark 16:15,16.]. This method of implementation was unexpected, and many disciples likely were bewildered and discouraged by it. However, “If life hands you a lemon, make lemonade.” Turning negative conditions into positive is a great source of strength. The Jerusalem church met and overcame adversity (1Peter 1:6,7). A church can overcome any problem if it maintains its *unity* and *commitment*, but it is very difficult to deal with problems amid internal division and strife. [See Eph. 4:3 to find the *key* to congregational strength.]
2. The Gospel Goes to Samaria [a Distant Place] (Acts 8:5-13).
 - a. Why? This was the next step in God’s plan of evangelism (Acts 1:8).
 - b. How? Not automatically. Prayers alone are not enough. Men must go!
 - c. Who? The Jews had no dealings with Samaritans (John 4:9), but *Jewish Christians did*, so Philip went to Samaria to preach the gospel. [Consult a map.]
3. This Philip was a “deacon” in the Jerusalem church (Acts 6:5) and an “evangelist” who later lived at Caesarea (Acts 21:8). He was not an apostle, but he carried the message of Jesus in “Phase II” of God’s preaching plan. [See Matthew 28:19,20. where “teaching” those converted was emphasized.] The apostles Peter and John went to Samaria only after the Samaritans had “received the word of God” (Acts 8:14).
4. The Conquests by the Gospel in Samaria demonstrate its real power (Romans 1:16) to *conquer a great city* (Acts 8:5-25)!
 - a. The means of the conquests was by *preaching Christ* (vs. 5). Included in this message was the person of Christ, His authority, His church, and His commands (vs. 12). No other message or device was needed to convert lost people to the Lord. [See 1Corinthians 2:2.]
 - b. The objects of the conquests were *the lost*. The Samaritans were unlikely prospects for the gospel; sorcery and superstition were in control of their minds (vs. 9-11). We are often too selective in our decisions about those to whom the gospel should be preached. [See Mark 16:15.]
 - c. The results of the conquests were significant:
 - (1) *Attention was given to the words spoken and the signs performed* (vs. 6). [See Mark 16:20.]
 - (2) *Salvation was offered to the lost and was gladly received* (vs. 12). [See also Mark 16:16.]
 - (3) *The joy experienced by the saved was evident* (vs. 8).

- d. **The completeness of the conquests** was demonstrated in the conversions of :
 - (1) Men and women (vs. 12);
 - (2) Simon the sorcerer (vs. 13), who “also believed” and “was baptized.” His conversion was as genuine as that of all other baptized believers (Mark 16:16).
 - (3) This was an extensive victory for Jesus and the gospel!

5. **A Temporary Setback** was caused by “Simony in Samaria” (vs. 14-24) “Simony” is “traffic in that which is sacred” [Webster].
 - a. The apostles were sent to impart the Holy Spirit to the newly-converted Samaritans (vs. 15). The Spirit had “fallen” on none of them (vs. 16). This “falling” was in addition to the “gift of the Holy Spirit,” which is promised to all who obey the gospel. [See Acts 2:38.]
 - b. The Spirit would be received by the “laying on” of the apostles’ [only] hands.
 - c. This *first effort* at “religion for profit” was conceived by Simon (vs. 18,19) and rejected by the apostles (vs. 20,21).
 - d. The *first restoration* of a wayward Christian was effected (vs. 22-24).
 - e. Two “plans of salvation” are illustrated in Samaria:
 - (1) Aliens [non-citizens] needing initial forgiveness must believe and be baptized;
 - (2) Naturalized citizens who fall away must repent and pray for restoration.

6. Other villages were given the same opportunities as Samaria (vs. 25). The result of these opportunities is unknown, but it is likely that many churches were established.

7. **The Conquest of a Single Soul** followed the conquest of many souls (vs. 26-39). *Every* soul is important to God, but this one possibly is special as an entree for the gospel to go into Ethiopia. This individual was no ordinary person (vs. 27,28).

8. **A great opportunity was *opened* to Philip:**
 - a. It began on an *open road* in a “desert place” (vs. 26). Opportunities often come in unexpected locations.
 - b. It used an *open Book* (vs. 28). God speaks through Scripture. [See Isaiah 55:6-11.] The Book is *always* involved in salvation in one way or another. [See John 8:32.]
 - c. It depended on an *open mind* (vs. 31). Humble people welcome guidance. Pride often obstructs the operation of truth in human hearts.
 - d. It required the use of an *open mouth* (vs. 35). Christians must be eager to share with others the wonderful treasure of salvation that they have discovered (1Peter 3:15).
 - e. It was fully utilized because of an *open heart* that gladly received the truth (vs. 37).
 - f. It gave an *open spirit* enjoyment of every spiritual blessing in Christ (Eph. 1:3).

9. “All the cities [from Azotus to Caesarea] also heard the gospel preached (vs. 40).

10. **Another Special Messenger** was to be prepared to establish Gentile churches. [See Romans 10:13-15.]
 - a. A *special man* was needed for a *special task*. Saul [Paul], a Hebrew and a Pharisee,

had a Gentile background in Tarsus. He enjoyed a unique relationship to both Jews and Gentiles. [See 1 Corinthians 9:20-22.]

- b. Saul's immediate preparation involved a church in a *distant place*-- Damascus. The origin of this church is unrevealed, but doubtless it came from the "scattering."

11. The Church in Damascus included:

- a. *A persistent persecutor* [Saul] (vs. 1-9), who "Yet [further] persecuted saints" (vs. 1).

- (1) He was totally dedicated to his task (vs. 1): He "breathed threats and murder against the disciples." Vincent translates: "Breathing hard, out of threatening and murderous desire." Action fed on action, building to a greater intensity.
- (2) He was determined to act according to the law (vs. 2). He possessed "letters of authority" from the high priest [chief priests, Acts 26:10] It was degrading to a Pharisee such as Saul to seek authorization from Sadducees [chief priests] to punish those who rejected "the law and traditions" of Jews. [See Acts 26:9-11.]
- (3) The Lord appeared to Saul in a heavenly light (vs. 3) and spoke to him about his persecutions of Christians (vs. 4). Saul had instant perception of his great error in judgment about Jesus. Jesus was not dead but was alive; He was not an imposter but was indeed the Son of God (vs. 5)!
- (4) Saul asked what he should do in view of his enormous sin (Acts 22:10). He was to be told in Damascus what his action must be (vs. 6).
- (5) He was obedient to the *heavenly* vision (Acts 26:19) out of a new sense of duty. He previously had been obedient to the *hellish* conviction that had driven him to persecute saints so vigorously (Acts 26:9).

- b. *A dutiful disciple* [Ananias] (vs. 10-18) who was a "certain disciple" (vs. 10) with a solid reputation as "devout" by the Law (Acts 22:12). He possessed great faith and personal courage (vs. 13,14).

- (1) Ananias was equipped as a messenger with a message of great importance:
 - (a) He was motivated by a vision (vs. 10);
 - (b) He was given exact instructions about his mission (vs. 11,12);
 - (c) He was impressed with his obligation to perform his duty by a vision sent to Saul about Ananias' mission (vs. 12);
 - (d) He understood that someone else was depending on his faithfulness to the task he was assigned (vs. 12).
- (2) Ananias was naturally fearful (vs. 13,14) for his personal safety, but the Lord's priorities overrode his own.
- (3) Ananias "went his way" to obey God despite his fears (vs. 17).
- (4) Surprisingly, he discovered that the *dreaded destroyer* [Saul] was now a *pitiful penitent*!
- (5) He told Saul the reason behind his coming (vs.17):
 - (a) The Lord had sent him to take part in restoring Saul's sight and in Saul's receiving the Holy Spirit (vs. 17);
 - (b) Saul would become a witness [apostle] of the sight and sound of a risen Jesus (Acts 22:14,15);

- (c) Saul needed forgiveness before he could embark on his apostleship; he should “arise and be baptized and wash away” his sins (Acts 22:16).
 - (6) Ananias’ credibility was established with Saul by fulfilling the vision Saul had been given about Ananias’ visit (vs. 17,18).
 - (7) Saul obeyed God’s instructions, and another dutiful disciple was added to the church (Acts 2:47)!
- c. *A converted confounder* [Saul], who manifested a complete change in his behavior toward the Lord’s people (vs. 19-22).
- (1) Few converts display such complete conversion [“change”] as Paul did!
 - (2) Saints were amazed to see the *persecutor* of Christ become the *proclaimer* of Christ in the synagogues (vs. 20).
 - (3) Saul had come to Damascus to take prisoners; he now had become a prisoner of the Lord. [See 2Timothy 1:8.]
 - (4) He had caused much suffering among the followers of Jesus; he now must suffer much in behalf of the same Jesus (vs. 16).
 - (5) Saul “increased all the more” in his spiritual strength [the ability to be effective] (vs. 22).
 - (6) He *confounded* [“throw into confusion”] the Jews about Christ, proving His Deity...wouldn’t we like to hear what he said to them??
- d. *A forgiving flock* [*church*] at Damascus (vs. 23-25).
- (1) The Jews’ champion and chief enforcer was now in the same danger he had caused others to face (vs. 23).
 - (2) Even the governor tried unsuccessfully to capture him [See 2Corinthians 11:32]. Saul now faced a very grave situation as a new convert to Jesus.
 - (3) Saul escaped from his enemies when other saints used a basket to deliver him through the wall of the city (2Cor. 11:33).
 - (4) It is ironic that he had become dependent on the compassion of those to whom he had shown none (Acts 26:10)! These disciples in the church at Damascus were truly converted people. [See 1Peter 3:8,9.]
12. The Jerusalem church was more cautious about accepting Saul than Damascus seems to have been (vs. 26,30).
- a. Barnabas helped to overcome their fears with favorable testimony about Saul. We don’t know how Barnabas knew so much about Saul (vs. 27), except that he was himself a “good man and full of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 11:24).
 - b. Saul had apparently been in Arabia for three years prior to coming to Jerusalem. [See Galatians 1:17,18.]
 - c. He disputed [“a learned discussion”] with the same Hellenists who had disputed with Stephen. Paul was fully capable to do this both by his background and by his inspiration (vs. 29).
 - d. His efforts resulted in the same outcome that Stephen had experienced-- they sought

- to kill him (vs. 29)!
- e. Once again, his new brethren rescued him from danger by sending him to Tarsus (vs. 30).
13. Temporary peace followed Saul's conversion. Jewish churches ["church"--footnote, NKJV] in "distant places" [far from Jerusalem]:
- a. Had peace;
 - b. Were edified [by the word];
 - c. Walked in the fear of the Lord;
 - d. Were comforted by the Holy Spirit [perhaps in part by miracles];
 - e. Were multiplied [in numbers] (vs. 31).
14. Jewish churches in "near places"[to Jerusalem, the place of origin] were also prosperous in the Lord (vs. 32,43):
- a. Aeneas, a paralyzed man, was healed by Peter at Lydda, and "many turned to the Lord" (vs. 35);
 - b. Dorcas, a godly saint, was raised from the dead by Peter at Joppa, and many "believed on the Lord" (vs. 42). This church at Joppa was a close-knit family of believers and must have enjoyed the respect of people who knew them (vs. 42).
15. The stage is now set for a *great occurrence-- the establishment of the first Gentile church*. This will take place in Acts chapter 10.....

Lesson 10: **Jewish Churches in Distant
and Near Places**

QUESTIONS

(Acts 8:5- 9:43)

1. Acts 8 reports how the disciples gave both “active” and “passive” compliance to Christ’s instructions about evangelizing the world. Discuss. 8:1,4,5,26,27 [See also, Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:8.]
2. What role did the working of miracles play in evangelizing Samaria? 8:6
3. In what kind of “package” had Simon’s sorcery [magic] been presented to the Samaritans? 8:9,10
4. What were the two main components of Philip’s preaching to the Samaritans? 8:12a How was each component related to the obedience of the Samaritans? 8:12b [See also, Acts 2:38,41,47; 1Corinthians 12:13; Colossians 1:13; Matthew 16:18,19.]
5. What commentary does Acts 8:14-17 provide about the question of what is meant by the “gift of the Holy Spirit” in Acts 2:38? [See also, Acts 8:20.]
6. Acts 8 calls attention to two “plans of salvation.” Explain how these two “plans” are not contradictory. 8:12,13,22 [See also, 1John 1:9; 1Cor. 5:1,5; 2Cor. 7:10-12.]
7. How does the account of Simon’s behavior renounce the claim that a Christian is “once saved, always saved”? 8:12,13, 18-24
8. Show that the preaching of Philip was the same as that of Peter on Pentecost. Also show how the responses to the preaching were the same in all *three* conversions in Acts 2 and Acts 8. Acts 2:36-41; Acts 8:5,12,13,16; Acts 8:35-38
9. Why do you think early church members were referred to as being “of the Way”? 9:2 [See also, Acts 19:9,23; Acts 24:14; Acts 16:17, and especially John 14:6.]

Jewish Churches in Distant and Near Places

10. **Why did the Lord Himself not tell Saul what to do to be saved? 9:6,15,17 [See also, Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8.]**

11. **Did a soon-to-be apostle have to do the same things to be saved from sin as were done by those who were not to become apostles? 9:5,6,9,11,17,18 [See also, Acts 22:16.]**

12. **What was the connection between Saul's baptism and his apostleship? 9:6 [KJV and Confraternity Versions] 15,16,17; Acts 22:10,14,15; Acts 26:16-18 [See also, Acts 1:8 and Acts 2:32.]**

13. **What amazing and immediate change could be seen in Saul's behavior following his conversion? 9:20,21**

14. **With whom did Saul debate about the "name" of Jesus? 9:29 What was the outcome of his debating with them? 9:29,30**

15. **What were the immediate effects of Saul's conversion on the churches of Christ? 9:31**

16. **What kind of "good works" were commended to the church in Acts 9:36,39? Are these the "good works" Paul later says *all* Christians should "walk in"? (Ephesians 2:10)**

17. **Two physical healings are described in Acts 9. What impact did they have on unbelievers who learned of these miracles? 9:35,42**

1. When chapter 9 closes and chapter 10 opens, there is a need yet unfilled: the gospel must go to the Gentiles, as prescribed in Matthew 28:19 and Acts 1:8.
 - a. *Someone* needs to be the first to hear the gospel. God had been particular and had chosen “devout” Jews to hear first (Acts 2:5). Now, a devout Gentile will surely be the most likely candidate to receive the truth of salvation.
 - b. *Someone* needs to take the gospel. [See Romans 10:14,15.] God never transmits the gospel directly but always employs messengers to carry His message [e.g., the conversion of Saul (Acts 9:6)].
 - c. *God* needs to fulfill the promise of the gospel that all nations would participate in His kingdom. [See Isaiah 2:1-4.]

2. God controls all the players and events in chapter 10 in a way that will fill all of these needs.

3. To accomplish His purposes, *God uses TWO MEN*:
 - a. *Cornelius-- a Gentile sinner* (Acts 11:4).
 - (1) He was a “good” sinner (vs. 1,2) and a remarkable soldier, moral and religious.
 - (2) Almost any church would accept such a man’s application for membership, but he was not “good enough” for the Lord’s church!
 - (3) His religious experience [the vision] would seem to confirm his salvation.
 - (4) But, the gospel saves, not good lives nor religious experiences (Romans 1:16,17). The “Greek” [Gentile] was as dependent on the preached gospel as the Jew.

 - b. *Peter-- a Jewish preacher*.
 - (1) He had excellent credentials:
 - (a) He was one of the original apostles;
 - (b) He was the principal preacher of the gospel when it was first proclaimed;
 - (c) He was especially chosen by God for preaching to the Gentiles. (Acts 15:7).
 - (2) But-- He was:
 - (a) Stubborn for Jewish law and traditions and resisted God’s instructions to behave in ways contrary to both (vs. 13,14);
 - (b) Influenced by the “Jewishness” of the Lord’s church at this time:
 - aa. Many believed that the Law was *not* to be abolished (Matthew 5:17);
 - bb. Only Jews had thus far been converted and added to the church;
 - cc. Like many other members, he had always prided himself on keeping the Jewish traditions. [See Acts 3:1 and 10:9.]
 - (c) Only with great difficulty was he able to take a proper stand about the Law and the “traditions of the fathers.” [See Galatians 2:11-14 to appreciate his problem, even after God’s position had been made clear.] [See Acts 15:10.]

4. **HOW** will God use two such different men to fulfill this need that exists?? Remember-- God is in complete control of this entire situation!

5. First-- *God sent TWO VISIONS* [this is God's part in this story about salvation].
 - a. *To Cornelius* (vs. 3-6).
 - (1) An angel was employed to bring the vision; the instructions were clear about what God expected. Cornelius was told what he must do, *not* what would be done for him.
 - (2) Cornelius' prayers were considered as a "memorial" of God's promise to "all flesh" (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:39). Now was the time to fulfill that promise (vs. 4,5).

 - b. *To Peter* (vs. 9-16).
 - (1) His vision was symbolic: the sheet held many *unclean* creatures.
 - (2) He was told to "eat" unclean beasts, creepers, and birds. The Law specifically required the parting of the hoof and the chewing of the cud, fins and scales, and named only certain flying creatures that could be eaten. [See Deuteronomy 14.]
 - (3) God's message in the vision was shocking to Jews: God has cleansed the unclean; men must not question His action.
 - (4) This lesson was taught to Peter not just once but *three* times for emphasis. Was this a recognition of the depth of Peter's prejudices?

6. Second-- *The issues were CLARIFIED* (vs. 17-23a).
 - a. Peter was "perplexed" about the vision's meaning: would the rest of the Law also be removed by God?
 - b. God's timing was perfect [obviously!]:
 - (1) The vision to Cornelius set in motion the process of converting the Gentiles;
 - (2) Messengers had to be dispatched to seek the information necessary to the successful completion of God's plan;
 - (3) Peter's prejudices had to be softened before he would cooperate in this activity;
 - (4) The Spirit's vision of the sheet accomplished this task and removed his doubts about receiving Cornelius' servants [no Jew would ordinarily allow any Gentile into his house].
 - (5) Upon listening to the Gentile messengers, Peter perceived his part in this procedure. He could in good conscience "go down and go with them," as the Spirit directed.
 - (6) Peter's strong Jewish prejudices were beginning to weaken. He not only invited Gentiles into his house, but he also *lodged* them overnight. Unheard of!!

7. Third-- *God received TWO RESPONSES to the TWO VISIONS* [this is Man's part in this story about salvation].
 - a. *The response from Peter*: he went to preach as he had been instructed to do (vs. 23b-29).
 - (1) He took certain [six--Acts 11:12] brethren [Jews] as witnesses of these *strange events*.

- (2) He discovered that many had come together to hear him (vs. 27).
 - (3) He “went in to them,” contrary to his previous convictions. The vision’s message was clear to him: “No man is common or unclean” for the gospel of Christ!”
 - (4) He inquired about the purpose of his mission, even though God and the servants had already stated it (vs. 22). Perhaps Peter was unsure about what “words” he was supposed to speak.
- b. The *response from Cornelius*: he was ready to hear Peter’s preaching (vs. 30-33).
- (1) He recited the vision and the instructions he had received from God.
 - (2) He corroborated the story of the messengers about the message from a “holy angel” (vs. 22) in “bright clothing” (vs. 30).
 - (3) He had gathered his kinsmen and near friends to hear *all things*-- what a **Great Audience** this was (vs. 33)!
 - (4) He confirmed that Peter’s words should relate to *salvation* (Acts 11:14).
 - (5) Now, Peter could have *no doubt* about the nature of the “words” he had been dispatched to speak to Cornelius and to the Gentile nations.
8. Fourth-- *God inspired the SAME SERMON* for Gentiles as for Jews (vs. 34-43). [See Romans 1:16.]
- a. Peter now grasped a basic truth about church membership: *anyone* can be in the Lord’s church *if he fears God and obeys God’s will* (vs. 34,35). [See Psalm 119:172.]
 - b. His sermon revealed how to do **both**. Cornelius was told not only what God had done for man by Jesus but also what **everyone** must do to “work righteousness.”
 - c. This is a “short form” of Peter’s sermon on Pentecost, but it is the *same sermon*. [See the chart, “One Gospel for All.” page 61.]
9. Fifth-- *God gave the SAME SIGN* for the Gentiles as He had for the Jews: the baptism of the Holy Spirit (vs. 44,46).
- a. The Spirit “fell on them” as He had on the apostles earlier (Acts 11:15-17). This was the *baptismal measure* of the Spirit, not the “*gift*” of the Spirit promised to all converted people (Acts 2:38; 5:32).
 - b. This fulfilled the “all flesh” promise [Jewish flesh and Gentile flesh] of the prophets [e.g., Joel 2:28]. The promise was *not* intended to include *every* human individual.
 - c. The *effects* of this “outpouring”-- The Gentiles spoke in tongues and magnified God.
 - d. The *purpose* of the “outpouring”-- [as explained by Peter in Acts 11]-- God wants Gentiles to have the *same water baptism* (vs. 47) and be members of the *same church* as Jews.
 - e. The *role* of the “outpouring”-- It was God’s own testimony of spiritual equality. He gave the *same Holy Spirit baptism* to the Gentiles as He had given to the Jews [in the persons of the apostles]. This served a *different role* than to the apostles, who were on Pentecost inspired to preach and confirm the gospel.
 - f. Holy Spirit baptism is called: “fell on them” (vs. 44); “Poured out” (vs. 45); “gift of the Holy Spirit” (vs. 45); “received the Holy Spirit” (vs.47).

10. Sixth-- *God demanded ONE FORM OF OBEDIENCE* for all sinners. [See Romans 6:17,18.]
 - a. At Cornelius' house: ALL must believe on Christ (vs. 43); ALL must repent ["fear Him" (vs. 35)]; ALL must be baptized in water (vs. 47,48).
 - b. On Pentecost: ALL must believe on Christ (Acts 2:36); ALL must repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38).
 - c. These commands were plain and plainly stated to ALL-- Jews and Gentiles!

11. Seventh-- *God provided ONE CHURCH* for all saved people.
 - a. Jews and Gentiles are one people in Christ.
 - b. The one people were represented here by Peter and his witnesses [Jewish people] and Cornelius and his company [Gentile people].
 - c. These Jews stayed with the Gentile converts "a few days" [NKJV]. They were TOGETHER as brethren equal before the Lord. If a "few days" was as much as a week, or if they included a weekend, then Jews and Gentiles WORSHIPED GOD TOGETHER for the *first time* (vs. 48b)!

Lesson 11: **The First Gentile Church** (Acts 10:1-48) QUESTIONS

1. What qualities did Cornelius possess that made him a “religious sinner”? 10:2
2. About what did Cornelius’ prayers and alms serve as a “memorial” to God? 10:4
[See also, Genesis 12:3; John 10:16; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8.]
3. Did Cornelius receive direct or indirect instructions from God about what was expected of him? 10:5,6
4. Describe the vision that Peter saw and identify its purpose. 10:10-16, 34,35
5. Peter was very confused [“perplexed”-- ASV, RSV] by what he saw and heard in the vision. Why? 10:12-16 [See Deuteronomy 14:3-20.]
6. Cornelius’ servants testified of his lifestyle to Peter. Did they think that Cornelius was likely to be receptive to religious instruction from Peter? 10:22 [See also James 3:13-17.]
7. God’s lesson to Peter about *clean* and *unclean* had meaning on two levels. What was the first lesson with a physical meaning? 10:20,23,28,29
8. The second lesson that Peter needed had a spiritual meaning and was even more important than the first. How do we know that this lesson was hard for Peter to understand? 10:29
9. What was the spiritual concept that Peter finally grasped? 10:34,35 [See Acts 11:14.]
10. Did Cornelius seem to have the same problem as Peter did with this new concept?
10:6,33,24

11. The first part of Peter's sermon about Jesus contained facts with which Cornelius was likely familiar. What were those facts? 10:37-39

12. The second part of the sermon consisted of things about which Cornelius probably had little or no knowledge. What were those things? 10:40-43

13. Any knowledge that Cornelius had about the events described in part two of the sermon might have come to him by what means? Acts 8:40; 10:1

14. What significant event occurred while Peter was preaching [as he began to speak (Acts 11:14)] to the Gentiles? 10:44

15. Three terms are used to describe this event. What are they? 10:44,45,47

16. How do we know that these terms refer to the baptism of the Holy Spirit? 10:47 [See also, Acts 11:15,16.]

17. What *physical* evidence confirmed that what happened to the Gentiles was what had happened previously to the Jews [the apostles]? 10:46 [See Acts 2:4ff.]

18. How do we know that the first Gentile church was composed *at first* of members who had been baptized *twice*? 10:44-48

19. How many times was each Gentile baptized when the gospel was preached later to Gentiles other than Cornelius? 10:47,48 [See also, Ephesians 4:5; 5:25-27; 1Peter 3:20,21.]

ONE GOSPEL FOR ALL

Acts 2; Acts 10

One Faith

(Ephesians 4:5)

Acts 2

Acts 10

Jesus received promise of Spirit
(vs. 33)

Jesus anointed by Spirit
(vs. 38)

Jesus did mighty works and signs
(vs. 22)

Jesus did good and healed
(vs.38)

Signs were done in your midst
(vs. 23)

We are witnesses of His deeds
(vs. 39)

Jesus crucified by lawless men
(vs. 23)

Jesus crucified by Jews
(vs. 39)

Jesus raised by God
(vs. 32)

Jesus raised by God
(vs. 40)

Jesus' resurrection witnessed
(vs. 32)

Jesus' resurrection witnessed
(vs. 41)

Jesus made Lord and Christ
(vs. 36)

Jesus made Judge of all
(vs. 42)

Salvation by name of Christ
(vs. 38)

Salvation by name of Christ
(vs. 43)

Remission of sins promised
(vs. 38)

Remission of sins promised
(vs. 43)

Faith in Christ is essential
(vs. 36)

Faith in Christ is essential
(vs. 43)

Water Baptism commanded
(vs. 38)

Water Baptism commanded
(vs. 47,48)

“There is no respect of persons with God...” (Romans 2:11)

A Second Look at the First Church

1. The first seven chapters of Acts deal with the church at Jerusalem.
2. The disciples were scattered from Jerusalem by a great persecution (Acts 8:1).
3. The focus now will turn in Acts 13 from the Jerusalem church to some Gentile churches.
4. But before the focus changes, we are given another look at Jerusalem saints in chapters eleven and twelve.
5. The faithfulness of these disciples is apparent in Luke's report in these chapters.
6. **CHAPTER ELEVEN: "Keeping the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace" (vs.1-18).**
[This is a basic duty of *every* church of Christ (Ephesians 4:3)!]
 - a. **The Unity of the Spirit** requires several behaviors by members of a local church:
 - (1) **Insisting on strict adherence to God's law given by the Spirit (vs. 1-3).**
 - (a) We might criticize "the circumcision" for challenging Peter's actions, but they lacked the new knowledge that Peter had received directly from God.
 - (b) The inspiration of the Spirit had led Peter into the truth about Gentiles. God would lead others in the same way, not directly, but by Peter's testimony. [See John 16:13.]
 - (c) The objection to "eating" with Gentiles included baptizing them into the same church that Jews were in. "Eating" signified recognition and treatment of others as social and spiritual equals. [See 1Corinthians 5:11.]
 - (d) Their objections were based on the belief that Peter had violated God's law for Jews; Peter had "perceived" the truth (Acts 10:34), but they had not.
 - (e) Peter now could understand that *all* must function under the same law of God. [See 1Corinthians 4:17.] Both "sides" had thought they were keeping the law of God.
 - (2) **Giving careful attention to the complete revelation on matters of difference to arrive at the truth (vs. 4-17).**
 - (a) The repetition in chapter 11 of the account of Peter's experience in Acts 10 emphasizes the importance of the lesson to be learned.
 - (b) Peter enlisted God as a "witness" in his "summation to the jury" by declaring that men must not withstand God. God's position had been made clear when He gave the Spirit to Gentiles, testifying to their suitability for salvation.
 - (3) **Accepting fully whatever truth is discovered about the issue involved (vs. 18).**

- (a) These brethren stopped their arguments and agreed with Peter's conclusion that God had granted "repentance unto life" to the Gentiles.
 - (4) Being genuinely thankful that truth has prevailed in the undertaking (vs. 18).
 - (a) Grudging acquiescence never results in true unity of faith.
- b. The Bond of Peace goes beyond having all parties believing the same truth. Individuals and churches must "strive" [work hard] to establish and maintain harmonious relationships within the body of Christ. Every Christian must:**
- (1) Make a conscious effort to be at peace with all others (vs.19-26).
 - (a) Jewish saints had preached only to Jews before Cornelius' conversion (v.19).
 - (b) Some, following that conversion, preached to Greeks and many were converted at Antioch to lay the foundation for a strong church (vs. 20,21).
 - (c) We don't know the names of these Christians, but *God* does, and their reward for faithfulness is certain for them.
 - (d) The "FIRST CHURCH" responded favorably to this "NEW CHURCH" (vs. 22-26).
 - 1. Jerusalem had no reservations about the events resulting in the church at Antioch. They made no attempt to impose their influence on this "new work" or in other ways to intervene in God's plans.
 - 2. They sent Barnabas to exhort these Genyiles to "cleave to the Lord."
 - 3. They shared in the good work among the Gentiles in recognition that all Christians were in the same body and that what was good for some was good for all. [See 1Corinthians 12:25-27.]
 - 4. Jews and Gentiles were truly "one body" at Antioch. The peace between them made it possible for all to be called "Christians" [a divinely-given name (Isa.62:2) meaning "belonging to Christ"] for the *first time* (vs. 26). This display of unity fulfilled Jesus' greatest desire for these two diverse peoples. [See John 10:16.]
 - (2) Recognize the family relationships that exist in the church (vs. 27-30).
 - (a) All have the *same* Father; all are equal as brethren (vs. 29); all have the same obligations to *serve* and *be served* for the good of the family.
 - (b) Each member must be willing to address the needs of other members despite any uncertainty of personal future circumstances. These Jewish Christians "sent" even though they could not know what the future might hold for them at Jerusalem.
 - 1. A pattern for relieving saints' needs was established and was followed by all New Testament churches: (1) Relief was sent by the local church *for* the assistance of brethren, not people of the world; (2) the relief was sent *to* the elders of other churches , not institutions of other kinds.
 - 2. Barnabas and Saul were used as messengers from Antioch to the receiving churches.

7. CHAPTER TWELVE: The *FIRST* struggle between the “old” kingdom [Israel] and the “new” kingdom [the Lord’s church].
- a. The old kingdom, under Herod, king of the Jews, represents the *organized enemies* of the church.
 - b. The old kingdom under its Jewish leadership now adopted a different tactic to suppress the new kingdom. They would afflict “certain” prominent members of the church rather than members in general, as Saul had done (vs. 1-5a).
 - c. The new kingdom [church] prayed for Peter (vs.5b). This “weapon” was far mightier than any sword, prison, guards, or chains that might be used by the old kingdom. [See 2Corinthians 10:4.]
 - d. Herod was about to “bring him [Peter] forth” [to execute] (vs. 6a), but God intervened and decided the outcome of this conflict (vs. 6b-17).
 - e. Unrighteousness is always a poor loser (vs. 18,19).
 - (1) Christ’s enemies should have admitted the obvious-- God had *won* with a miracle.
 - (2) Instead, they questioned the guards for a *physical explanation* for the escape, even though what had happened was contrary to all *physical reason*.
 - (3) They chose to refuse or ignore the available evidence and resorted to a physical answer to God’s verdict in this matter. [See 1Corinthians 2:14.]
 - f. God taught an arrogant sinner a final lesson (vs. 20-23).
 - (1) Herod had not learned from his experience with God’s miracle for Peter’s release. Sin has a way of blinding sinners to plain evidence.
 - (2) He accepted praise that glorified him as a god; this was considered as *the supreme sinfulness* in any Jew. He “gave not God the glory” (vs. 23).
 - (3) He was eaten by worms. Josephus says that it took five days for him to die a slow and agonizing death. This occurred in A. D. 44.
 - g. The *new kingdom* [the church] moved on in a continuing victory over the *old kingdom* [national Israel] (vs. 24,25).
 - (1) The “word” multiplied [preaching increased] and the church grew in proportion to the preaching. [See Acts 6:7.]
 - (2) Barnabas, Saul, and Mark came to Antioch from Jerusalem, having completed the work of benevolence they had been appointed to do (Acts 11:30).

A Second Look at the First Church

1. Some Jewish Christians in Jerusalem rebuked Peter for actions he had taken toward Gentiles in Caesarea. Which action(s) did they specify? 11:1-3 Why did they object to one particular action? [See Deuteronomy 28:1; Matthew 10:5,6; John 4:9; Matthew 9:11; 1Corinthians 5:9,11.]
2. In Luke's narration of Cornelius's conversion, he described Peter's message to Cornelius in several ways. What were they? Acts 10:6,22,32,33 In his own rehearsal of this event, how did Peter describe the importance of that message? 11:14
3. Was the baptism of the Spirit something that was frequently experienced in the early days of the gospel? 11:15
4. Were these Gentiles baptized in the Spirit as a "second work of grace" to prove that they had indeed *been saved* by the Lord? 11:14,15
5. What was the reaction of Peter's critics after they had received a straightforward account of the facts of this disputed incident? 11:18
6. What happened at Antioch that made the situation there different from that of other contemporary churches? 11:19-21
7. How did Jerusalem Christians feel and what did they do to show their feelings when they learned about the remarkable development at Antioch? 11:22,23
8. Where was the first use of the name "Christian" to describe the disciples of Jesus? 11:26 Why was this the appropriate place for this name to be used? [See Isaiah 62:2.]

Lesson 12: **A Second Look at** (Acts 11:1- 12:25) **QUESTIONS**
the First Church

9. What gross mistake was made in the original King James Version in translating Acts 12:4? [Compare the words in the KJV with the same words in another version.]
10. What was the “expectation of the Jewish people”? 12:11
11. What did the early church do that was later urged upon all Christians? 12:5,12; 1Thessalonians 5:17
12. What strange reaction was exhibited by the first person to contact Peter following his miraculous release from prison? 12:13,14
13. What indication do we have about Herod’s sincerity in seeking for the truth about Peter’s escape? 12:18,19
14. What did Herod do that was sinful enough to bring severe and immediate punishment from the Lord? 12:21-23 Was this similar to the sin of Ananias in Acts 5:4?
15. Growth was enjoyed by the church following their show of unity and love (Acts 11:21). Growth continued to be rapid when people saw the power of God in the church (Acts 12:5-23). What kind of opposition unsuccessfully attempted to inhibit the growth of the cause of Christ at this time? 12:1-4

The First “Campaign for Christ”

1. This chapter [thirteen] deals with what is often called “Paul’s first missionary journey.”
2. A “campaign” is a “connected series of operations to bring about some desired result.” Does this describe Paul’s work of preaching? Did he engage in a *series* of efforts to take the gospel to the lost? Yes, at least nine cities were involved. Is this a *connected* series? Yes, a map reveals the proximity of these locations to one another. Is a particular *result* intended by the apostle? Yes, Paul sought to: (1) secure the salvation of the Gentiles; (2) fulfill his part of the Great Commission to Gentile nations; (3) satisfy the duty imposed on him by the Lord to “bear His name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15).
3. In these two chapters [thirteen and fourteen], we discover several “FIRSTS” in the “campaign” to take the gospel to the Gentiles:
 - a. Paul’s *first preaching trip* (13:1-3);
 - b. Paul’s *first Gentile convert* to his preaching (13:12);
 - c. Paul’s *first leadership role* in the Lord’s work;
 - d. Paul’s *first sermon* (13:16-41);
 - e. Paul’s *first rejection* as a preacher of the gospel (13:45);
 - f. Paul’s *first death* (?) (14:19).
4. CHAPTER THIRTEEN: *Paul’s First Preaching Trip* (13:1-3).
 - a. Barnabas and Saul were separated by the Holy Spirit from the other prophets and teachers at Antioch to do a special work.
 - b. They were sent to that work by the prophets and the church in accord with the Spirit’s directions (vs. 4).
5. Paul’s *First Gentile Convert* (vs. 4-12).
 - a. His first Gentile prospect was a “good one.” He was a man of understanding (vs. 7); and a seeker of truth (vs. 7).
 - b. But-- he was temporarily hindered from the truth by the sorcery of a Jewish “false prophet” named Bar-Jesus [“Son of Jesus”] (vs.8).
 - c. Paul, “filled with the Holy Spirit” (vs. 9), gave a scathing rebuke and a severe punishment to Bar-Jesus (vs. 10,11).
 - d. There are several possible reasons for Paul’s action:
 - (1) Because of *who* Bar-Jesus was: a *Jew* “gone bad” into sorcery [a false prophet];
 - (2) Because of the *curse* placed on false prophets by true prophets [e.g., Ezekiel 13]

- and by Jesus (Matthew 7:15);
- (3) Because of *what* he was doing; perverting the Lord's ways and turning Sergius Paulus from the faith (vs. 8); a soul was involved, Paul's first *Gentile* soul. Perhaps the severity of the punishment reflected God's *determination to execute His plan!*
- e. The desired result was achieved: Sergius Paulus "believed" when he saw the miracle. This was the primary role intended for miracles in the early church (Mark 16:20).
6. Paul's *First Leadership Role* (vs. 9-13).
- a. He took the initiative in resolving the problem with Bar-Jesus (vs. 9ff.);
- b. Luke confirms this role: "Paul and his party" set sail from Paphos (vs. 13);
- c. Paul led in the preaching in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia (vs. 15,16ff.);
- (1) His role did not restrict Barnabas' participation in the work (vs.43,46,50,51).
7. Paul's *First (recorded) Sermon* (vs. 13:16-41).
- a. He first preached to Jews in their synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia.
- (1) It was God's plan for Jews to hear first (vs. 46);
- (2) These were God-fearing Jews who should have been "good" prospects (vs. 16).
- b. Paul's sermon is a summary of Israel's historical relationship with God and their prophets.
- c. [A good outline of the sermon may be found in Commentary on Acts by H. Leo Boles, page 215.]
- d. The Jews had fulfilled the prophecies about Jesus' condemnation and crucifixion (vs. 29), but God had fulfilled those about Jesus' resurrection (vs. 33) and justification (vs. 34,39).
- e. The sermon deals with *two prominent themes*:
- (1) God's involvement in Israel's history: He "chose" (vs.17); "exalted" (vs. 17); "led forth" (vs. 17); "bore them" (vs. 18); "destroyed seven nations" (vs. 19); "gave the land" (vs. 19); "gave judges" (vs.20); "gave Saul" (vs. 21); "raised up David (vs. 22); "raised up...a Savior...Jesus" (vs. 23); raised up Jesus" [in resurrection] (vs.33). *God had always moved toward the ultimate blessing of salvation for His people* (vs. 39).
- (2) God's grace had been demonstrated in His response to every failure of Israel: He "put up with their ways" (vs. 18); He gave judges to deliver them from the consequences of not appropriately occupying the land of promise (vs. 20); Saul's disobedience was meant to teach them a lesson about rebellion (vs. 21,22); David had saved the kingdom for the nation (vs. 22); God had raised Jesus after they had killed Him (vs. 28,30); remission of sins was offered eventually despite their wickedness (vs. 38).
- (3) God's warning to Israel was clear: *Don't fulfill another negative prophecy* [e.g., Habbakuk 1:5] *by rejecting Jesus* (vs. 40,41).
8. Paul's *First Rejection of His Preaching* (vs. 13:44-47).
- a. Some of his listeners seemed interested in what he said (vs. 43).
- b. There were two results of Paul's preaching that were typical: [See 2Cor. 2:16.]

- (1) The Jews were jealous; contradicted the sermon; blasphemed; judged themselves unworthy of eternal life (vs. 45,46);
 - (2) The Gentiles were glad; glorified the word; were disposed to eternal life; believed (vs. 48).
9. Paul and Barnabas [and others?] spread the gospel throughout that region (vs. 49).
- a. Persecution was stirred up against them by Jews and by city leaders.
 - b. They were expelled from that area (vs. 50).
 - c. They came to Iconium, where the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit (vs. 51,52).

10. CHAPTER FOURTEEN: *“Living Dangerously in Gentile Cities.”*

- a. Iconium: *“Danger Delayed”* (vs. 1-7).
 - (1) Many believed Paul’s message, but some chose to believe the unbelieving Jews (vs. 1,2). [See Matthew 23:13.]
 - (2) The city was seriously divided between the Jews and the “apostles” [Barnabas was an “apostle” (“one sent”--Acts 13:1-3) but not of the same rank as Paul] (vs. 4).
 - (3) “A part” of the city refused to believe, in spite of signs and wonders done by Paul and Barnabas (vs. 3,4).
 - (4) A death plot was good reason for the preachers to flee from Iconium to pursue their mission in other places (vs. 5-7).
 - (5) Thus-- death was avoided, but danger was only *delayed*!
- b. Lystra: *“Danger Avoided”* (vs. 8-18).
 - (1) There are different kinds of danger in serving the Lord. Paul had avoided physical danger in Iconium, but he faced a danger in Lystra that was even more serious: the danger of allowing gospel truth to be perverted into a grave error.
 - (2) A crippled man was healed because of a strong faith (vs. 8-10).
 - (3) Their miraculous powers led the pagans to mistake Barnabas for Jupiter [Zeus] and Paul for Mercury [Hermes] (vs. 11,12).
 - (4) Worship was pressed upon them by the misguided citizens (vs. 13).
 - (5) This great error was strongly rejected by Paul and Barnabas (vs. 14,15).
 - (6) They took occasion to teach the truth about the true God’s nature (vs. 15-17).
 - (a) His beneficent actions toward the nations was emphasized (vs. 17).
 - (7) The would-be worshipers were “restrained” if not convinced (vs. 18), and a serious danger to the truth was avoided.
- c. Lystra: *“Danger Realized”* (vs. 19,20).
 - (1) Paul’s Jewish enemies were *zealous*. It was some 78 miles from Antioch to Iconium and about 18 miles from Iconium to Lystra. These foes were very determined in their opposition to the truth!

- (a) They “persuaded the multitudes” to take violent action against God’s messengers.
- (2) Paul was stoned [we don’t know why Barnabas escaped unless it was because Paul had been the “chief speaker”] and was “supposed” to be dead. This supposition may have been accurate [See 2Corinthians 12:2-4.].
- (3) Paul “rose up” in a rapid and miraculous recovery, whether dead or just nearly dead (vs. 20).
- (4) He resumed his mission “the next day” in Derbe (vs. 20).
- (5) Many were converted in Derbe. People doubtless were impressed when they learned about Paul’s remarkable experience of danger and recovery in Lystra.

d. Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch: “Danger Spurned” (vs. 21-23).

- (1) How could Paul refuse to give way to fears raised by his treatment at Lystra? Was it that he was just a very brave man?
- (2) Yes, but it was *more* than that! He was entirely focused on the dangers that were faced by others and on his duty to help them to avoid those dangers.
 - (a) His task was to confirm the disciples in the faith;
 - (b) He was determined to exhort the saints to continued faithfulness;
 - (c) Others must be warned that discipleship involves tribulations (vs. 22).
 - 1. Tribulation should be an opportunity for encouragement, not discouragement, for God’s people.
 - 2. Temptations to waver are very real and near to all of us; we need constantly renewed strength to be able to prevail in the face of trials.
- (3) Elders were appointed in *every* church (vs. 23). This was part of Paul’s goal to “strengthen” the saints to be faithful. [See 1Peter 5:2-- “tend the flock...”]
 - (a) Every Christian needs the strength available to him in a local church.
 - (b) Elders have a duty to provide ways for members to grow in strength.

11. Paul’s return to Antioch of Syria (vs. 24-28).

- a. Paul and Barnabas rehearsed all that *God* had done through them; there was no boasting about what *they* had accomplished (vs. 27).
- b. A door of faith had been opened to the Gentiles (vs. 27). This fact made the dangers they had faced very worthwhile!
- c. Did Paul tell the brethren at Antioch about the persecutions he had faced while preaching in Gentile cities? Probaby, but his emphasis was no doubt on having accomplished the work he had been sent by God to do. This was work that *God* had appointed for him: the conversion of the Gentiles to the Lord!

Lesson 13: **The First “Campaign for Christ”** (Acts 13:1- 14:23) QUESTIONS

1. In what sense was Paul’s first preaching trip a “campaign for Christ”? [Consult the meaning of “campaign.”]
2. Who were the “campaigners” who would take the gospel to Jews and Gentiles? 13:2,5
3. Paul treated Elymas [Bar-Jesus] differently from the way Peter had treated Simon. Why do you think these two soocerers were treated differently? 13:6-11; Acts 8:13,18-24
4. Paul initiated a practice when he arrived in Antioch of Pisidia that he often repeated in his subsequent preaching. What was it? 13:14 Why did he do that? 13:46,16
5. Who was Paul’s *first Gentile* convert? 13:12
6. At Antioch, Paul preached his *first recorded sermon* in which he sought to prove that Jesus is the Jews’ Messiah. List the things that God had done for the Jews that had led eventually to the coming of Jesus to the nation. 13:17-23
7. Paul gave three proofs that Jeus is the Christ. The first is found in verses 24,25; the second in verses 27-29; and the third in verses 30-37. List them, using only a few words for each point.
8. Paul’s sermon concluded with what promise and what warning? 13:38-41
9. How many Gentiles were converted at Antioch of Pisidia through Paul’s efforts? 13:48

The First “Campaign for Christ”

10. Paul experienced in Antioch the *first recorded rejection of his preaching*. Who rejected his gospel and what was the extent of their rejection? 13:45,50

11. Into what Gentile cities did Paul take the gospel after leaving Antioch? 14:1,6,20,21
[Locate these cities on a map of Paul’s missionary journeys.]

12. Both Paul and Peter had occasion to heal a lame man. What were some things common to both incidents and what things were different? 14:8-10; Acts 3:2-10

13. How did the results of Paul’s miracles differ between Iconium and Lystra? 14:3-5; 8-13,18

14. What sudden change of attitude toward Paul and his companions occurred at Lystra? How many people were involved in such a change? 14:18,19

15. Paul could already speak from experience when he gave advice about faithfulness to the disciples in Antioch, Lystra, and Iconium. What did he tell them? 14:21,22
[See also 2Timothy 3:12.]

Lesson 14: **The First Religious Conference** (Acts 15:1-35)

1. Religious conferences are common in our time. A conference is “A formal consultation or discussion; interchange of views; also, a meeting therefor..a stated meeting of preachers and others, invested with authority to take cognizance of ecclesiastical matters” (Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary). An investigation of the history of religious conferences will reveal that they were begun by the Catholic Church in the ninth century when church leaders met each month. Their aim was for a “general consultation and mutual edification” (Shaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, Vol. 3, p. 220).
2. Religious conferences and conventions usually have certain characteristics. They are:
 - a. Planned and meet at regularly scheduled times;
 - b. Organized with duly elected or appointed officers;
 - c. Structured and governed by adopted procedural rules of conduct;
 - d. Composed of delegates to represent numerous churches;
 - e. Respectful of the authority of delegates to represent or act on agenda items;
 - f. Productive of decisions reached by the majority vote of delegates;
 - g. Authoritative to bind decisions on churches in varying degrees [some absolutely].
3. The conference held at Jerusalem was quite different. It consisted simply of a meeting to “confer” about a pressing problem that confronted the local churches. “To confer” is to “converse; consult; compare views; hold conference” (Webster). This conference:
 - a. Was convened without prior formal scheduling;
 - b. Was unorganized and functioned without officers or appointed leaders;
 - c. Had unstructured procedures that followed no previously-adopted agenda;
 - d. Delegated no authority to participants to make decisions for others;
 - e. Employed no voting to determine the majority will of those taking part.
4. This conference in Acts 15 was not to meet and decide what course of action the churches should take about the matter under consideration. The decision had *already been made!* The Lord Himself had clearly announced His position about whether or not the Gentiles must subscribe to any part of the Law of Moses to be saved and to be regarded as first-class citizens in His new kingdom:
 - a. Peter had proclaimed at Cornelius’ house: “To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins”(Ac.10:43).
 - b. Paul, although once zealous for the Law, fully understood the equality that had been granted to the Gentiles. In his sermon at Antioch in Pisidia, he declared that “by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you [the Jews] could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:39).

5. The gathering at Jerusalem merely provided an opportunity for those with pertinent information to *make an unequivocal statement* about the truth contained in that information and to *clarify once for all* how that truth must govern the behavior of all affected parties in the future.

6. *The Problem for Discussion in this Conference* (vs. 1,2a,5).
 - a. Judaizers had raised the issue of circumcision and Law-keeping at Antioch as an obstacle to the Gentiles' salvation by the gospel.
 - b. The Pharisees had taken the lead in this controversy (vs.5).
 - c. The circumcision promoted by these agitators was not the same as that which had been initiated in Abraham and his descendants. That circumcision was intended for Jews as their promise to observe *all* the dictates of the Law of Moses. It was a symbol of humility and dependence on God. This one had devolved into an act of self-righteousness and religious arrogance. Jews wanted Gentiles to submit to *certain parts* of Moses' Law as a way of admitting the superiority of all things Jewish.
 - d. Jesus had promised that He would unite "other sheep" with the Jews and both would dwell as "one flock" with "one shepherd" (John 10:16).
 - (1) This unity would require one of two changes in previous arrangements:
 - (a) Gentiles could adopt Jewish practices of the Law, and all would serve God in the same way that Jews had served Him for many centuries. Or,
 - (b) The Law of Moses could be removed as a religious guide so that neither Jew nor Gentile would serve God according to Mosaic practices but both would serve in a way entirely different than any people had done before.
 - (2) Of course, Jews would prefer the *first* option, but that would negate God's plan for a new covenant, which He had foretold in both the Law and the prophets [e.g., Deuteronomy 18:15; Jeremiah 31:31-34.]
 - (3) The *second* option alone could effect the removal of "enmity" between Jews and Gentiles (Ephesians 2:15). Requiring obedience to any vestige of the Law would make true unity impossible, for the Law had been the leading cause of division between the two peoples.

7. *The Solution to this Problem Attempted* (vs. 2b-3).
 - a. Paul, Barnabas, Titus [See Galatians 2:1], and others were sent to Jerusalem to confer with other apostles and elders about "the question."
 - b. Paul was a reluctant participant [Read Galatians 2:1-10.] His apostleship to the Gentiles was not dependent on others for its authority. [See Galatians 1:15-17.]
 - c. He first spoke privately to the church "pillars" [James, Peter, and John], not for confirmation of *his* gospel but to confirm that "theirs" should not conflict and cause problems. There could not be *two gospels*!
 - d. Full agreement was reached among them that there was *one gospel* for all flesh.

8. *The Conference at Jerusalem Conducted* (vs. 4-21).
 - a. Meeting 1: The church, apostles, and elders were told about "all things" that God had done with Paul and Barnabas among the Gentiles. The question of circumcision

apparently was not a central topic of discussion in this meeting.

- b. **Meeting 2:** A private meeting was held with the “pillars” of the church as a consequence of certain Pharisees “rising up” against a report of Gentiles being saved without submitting to circumcision and “keeping the law of Moses” (vs. 5). Galatians 2: 3-10 discloses details of this meeting with the “pillars” to defend against the allegations of the Pharisees. This meeting ended with a full exoneration of any wrongdoing and with complete support from those whose efforts had been and would continue to be among Jewish prospects.
- c. **Meeting 3:** This was the “big” meeting for which Paul, Barnabas, and Titus had come to Jerusalem. It was intended to deal more publicly with the knotty problem of the Gentiles’ relationship to the Law.
 - (1) “The multitude” of the “whole church” attended this conference (vs. 12, 22), but only the apostles and elders assumed the responsibility of coming together “to consider this matter” (vs. 6).
 - (2) Both sides were allowed to speak about the issue in question, and “much dispute” characterized the early part of the meeting (vs. 7).
 - (3) Agreement among the apostles had already been established [See Meeting 2.], but the support of the truth by the whole church was crucial to the continued evangelization of the Gentiles. A full hearing from all parties was important.
 - (4) Three responses to the “disputing” were reported by Luke. These came from men highly qualified to speak on the matter: Peter, Paul, Barnabas, and James.
 - (a) *Peter* stated pertinent facts: the fact that God had made “no distinction” between Jews and Gentiles in their conversions (vs. 9); the fact that the Law had been an unbearable yoke for the Jews (vs. 10); the fact that the apostles and elders believed [See Romans 10:17] that faith, not law, was the basis of salvation for both nations (vs. 11). [These pronouncements, incidentally, are the *last recorded words* of Peter in Acts.]
 - (b) *Paul and Barnabas* added the fact that many miracles had been done among the Gentiles to expedite their conversion to the Lord (vs. 12). Their affirmations seemed to have a quieting effect on the agitators (vs. 12).
 - (c) *James* [the Lord’s brother and prominent leader (elder?) in the Jerusalem church] took the role of “finisher” in this conference. Perhaps that was because he might have been expected by many to be more inclined toward the “Jewish position” on the Law than the others. Contrarily, James cited Jewish *prophecies* which anticipated the *facts* related by the others [See Amos 9:11, 12.] and showed that Gentiles had a right to seek the Lord and to be a part of the “tabernacle of David” (vs. 16).
 - (5) A summary of the conclusions reached by the apostles and elders was given by James to those gathered for the conference about Gentiles and the Law. His remarks [as well as some of the points made by the others] may have been planned earlier when Meeting 2 was conducted. He proposed that:
 - (a) The Gentiles should not be “troubled” [by the Law] when converted (vs. 19);
 - (b) Ante-Law restrictions on all human behavior, rather than legalistic details of the Law, should be emphasized in teaching among Gentiles (vs. 20);

- (c) The Law of Moses could be held in respect [and perhaps even observed as custom] by Jewish converts if they so desired (vs. 21).
9. *The Action of the Participants in the Jerusalem Conference* (vs. 22-30).
- a. Several local brethren were chosen to accompany Paul and Barnabas with a letter to the church at Antioch from the apostles and elders, affirming the truth upon which all had agreed. Two prophets (vs. 32), Judas and Silas, were in that number.
 - b. The doctrine of the trouble-making Pharisees was disavowed (vs. 24).
 - (1) Note-- An important principle of Bible authority is established here. *Every doctrine or practice* in the church is disavowed if it has no “such commandment” of inspiration upon which to rest!
 - (2) Anything not supported by an inspired direct command or statement, an approved example, or a necessary inference is prohibited to the church now just as it was in the first century!
 - c. Support was expressed for Paul and Barnabas as “beloved” men who had “risked their lives” for the cause of Christ (vs. 25,26).
 - d. Judas and Silas, the two prophets, were charged to add their oral testimony to the written statement of the letter about the Gentiles’ freedom from the Law (vs. 27).
10. *The Reaction of the Gentiles to the Conclusions of the Jerusalem Conference* (vs. 31-35).
- a. The “epistle” was delivered to the church at Antioch. [This is the first New Testament letter of which we have a record.]
 - b. The church rejoiced and was encouraged at the information in the letter (vs. 31).
 - c. Judas and Silas, the prophets, exhorted and strengthened the brethren at Antioch in their new-found liberty in Christ as first-class citizens in the kingdom (vs. 32).
 - d. Peace apparently characterized the relationships among Christians in Antioch (vs. 33), and the progress of the gospel was unimpeded by friction between Greeks and Jews (vs. 34,35). This was in great contrast to the situation when chapter 15 began.
 - e. Undoubtedly, the gospel to the Gentiles was preached at Antioch and in other places with renewed enthusiasm and anticipation. The conference at Jerusalem had proved to be very worthwhile!

Lesson 14: **The First Religious Conference** (Acts 15:1-35)
QUESTIONS

1. Why was the church at Antioch especially vulnerable to the claims made by the advocates of the Law who came from Judea? 15:1 [See also Acts 11:20,21,24.]
2. What was the claim made by these Jewish teachers that caused such a severe controversy within the church at Antioch? 15:1
3. Is there any evidence that there had been any expressed revelation from God before now about the practical relationship between the Law of Moses and the Law of Christ since Pentecost? If not, why might this information have been delayed until now?
4. What particular part of the membership of the Jerusalem church was adamant that *all* converts were required to “keep the law of Moses”? 15:5
5. Did the apostles and elders convene in Jerusalem to make a decision about the matter under dispute that would be based on their personal judgment? 15:11,19,22,25, 28,29
6. What was Peter’s main argument against imposing the Law on Gentile converts? 15:10
7. Paul and Barnabas emphasized what facts as their contribution to this discussion? 15:12
8. James resorted to what kind of proof in an effort to prevent the binding of the Law on Gentiles when they obeyed the gospel? 15:15-18
9. What four common Gentile practices were likely to present real everyday problems for Gentile Christians? 15:28,29 What word was used to describe other things [like the Law] that would only be burdens for them to bear? 15:28
10. What means of communication did the apostles and elders employ to give the

Lesson 14: **The First Religious Conference** QUESTIONS

members at Antioch the answer to their question about the Law and the gospel?
15:23,27

11. The apostles and elders appealed to *one fact* in their letter that should be *then and thereafter* a basis upon which ALL religious questions should be decided. What was this important truth? 15:24
12. Who were the parties whose endorsements of James' suggestions about the Gentiles were included in the letter sent to Antioch? 15:28
13. How was the letter about the Law received by the Christians at Antioch? 15:30,31

Lesson 15: **First Gentile Churches on a** (Acts 15:36- 17:15)
New Continent

1. *A Plan That Had To Be Changed* (Acts 15:36-41).
 - a. “After some days” [more than a year later] Paul took the initiative to revisit churches and survey their progress in the gospel (vs. 36).
 - b. Paul always maintained a deep concern for the spiritual welfare of his brethren. [See 2Corinthians 11:28.] He knew that it is crucial to ground new converts in the faith (Colossians 2:6,7).
 - c. A “sharp contention” [Gr., *paroxysm*, “any sudden, violent action or emotion”] arose. Barnabas determined to take Mark, his cousin, on their proposed journey. Paul, however, judged the appropriateness of that plan by Mark’s past performance in the work and disagreed (vs. 37,38). We can only guess whether or not this was a case of partiality versus prejudice, but their disagreement exposed the *humanity* of both of these remarkable preachers.
 - d. Paul took Silas, who had close ties to the Jerusalem church, and they were commended to their new work by the Jerusalem church. Barnabas sailed away with Mark to a different field of labor. Thus, both men were “headed home,” Barnabas to Cyprus and Paul to Syria.
 - e. A blessing sprang out of difficulty, as it often does. Now, there were *two teams of preachers* to “confirm churches” and to preach to the lost (vs. 41). Happily, neither principal in this contention allowed any bitterness to color their future relationship. [See 1Corinthians 9:6 and 2Timothy 4:11.]
 - f. Like Barnabas and Paul, we must never allow personal differences to hinder the cause of Christ in any way. The well-being of truth is much more important than any of us!
2. *A Good Plan That Was Carried Out* (Acts 16:1-5).
 - a. A visit was planned to see churches that had been established on Paul’s first trip, including those in Syria and Cilicia (Acts 15:41), whose locations are unrevealed. The churches at Derbe and Lystra (vs. 1) were among the **FIRST** churches planted by Paul. [See Acts 14:6,7.]
 - b. Timothy was contacted at Lystra. He was an unusual young man:
 - (1) He was a disciple, possibly one of Paul’s earlier converts. [See 1Timothy 1:2];
 - (2) He was the product of a mixed marriage between a believer and an unbeliever and between a Jew and a Gentile;
 - (3) He was uncircumcised and therefore did not follow Jewish traditions;
 - (4) He was “well reported of” by the brethren, as were Cornelius (Acts 10:22) and Ananias (Acts 22:12);
 - (5) He had a built a good reputation for himself despite his youth (1Timothy 4:12) and had not been “sowing his wild oats.”

- c. Paul *planned* to use Timothy in the work of evangelism (vs. 3). Older church members [both men and women] should encourage those who are younger to take up the work of Christ.
- d. Paul *planned* for Timothy's effectiveness. He circumcised him "because of Jews" who might resent his indifference to their traditions. Circumcision had originated in the Abrahamic covenant and predated the Mosaic Law. It was *allowed* for Jewish converts, if they did not bind it on themselves or on others as necessary for salvation.
- e. "Decrees" [See Acts 15:28,29.] were delivered to the brethren ["them"] to be obeyed.
- f. Churches were strengthened and grew in number. This was the manifestation of a good plan:
 - (1) The plan: to show Jews and Gentiles how they could live together in the church so that each "side" might enjoy the *true* relationship between the Law and the Gospel of Christ.
 - (2) The plan's agent: Timothy, who as a fleshly Jew [partially], could illustrate how the Law [circumcision] could be respected as a national tradition without connecting that respect to gospel salvation, which is totally outside the Law.
 - (3) The plan's action: The circumcision of Timothy would be a practical demonstration of the spiritual lesson that Paul sought to teach both Jews and Gentiles.

3. *Another Plan That Had to be Changed* (vs. 6-12).

- a. Paul traveled through Phrygia and Galatia, where he fell ill. [See Galatians 4:13,14.] He intended to go to "Asia" [Lydia, Mysia, Caria, Ephesus] but was forbidden by the Holy Spirit to do so. How was the warning delivered? By spoken message? By his illness? We are not told.
- b. Churches were established despite this change of plans. New works were planted in Phrygia [Colossae, Laodicea, Hieropolis [See Colossians 4:13] and Galatia. [See 1Corinthians 16:1.]
- c. A plan to go into Bythia was also changed by the Spirit. How?
- d. Paul was directed to Troas, where he saw a vision of a man from Macedonia calling for help. Luke evidently joined Paul and Barnabas at Troas [in 16:8, it is "they," but in 16:10, it is "we].
- e. The evangelists "concluded" [probably through their own judgment] that they had been "called" to go into Macedonia to preach the gospel to the Gentiles there.

4. *God's Own Plan For Preaching in Europe* (Acts 16:11-40).

- a. The first convert in Europe (vs. 11-15) was Lydia, a *woman* with a good heart.
 - (1) She was a very good "prospect" for the truth:
 - (a) She worshiped God as a Jew or as a proselyte (vs. 14);
 - (b) She had shut down her business on the sabbath day (vs. 13);
 - (c) She was willing to listen to the gospel with an open mind (vs. 14);
 - (d) She possessed an honest heart unimpeded by religious prejudice (vs. 14);
 - (e) She was responsive to the truth when she heard it taught (vs. 15);
 - (f) She was grateful for the opportunity to learn and to obey the gospel (vs. 15).

- (2) Her good qualities as a “prospect” were to no avail as long as she was beset by the typical negative mindset of the Jews. Her mind was “closed” to the reality of a crucified and risen Messiah. She entertained instead the concept of an earthly king on an earthly throne.
 - (3) Lydia’s heart was “opened” to the true Savior by the “things spoken by Paul,” just as Jesus had “opened the understanding” of other disciples by the things He taught them (Luke 24:45,46). No direct operation of the Spirit was necessary to her conversion; the simple word of the gospel was sufficient to the task.
 - (4) No infant baptism was practiced in this case of conversion, as some contend. God shows no partiality (Romans 2:11.) He requires those whom He accepts first to “fear Him and work righteousness” (Acts 10:34,35). If Lydia was required to open her heart through faith in the spoken gospel and to be baptized, so were all others in her “household” who were saved (vs. 15).
- b. Other converts resulted from *another woman’s* relationship to the truth (vs. 16-40).
- (1) A maid with a “python spirit” [possibly connected with the oracle at Delphi, Greece] acknowledged the status of “Paul and us” (vs. 17) just as other demons had done in confessing the nature of Christ (Mark 3:11).
 - (2) This endorsement troubled Paul; not wishing to have any alliance with an evil spirit, he cast out the demon from the maid. As Christians, we must always be careful not to allow our influence to be identified with matters not consistent with the truth. [See 2Corinthians 6:14,15.]
 - (3) *A False Accusation Against the Preachers*-- The preachers were falsely accused by the maid’s hypocritical masters (vs. 19-21). “We are Romans...they are Jews!” Philippi was no doubt under the influence of Rome’s discrimination against the Jews. [See Acts 18:2; 16:12.] This false charge was purported to be based on Roman *law*, but the real motive behind the charge was not respect for *law*, but *greed for money* (vs. 19).
 - (4) *An Official Action Against the Preachers*-- Paul and Silas were imprisoned after being beaten with “many stripes” [probably more than the 39 allowed by the Jews]. They were cast into an “inner prison” that was reserved for the worst of criminals and were placed in stocks [usually in very painful positions].
 - (5) *A Strange Reaction by the Preachers*-- They were *praying* and *singing hymns!* They were openly practicing what they preached to others: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer...and the peace of God ...will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6,7).
 - (6) Paul was the Lord’s prisoner, not man’s! [See Ephesians 3:1; 4:1, etc.]
 - (7) The Lord answered the prisoners’ prayers with a great earthquake. The prison doors were opened, and their bonds were loosed.
 - (8) The jailor was wakened from his sleep, saw the open doors of the prison, and assumed that the prisoners had escaped. He chose to take his own life rather than to face severe Roman retribution for the escape of his prisoners.
 - (9) Paul intervened by calling to him, “Do yourself no harm. We are all here.”
 - (10) A desperate question followed this unexpected turn of events: “What must I do to be saved?”

- (a) This was not physical salvation from physical harm-- that fear had already been put to rest by Paul's assurance that the prisoners were all there.
 - (b) Paul's answer related to *spiritual* salvation. Belief in Jesus would have no influence with Roman officials in determining the jailor's fate.
 - (c) Although the jailor's grasp of the situation remains unrevealed to us, it is obvious that he had sufficient knowledge about Paul and Silas to perceive that what had happened was clearly the result of some divine intervention. He fell down trembling before the two preachers.
 - (d) It is highly possible that the connection between the physical events of the earthquake and the spiritual intervention of God and His Son Jesus Christ were expounded to the jailor before he asked his question. This would explain his sudden interest in personal salvation from sin.
- (11) The inspired answer to the jailor's question has often been misunderstood by the religious world.
- (a) "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved..." is taken to mean that men are saved by simply "accepting Christ as God's Son" without any further action on their part. "Faith only" saves.
 - (b) This concept ignores the fundamental truth of the gospel that *Jewish* salvation and *Gentile* salvation were necessarily on the *same terms*.
 1. God is impartial in His dealings with all men (Rom. 2:11; Acts 10:34,35).
 2. In considering the baptism of Gentiles, assurance was given that God's grace would save Jews and Gentiles "in the same manner" (Acts 15:11).
 - (c) Jews who asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do [to be saved]?" and a Gentile jailor who inquired, "Sirs what must I do to be saved?" must necessarily be given the *same answer* to the *same question*.
 - (d) "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 16:31) comprehends the same answer as "Know assuredly that God has made Jesus ...both Lord and Christ" and "Repent and be baptized" (Acts 2:36,38). Only the language is different.
 - (e) "The word of the Lord" gave the jailor a more complete answer to his question (vs. 32).
 1. Salvation and the kingdom were dependent on the preaching of "the word of the Lord," which would "go forth" from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-4), which it did on Pentecost, Acts 2.
 2. The "word of the Lord" on Pentecost required faith, repentance, and baptism for the remission of sins for Jews (Acts 2:36-38).
 3. The same "word of the Lord" made identical demands on the Gentile jailor and his house. He "washed their stripes" [indicating repentance] and was baptized *immediately* with *all* his family (vs. 33).
 4. Only after *complete obedience* to the "word of the Lord" did he rejoice because he *had believed in God* (vs. 34).
 - (f) All other recorded conversions in the New Testament included these same requirements for sinners. [See Acts 8:12,13, 37,38; 9:18; 22:16; 10:45; 18:8.]
- c. Paul was always concerned with "providing *honorable things*, not only in the sight of

the Lord, but also in the sight of men” (2Corinthians 8:21).

- (1) His imprisonment could have been embarrassing to him and his work, but he seized the opportunity to turn negative circumstances into positive (vs. 35-40).
 - (2) Paul and Silas were released for unknown reasons. The city officials possibly realized how hasty and contrary to Roman law their actions had been.
 - (3) Strangely-- Paul refused the offer of freedom. Obviously, he knew that Roman law forbade binding and imprisoning Roman citizens without a trial. Such mistreatment could result in death for an offender.
 - (4) An open release from prison would make it apparent that the magistrates had erred in their action and that gospel preachers had been mistreated by them.
 - (5) The magistrates previously “commanded,” “beat,” “cast” and “charged” (vs. 22,23). Now, they are “afraid,” “plead with them,” “bring them out,” “ask them to depart” (vs. 38,39). Their attitude toward the preachers underwent a dramatic change!
- d. Having defended the honor of the gospel and of their behavior as preachers of the gospel, Paul and Silas served as a great encouragement to “the brethren” (vs. 40).
 - e. Perhaps no one could yet fully understand why God had changed the original plan for spreading the truth (vs. 7). Eventually, it would become clear that these new converts in Europe would greatly multiply and would help to bring down this last of the world governments [Rome] as the prophet Daniel had foretold (Daniel 2:44).

5. *More Preaching Is Done in Europe* (Acts 17:1-14).

- a. Paul and the others came to Thessalonica, a city some 100 miles from Philippi. A Jewish synagogue was located there (vs. 1).
- b. Christ as their risen Messiah was preached for three Sabbath days. Some Jews and many “devout Greeks” and “leading women” were persuaded by what they heard (vs. 2-4).
- c. The *jealousy* of the unbelieving Jews was veiled as *loyalty* to Caesar. Their violent actions toward Paul and Silas and their benefactor Jason were camouflaged in the claim that the Christians were acting in support of Jesus as their king. Of course, their allegation was true on a *spiritual* level. Yet, *it* was ironic that Paul and Silas were accused by Jewish zealots because of their loyalty to Jesus as a king. While the Messiah as a *spiritual* king posed no threat at all to the Roman authorities, the historical expectation of traditional Judaism for a *physical* king and a *political* kingdom was cherished by these Jews. It was a real challenge to Roman power and rule.
- d. After “security” was taken from Jason and others, the preachers were allowed to leave the city [upon what terms we do not know]. They were then sent by night to the city of Berea (vs. 9,10).
- e. Berea was populated by noble [fair-minded] Jews who would not accept teaching blindly but who insisted on examining the Scriptures [daily] to confirm the truth of what Paul and Silas were preaching about Jesus. They were not “quick and easy” believers who often will not endure. [See Luke 8:13.]
- f. Agitating Jews came from Thessalonica and raised opposition to the truth at Berea. Paul was brought by the brethren to Athens. Silas and Timothy remained at Berea

- until sent for by Paul (vs. 15).
- g. Luke evidently was not in either Thessalonica or Berea with Paul. He apparently had remained at Philippi:**
- (1) Luke spoke of “us” and “we” in events preceding the imprisonment of Paul and Silas in Philippi (chapter 16). From that time, “they” and “them” were the pronouns of choice in reciting the events of Paul’s work;**
 - (2) In Acts 20:5, Luke resumes his use of “us” and “we,” indicating that he has resumed his association with the company of gospel teachers.**

Lesson 15: **First Gentile Churches on a** (Acts 15:36- 17:15)
New Continent **QUESTIONS**

1. What proposal was made to Banabas by Paul after they had spent considerable time teaching and preaching the word of the Lord at Antioch? 15:36 What obstacle to Paul's plan presented itself? 15:37-39
2. What was the immediate outcome of the dispute between Paul and Barnabas? 15:39,40
3. What was the probable long-term outcome of this dispute? 15:41 [See also, 1Corinthians 9:6; Galatians 2:1; Colossians 4:10; 2Timothy 4:11.]
4. Explain the different treatment Paul gave to Timothy and Titus regarding circumcision. 16: 3 [See Galatians 2:3-5.] We may be sure that Timothy's circumcision was performed under what condition? Acts 15:1,24
5. How did God intervene in the plans that Paul and Silas tried to carry out? 16:6,7
6. How did God communicate to Paul His plans for evangelizing, and how did Paul respond to God's communication? 16:9,10
7. What were Lydia's spiritual characteristics as noted by Luke in Acts 16:13-15? In what way did the Lord "open her heart"? 16:14 [See also, Luke 24:44,45; Ephesians 1:18.]
8. Why should Paul have been "greatly annoyed" ["troubled/grieved"] at the persistent testimony of the maid at Philippi about his being a servant of God? 16:16-18 [See also Mark 3:11,12.]
9. In what way did the maid's owners display gross hypocrisy when they brought charges against Paul and Silas? 16:19-21

Lesson 15: **First Gentile Churches on a** QUESTIONS
New Continent

10. Paul gives us a divine prescription in Philippians 4:6,7 for combating anxiety. Acts 16:22-25 provides a practical illustration of the power of his advice. How?

11. Did Paul and Silas initially give a *complete* answer to the jailor's question about salvation? 16:30,31 How do you know? 16:32-34

12. "The word of the Lord" provided the jailor with vital information about salvation. Where else had "the word of the Lord" been preached earlier, and what instruction about forgiveness did it contain? [See Isaiah 2:2-4; Acts 2:17,37,38.]

13. Why would Paul and Silas not leave the prison and the city secretly when they had the opportunity? 16:35-40

14. When Paul preached in the synagogue of the Jews at Thessalonica, what was the emphasis of his message? 17:1-3 What was the result of his sermon? 17:4

15. At Berea, Paul found Jews who possessed a commendable attitude. What was it? 17:11 How did their attitude affect their behavior toward Paul's preaching? 17:11,12

16. The devil never relaxes his efforts to defeat the progress of the gospel in the lives of men. How do we know he "kept on keeping on" when Paul and Silas came to Berea? 17:10-14

Lesson 16: **“First” Cities Hear the Gospel** (Acts 17:16- 19:20)

1. The apostles had been charged to preach to “all nations” and to “every creature.” [See Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16.]
2. Their personal contact with every prospect was not physically possible [See Acts 19:10.]
3. The gospel was spread from the larger cities to surrounding locations.
 - a. This was done in the context of “the fulness of time.” [Lesson 2 and Galatians 4:4]
4. This lesson involves three leading cities [“first cities”] of Paul’s time in which he preached and sought to establish churches.
 - a. There were many *obstacles* in these cities, but there were also many *opportunities*.

ATHENS: THE “FIRST CITY” OF THE EDUCATED IGNORANT

1. This was the capital of the Greek state of Attica. Athens was the center of world culture for several centuries before Christ. Its art, literature, and drama had a lasting impact on other cultures. Its philosophers generated four schools of thinking, including the Stoic and the Epicurean (vs. 18).
2. Athens was truly a city of the highly educated, but it was full of *idolatry*. Pretonius said, “It is easier to find an idol than a man in Athens.” The people even worshiped gods unknown to them (vs. 23). So, Athens was a city of the pitifully ignorant. Many people today are likewise educated in worldly wisdom but lacking in spiritual wisdom. [See Proverbs 9:10.]
3. Paul was impressed by Athens, but not in the same way as tourists then and now. Pausanias visited the city soon after Paul did and wrote six volumes about the artistic magnificence he saw there. He noted the deification of persons, ideas, and human qualities. He was impressed by statues, temples, and other architecture. Paul, on the other hand, was impressed by the **IDOLS** he saw. The city was *full* of them! He was “provoked,” “stirred,” and “exasperated” by what he saw (vs. 16).
4. While Paul waited for Timothy and Silas (vs. 15), he spent his time “disputing” with Jews and proselytes and with Greeks in the marketplace (vs. 17). No sightseeing for him!
5. He encountered Stoics who contended that “virtue is its own reward” and Epicureans

who believed that “a simple life is free of physical and mental pain.” Both philosophies had degenerated in their principles. The Stoics had come to advocate suicide when one cannot be indifferent to sorrow and pleasure; the Epicureans now espoused, “Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.” Both schools rejected life after death. Paul’s teaching was distinctly different from theirs. He said, “Weep with those who weep...” (Romans 12:15) and, “Denying ungodliness and worldly lust...” (Titus 2:12).

6. There were two reactions to Paul and his message:
 - a. Some thought him to be but a “babbler” [a “seed picker” who only gathered crumbs of knowledge];
 - b. Others considered him to be a “setter forth of strange gods” [he taught about Jesus who had been resurrected by His Father-- a believer in *two gods*];
 - c. Their first estimate dismissed Paul’s worth as a teacher; the second manifested a shallow curiosity about *new things* (vs. 19-21).

7. Paul’s speech on Mars’ Hill (the Areopagus) (vs. 22-31).
 - a. He emphasized certain qualities in the Athenians that were also found in himself:
 - (1) He commended their *spirituality*-- they were “very religious” (vs. 22);
 - (2) He acknowledged their efforts to *worship* a higher power (vs. 23);
 - (3) He noted their *carefulness* to be completely right (vs. 23).
 - b. He could not begin his sermon with Old Testament Scriptures, with known facts about Jesus, or even with common knowledge about God. They had many gods that were different from the True God.
 - c. He could, however, begin with natural manifestations of God which they accepted, even if unconsciously (vs. 24).
 - d. He could also appeal to their recognition of the inadequacy of their devotions-- they needed to acknowledge an “unknown god,” lest they fall short. Their altar was a symbol of their ignorance and of their hidden need to know about “Paul’s God.”
 - e. He could take advantage of their felt need to worship and serve a God greater and better than men and who can be respected for His Person and Nature (vs. 23-25).
 - (1) A common origin has endowed all men with a common yearning to know and serve a common Maker (vs. 26-28a). This phenomenon had been noted by Greek poets long before (vs. 28b).
 - (2) Logic rejects the idea that something greater [the Greeks held man in lofty esteem] could be the offspring of something lesser [gods of gold, silver, or stone] (vs. 29).
 - (3) Logic also indicates that a Creator greater than man would demand some measure of obedience from His lesser creatures (vs. 30).
 - (4) Now some basic facts of the gospel could be introduced by Paul:
 - (a) The Creator will call His creatures to an accounting at some appointed time;
 - (b) God has appointed [ordained] someone to judge the worthiness of His creatures;
 - (c) God has proved by the resurrection the excellence of His judge (vs. 31).

(5) Paul's sermon examines the stark differences between the True God and the numerous gods worshiped in the culture of Athens. Consult the Chart, "Paul's God and Their Gods, page 93.

9. Paul's sermon apparently was cut short by the reaction of some in his audience (vs 32).
10. There were three responses to Paul's sermon about God (vs. 32-34):
 - a. Some mocked at the ideas of repentance, resurrection, and judgment;
 - b. Others wanted to *hear* more. We can only wonder if they wanted to *know* more.
 - c. Some believed [two are named]. No further reference is given in the New Testament to a church in Athens. History cites an apostate church at a later date.

CORINTH: THE "FIRST CITY" OF DOLLARS AND DISSIPATION (Acts 18:1-17)

1. Corinth was very prosperous economically because of its location (Consult a map).
2. It was very cosmopolitan but also very wicked. To "corinthianize" was to behave immorally. The city had imported a lot of what was good, but it had gathered much that was bad from many places. [See Romans 1:26.]
3. Paul found Priscilla and Aquila, Jews of the same trade as he [tentmaking]. He had to work with them until help came by Silas and Timothy (vs. 5). [See 2Corinthians 11:9.] (vs. 2,3).
4. He preached to Jews and Greeks for 18 months (vs. 11). During that time, most Jews opposed him and excluded him from the synagogue (vs. 6) His work then was apparently among the Gentiles (vs. 6). Many believed and obeyed (vs. 8), including the chief ruler of the synagogue, a neighbor to Justus (vs. 7,8).
5. The outlook was good; the Lord had "many people" there [in prospect]. The Lord's protection was promised to Paul in a vision, and he was urged to continue his efforts in Corinth (vs. 9,10).
6. Persecution arose from Jewish zealots, who dragged Paul before Gallio, the governor, on the charge of promoting a "new" religion in a Roman city, which was contrary to Roman civil law (vs. 13).
 - a. Their action was false and hypocritical. They were not concerned about "the law" but about their own religious prejudices.
 - b. Gallio was a just judge who "cared for none of these things" (vs. 17). He recognized the weakness of their charge and the vindictiveness of their tactics.
 - c. He summarily dismissed their accusations by telling them to "mind their own business and he would mind his" (vs. 14).

7. Certain Greeks took advantage of the opportunity to beat Sosthenes, ruler of the synagogue [had he replaced Crispus? (vs. 8)], perhaps in retribution for past grievances.
8. Paul left Corinth with Priscilla and Aquila (vs. 18). They would continue to be his “fellow workers in Christ Jesus” (Romans 16:3).
9. He left behind a church that would become large in number but full of problems, as disclosed in the letters Paul wrote to it [First and Second Corinthians].

EPHESUS: “FIRST CITY” of the “BIG LIE” (Acts 18:19- 19:20)

1. Paul had a brief stay in Ephesus, then left to “keep the feast” [Passover] at Jerusalem, promising to return to Ephesus if God willed (vs. 19-21).
2. He began a third preaching trip from Antioch, covering the region of Galatia and Phrygia “in order” and “strengthening all the disciples” (vs. 23).
3. Another effective preacher is introduced at Ephesus (vs. 24-28).
 - a. Apollos was a Jew from Alexandria, Egypt, eloquent of speech and “mighty in the [Old Testament] Scriptures.” He was, like many of the Jews, still looking for the coming of the kingdom of God. [See Luke 23:51.]
 - b. He knew “the way of the Lord” [in prophecy] and fervently and accurately taught the “things of the Lord” that had been for so long anticipated by devout Jews. Just how much about Jesus this included we do not know.
 - c. Apollos did not know the full truth about New Testament baptism. He preached instead the baptism of John, which was based on repentance and on a faith that looked for a Messiah *yet to come* into His kingdom (Acts 19:4). Christ’s baptism also requires repentance, but it is administered to people who believe that the Messiah has *already come* into His kingdom (Acts 2:36).
 - d. Since Pentecost, baptism had been *in the name of Christ* [by His authority] as the Savior (Acts 2:38). John’s baptism looked forward to a Christ to come; Christ’s baptism looks backward on a Redeemer who has come and who has been exalted to a position of complete authority over all men (Acts 2:33).
 - e. For a more detailed contrast between John’s baptism and Christ’s baptism, study the Chart, “John’s Baptism and Christ’s Baptism,” on page 94.
 - f. Priscilla and Aquila “filled in the blanks” for Apollos and taught him what he had not known nor understood about “the way of the Lord” (vs. 29). He was a ready student and eagerly accepted the new truths he had not known. It is assumed that he was first himself baptized and then began to teach and to baptize others with an “up-to-date” baptism. What a joy it must have been to a couple of humble tentmakers to be able to bring such an able man into the full service of the Lord!
 - g. Apollos had an immediate impact on the faith of other saints (vs. 27) and on the disbelief of fellow Jews (vs. 28). We read later of his extensive work in God’s kingdom (1Corinthians 3:5-10).

4. Paul met twelve baptized sinners who *thought* they were Christians! (Acts 19:1-7)
 - a. Something unrevealed prompted Paul to question them about receiving the Spirit.
 - (1) “Receiving the Spirit” did not refer to the “gift of the Spirit” which *all* receive upon obedience to the gospel (Acts 2:38).
 - (2) Reference is likely to some miraculous measure of spiritual gifts which *some* were given to enhance knowledge and service in the church (1Corinthians 12:4-11).
 - (3) Obviously, they had not “received the Spirit” in the way Paul expected.
 - b. These would-be “disciples” did not understand the role of the Spirit in the church.
 - (1) Being Jews [John’s baptism was for the Jews], they probably knew something about the Spirit. He was the subject of many prophetic statements [e.g., Joel 2:28; Micah 3:8; Ezekiel 39:29, etc.].
 - (2) John had also promised that the Spirit would “baptize” some (Luke 3:16). It is unlikely that men baptized with John’s baptism would not know of the *existence* of the Holy Spirit.
 - (3) They evidently did not know “whether there is a Holy Spirit” who is given to Christians to help them in their newly-assumed responsibilities in the church. Nor did they understand the Spirit’s role of confirming the Lordship of Jesus on Pentecost (Acts 2:33) and other things He is appointed to do in His relationship with *true* disciples of Christ.
 - c. Paul recognized that their baptism was not the *current* baptism instituted by Jesus. His baptism is “*into* the name” [ASV] of Father, Son, *and Holy Spirit* (Matt.28:19).
 - d. John’s baptism was no longer adequate. Its adequacy ceased with John’s work.
 - (1) Many “baptisms” today are inadequate. Those baptized “because they are already saved,” who lack the prerequisites of faith and repentance [infants], or whose baptism employs less water than an immersion [sprinkling or pouring] should examine the validity of their salvation (Acts 2:38).
 - e. These twelve were “baptized” [not “rebaptized”] “in the name of the Lord Jesus.”
 - f. All twelve were given spiritual gifts of tongues and prophesying by Paul’s hand. This validated the superiority of a faith that trusted in the *fact* of Jesus’ Lordship over a hope that could only trust in the *promise* that He would become our Lord.
5. All Asia heard the word of the Lord within two years and three months (vs. 10).
 - a. Paul utilized the synagogue and the school [building] of Tyrannus (vs. 8,9).
 - b. His original *plan* (Acts 16:6,7) was now in harmony with God’s. We must learn to be patient and allow God--in His time-- to work things out correctly.
 - c. “Unusual” miracles were performed by the *hands* of Paul (vs. 11). Perhaps it was the use of “handkerchiefs and aprons” that made them unusual.
 - d. Certain Jewish exorcists presumed to employ Jesus’ name in the exercise of their spurious trade. If Jesus’ “name” empowered Paul to perform *genuine* healings, may-be it would do the same for them, they thought (vs. 13-16).
 - (1) The use of Jesus’ name would have been repulsive to these Jews, except that it might bring them financial gain.
 - (2) Their plan backfired on them. A typical failure was seen when seven sons of Sceva [a Jewish chief priest] were overpowered and beaten by an evil spirit

- who refused to be controlled by hypocritical men who acted with ugly motives (vs. 13-16).
- e. The integrity of Jesus' "name" [everything He represents] was "magnified" and guarded from religious imposters who would make merchandise of the gospel (vs.17).
 - f. Many [unconverted and/or not fully-converted?] renounced their magical arts and heretofore secretive practices, openly burning their valuable books (vs. 18,19).
 - g. *So* [because of the power of God's work] the word grew [in influence] and prevailed [over every contrary influence] (vs. 20). *Totally committed* disciples can always be used by God in effective ways. [See Matthew 5:14,15.]
6. Ephesus remained under the cloud of superstition and false religion. The worship of pagan gods and goddesses was still the popular practice of the people. "Every man" knew [?] that Ephesus was the "temple guardian of the great goddess Diana." They even boasted of an image that had "fallen down from Zeus!" (vs. 35). Ephesus was, indeed, "The City of the BIG LIE" of idolatry. Paul would have to deal with its misguided zeal if the gospel was to make any lasting progress there.

PAUL'S GOD AND THEIR GODS
ACTS 17:24-31
CHART

<u>Verse(s)</u>	<u>PAUL'S GOD</u>	<u>THEIR GODS</u>
24	One God	Many Gods
24	Creator of all things	Most created, none eternal
24	Controls all things	Each controls only parts of things
24	Not confined by temples	Dwell in earthly temples
25	Not dependent on men	Dependent on men for functions
25	Giver of gifts to men	Taker of gifts from men
26	Made men of common ancestry	Men had diverse origins
26	Rules all equally and completely	Each rules differently and partially
27,28	Desires to bless worshipers	Desire to be blessed by worshipers
29	Men are His offspring	Offspring of [originated by] men
29	Not represented by physical things	Represented by images, etc.
30,31	Desires righteousness in men	Often instigate evil behavior in men
31	Plans a final judgment for men	Give only immediate and superficial rewards and punishments to men

JOHN'S BAPTISM AND CHRIST'S BAPTISM

ACTS 19:1-7

CHART

JOHN'S BAPTISM

CHRIST'S BAPTISM

For Jews [Abraham's seed] only (Luke 3:7,8)	For every creature (Mark 16:15,16)
In God's name [authority] (Luke 7:29)	In name of total Godhead (Matthew 28:19)
Added to Law's requirements (Luke 7:30)	Requirement of <u>new law</u> (Acts 11:15; 2:38)
In <u>hope</u> of promised Messiah (Acts 19:4)	In <u>confidence</u> of exalted Messiah (Acts 2:33)
Pledge to accept Jesus <u>when</u> He came (Acts 19:4)	Pledge of loyalty to One who <u>has come</u> (Rom. 6:3,4)
Repentance required prior to baptism (Mark 1:4)	Repentance required prior to baptism (Acts 2:38)
Remission of sins promised (Mark 1:4)	Remission of sins promised (Acts 2:38)
Remission only in prospect (Heb. 9:15-17)	Remission in reality <u>now</u> (Eph. 1:7)
<i>Gift</i> of Holy Spirit not attached (Acts 19:2)	<i>Gift</i> of Holy Spirit <u>is given</u> (Acts 2:38)
<i>Baptism</i> of Holy Spirit <u>to be given</u> (Luke 3:16)	<i>Baptism</i> of Holy Spirit <u>had been given</u> (Acts 2:33)

Lesson 16: **“First Cities” Hear the Gospel** (Acts 17:16-19:20)

QUESTIONS

1. What feature of the great city of Athens made a great impression on Paul? 17:16
2. The Athenians' outlook on knowledge gave Paul the opportunity to present his discourse on the True God. What was their attitude about knowledge? 17:19-21
3. What compliment did Paul pay the Athenians that allowed him to begin on common ground with them in his sermon on Mars' Hill? 17:22
4. How was man's relation with his "gods" different from the relation man should enjoy with the True God? 17:24,25
5. The power of all Athenian "gods" was inadequate and incomplete, but how did Paul describe the True God's control over man and the world? 17:28
6. Man's total dependency on the True God makes it inappropriate for man to try to limit God's Person by doing what thing that the Athenians "specialized" in? 17:29,24
7. Paul proclaimed three truths of the gospel that sounded very strange to the Athenians. What were they? 17:30,31
8. What impression did Paul's sermon about the True God make on the Athenians who heard it? 17:32-34
9. The Lord's promise to protect Paul from serious bodily harm or death was made in view of what plan that God had made for the future of the gospel in Corinth? 18:9-11
10. What was the "take" of Gallio the proconsul on the Roman law that no *new* religion should be spread among Roman subjects? 18:13-17

Lesson 16: **“First Cities Hear the Gospel”** QUESTIONS

11. In 1Corinthians 9:19-23 Paul declared his outlook about saving the lost. What did he do at Cenchrea that demonstrates that he meant what he said? 18:18 At Ephesus, he made a statement that shows the same thing. What was it [KJV and NKJV]? 18:21
12. What were the strengths of Apollos and his preaching? 18:24,25 What serious flaw in his preaching had to be corrected? 18:25,26
13. What was the first question Paul asked the twelve disciples at Ephesus? 19:1,2
14. The answer Paul got to his question about the Holy Spirit led him to ask these disciples what other question? 19:3
15. What was the *basic* difference between the baptism previously received by these disciples and the baptism they *should* have received under the gospel of Christ? 19:4
16. Paul would not be deterred from preaching the gospel in Ephesus and all Asia. When denied the use of the _____, he moved to the_____. 19:8-10 How successful were his efforts in spreading the truth? 19:10
17. How did God demonstrate to everyone in Ephesus that He was jealous for those things intended for the spread of the kingdom? 19:11-16
18. What change was seen at Ephesus in the lives of those who previously had been under the dominion of the devil? 19:17-20

The First Backlash and First Warnings

1. Paul's future work was planned for Ephesus, Macedonia, Achaia, Jerusalem, and Rome (Acts 19:20,21). He "must see" Rome, not as a tourist, but as a preachers seeking an opportunity to spread the gospel among the lost. Indeed, he *would* see Rome, but not in the way he thought. Similarly, the early church went "into all the world" unexpectedly through a persecution. [See Matthew 28:18; Acts 8:4.]
2. THE FIRST PAGAN BACKLASH (vs. 23-41).
 - a. Opposition to the gospel usually arose from Jews who agitated the Gentiles [e.g., Acts 20:3].
 - b. An exception is found in Acts 16 when Gentile "masters" became concerned about economics (Acts 16:19).
 - c. Large numbers at Ephesus were involved in this opposition. This also was about the loss of income. The Gentiles seemed to think that "one god is as good as another," while the Jews always felt that they were right and all others were wrong about *any* religious issue. The truth of the matter was that God's will was right and both Jews *and* Gentiles were wrong in their convictions and practices. This corresponds to some common attitudes found among many religious people of *our* time.
3. This pagan backlash involves *two principal players*: one who started it and another who stopped it.
4. Demetrius, the first principal, and the silversmiths began the opposition to Paul (vs. 24-29).
 - a. Demetrius was a leader in the business of making shrines to Diana. He "brought much business to the craftsmen" (vs. 24).
 - b. He gathered others with common monetary interests and incited them to wrath (vs. 28).
 - c. He frankly stated their common concerns: First was *business* (vs. 27a); second was *religion* (vs. 27b).
 - d. His charges against Paul and the gospel were based on *reality*:
 - (1) Their trade would suffer if many people were converted from their need to purchase the shrines of Diana;
 - (2) Diana's temple would become "of no account" to those who might learn that they could become temples of the Holy Spirit and be far greater than any other temple because the *true God* dwells in Christians. [See 1Corinthians 4:19,20; 2Corinthians 6:16.] The exceptional *physical* beauty of Diana's temple was far surpassed by the *spiritual* beauty of any temple created by God's own hand.

[Diana's temple was recognized as one of the original Seven Wonders of the World. It measured 425 feet by 120 feet with 60 foot marble columns supporting the vast marble slabs of the roof. J.W. McGarvey says that three or four temples like Solomon's could have been placed within its walls. It was adorned with many paintings and sculptures. A crude, many-breasted figure of Diana stood on a pillar of bees, flowers, and corn. The idol supposedly had fallen from a pagan "heaven." Diana "of the Ephesians" was not the same as Diana, the Greek goddess. She was revered as the mother goddess of all Asia Minor (vs. 35).]

- e. The mob was incensed. It seized Paul's traveling companions (vs. 28,29).
 - f. Paul was restrained from confronting the mob by the disciples and by his friends among the "officials of Asia" (vs. 30,31).
 - g. The scene at Ephesus became one of total *confusion* (vs. 32).
5. The Jews sought to protect themselves with a defense by a certain Alexander (vs. 33).
 6. Alexander's efforts were rebuffed by the pagan Gentiles because he was a Jew (vs. 34).
 7. The pagans cried for about two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians" (vs. 34).
 8. The unnamed Townclerk was the second principal in this episode. He sought to quieten the unruly mob (vs. 35-41):
 - a. He appealed to the civic pride of the citizens as the "temple guardians" of the "great goddess Diana" (vs. 35);
 - b. He emphasized the absoluteness of their position as temple guardians and the unchallenged sanctity of their "goddess" and her statue (vs. 36);
 - c. He pointed out the harmlessness of Paul and his companions and their inability to do any real damage to the status quo (vs. 37);
 - d. He recommended that any satisfaction be sought legally in the courts (vs. 38, 39);
 - e. He warned of the danger of retribution by the Roman government for any civil unrest for which the mob might be held responsible (vs. 40).
 9. The crowd apparently accepted the arguments of the Townclerk and were willing to discontinue their protests against Paul and his companions. They were "dismissed" and went home.

CHAPTER TWENTY

1. In this chapter, we are allowed to look in on a church service at Troas (Acts 20:6-12).
 - a. Paul was hastening toward Jerusalem, but he waited seven days at Troas and then met with the church on the first day of the week when it assembled to "break bread" (vs. 6,7). This is strong evidence that early churches regularly met on Sunday to observe the Lord's Supper and to worship God as collective bodies.
2. Paul preached "until midnight" to this gathering. This was his only opportunity to teach these brethren, and no doubt he had many things he needed to say to them.

3. This church met in an “upper room” (vs. 8) on the “third story” (vs. 9) of some structure. It may be that this location was more affordable than some others, or it might have offered a quieter place to worship than a room on the street. Or, perhaps this upper room was more desirable for a church meeting then than we might suppose it would be in our own time.
4. A young man, Eutychus, fell asleep and then toppled from his seat in a window of the meeting room (vs. 9). He was killed in the fall, but Paul revived him through his power as an apostle to perform miracles.
5. Paul continued speaking to the brethren until daybreak (vs. 11). Most likely, Paul enjoyed the undivided attention of the saints following the unscheduled display of his status and power as an apostle of the Lord!

FIRST WARNINGS ABOUT APOSTASY (vs. 17-38).

1. Paul’s self-concept as a preacher was revealed to the Ephesian elders:
 - a. He had served with “all humility” (vs. 19);
 - b. He had served with “many tears” [because of disappointments he suffered] (vs. 19);
 - c. He had dealt with the “plotting of the Jews” to do him harm and to suppress his preaching of the gospel (vs. 19);
 - d. He had been unrelenting in teaching all that was “helpful” both publicly and from house to house (vs. 19);
 - e. He was always faithful to his message of “repentance toward God” and “faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (vs. 21).
2. Paul’s unalterable commitment as a preacher was significant (vs. 22-24):
 - a. He knowingly and willingly faced persecution whenever he preached the truth (vs. 22,23);
 - b. His preaching was more important to him than his own life (vs. 24).
3. Paul’s unwavering purpose as a preacher underpinned all his activities (vs. 25-27):
 - a. He intended always to preach “the *whole* counsel of God” (vs. 27);
 - b. He wanted in every situation to be “free from the blood of all men” (vs. 26).
4. A serious charge was given by Paul to the Ephesian elders (vs. 28-32):
 - a. Take heed to [1] themselves and [2] all their flock;
 - b. Shepherd [feed] the church for which they had responsibility;
 - c. Watch and guard the saints against:
 - (1) External dangers from “savage wolves” who would not spare the flock;
 - (2) Internal dangers from ambitious men who would pervert the truth and draw others after them into error.
 - d. Depend on God and His word to “build up” the church and assure the reward in heaven.

5. Paul's performance as a preacher demonstrated his motives toward others (vs. 33,34):
 - a. His *past* activities proved his devotion to their *past* welfare;
 - b. His *personal sacrifices* attested to his constant concern for his brethren, especially the "weak."

6. A tender scene of parting was described by Luke (vs. 36-38):
 - a. Paul and the brethren prayed together;
 - b. They all wept freely as they faced the prospect of parting company;
 - c. Even grown and dignified men expressed their feelings with "holy kisses" of mutual love;
 - d. The grief of parting was deepened by the knowledge that it was highly unlikely that their association could be renewed at some future date.
 - e. The brethren accompanied Paul to his ship (vs. 38).

Lesson 17: **The First Backlash and
First Warnings**

(Acts 19:21- 20:38)

QUESTIONS

1. Subject to the approval of the Spirit, Paul planned to go to what places upon leaving Ephesus? 19:21
2. What were the concerns expressed by Demetrius to the silversmiths about Paul's influence among the people of Ephesus and Asia? 19:25-27 Were these concerns valid?
3. Describe the behavior of the Ephesian mob that gathered in the town theater. 19:32
4. What "defense" do you think Alexander would have made to the Ephesians had he been given the opportunity to speak? 19:33 Why was he not allowed to speak? 19:34
5. In what two objects did the Ephesians take great pride? 19:35
6. What arguments did the Townclerk make to the mob to discourage them from further violence? 19:35-40
7. How effective was the speech made by the Townclerk? 19:41; 20:1
8. Trace the journey of Paul from Ephesus to Troas. Look at a map for these locations. 20:1-6
9. What two groups of travelers were heading for Troas by different routes? 20:3-6
10. For what purpose did the church at Troas assemble on the first day of the week, and why can we conclude that this was a regular practice there? 20:6,7,16

1. Trace Paul's journey in chapters 20 and 21 on a map.
 - a. Chapter 20-- Ephesus, Macedonia, Greece [where he was threatened by a plot], Troas, Assos, Mitylene, Miletus [where he spoke to the Ephesian elders].
 - b. Chapter 21-- Cos, Rhodes, Patara, Tyre, Ptelomais, Caesarea. Jerusalem.
2. Paul "found" ["to seek for, to search"] disciples at Tyre where he tarried for seven days. He had also remained at Troas to worship with the saints there as he now did at Tyre (21:3,4). How unlike many travelers who choose to ignore worshipping with the saints in places they visit. Instead, they seek out everything else they can do on their trips.
3. Another sad farewell occurred at Tyre (vs. 5). This is the first mention of children in any connection with the church. These children, of course, were not *members* of the church at Tyre.
4. Paul lodged with Philip in Caesarea (vs. 8). Philip had come to Caesarea some time earlier (Acts 8:40). Now, he and his four daughters made a total of *five prophets* in one family (vs. 9)! This was a godly household! The prophesying of these women was in fulfillment of Joel's prophesy in Joel 2:28. Paul and his companions stayed "many days" with Philip. There must have been much to talk about. These men had been spiritual enemies at their last known contact [See Acts 8:1-4.]. Then, they had good reason to fear each other. Now, some twenty years later, they were brethren working in a common cause! Both could now see God's providence in the great persecution in which they had participated on opposite sides.
5. Agabus [See Acts 11:28.] gave a prophecy about Paul's impending imprisonment in Jerusalem (vs. 11).
6. All the disciples ["we" included Luke and Paul's other companions; "those of that place" were the saints of Caesarea] sought to deter Paul's purpose to go to Jerusalem. This was doubtless the result of their *human* opinion, and they were unsuccessful in their efforts (vs. 13). Finally, all concurred that "the Lord's will be done" (vs. 14).

THE PROPOSAL FOR A COMPROMISE (Acts 21:17-25).

1. A "*Compromise*" is "a settlement reached by mutual concession." A "concession" is "a thing yielded" (Webster).
2. Paul was received warmly in Jerusalem by the brethren there (vs. 17).

3. James and the elders were briefed on Paul's success among the Gentiles; they rejoiced at the good news (vs. 19,20).
4. A problem was introduced to Paul and the others:
 - a. Many Jews had been converted to Christ, but "all" [the Jewish nation and perhaps even some of the converted Jews] were still "zealous for the law" (vs. 20);
 - b. The Jews had been led to believe that Paul, in his role as an apostle, expected converted Jews to "forsake Moses" and to discontinue all observances of the "customs" they had practiced while living under the Law (vs. 21).
 - c. Circumcision of Jewish children was an especially sensitive subject with the Jews.
 - d. Obviously, publicity about Paul's supposed position on the relationship of Jewish converts to the Law would greatly diminish the opportunities for continuing to teach them and for bringing them to Christ.
 - e. Paul had *never* forbidden Jews to "circumcise their children." He was himself responsible for Timothy's circumcision (Acts 16:3). He insisted, of course, that circumcision could only be performed as a Jewish custom and *not* as an act related in any way to salvation under the new covenant. The curtain had come down forever on the role played by circumcision as something essential under the Law (Acts 15:5,11,24).
5. There was concern among the Christians in Jerusalem that the assembly [council] of the Jewish leadership would use Paul's arrival as an occasion to spread false claims against him and his teaching. That might seriously and negatively impact his effectiveness as an apostle while he was in the city. It might prove harmful to *all* his efforts to spread the truth among unconverted Jews and to bridge the gap between converted Jews and their Gentile brothers whose love offering he was bearing. [See 2Corinthians 9:12-14.]
6. A *compromise* was proposed for Paul's consideration (vs. 23-25). *Compromise* is permissible for Christians only in matters of *opinion*, never in matters of *faith*! The apostle Peter declared, "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1Peter 4:11). Paul's position was clear, "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8). The practice of Jewish customs might be negotiable within the category of *opinion*. It had been removed from discussion as *essential* to salvation by faith (Galatians 2:16).
7. The *proposal for compromise* called for Paul to associate himself personally and financially with four Jews in the city who were seeking to purify themselves through some ceremonial rite of cleansing [perhaps a Nazarite vow-- Numbers 6:1-21] practiced under the Law.
8. Paul would do two things to prove to unconverted Jews that he had not assumed an unbending position against their religious instincts to continue doing some of the things that particularly defined their Jewishness and that separated them as Jews from other men:
 - a. He would pay the expenses incurred by these four Jews as they sought to satisfy the

terms of their vow;

- b. He would also at least “go through the motions” of some form of Jewish purification to demonstrate that his objection to “walking orderly and keeping the law” (vs. 24) was not in the realm of *allowance* [as custom] but in the province of *requirement*. It may be difficult for us to understand everything involved in this compromise, but it is certain that Paul’s motivations centered in his becoming “all things to all men” that he might “by all means save some”(1Corinthians 9:22).
9. By this *compromise* between a bending and an unbending stance toward the Law, Paul could set the record straight with unbelieving Jews and thereby influence some of them to give a fair hearing to the truths of the gospel (vs. 24).
 10. This episode illustrates a difference between Jews and Gentiles regarding the Law after they had become Christians:
 - a. Jewish converts were permitted to observe the ceremonies if they chose to do so;
 - b. Gentile converts should not be involved in any matter of the Law;
 - c. Neither Jews nor Gentiles were required to do *anything* outside the specific requirements of the gospel (Acts 15:24).

THE ATTEMPT AT COMPROMISE (vs. 26-36).

1. The *compromise* almost worked (vs. 26,27)! But Jewish agitators from Asia stirred up the people about Trophimus, a Greek with whom Paul had been seen in the city. Moved either by misapprehension or by a wicked determination to misrepresent the truth about Paul, these Jews charged that he was an avowed enemy of everything Jewish and that he had even dared to take a Gentile into their holy temple (vs. 28).
2. Roman law reputedly allowed the punishment of anyone who was convicted of violating the temple or other “holy” places within the empire (vs. 28). Under such supportive conditions, the opponents of Paul’s gospel would be emboldened to resort to violence to stop his work. They would not hesitate to kill him if given the opportunity (vs. 31).
3. The Roman military commander heard about the uproar against Paul, and his arrival on the scene of conflict quickly put an end to the threat against Paul’s life (vs. 31,32).
4. Paul was carried away to the barracks in chains when the commander was unable to ascertain from the mob who Paul was or why he was being so badly treated by the crowd (vs. 33,34).
5. The persistent anger of the mob toward Paul cut off any further possibility of a *compromise* that might quieten the fears of Jewish prospects that the gospel posed a sinister threat to the entire fabric of their national culture and tradition (vs. 35,36).

THE PRICE OF COMPROMISE (vs. 37-40).

1. The price of compromise of the truth is *damnation* (Revelation 22:18,19).
2. The price of compromise of an opinion varies-- it may be helpful, or it may not.
3. Paul paid the price of *physical freedom* for his effort to make a compromise with the prejudices of the unbelieving Jews. It may be that this price was in God's plan for Paul, or God may have used this outcome to further the progress of the gospel.

THE DEFENSE OF COMPROMISE (Acts 22:1-30).

1. Paul was allowed to speak for himself. He did not seek to defend himself personally, but he was anxious to defend God's plan and purpose for His people (vs. 1).
2. He called attention to himself only as an instrument of God's will.
 - a. He recounted the details of his conversion so as to increase the Jews' understanding of who he really was and why he had done things that had been reported as raw anti-Jewish behavior.
 - b. This was the *second* inspired account of Paul's conversion to the Lord. [See Acts 9 for the first account.]
3. Truths of the gospel are *essential*; expedients are *unessential*. This explained Paul's behavior relative to the Law. His message had been: "Yes, you Jews can keep the Law [as custom], but No, you can't require any part of the Law for anyone because God doesn't."
4. Paul used a conciliatory approach as a means of trying to explain himself without giving undue offense to his audience. He sought to establish common ground with his Jewish listeners:
 - a. He used the Hebrew language in addressing them (vs. 2);
 - b. He claimed Jewish nationality for himself (vs. 3);
 - c. He recalled his upbringing in Jerusalem, the seat of the Law (vs. 3);
 - d. He had been taught by Gamaliel, an eminent expert in the Law (vs. 3);
 - e. He had been taught a *strict interpretation* of the Law, including the traditions (vs.3);
 - f. He had shown respect for the Law followed by "our fathers" (vs. 3);
 - g. He had been as zealous for the Law as the fathers had been (vs. 3);
 - h. He had persecuted [those of] the Way [Christ] unto death (vs. 4);
 - i. He had imprisoned both men and women because of their faith in Jesus (vs. 4);
 - j. He had been endorsed as a persecutor by the high priest and the elders (vs. 5);
 - k. He had official documents to extradite Christians to Jerusalem (vs. 5);
 - l. He had pursued Christ's disciples even to distant places (vs. 5);
 - m. He had been taught a *different* law of God by a devout Law-keeper, Ananias (vs. 12);
 - n. He had been taught about Jesus by a man of good report among the Jews (vs. 12);

- o. He had been appointed by *God* to “know His will” and to see “the Righteous One” [See Habakkuk 2:14.] (vs. 14);
 - p. He had prayed in the *temple* after his conversion (vs. 17);
 - q. His persecution of saints was well-documented (vs. 19);
 - r. He had taken an active role in Stephen’s death and in the great persecution (vs. 20);
5. Paul also used a plain approach in his speech to the Jews:
- a. He had experienced a miracle and had seen a vision of the Lord, who was *alive* (vs. 8, 14);
 - b. His opposition to Christ’s disciples was considered by God as “persecution” of Christ (vs. 8);
 - c. The Lord had imposed a *duty* on him (vs. 10);
 - d. He had been given clear instructions about what his duty to God was (vs. 16);
 - e. A *new role* had been specified for Paul as a servant of Jehovah (vs. 15). Now he was constrained to be “for” Jesus and not “against” Him! [See Matthew 12:30.]
 - f. The Lord had directed Paul from the Jews [primarily] to the Gentiles (vs. 18,21).

THE OUTCOME OF THE COMPROMISE (vs. 22-30).

1. The Jews were in a frenzy; they wanted Paul’s life (vs. 22,23).
2. A quick resolution by scourging was sought by the commander (vs. 25).
3. Paul appealed to his Roman citizenship in an effort to protect himself from physical harm (vs. 25-29). [See Romans 13:4 for Paul’s attitude toward the use of civil government.]
4. The chief captain arranged a hearing for Paul before the chief priests and all the council, supposing that he could thereby learn the particulars of this unusual situation involving Paul and his Jewish adversaries (vs. 30).

Lesson 18: The First Compromise (Acts 21:1- 22:30) QUESTIONS

- 1. List the places visited by Paul and his companions in chapters 20 and 21, beginning at Ephesus and ending in Jerusalem. Locate each of these places on a map.**
- 2. Disciples at both Tyre and Caesarea received notice through the Spirit that Paul would be in danger in Jerusalem and urged him not to go there. What was Paul's attitude about this danger? 21:13**
- 3. Paul visited many days with Philip, "the evangelist." What else do we know about Philip, and what was unusual about his family? 21:8,9 [See also, Acts 6:5; 8:5ff, esp. 8:40.]**
- 4. Upon returning to Jerusalem, Paul reported his activities to James and the elders. Why would they have been especially interested in Paul's success in preaching to the Gentiles? 21:18-20 [See also, Acts 15:13,19,20,22,24.]**
- 5. Although they were elated over Paul's Gentile conversions, James and the elders were concerned that Paul might be causing a problem among the Jews. What? 21:20,21**
- 6. What was the solution offered by James and the elders for this problem? 21:22-24 Why was this an appropriate time for Paul to accept their suggestion? 21:24 [See also Acts 18:18.]**
- 7. Who was responsible for causing Paul great trouble as he tried to *avoid* trouble with the Jews? 21:27 What situation did they use to attack Paul's Jewish integrity? 21:27-29**
- 8. Who came to Paul's rescue when it appeared that he would be killed by the furious mob in Jerusalem? 21:31,32**
- 9. What mistake did the Roman commander make about Paul's identity? 21:38 Why do you think Paul was allowed to speak to the mob as he requested? 21:39**

10. What were some things Paul recited about himself that would identify him with the *nationality* and the *religion* of the Jewish mob? 22:2,3

11. What had Paul done before his conversion that proved his personal commitment to do whatever he believed God wanted him to do? 22:4,5

12. What great change in Paul's life had occurred because of his deep commitment to do God's will always? 22:8,10

13. What word did Paul use to describe his opposition to Jesus that served as an admission that a great life-change was necessary for him? 22:7

14. How did Paul justify the drastic changes in his life and in his religious teaching that were so offensive to his fellow countrymen? 22:14,15

15. What practical lesson did Paul receive when he returned to Jerusalem after three years in Arabia that showed him where his greatest usefulness would be in preaching the gospel? 22:17,18 [See also, Acts 9:26-30 and Galatians 1:15-17.]

The First Legal Test of the Gospel

1. Some basic relationships existed between Roman law and Jewish law at this time:
 - a. The Romans maintained final authority in all legal matters;
 - b. The Romans sometimes allowed the Jews to make recommendations about matters that involved Jewish law [e.g., Pilate's disposition of Jesus to Herod (Luke 23:7,15)].
 - c. At other times the Romans did not allow for Jewish input into decisions [e.g., Gallio's treatment of Paul's enemies at Corinth (Acts 18:12-16)].
 - d. The Romans personally executed any verdicts reached about legal matters. [See Matthew 27:22-31.]
 - e. Roman law superseded all Jewish law. Where there were conflicts, Roman law always prevailed.

2. Some prominent Roman laws were in place in Palestine during Paul's lifetime. They were enforced in varying degrees at different times:
 - a. Peace must be preserved in the provinces of the empire at all costs. [See Acts 19:40.]
 - b. The rights of Roman citizens must be guaranteed under all circumstances.
 - (1) Valerian [508 B.C.] and Portian [300 B.C.] laws stipulated that:
 - (a) No magistrate had the right to bind, scourge, or kill any *untried* Roman citizen;
 - (b) No Roman citizen could be executed except by formal trial and the vote of a general assembly of the people;
 - (c) A simple statement of citizenship was sufficient to halt legal proceedings until the people could make a lawful decision through specific procedures;
 - (d) Many powers of the people were assumed by the emperor following an appeal to Caesar.
 - (2) The legal implications of these laws were important for Roman citizens:
 - (a) No punishment could be administered without specific charges being made against the defendant;
 - (b) Protection was assured from all unlawful actions during the legal process;
 - (c) Provision was to be made for a fair hearing on all charges against a defendant.
 - (d) The right of appeal to a higher court was available to contest the decision of a lower court.

[This information, #1 and #2, may be found in Conybeare and Howson, The Life and Epistles of St. Paul, pp. 239, 589-598) and in Westminster Dictionary of the Bible, pp. 517-518.]

3. These were the laws that controlled the events surrounding Paul during the rest of the book of Acts. Of course, it is obvious that *God* was actually in control and was using these Roman laws to shape circumstances to conform to His plan for Paul's life and work in His kingdom. [See Galatians 4:4; Romans 13:4.]
4. The gospel, not just Paul, was on trial in these chapters. Could its precepts be satisfied amid very difficult obstacles?
 - a. The gospel encourages Christians to live peaceably with all men (Romans 12:18);
 - b. Christians must "repay no one evil for evil" (Romans 12:17);
 - c. Every disciple must demonstrate honor to the ruling authorities (1Peter 2:17).
5. The Jews tried to discredit Paul and his gospel by the use of Roman "law" [See Acts 16:21.], but the final verdict from a fair trial would be: "Nothing...worthy of death or of any bonds" (Acts 23:29).
6. Some of the Roman laws that came into play regarding Paul's Roman citizenship were:
 - a. *The peace must be preserved* (21:30-33; 22:22-24). The commander took immediate action to address the unruly situation caused by the angry mob. The Jews were in a frenzy, and trouble could easily spread throughout the entire city.
 - b. *Specific charges must be lodged against an accused person* (22:24,30). The uproar confused Lysias (Acts 21:34). The Jews wanted Paul to be executed (vs. 22), but Lysias failed to comprehend Paul's Hebrew-language defense and its implications. The charges were actually about "their law" (Acts 23:29) and not about some Roman law that would justify imposing a penalty on Paul. Scourging was inflicted (vs. 24) to gather information [by confession of the prisoner], not for punishment. Guilt was usually presumed against any "outsider."
 - c. *Protection must be given to a defendant from unlawful acts by others* (vs.25-29). Expecting to be scourged, Paul resorted to the protection of Roman law (vs. 25b). His claim was unchallenged, because a false claim of citizenship could bring a death penalty to the claimant (vs. 26-29). Details of Paul's "citizenship by birth" are not entirely clear, but his status was evidently superior to a purchased citizenship such as Lysias possessed. When Paul made his claim, the scourgers "departed" [in a hurry, no doubt!] and Lysias was "afraid" because the Roman law had been broken when this Roman citizen had been bound without good cause (vs. 29).
 - d. *A fair hearing of all charges against a defendant must be provided to a defendant* (vs. 30ff.). The Jewish leaders were commanded to appear and accuse Paul of his crimes. Paul, however, took the initiative of a "good conscience before God" (vs. 1), which was important to the Jews but not to the Romans. The Jewish high priest ordered a reprisal against Paul without hearing his defense (vs. 2). The Law for which the high priest was so jealous forbade any act that constituted "unjust judgment" (Leviticus 19:15). Paul was anxious to be seen as a student and respecter of the Law and so he quoted from the Law (vs. 3,5). Perhaps even the Romans would be impressed that a man who was accused of breaking the Jews' law would seek the protection of the very law for which his accusers charged he had no respect.

7. Concluding that he would never receive a fair hearing, Paul perceived that his adversaries were divided into the competitive philosophical camps of Sadducees and Pharisees (vs. 6). He recognized at once an opportunity to rescue himself from a potentially life-threatening situation.
 - a. These two Jewish parties were constantly embroiled in the hotly-contested questions about the resurrection of the dead and other similar issues. Pharisees defended the possibility of life after death; the Sadducees stoutly denied it.
 - b. Paul suddenly revealed that his personal position was derived from his Pharisee heritage and that somehow the problems he was facing had sprung out of his convictions about such fundamental truths.
 - c. Of course, the Pharisees and Sadducees were in agreement that Paul was guilty of despising the Law and of forbidding Jews to observe its customs and traditions. So far as they were concerned, these were the departures from Judaism that had brought about the conflict between them and the apostle.
 - d. Antagonism toward the Sadducees was stronger in some of the Pharisees than their ill will toward this preacher of a new religion. The opportunity to strike a blow against their longtime religious opponents was too good to pass up.
 - e. It is ludicrous that the scribes of the Pharisees so quickly abandoned their violent condemnation of Paul and instead began to vigorously pronounce his innocence of any "evil" for which he might be punished. The only possible reason for their unexpected behavior was that their longstanding *prejudices* against the Sadducees were much stronger than their *convictions* about the things in their Law (vs. 9).
 - f. Personal considerations often prove to be the real motivators of human action rather than genuine religious convictions. It is likely that these scribes had not really changed their feelings about Paul but were simply willing to take an insincere position in an effort to embarrass others against whom they had for a long time entertained an unrelenting grudge.
 - g. The commander, aware of his duty to maintain the peace of the city, snatched Paul from the jaws of danger and hastened him away from hands that sought to do him harm (vs. 10).

AN INTERLUDE: The Lord encouraged an apostle who could possibly become discouraged over a disappointing turn of events (vs. 11):

- a. Paul had been faithful as God's spokesman in Jerusalem even in the face of great danger to himself;
- b. He would be rewarded for his faithfulness with something he had deeply desired to do-- preach the gospel in Rome (Romans 19:21).

8. Other Roman laws that protected Paul during his ordeal:

- a. *Prohibition of punishment for unproved charges against a defendant* (vs. 12-24).
 - (1) A vicious plot was devised against Paul's life by more than forty of his enemies. It involved having Paul moved to a site where he could be examined by the council. During this move, he would be ambushed by these assassins and killed (vs. 12-15).

- (2) The pernicious plot was exposed by Paul's young nephew (vs. 16-21); it was thwarted by the urgent actions taken by the commander of the Roman garrison (vs. 22,23).
 - (3) Paul's enemies could not have anticipated such strenuous efforts by the Romans to protect an uncondemned citizen.
 - (4) Four hundred and seventy soldiers, both infantry and cavalry troops, assured Paul's complete safety to Antripas. His further removal to Caesarea, Rome's headquarters for the security of Palestine, and his lodging in Herod's own palace made certain that the plotters would utterly fail in their determination to destroy God's apostle (vs. 23-33). God had taken charge of Paul's protection, and nothing that men could do could keep him from his appointed mission (Acts 23: 11).
 - (5) Paul evidently was treated with respect as an uncondemned man while in custody in Caesarea (vs. 31-35).
- b. *Defendants had the right of appeal for contested verdicts* (vs. 24,25).
- (1) The verdict by Lysias about Paul was: there was "nothing charged against him worthy of death or chains" (vs. 29).
 - (2) The plot of the Jews against Paul constituted *their* informal appeal of Lysias' decision not to allow them to have their way with his prisoner (vs. 22:30; 23:10).
 - (3) Lysias exercised Paul's *right* for his protection at Caesarea (vs. 35).
 - (4) Another hearing would soon be held before Felix the governor (vs. 30). This appeal hearing will be investigated in chapter 24.

Lesson 19: The First Legal Test (Acts 22:22- 23:35) QUESTIONS
of the Gospel

- 1. What was the “word” that excited the Jews to extreme anger against Paul? 22:22**
- 2. What behavior did the Jews exhibit that demonstrated the extent of their anger? 22:23**
- 3. To what two facts did Paul call attention when he was about to be scourged by the Romans? 22:25 When earlier had Paul appealed to his citizenship? Acts 16:36-38**
- 4. What was the difference between Paul’s citizenship and the commander’s? 22:28**
- 5. Paul began his defense before the Jewish council with a claim that should have been very important to the Jews, if not to the Romans. What was it? 23:1**
- 6. What incident did Paul use, and how did he use it, as an opportunity to demonstrate to the Jews that he was more dedicated to following some things in the Law than they were? 23:1-5 [See also, Leviticus 19:15,16; Deuteronomy 19:15,18)**
- 7. How did Paul use his knowledge of Jewish religion and politics to stop the progress of the “kangaroo court” that was bent on his destruction? 23:6-10**
- 8. Which part of the Sanhedrin court showed that it was more interested in the politics of religion than in religion itself? 23:9**
- 9. How did the Lord affirm Paul’s plans for preaching the gospel in a place he had not yet visited? 23:11 [See also Acts 19:21.]**
- 10. When Paul could not be defeated through the trial of law, by what means did his adversaries determine to destroy him? 23:12-15**

The First Legal Test of the Gospel

11. The providence of God obviously intervened in events rapidly leading toward Paul's death. What happened? 23:16 What must have been the attitude of the Romans toward Paul that might explain their cooperation with this Jewish prisoner? 23:17-22

12. What extreme measures did the Roman commander resort to in response to the word of a young and unknown boy? 23:23,24

13. Cladius Lysias' letter to Felix the governor placed Paul in a favorable light as being innocent of crimes against the Roman state. What fact did Lysias *misrepresent* and what fact did he *omit* to make himself look good to the governor? 23:26-30

14. Where was Paul kept in Caesarea in order to provide maximum security for him? 23:25

1. **PAUL was on trial *again* before his accusers (Acts 24:1ff.).**
 - a. He had already been “tried” several times *informally*:
 - (1) At Philippi-- he was charged with teaching “unlawful customs” and was imprisoned without a formal hearing (Acts 16:20-24);
 - (2) At Athens-- he was dismissed by many Greek intellectuals as a “babbler” [“seed picker”] and was mocked as a “proclaimer of foreign gods” (Acts 17:18,32);
 - (3) At Corinth-- he was accused of persuading men to “worship God contrary to the law.” The proconsul refused to pursue the charges against him (Acts 18:12-17);
 - (4) At Ephesus-- “A great commotion about the Way” led to a “trial” before certain silversmiths and a large mob of idol-worshippers. Only the intervention of a city official prevented a disastrous “verdict” by angry people (Acts 19:23-41);
 - (5) At Jerusalem--
 - (a) He was prejudged guilty by Jewish zealots of defiling the temple and escaped death only by the actions of the Roman commander (Acts 21:27-36);
 - (b) He was condemned by his audience when the defense of his behavior included a reference to preaching to “the Gentiles” (Acts 22:1,21-23);
 - (c) He was tried before the Jewish council as a traitor to the Law of Moses. An internal controversy about the resurrection ended their deliberations about Paul’s fate (Acts 23:1-10).
 - b. *Finally*, Roman law would grant Paul a *formal* trial conducted within legal guidelines to assure that his trial would be fair:
 - (1) His accusers were required to be present to face the accused. The high priest, elders, and their lawyer [orator] Tertullian came before the court to press their charges against Paul (23:35; 24:1);
 - (2) Regular court procedure would be followed to ensure an orderly hearing from all involved parties : the prosecution would make its accusations; the defense would then be allowed to respond with its answer (24:1,2).
2. **GENTILE FAITH also was on trial *again* before its judges.**
 - a. The Jews had already rejected any system of faith that would save Gentiles if it did not include requirements for Gentiles to keep the Jewish Law (Acts 22:21,22).
 - b. Even many Jewish *converts*, it seems, at first believed that Law-keeping was essential for Gentiles (Acts 15:1-5).
 - c. The Jews’ quarrel with Paul was not so much based on his *personal* relationship to the Law as on the fact that he publicly insisted that Law-keeping was not any longer binding on either Jew or Gentile.
 - d. Any verdict favorable to Paul would also be a verdict favoring Paul’s message of

- equality between Jews and Gentiles. Such a decision would at the same time be an indictment of the Jewish religious leadership and its control over all Law-keepers.
- e. The contest to rule the hearts of men had led Jewish zealots to be willing to kill this apostle whose preaching threatened their cherished position of authority among their people. They would use any legal or illegal (Acts 23:13-15) means necessary to accomplish their purpose.
3. The *legal tactics* of the Jewish leaders included accusations against Paul that:
 - a. He was guilty as a promoter of an *illegal* religion, “the sect of the Nazarene” (vs. 5). While Rome allowed the practice of long-established religions in the provinces, forming “new” religions was strictly forbidden;
 - b. He was guilty of harrassing a *legal* religion (vs. 5,6). Judaism had been practiced for a long time in many places now under Roman control;
 - c. Specifically, he was a “pestilent fellow” [KJV, ASV]. “Pestilent: a deadly, infectious malady” (W.E. Vine). They said he was dangerous both to Rome and to the Jews. Of course, their great concern, undisclosed to the Romans, was that the influence of the gospel would continue to spread “throughout the world” to the detriment of their own influence over keepers of the Law (vs. 5);
 - d. Specifically, he was a threat to the peace of the Roman empire. He troubled Rome’s subjects [Jews] to “dissension” and “insurrections” [ASV];
 - e. Specifically, he was a “ringleader” of a “sect,” an *unapproved* offshoot of Judaism;
 - f. Specifically, he was a profaner of their temple. He had violated the law of a religion *approved* by the Roman government (vs. 6).
 4. Paul’s response to these charges by the Jews (vs. 10-21):
 - a. He had confidence in the competency and fairness of Felix to judge his case (vs. 10,11).
 - b. There was no proof of any pestilent behavior or insurrection by Paul. The time frame argued against those charges:
 - (1) It had been twelve days since Paul had arrived in Jerusalem (vs. 11);
 - (2) It had been at least three days since he was taken prisoner (23:11,12,32) and five days since coming to Caesarea (24:1);
 - (3) That left only four days [or less] in which to raise an “insurrection,” which was not likely enough time.
 - c. The “sect” [“Way”] embodied the fulfillment of God’s purpose and of the promises made to the Jews in the Law and in the prophets (vs. 14,15). [See Matthew 5:17,18.]
 - d. He preached *hope* in the resurrection and in God’s fair judgment of both the just and the unjust (vs. 15). This was a hope entertained by all who believed “the law and the prophets” (vs. 14), which, of course, excluded the Sadducees [the high priest and unknown numbers of the “elders” who accused Paul were Sadducees.]. Paul’s dispute with the others was about who were *just* and *unjust*, as defined by the Law and the gospel of Christ. [See Romans 3:30; Galatians 2:15,16.]
 - e. He *always* lived in good conscience according to what he believed was God’s will for

- him (vs. 16). [See Acts 23:1.] Perhaps Felix could see how inconsistent was the behavior of Paul's accusers with the Law which they professed to defend.
- f. He had been engaged in doing a *good deed* when arrested. His beneficent work to benefit Jewish nationals should cast light on his basic character. He was no rabble-rouser or seditionist (vs. 17, 5).
 - g. He was still a practitioner of Jewish customs and traditions, as evidenced by his own purification in the temple (vs. 18).
 - h. The Jews had breached Roman law in the failure of first-hand witnesses to Paul's actions to attend his trial and accuse him directly of his "crimes" (vs. 19).
 - i. Paul would confess only to one of the charges for which he now stood in judgment. He *did* believe and preach the resurrection of the dead. This admission likely was intended to instigate another serious disagreement among his accusers. The resurrection, of course, was *not* a matter of concern to a Roman court of law.
5. Felix deferred making a decision about Paul's case because:
 - a. He wanted to maintain favor among the Jews (vs. 22, 27). Knowing what he did about Christ's "Way," he must have concluded that Paul could not be convicted in a Roman court on the basis of the religious charges against him. But to acquit Paul now would only antagonize many of the Jews, which Felix did not want to do.
 - b. He thought that a delay in judgment might allow time for Lysias to come and possibly furnish information about civil violations that could be used in his decision (vs. 22).
 - c. He hoped to obtain money from Paul or his friends to secure Paul's release (vs. 26).
 6. Paul was held for two years by Felix (vs. 27). He was treated well and allowed to enjoy the comfort and support of his friends (vs. 23). It is possible that Felix was answering a conscience that convinced him of Paul's innocence and of the obvious legal truth that he should be released immediately.
 7. Felix and his wife [who was Jewish] heard Paul speak about the gospel he preached (vs. 24-26).
 - a. Felix apparently had some prior knowledge that generated a desire to learn more about this unusual preacher and the strange message he was preaching. Or, his interest might have sprung from his wife's Jewish background and interests.
 - b. Paul's discourse to the couple consisted of lessons about:
 - (1) Righteousness. Only those obedient to the gospel are righteous (Romans 3:28).
 - (2) Self-control. Only those who sacrifice themselves continue to be righteous (Romans 12:1,2).
 - (3) Judgment to come. God will one day judge *all* men on the basis of their righteousness or lack of it (Acts 17:31).
 - c. Felix [and probably his wife also] did welcome Paul's views on religion:
 - (1) Felix was not righteous [upright] in his conduct as a civil governor;
 - (2) He was lustful in his private life [his marriage to Drusilla was adulterous] and he was not at all in control of his passions;

- (3) His prospects in an eternal judgment by God were not good!
- d. Paul's gospel disturbed Felix too much for him to deal with its immediate demands on his life. He pushed aside any confrontation with the truth about himself and made a shallow promise to consider Paul's gospel at another time (vs. 25).
8. Felix was replaced as governor of the province by Porcius Festus and "inherited" Paul as a prisoner and got his case as something still to be resolved under Roman law (vs. 27).
- a. Nothing exists to indicate that Felix ever found his "convenient time" to hear the gospel again (vs. 25). He probably never obeyed the Lord and suffered the eternal consequences of his spiritual unconcern.
- b. Paul's challenge to his hearers was always, "Now is the day of salvation" (2Cor. 6:2).
9. ANOTHER JUDGE... ANOTHER TRIAL (Acts 25:1-12).
- a. Festus might prove to be a more likely dispenser of justice than Felix had been.
- (1) The Jews sought an advantage in making an immediate ["after three days"] request for reopening of Paul's case. This immediacy would hinder any investigation conducted by Festus that might favor Paul's cause (vs. 1-3).
- (2) This request was tied to a sinister plot and hid criminal motives in legal garb. Moving the prisoner from Caesarea to Jerusalem for another trial would again open the door for an attempt on his life. Perhaps some of the same forty assassins who had enrolled in an earlier plot (23:12,13) were also sharers in this one.
- (3) Festus was either too smart or too stubborn to agree to the scheme. Paul would remain at Caesarea, where Festus would hear his case soon (vs. 4).
- (4) After a period of time [exceeding ten days] Festus began Paul's second *formal* trial at Caesarea. This trial was a copy of the first-- the evidence against Paul was not valid. His innocence of the charges was obvious (vs. 7). Paul's defense of his actions was just as unyielding as before-- he had done *nothing* to violate either the law of Moses or the law of Rome (vs. 8).
- (5) Festus, like Felix, deferred a fair decision in the matter and caved in to Jewish pressure. He proposed a change of venue, which Paul was unwilling to accept under the circumstances (vs. 9,10).
- b. Exercising his right as a Roman citizen, Paul appealed for a judgment from Caesar. This was an extreme strategy to address an extreme situation (vs. 10,11).
- c. Under law, Festus had no choice but to grant Paul's appeal to the emperor. He did, however, first "confer" with "the council," either Paul's adversaries or his own legal advisers (vs.12). Was he still not willing to do his duty as a judge until he had determined if the Jews would "go along" with Paul's deportation to Rome? If so, they apparently agreed to cooperate, if only for the reason that this appeal would send the apostle far away where he could do them no harm.
- h. A trial before Nero probably would secure no more justice for Paul, but it would allow him finally to realize his ambition to preach the gospel in Rome (Acts 19:21).
2. Gentile faith had been *twice tried* and *twice betrayed* by the personal ambitions of cowardly judges. But-- it takes *three strikes* to put one *out!* Gentile faith would have still have another chance to be exonerated in Rome [and it would be]!

1. Paul's Jewish accusers employed what person to present their case to Felix in the most favorable light possible? 24:1,2
2. How did Tertullian introduce his case to Felix in an effort to gain his favorable attention? 24:2,3
3. What "findings" about Paul did the Jews hope would be confirmed by Felix when he had heard the evidence against him? 24:5-8
4. Paul denied being guilty of "creating dissension" (vs. 5) among the Jews in Jerusalem. For one thing, he was in the city for only how long before his activities were interrupted by his adversaries? 24:11,12
5. Paul accused his accusers of having no proof that he had caused trouble among the Jews in what places in Jerusalem? 24:12,13
6. Having challenged the Jews' assessment of his Jewish character, Paul boldly claimed that his "Jewishness" had led him to hold what *four* religious convictions which all good Jews ought to support, not condemn? 24:14
7. As further proof of the inappropriateness of the Jews' opposition to his activities as a disciple of Jesus, Paul called attention to the mission that had brought him to Jerusalem. What was that mission? 24:17 [See also 2Corinthians 9:1,12-15.]
8. What objections did Paul make about the "hearsay" evidence being used against him in this trial before Felix? 24:18-20
9. The only first-hand evidence that these accusers could use against Paul was something that most of them as Jews would have to support, not condemn. What was it? 24:21

10. What disposition did Felix make of Paul's case? 24:22,23

11. Later, Felix had the opportunity to learn more about the gospel for which Paul had been brought to trial by the Jews. What disposition did Felix make of the case that Paul made for Jesus? 24:25

12. Perhaps the mind of Felix was too much distracted by *two worldly* motivations to give much serious attention to the spiritual things Paul tried to teach him. What were these motivations? 24:26,27

13. What plot did the Jewish leadership now contrive against Paul in an effort to destroy him? 25:1-3 What similar action had the Jews taken earlier against him? 23:12-25

14. Before Festus, Paul claimed in his own defense that he was completely innocent of any wrongdoing with respect to what *three* things? 25:8

15. What immediate disposition of this case did Festus wish to make? Why? 25:9

16. Why was Paul as a Roman citizen unwilling for his trial before Festus to end without the rendering of a verdict? 25:10,6

17. What verdict was Paul willing to accept as a Roman citizen if the charges brought against him were proved in a fair Roman trial? 25:11

18. How did Paul put an end to his own trial before Festus? 25:11,12

Lesson 21: **The Defense Never Rests!** (Acts 25:13- 26:32)

1. Paul had been imprisoned in Jerusalem after a confrontation with the Jews (Acts 21).
 2. He was a prisoner throughout the remainder of Acts. The book will close with the apostle experiencing a strange imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28:16,30,31).
 3. His case was complex:
 - a. He was a Jew accused by fellow Jews about religious practices that all had once observed;
 - b. He was tried by Gentiles who had no real interest in the issues that were involved in the dispute;
 - c. Many side issues had been raised in Paul's trials: charges of insurrection, accusations about the violation of a religion recognized by the Roman government, and the extending of political favor toward his Jewish accusers by self-seeking judges.
 4. Paul's verdict had been delayed by:
 - a. Many layers in the Roman political process;
 - b. An uncertainty among his judges about the nature of the charges against him;
 - c. The unwillingness of those judges to render an unpopular decision;
 - d. Most importantly, God was arranging passage for Paul to go to Rome (Acts 23:11).
 5. Numerous defenses were demanded of Paul throughout his several imprisonments:
 - a. Acts 22:11-- his defense before the Jews when first seized by the Roman authorities;
 - b. Acts 23:1--- his first defense before the Jewish council, which was interrupted when the members disagreed about the resurrection;
 - c. Acts 24:10-- his defense before Governor Felix;
 - d. Acts 25:8--- his defense before Governor Festus;
 - e. Acts 26:1--- his defense before King Agrippa;
 - f. Acts 26:32-- the defense he would make before Caesar, the Roman Emperor.
- SO*, it could well be said that, "*The Defense Never Rests!*" Paul was "happy" to have so many opportunities to defend himself and the gospel he preached (Acts 26:2).
6. This latest trial [chapter 26] was unofficial because he had already appealed to Caesar for a verdict in his case. However, it bore all the appearances of a real trial.
 7. Three main figures appear in Paul's last *recorded* defense, the trial before King Agrippa.
 - a. Festus is still Paul's *judge* who was responsible for these proceedings;

- b. Agrippa was Paul's *jury* who would render a "verdict" about his guilt;
- c. Paul, of course, was still the *defendant* who must defend himself once again.

Festus-- the Judge (Acts 25:14-27): a man of good *intentions* but of *limited ability*.

- a. He seems to have possessed an innate sense of fairness (25:15,16). He could have felt "dumped on" and considered himself to be justified in avoiding this dispute. He could have gained the favor of the Jews by agreeing with them in their charges without taking the time to investigate their merit. But that would have been unfair to Paul. He also considered it unfair to pass judgment on a man without allowing him to defend himself face-to-face before his accusers. Moreover, it was not fair for Jewish issues to be judged by Roman law. Festus thought that fairness would require Paul to go to Jerusalem to be judged by a Jewish court (vs. 20).
- b. He appears to have been devoted to his duty as a Roman official (vs. 17). He was ready to do his job-- or so he *thought* (vs. 18)!
- c. He was willing to seek help from others: (1) from Agrippa (vs. 14); (2) from the commanders and prominent men of the city (vs. 23, 26). Pride did not prevent him from gathering as much accurate information as possible (vs. 26,27).
- d. He was candid ["straightforward"] with others. He admitted to being: (1) "perplexed" or "uncertain" (vs. 20); (2) in an unreasonable position (vs. 27); (3) "ignorant" of the issues he faced as a judge (vs. 18,19).
- e. His good qualities were inhibited by his confusion (Acts 25:20,26). It is natural to want to dismiss things we don't understand rather than trying to learn more so we can reach a logical determination about them.

Agrippa-- the Jury (Acts 25:23,26; 26:1,28): a man whose *conscience* was at war with his *consciousness*.

- a. Some of Agrippa's qualities inclined him toward an unfavorable "decision" about Paul:
 - (1) He had a bad heritage:
 - a. His great-grandfather [Herod the Great] had tried to kill the infant Jesus and had murdered many babies in the process (Matthew 2:16);
 - b. His great-uncle [Herod Antipas] had beheaded John the Baptist, who had led many Jews to Christ (Matthew 14:3-12);
 - c. His father [Herod Agrippa I] killed the apostle James and planned to kill Peter, both of whom promoted Jesus as Lord (Acts 12:1-4).
 - d. Paul would not have been surprised to hear that Agrippa wanted to *kill* him; instead, Agrippa wanted to *hear him preach* (25:22)!
 - (2) He had a bad personal life. He was living incestuously with Bernice [according to historians].
 - (3) He had a bad ego. He was proud of his position, and he entered the auditorium with "great pomp" in the company of commanders and prominent men of the city (vs. 23).

- (4) He had a bad set of priorities. He put himself first and the truth last (26:27,28). His position was more important to him than doing what would please God. Whatever conviction he had was smothered by his worldly interests. He was probably embarrassed by Paul's appeal for his commitment.
- b. Some of Agrippa's qualities inclined him toward a favorable "decision" about Paul:
- (1) He had a good knowledge of the background facts from which to make a determination. Paul expressed confidence in his ability to judge fairly (26:3).
 - (2) He had a good interest in religion. He stated his wish to hear what Paul had to say (25:22). He likely was especially anxious to hear Paul tell about a man who had died and had risen from the dead (25:19).
 - (3) He had a good sense of justice. He made an honest evaluation of Paul and his situation despite whatever may have been operating in his life to deter him from trying to do what was right. Apparently, had it been left to him, Paul would have gone free (26:32).
 - (4) He might possibly have been a good "prospect" for the gospel. At least, Paul credited him with some "belief" of the Jewish prophets and their statements about the Messiah.

Paul-- the Defendant (Acts 26:2-29): a man whose *conscience* and *consciousness* were at peace.

Paul was:

- (1) A strict law-keeper (vs. 5);
- (2) A servant of God in earnest (vs. 7);
- (3) A man obedient to his convictions-- a doer, not a talker (vs. 9-11);
- (4) A dedicated disciple (vs. 20-23);
- (5) A user of his opportunities (vs. 24-29).

The "Verdict" of the "Judge" [Festus] (Acts 26:24).

- a. It was a judgment born out of the confusion of the judge.
- b. Festus' confusion was understandable:
 - (1) One religion [Judaism] had an intense hatred for the other [Christianity], although both religions claimed to follow the *same God*;
 - (2) The "leader" in one of the religions [Paul] had been changed from the other religion when he had seen a "bright light" (26:13,19,20);
 - (3) This new convert possessed an unexplainable zeal despite great personal cost to himself (26:20-23);
 - (4) Paul's former religious cohorts were filled with an unreasonable amount of hatred for him and seemed willing to do *anything* to harm him (26:21);
 - (5) The main issue about which the two sides were so at odds was whether or not a *dead* man had been *raised* from the dead (26:23)!
- c. It would have been hard for any irreligious Gentile to recognize much merit in this unusual case that had been thrust upon him for judgment!

- d. It is not surprising that Festus' after-the-fact verdict about Paul was:
- (1) The defendant was a man made "mad" by his "much learning" (26:24);
 - (2) Neither side had a case worthy of any serious deliberation by the civil courts.

The "Verdict" of the "Jury" [Agrippa] (Acts 26:31,32).

- a. His public verdict about Paul as a prisoner : "The captive is innocent of any crime and should be freed!"
- (1) All who were hearing Paul's case for the first time (25:23) supported the decision that Agrippa declared (vs. 31,32).
 - (2) It is interesting to speculate whether or not Agrippa would have reached this same decision had this been a *real* trial with *real* consequences to himself as well as to the prisoner. Would he have bowed to political pressure in the same way that both Felix and Festus had done?
- b. His personal verdict about Paul as an apostle of Christ: "Paul is *innocent* of any crime but *guilty* of harboring a religious fervor that is hardly worth the sacrifices he is making!"
- (1) It had taken but "little" persuasion to change Paul's allegiance. One incident had been enough to alter the entire course of his life.
 - (2) The evidence was hardly adequate for Agrippa to justify abandoning his position of power in the world as Paul had done. Furthermore, his perverted lifestyle stood in the way of any serious consideration of the things Paul preached.
 - (3) It was unnecessary for Agrippa to postpone a decision about his personal spiritual intentions as Felix and Festus had postponed a verdict about Paul's physical fate. He could say without hesitation, "Don't bother me any more...I'm not interested!"

The Official Verdict that Disposed of Paul's Case (Acts 25:12; 26:32).

*"Paul has appealed to Caesar...to Caesar He Shall Go!"
"On to Rome and to Caesar!"*

Lesson 21: **The Defense Never Rests!** (Acts 25:13-26:32)
QUESTIONS

1. Paul's Jewish accusers thought to take advantage of Festus' inexperience and ignorance of the facts of Paul's imprisonment. What did they ask Festus to do? What was his response? 25:14-16
2. Why had Festus been surprised when he heard the accusations that the Jewish leaders made against Paul? 25:17-19
3. How had Festus tried to resolve the dilemma he faced because of the contradictory statements made by Paul and his accusers? 25:20 What had happened then? 25:21
4. Festus admitted that it would be unreasonable [and unlawful] not to have specific facts to send to Caesar about Paul's imprisonment and guilt. How did he think he might obtain such information? 25:22,26,27
5. Chapter 26 begins the account of Paul's *fifth* defense of his behavior and teaching since making a drastic change in his life as an up-and-coming Jewish leader. What were the four previous defenses? See Acts 22:1; 23:1; 24:10; 25:8 Had Paul become weary of having always to defend himself and the gospel? 26:2
6. Why was Paul glad that Agrippa was to hear his defense upon this occasion? 26:2,3
7. Paul and his Jewish adversaries shared a common "hope." What was it? 26:6,7 See also, Genesis 3:15; Deuteronomy 18:15; Acts 3:22; John 1:45; John 4:25
8. What fundamental fact about Jesus gave Paul great hope that He was the Jews' Messiah, while the same fact made it difficult to have that hope? 26:8

9. Paul acknowledged the difficulty faced by faithful and zealous Jews in accepting Jesus as the Messiah by recounting what behavior of his own when he was also an unbeliever? 26:9-11
10. In His appearance to Saul [Paul], Jesus had assured him that he would be able to accomplish *five* significant things among the Gentiles. What were they? 26:18
11. What *three* things did Paul include immediately in his preaching of the gospel of Christ both to Jews and to Gentiles? 26:20
12. Paul preached the very *same* message to Jews and Gentiles everywhere. He was persecuted for his teaching by Jews, who should have been more receptive to his teaching than the Gentiles were. Why? 26:21-23
13. When Festus displayed a complete lack of understanding and sympathy for Paul as a zealous advocate of Jesus Christ, how did Paul seek to enlist support from King Agrippa? 26:24-27
14. Do you think that Agrippa's reply to Paul's appeal to him as a "prospect" for the truth was a *favorable, unfavorable, or indifferent* remark? Why? [Answers will vary.] 26:28
15. What seemed to be the consensus of opinion among his hearers about Paul's guilt or innocence? 26:31
16. Had Agrippa and Festus been able to free Paul following this hearing, Paul would probably have been able to go to Rome under different circumstances. If that had happened, what *two* outcomes of his preaching in Rome might not have occurred? See Philippians 1:12-14.

Lesson 22: **Destination: Rome, the** (Acts 27:1- 28:30)
World's First City

1. **Paul's purpose was set:** "I must also see Rome" (Acts 19:21). His opportunities to preach the gospel would be expanded there.
2. **The Lord's purpose was also set:** "For as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome" (Acts 23:11).
3. Paul *will* see Rome and preach the gospel as the prisoner of God and man. None would have thought that he had much of a chance to realize his goal. He had overcome many serious obstacles:
 - a. He had survived a riot about his preaching at Ephesus (Acts 19);
 - b. He had been seized and beaten by a frenzied mob at Jerusalem (Acts 21);
 - c. He had stood in judgment before a vengeful council of Jewish leaders (Acts 23);
 - d. He had avoided a plot against his life by forty Jewish assassins (Acts 23);
 - e. He had been denied justice by Felix and imprisoned for two years (Acts 24);
 - f. He had experienced a fruitless trial before Festus that was instigated by another sinister plot to kill him (Acts 25).
 - g. A favorable outcome from a hearing by Agrippa and other prominent officials was frustrated by his previous appeal to be heard by Caesar (Acts 26).
4. Now, *one great obstacle* to realizing his dream of preaching at Rome still remains: a dangerous sea voyage to Italy during an unfavorable season for travel. Yet, God's hand had been seen at every step in overcoming other hinderances to Paul's goal. Why should he not be confident that this outcome would be the same? After all, Paul's goal was also *God's goal*, too! Perhaps that was Luke's emphasis when he said at the end of their arduous journey, "And *so* we came to Rome" (Acts 28:14).
5. The last two chapters of Acts present several important changes that took place during the voyage to Rome:
 - a. **A Change of Course for Paul** (Acts 27:1-20).
 - (1) The voyage began around the time of "the Fast." This Day of Atonement celebration was either September 23 or October 5, depending on whether the year was A.D. 59 or A.D. 60. Mid-September to mid-November was the most dangerous time for sea travel.
 - (2) The traveling party sailed to Myra (Lucia), then changed ships at Fair Havens. Paul [probably from personal experience, not by revelation] predicted a "loss of life," which did not occur. Nevertheless, his warning of the dangers in continu-

ing the voyage was accurate (27:10). But-- his advice was ignored by all!

- (3) A sudden storm forced a *change of course* for the travelers. Hope then was lost by men who soon found themselves in an apparently hopeless situation. They “were driven” by strong winds for some eight hundred miles (27:15).

b. **A Change of Roles for Paul** (Acts 27:21-44).

- (1) The voyage had turned deadly because of *faulty human judgment* (vs. 11) tempered by *physical convenience* (vs. 12).
- (2) *Sound human judgment* could have avoided the trouble ahead (vs. 10,12).
- (3) **Now-- *divine judgment* must take control of the journey (vs. 23), which was that:**
 - (a) No life would be lost *if* divine orders were followed; all aboard had been “granted” to Paul (vs. 24);
 - (b) Everyone must remain aboard the ship (vs. 31);
 - (c) The ship must be allowed to run aground on a certain island (vs. 26).
- (4) God’s promise of escape [*a*, above] was conditioned on human obedience to His requirements, *b* and *c*. Disobedience can never expect favorable results!
- (5) Paul assumed the role previously occupied by the ship’s master [whose decisions had been so faulty] (vs.11) as he:
 - (a) Guided the actions of the centurion and the soldiers (vs. 31,32);
 - (b) Encouraged everyone to eat food (vs. 33,34);
 - (c) Exercised definite control over the perilous situation (e.g., vs. 31, 34,36).
 - (d) Assured his own safety and that of the others on board (vs. 22,24).
- (6) Paul was careful to portray *God* as the *Real Master* of the ship:
 - (a) He recited God’s promise about the ultimate safety of all on board (vs. 22-25);
 - (b) He attributed his own confidence to a message from an *angel of God* (vs. 23);
 - (c) He gave thanks to God for their food [and other blessings] (vs. 35);
- (7) The pagan unbelievers were impressed [“encouraged”] by Paul’s faith (vs.36).
- (8) Such a change of roles is typical of a similar change in our own lives: from self-control to God-control! This change saved a group of men from the *sea*; it can save all men now from *sin* and *damnation*!

c. **A Change of Mind About Paul** (Acts 28:1-10).

- (1) The “barbarians” [KJV, ASV-- non-Greeks] were good people and treated Paul and the other survivors with great kindness (vs. 2).
- (2) Despite their kindness, the island people were convinced that Paul was a dangerous criminal when a viper bit him (vs. 3,4).
- (3) But they had a *change of mind* when no harm came to Paul from the serpent’s bite (vs. 5). Then they supposed that the apostle was a god of some sort (vs. 6).
- (4) This was opposite to the reaction of the people of Lystra, where Paul had first been considered to be a god, then a [religious] criminal (Acts 14:11,12,19).
- (5) Paul’s true character was displayed when he was presented with opportunities to serve others on the island (vs. 8,9).
- (6) The islanders gave *appropriate honor* to the apostle in recognition of who and what he really was-- a *good* man through whom *God* was working (vs. 10).

- (7) Their change of mind occurred only because *Paul's* mind never changed! He “always” strove to “have a conscience without offense toward God and men” (Acts 24:16). Such a worthy goal will be rewarded by both God and men (vs.10).

d. A Change of State for Paul (Acts 28:11-16).

- (1) Paul had often been in prison. [See 2Corinthians 11:23.]
- (2) His treatment as a prisoner had seldom been pleasant; oftentimes it had been extremely cruel. [See Acts 16:23; 21:33; 22:24,25.]
- (3) His state as a prisoner changed after 276 men had been rescued for a doomed ship because of *his* intervention into a hopeless situation:
 - (a) He was allowed to stay three days at Syracuse (vs. 12) and seven days with the brethren at Puteoli (vs. 13);
 - (b) He was privileged to dwell in his own private quarters [“hired house”] (vs. 16,30);
 - (c) He was permitted to entertain numerous guests (vs. 23,30);
 - (d) He was allowed to continue teaching others about the gospel and the kingdom of God (vs. 23,30);
 - (e) No interference was raised against his activities for “two whole years”(vs. 30).
- (4) This change of state enhanced the spread of the truth to Jews, Greeks, and soldiers. He was able to teach several of his captors each day until all were impressed with the fact that “my chains are in Christ” (Philippians 1:13).

e. A Change of Focus for Paul (Acts 28:17-29).

- (1) Paul began his teaching at Rome by following his pattern of first contacting Jews with the gospel. He sought a sympathetic mind-set from them about his role as the Jewish apostle to the Gentiles who had done *nothing against the Law* and was bound as a prisoner only because of “*the hope of Israel*” (vs. 20).
- (2) Some believed his message, others [most?] disbelieved (vs. 24).
- (3) “They” [the unbelievers] fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah about the rebellious nature of the Jewish nation [Isaiah 6:9,10] (vs. 23-27).
- (4) Paul’s focus would change. His concern for the salvation of his own people ran deep (Romans 10:1), but now his efforts would be concentrated on taking the gospel to the Gentiles. He was confident that they would be more receptive to God’s grace than the Jews had been. (vs. 28).

BUT, THERE WAS:

f. No Change of Commitment by Paul (Acts 28:30,31).

- (1) Paul was committed to preach the “things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ” for the next two years (vs. 30,31).
- (2) He was totally committed to teach all who sought him out to hear his message of spiritual hope. His commitment, along with the other apostles, was in response to the Lord’s charge to “preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15,16).
- (3) Boldness is unusual in a prisoner, but God was with him, even in a prison house,

and Paul preached to everyone “with all confidence” (vs. 31). He was really *God’s* prisoner, not man’s!

- (4) Finally, Paul could enjoy a situation in which *none* hindered his work as an apostle. His prison must have seemed much like a *palace* to him, and his imprisonment like *heaven on earth*! No other circumstance could ever compare with this one in which he could serve his Lord freely and completely without opposition from the devil and his angels.

The Curtain Closes:

- a. What was the outcome of Paul’s trial before Caesar [which was delayed for two years]? What was his ultimate fate? Was this to be the end of his labors for Christ?
- b. The answers to these questions are not important to the book of Acts. What was important was that the Lord’s plan for him as a witness (Acts 1:8; 26:16) was being carried out and that the apostle’s experiences had demonstrated over and over again that the Savior was “with him unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20).
- c. Solid evidence in the New Testament, in conjunction with statements from secular writers, indicates that Paul, sadly, would be released by Nero following his trial, only to be imprisoned again a few years later. Worse still, he was ultimately to be executed for his service as a soldier of Christ. In his writings, we can detect his expectation of release from his first sentence [e.g., Philippians 2:23,24] and his resignation to the final disposition of his case in his second incarceration [e.g., 2Timothy 4:7,8].

A faithful warrior for Jesus would finally lay down his sword, and his strong voice of faith would be heard no more.

Lesson 22: **Destination: Rome, the
World's First City**

(Acts 27:1- 28:31)

QUESTIONS

- 1. Locate on a map the places mentioned by Luke as he described Paul's perilous journey by ship from Caesarea to Rome.**
- 2. What Jewish celebration marked the usual beginning of dangerous sailing weather on the Great [Mediterranean] Sea? 27:9**
- 3. Was Paul's forecast of the outcome of this sea voyage based on inspired information or on his experience and knowledge of the sea? How do you know? 27:10 [See vs. 22-24.]**
- 4. What very bad judgment was displayed by the Roman centurion in charge of the voyage? What *two* factors led him to make that judgment? 27:11,12**
- 5. What unexpected change occurred in the weather soon after the ship set sail? 27:13**
- 6. When it became evident to those on board the vessel that they were facing real danger in the great storm, what did they do to try to save themselves and the ship? 27:16-19**
- 7. In spite of the fact that all the others had lost all hope of rescue, Paul was able to be optimistic and to give great encouragement to the rest. Why? 27:21-25 Why would the soldiers and sailors have believed what Paul promised? 27:21**
- 8. Paul stipulated conditions upon which the safety of all passengers would be granted by the Lord. What were they? 27:26,31,34**
- 9. What final preparation was made for grounding the ship? 27:38**

Destination: Rome, the World's First City

10. In what way was the plan made by those in charge of the ship not successful? 27:39-41
How might this have emphasized who was really in charge of the situation? 27:43,44
11. What other plan of the soldiers was thwarted by the centurion? 27:43 Give *two* reasons why he would not allow their plan to be carried out. [See Acts 27:24.]
12. What term is used to describe the inhabitants of Melita [Malta] that belies their behavior toward Paul and his companions [KJV, ASV]? 28:2 How has the use of that term been changed over time?
13. What event took place that caused those island people to draw a mistaken conclusion about Paul's identity? 28:3,4 Why did they change this opinion? 28:5,6 How was this situation different from what had happened to Paul at Lystra some time earlier? [See Acts 14:8-19.]
14. What favored treatment did Paul receive upon being delivered to the authorities at Rome? 28:16,30
15. What action did Paul first take at Rome as he laid his plans for continuing his gospel work in "the First City of the World"? 28:17,23
16. Paul announced to the leaders of the Jews at Rome that their nation had fulfilled what prophecy concerning them in the Old Testament? 28:25-27
17. What do we know from Scripture about Paul's initial imprisonment in Rome? 28:30,31 His second imprisonment some time later? [See 2Timothy 4:6-8.]

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CHART

The First Witnesses: Preparation

ACTS 1

1. They were given a commandment. 1:2
2. They were given many proofs. 1:3
3. They were taught about the kingdom of God. 1:3
4. They were given the promise of the Spirit. 1:4,5
5. Their misunderstandings were corrected. 1:6,7
6. They were challenged to their real mission. 1:8
7. Their witness was made complete. 1:9-11
8. Their individual hearts were prepared for their task. 1:12-14
9. Their sense of being instruments in a divine plan was nurtured.
1:12-14
10. Their number was replenished under divine control. 1:21-26

CHART

Sermons in Acts 2, 3, and 5

THE SERMONS:

<i>JESUS CRUCIFIED:</i>	2:23	3:14,15	5:30
<i>JESUS RAISED:</i>	2:32	3:15	5:30
<i>JESUS EXALTED:</i>	2:33	3:20,21	5:31
<i>JESUS WITNESSED:</i>	2:32	3:15	5:31
<i>JESUS SAVES:</i>	2:38	3:19,26	5:31

REACTIONS TO THE SERMONS:

1. "When they heard 'this'..."
(Acts 2:37)

2. They were "cut to the heart..."
(Acts 2:37--RSV)

3. "What shall we do...?"
(Acts 2:37)

1. "When they heard 'this'..."
(Acts 5:33)

2. "They were cut to the heart..."
(Acts 5:33)

3. They were "minded to slay them..."
(Acts 5:33)

----- Why the Difference???-----

CHART--- The Holy Spirit in Acts

1. “HOLY” THINGS ARE “SET APART” THINGS
2. MANY THINGS ARE “HOLY”-- INCLUDING THE SPIRIT
3. WHAT THE SPIRIT DID FOR PEOPLE IN ACTS:
 - a. Came upon the apostles-- 1:8
 - b. Fell upon the apostles and Cornelius-- 10:44; 11:15
 - c. Baptized the apostles and Cornelius-- 10:44; 11:15,16
 - d. Given to the apostles and Cornelius-- 15:8
 - e. Received by the Samaritans-- 8:15,17
 - f. Filled the apostles-- 2:4; 4:8; 13:9
 - g. Filled people other than the apostles-- 6:3; 7:55; 11:24
 - h. Given as a gift [or gave a gift] to the obedient-- 2:38
4. BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT:
 - a. A figurative “pouring out”-- 2:17,18,33; 10:35
 - b. Promised, not commanded-- 1:4,5
 - c. Received by Jews and Gentiles [“all flesh”] in persons of apostles and Cornelius’ family-- 2:1-4; 10:44-46
 - d. Effects on apostles: bore witness, spoke in tongues, worked miracles, gave the Spirit by laying on of their hands-- 2:1-39; 8:13,18
 - e. Effects on other people: spoke in tongues, magnified God-- 10:46
5. EXTRAORDINARY GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT:
 - a. Through the hands of the apostles-- 8:15-17
 - b. Nine kinds of gifts given-- 1Cor. 12:4-11
6. ORDINARY GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT:
 - a. All non-miraculous blessings for Christians-- Ephesians 1:3
 - b. Bestowed through medium of the gospel-- Romans 1:16,17

CHART--- **The Influence of the Spirit**

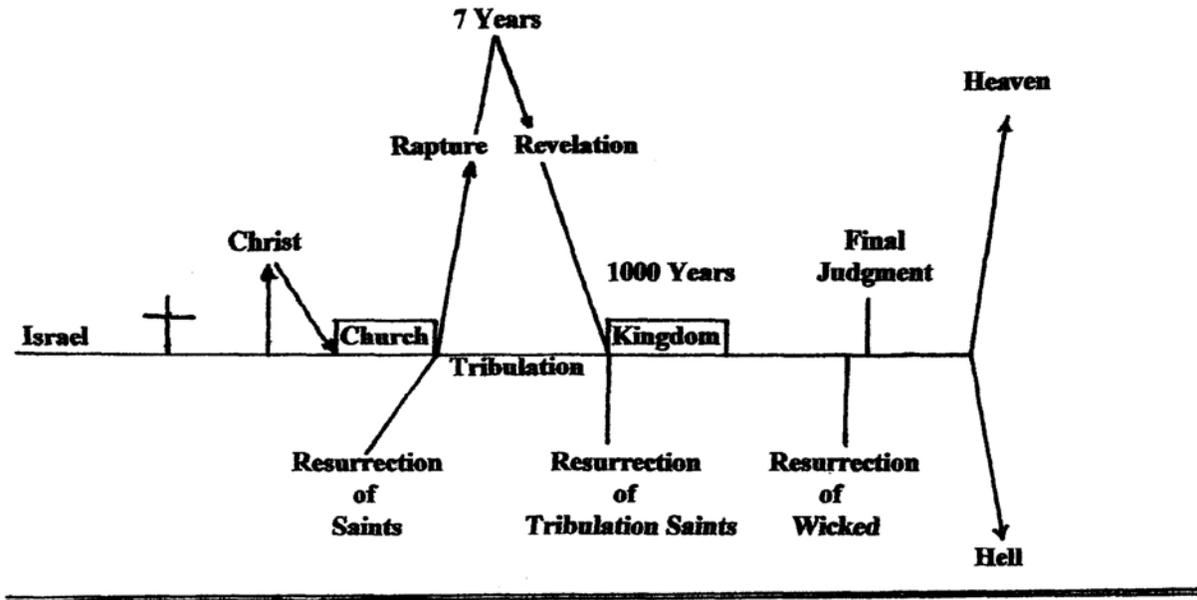
1. GUIDANCE FOR GOD’S WITNESSES:

- A. Sent Philip to contact the eunuch-- Acts 8:29**
- B. Directed Peter to Cornelius’ house-- Acts 11:12**
- C. Moved Agabus to foretell a great famine-- Acts 11:28**
- D. Chose preachers for the Gentile work-- Acts 13:2**
- E. Guided decisions at Jerusalem meeting-- Acts 15:28**
- F. Dispatched Paul to Europe-- Acts 16:7**
- G. Warned Paul of danger at Jerusalem-- Acts 20:23**

2. INFLUENCE OVER CHURCH LEADERS:

- A. Seven deacons were full of the Spirit-- Acts 6:3**
- B. Stephen and Barnabas full of the Spirit-- Acts 7:55; 11:24**
- C. Elders made overseers by the Spirit-- Acts 20:28**

PREMILLENIAL CONCEPT OF THE CHURCH



BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF THE CHURCH

