This chapter divides itself into four main divisions.

I. THE PROLOGUE - 1:1-5

READ 1:1-2

Verse one gives us a connecting link with the Gospel of Luke.


When he talks about the former treatise in verse one, he means the Gospel of Luke.

What the author is doing here is connecting the Book of Acts with the gospel preceding it.

He says, I WROTE, using the first person.

Luke himself is writing this book.

His purpose for this book, as it was with the Gospel of Luke, was to convey accurate information.

Like the Gospel of Luke, the Book of Acts is addressed to one individual, known as Theophilus.

The name Theophilus means "lover of God" or "loved of God"; it can go either way.

The Gospel of Luke was addressed to the same individual --Luke 1:3.

In the Book of Luke, Luke writes to Theophilus using the expression, most excellent, "most excellent Theophilus.".

This expression tells us that he was a person of rank.


He also uses it of Festus in 26:25.

By calling Theophilus *most excellent*, it means that he was a man of official Roman rank; he was some kind of a Roman official.

He was probably Luke's benefactor for the publication of his works.

He provided Luke with the money needed to write and publish these two works.

This is a typical format used by ancient historians.

For example, Josephus, when he wrote his history said, "Epephroditus, most excellent of men," using very similar language, of course, to what Luke uses.

In volume two of his book, Josephus says, "By means of the former volume, my most honored Epephroditus, I have demonstrated our antiquity."

Notice how both volumes in Josephus address the same man, Epephroditus.

Epephroditus was the benefactor, the one who helped finance the writings of Josephus.

In verse one Luke continues to point out that what he intended to write concerning Yeshua is *all that Yeshua began to do and to teach*.

That little phrase refers to the Gospel of Luke and summarizes that book.

Luke included in his gospel both the works and the words of Yeshua.

Also notice in verse one the little word, *began*.

By using this word, he is suggesting that the work of Yeshua did not end with the gospel.

Rather, the events of the Book of Acts are still the work of Yeshua the Messiah.

His work now continues, no longer personally here on earth, it does continue through this new Body, the Church, the Body of the Messiah.

The Book of Acts continues to report on the works and the teachings of Yeshua, but now through the Apostles.
In verse two, he points out the terminus of the gospel, “until the day he was taken up to heaven.”  

This sentence refers to the ascension of Yeshua.

The Greek word means to "lift up anything." 3

The point is that Yeshua was lifted up into heaven.


The ascension of Yeshua followed His post-resurrection ministry to His Apostles.

The content of His ministry is, “after giving instructions.” 4

That word “instructions” in the NIV would be better translated “commandments.”

He supplied commandments to the Apostles.

The means was through the Holy Spirit.

The object was the Apostles whom He had chosen, which at this point were eleven men.

They were chosen during the gospel period (Luke 6:13-16).

READ 1:3

What we have in verse three is a summary of His post-resurrection ministry.

As to His resurrection, Luke says he showed himself.

In other words, through these apostles, whom He had chosen, He showed himself to be very much alive (John 20:19-26; 21:1-14).

As to timing he says, "after his suffering."

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3 353 analambano { an-al-am-ban’-o} from 303 and 2983; TDNT - 4:7,495; v AV - take up 4, receive up 3, take 3, take in 2, take into 1; 13 GK - 377 { aj nalambavnw } 1) to take up, raise 2) to take up (a thing in order to carry or use it)
The word suffering includes both His anguish on the cross and His death.

Following His passion, the period of His suffering and death, He showed Himself alive because of His resurrection.

This showing of Himself was accompanied with many proofs.

In fact, as we put the gospel accounts together, He appeared to them at least ten different times.

The word *proofs* here means a compelling sign.\(^5\)

It means that there was objective evidence in contrast to mere imagination or mystical assertions.

The duration of His post-resurrection ministry is the space of 40 days.

There is a 40-day period between His resurrection and His ascension.

During those 40 days, He ministered to His Apostles.

The content of His ministry is that He was “spoke about the kingdom of God.”\(^6\)

In other words, He continued to teach them what He began to do in Matthew 13.

He continues to teach about the Mystery form of the Kingdom.

Outwardly, the Book of Acts deals with the progress of Christendom.

Inwardly, it deals with those who were truly saved, those who were true believers.

The Book of Acts records the continuation of the Mystery Kingdom program which began in Matthew 13.

**READ 1:4-5**

\(^5\) 5039 tekmerion \{ tek-may'-ree-on\} from a presumed derivative of tekmar (a goal or fixed limit); n AV - infallible proof 1; 1 GK - 5447 \{ tekmevrion \} 1) that from which something is surely and plainly known 2) on indubitable evidence, a proof, Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1995.

In verses four and five, we have the final commission that He gives to them.

This commission contains two elements.

The first key element is in verse four: they are to wait in Jerusalem.

They came together on the Mount of Olives and He then gave them a charge, not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father.

The promised gift from the Father was the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49).

The promise was that they would be given the Spirit at the request of the Son.

They already heard this before from Him.

They heard it from Yeshua during the upper room discourse (John 14:16-26; 15:26; 16:7-13).

The first part of the final commission is to wait in Jerusalem.

The second part of the final commission is to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

He draws a contrast, and the contrast is the identifying sign.

The contrast is this: John baptized with water, but these Apostles shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit.


Sometimes people will try to make significant distinctions between these words.

From the point of view of Greek text, this is invalid.

In the Greek text the little word there is the word “en.”

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7 1722 en [en] a primary preposition denoting (fixed) position (in place, time or state), and (by implication) instrumentality (medially or constructively), i.e. a relation of rest (intermediate between 1519 and 1537); TDNT - 2:537,233; prep AV - in 1874, by 141, with 134, among 117, at 112, on 46, through 37, misc. 321; 2782 GK - 1877 [ ejn ]GK - together with 3319 1845 [ ejmmevsw/ ]GK - together with 3551 1938 [ ejnnovmw" ]1)in, by, with etc.
The preposition “en” can mean in, with, or by. It all means the same thing as far as the Greek text is concerned.

Different translation teams simply chose one of those three possible meanings.

Be careful not to create distinctions in reference to this word.

But these apostles will be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

This will be fulfilled.

This is a prophecy in 1:5.

It will be fulfilled in 2:1-4.

We know that this prophecy was fulfilled by comparing verse 5 with 11:15-16.

Spirit baptism is defined in I Corinthians 12:13.

The results of Spirit baptism is not the receiving of any particular spiritual gift, but in becoming a member of the Body of Christ.

II. THE ASCENSION OF THE MESSIAH - 1:6-11

In verses 6-11 we have the ascension, which overlaps the gospel account in Luke 24:44-53.

A. The Final Commission - 1:6-8

READ 1:6-8

The final commission begins with a question raised by the Apostles in verse six: “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

Why would they, at this point, raise the question about restoring the kingdom to Israel?

We see the background of this question in the first five verses.

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We are told earlier in the prologue that Yeshua has been teaching concerning the Kingdom of God -- in verse three.

The Kingdom of God is a Messianic concept.

Furthermore, in verse five, he mentioned the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

From the Old Testament, these disciples knew that the restoration of the Kingdom would be proceeded by Israel's salvation.

They also knew that Israel's salvation was to be the result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Isa. 32:15-20; 44:3-5; Ezek. 39:28-29; Joel 2:28-3:1; Zech. 12:10-13:1).

Logically, they want to know if this baptism of the Spirit in Acts 1:5 is the outpouring of the Spirit on the nation.

And, if so, will He at that time restore the Kingdom to Israel?

If this Baptism of the Spirit is the one prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures then the Messianic Kingdom was not far behind.

However, the baptism of the Spirit is not the national outpouring of the Spirit that was dealt with by the Old Testament prophets.

The baptism is a unique ministry concerning the Church only.

When a person believes in Yeshua he is baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ.

Not yet realizing what the baptism of the Spirit really is, they are confusing the baptism of the Spirit for the individual believer with the national outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the whole nation in the latter days.

And that is why they raised the question.

In other words, will the Messianic Kingdom come now?

Will the Times of the Gentiles now come to an end?

Will He now institute and re-establish the Davidic Kingdom?
Remember, back in the gospels (Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:30) Yeshua promised that they would sit upon 12 thrones and judge the 12 tribes of Israel.

Is this now the time of the fulfillment of that promise?

Also notice that the question is not dealing with the fact of the restoration.

The question deals with the time of the restoration.

"When is this going to happen -- now?"

In verse seven, Yeshua answers, *It is not for you to know the times or dates.*

The Greek word used here is the word “chronos.”

It refers to ages or eras.

It refers to a general period of event.

It deals with a simple period of duration.

But the term "seasons" means periods by which ages are marked.

The word seasons is the word “kairos.”

That word means a definite space of time, a precise time of an occurrence.

It refers to kinds of time, like hard times, time in reference to its extent and character.

Yeshua is telling them that it is not for them to know the age in which this will come to pass, nor the exact time in this age when it will come to pass because this is what the Father has set in His own authority.

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9 5550 chronos [khron'-os] of uncertain derivation; TDNT - 9:581,1337; n m AV - time 33, season 4, while 2, a while 2, space 2, oftentimes + 4183 1, not tr 5, misc. 4; 53 GK - 5989 { crovno" } 1) time either long or short, For synonyms see entry 2540, kairos. See entry 5853 for comparison of synonyms.

10 2540 kairos [kahee-ros'] of uncertain affinity; TDNT - 3:455,389; n m AV - time 64, season 13, opportunity 2, due time 2, always + 1722 + 3956 2, not tr 1, misc. 3; 87 GK - 2789 { kairov" } 1) due measure 2) a measure of time, a larger or smaller portion of time, hence: 2a) a fixed and definite time, the time when things are brought to crisis, the decisive epoch waited for 2b) opportune or seasonable time 2c) the right time 2d) a limited period of time 2e) to what time brings, the state of the times, the things and events of time, For synonyms see entry 5550, chronos. See entry 5853 for comparison of synonyms.
In other words, God the Father has already picked a time, and the point is, He will come.

He will come indeed, but it is not for them to know when.

In verse eight, He spells out their particular calling “But you will receive power.”

This is divine power.

By means of divine power they are going to be able to fulfill their commission.

It is power to complete the specific commission which they have now been given.

As to timing, when the Holy Spirit comes on you.

The Spirit will bring the power.

When they are baptized by the Spirit, they will receive the power.

Then He spells out the nature of their commission.

He says, you will be my witnesses.

This is the theme of the Book of Acts, that they will be witnesses.

That they are to be witnesses is the key element, the theme, of the book.

The policy of silence, which was initiated in Matthew 12, is now rescinded.

In Matthew 12 there was the national rejection of the Messiahship of Yeshua.

At that point in Matthew 12, He told them to tell no one that He is the Messiah.

They were to follow a policy of silence, but now this policy of silence has been canceled.

In other words, their job is not to rule and to reign in the Kingdom yet.

Their job now is to witness.

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He then spells out for them the organizing framework of their mission.

By so doing provides a neat outline for the Book of Acts.

He says, first of all, *in Jerusalem*, in keeping with the commission that He had already given to them (Luke 24:47).

Jerusalem was the base of Jewish leadership.

That was where the blood of the prophets and Messiah was shed.

This would be covered in Acts 2:1-8:5.

Secondly, *and in all Judea*.

That is where Pharisaic Judaism was strong.

The word *all* probably includes Galilee, which was an extension of Judea's rule.

This would be covered in Acts 8:26-12:25.

Thirdly, *and Samaria*, where there was a hybrid religion that was hostile to the Jews.

This would be covered in Acts 8:5-25.

And, fourthly, *to the ends of the earth*.

This is an idiom for the Gentile world; where you have Gentile paganism and heathenism; where there were false concepts of God; where you had an immoral society and areas which were unclean to the Jews.


B. **The Departure - 1:9-11**

**READ 1:9**

In verse nine, we have the departure of Yeshua.

Here we get a brief glimpse of His actual ascension.
They did not see Him going all the way up into heaven.

Yeshua went up into heaven and at some point a cloud blocked their vision.

This may very well have been the Shechinah Glory light, the Shechinah Glory cloud.

Other references to the ascension are to be found in Luke 24:51; Ephesians 4:10; I Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 4:4; and, I Peter 3:22.

He ascended into heaven as He Himself had prophesied in John 3:13; 6:62; and, 20:17.

The meaning of the ascension is three-fold.

First, it marks the conclusion of His earthly, bodily ministry.

He still continues a ministry on the earth, through the Church, but His earthly, bodily ministry is now through.

Secondly, His work now continues through the Apostles.

And, thirdly, it means that He has an exalted position at the right hand of God the Father (Acts 2:33-36; 5:31; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1; 12:2).

In verses 10 and 11 we have an angelic message.

**READ 1:10-11**

In verse ten we are told about the appearance of these angels.

There were two of them, and they appeared as men.

Whenever angels appear visibly, they often appear as young men.

As to dress, they were wearing white apparel, which was a very conventional dress for angels (Matt. 28:3; Mark 16:5; Luke 24:4; John 20:12).

The message that these angels have to the Apostles is found in verse 11.

The message begins with a question, “why do you stand here looking into the sky?”
The intent of the question is to get them to stop looking into heaven.

The point being, they are not to expect an immediate return of Yeshua.

There is the promise of an eventual return.

The promise is that this same person, the same one will someday come, and He will come in the same manner.12

The manner of His return does not mean place.

The statement does not mean that Yeshua will return in the same place.

In fact, the initial place of the second coming will not be the Mount of Olives.

He will eventually return to the Mount of Olives, but that will not be the initial place of His return.

The manner of His return is that He will come in the clouds of heaven.

He left in the clouds of heaven and He will return in the clouds of heaven (Matt. 24:30; Mark 13:26; Rev. 1:7).

In verses 12-14 we read about their return to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives.

III. THE RETURN OF THE APOSTLES TO JERUSALEM - 1:12-14

READ 1:12

Verse 12 discusses the return itself.

This was an act of obedience to what Yeshua told them to do back in verse four.

This was also an act of bravery because remember for them, Jerusalem was not a safe place.

12 5158 tropos [ trop’-os] from the same as 5157;; n m AV - as + 3739 3, even as + 2596 + 3739 2, way 2, means 2, even as + 3739 1, in like manner as + 3639 1, manner 1, conversation 1; 13 GK - 5573 { trovpo” } 1) a manner, way, fashion 1a)as, even as, like as 2) manner of life, character, deportment
They came from the Mount of Olives.

As to the distance, the text says it was near Jerusalem, *a Sabbath day's walk.*

This was Rabbinic language for about three-quarters of a mile.

This is the same return to Jerusalem spoken of in Luke 24:52.

**READ 1:13-14**

In verse 13a, we are told they returned to the upper room.

There is a definite article used in the Greek text.

It is not just any upper room, it is *the* upper room.

It refers to a specific upper chamber which was well-known to them.

It was most probably the same upper chamber as that of Luke 22:12 and Mark 14:15, the place of the last Passover.

It is also the same upper room of some of the resurrection appearances (John 20:19-26).

It is also the upper room where the Holy Spirit will come in 2:1, that will mark the place of the birthday of the Church.

This was where they were abiding.

This was the place of their temporary residence.

Church tradition says this was the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark.

In verse 13 we encounter a listing of the Apostles.

Eleven of them are mentioned.

Verse 14 tells us what they were doing up there.

They were holding a prayer meeting.

The purpose for returning to the upper room was, specifically, for prayer.
They were continually devoted to prayer.

The emphasis here is upon the intensity of prayer.

What were they praying about?

They prayed for the promise of the Father, the coming of the Holy Spirit.

This was a prayer of unity because they prayed with one accord.

The word translated “joined together” in the NIV is a Greek word that means "unity," to be of the same mind.

Those present were the 11 Apostles, but that is not all.

The text says with the women.

This might refer to the many women who followed Yeshua, or it might refer to the wives of the Apostles, or it might include, and probably did include, both.

Also mentioned was Mary, the mother of Yeshua.

And here we have the last mention of Mary.

She plays no prominent role in Church history.

Certainly not the role that the Catholic Church has ascribed to her.

Finally, the half-brothers of Yeshua are mentioned.

His four half-brothers were unbelievers during His lifetime (Matt. 13:55; 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35; John 7:3-5), but now have become believers as a result of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:7).

IV. THE CHOOSING OF THE TWELFTH APOSTLE - 1:15-26

A. Peter's Proposition - 1:15-22

(1) The Gathering - 1:15

READ 1:15
Peter takes the lead because he was looked upon as the leader.

Although Peter was the leader, the primacy of Peter did not mean that he had the sole authority of appointment.

The appointment of taking the place of the twelfth Apostle was going to have to be made in conference with the other Apostles.

As to the number present, Luke gives a specific number, *about a hundred and twenty*.

Here we see that the upper room had about 120 people, so obviously it was a sizable room.

In verses 16-20 we have the account of Judas, beginning in verses 16-17 with the account of the betrayal.

**(2) The Story of Judas - 1:16-20**

**READ 1:16-17**

In verse 16, Peter points out that this betrayal was a fulfillment of Scripture.

He will tell us which Scripture he has in mind in verse 20.

Notice here the dual authorship of Scripture.

The Scriptures have a dual authorship.

There is a Divine Author and a human author.

The Divine Author was the Holy Spirit, but the human author was David.

David wrote exactly what the Holy Spirit wanted him to write.

The topic concerned Judas.

The sin of Judas lay in the fact that he undertook the task of guiding those who arrested Yeshua.

In verse 17 he explains the previous position of Judas, he was one of the 12 Apostles.
Judas shared in their ministry.

This is what he had lost when he betrayed Yeshua.

In verses 18-19 he tells us about the death of Judas.

**READ 1:18-19**

Starting out in verse 18, he made the purchase of the field.

This meant he obtained the field with the reward of his iniquity.

Actually, it was purchased by the chief priests, but in keeping with the Jewish law, they purchased it in the name of Judas (Matt. 27:3-10).

In actuality, it was the chief priests who billed the field, but, legally, Judas bought the field.

So there is no contradiction here between Acts one and Matthew 27.

Then he describes the death of Judas by stating that Judas was disemboweled.

*All his intestines spilled out.*

He was disemboweled.

How does this synthesize with Matthew 27:3-10?

In Matt. 27:5, Matt. States that Judas hanged himself.

Are these two accounts contradictory?

No, these two accounts are not contradictory, instead they are complementary.

Judas by hanging himself profaned the city before the morning Passover sacrifice.

In order to remove this defiling body from the city, the religious leadership ordered his body cast into the Valley of Hinnom.

As a result of that fall his body split open, and his intestines gushed out.
He was disemboweled, and he was hung.

The explanation lies in the fact that both events happened to Judas.

Verse 19 focuses our attention upon the field itself, “Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this.”

They knew about the purchase of the field, and all the dwellers at Jerusalem knew about the source of the money.

Because the inhabitants of Jerusalem knew in what way this field was purchased, and where the money came from, they began calling it by an Aramaic name, Akeldama, meaning, The field of blood.

And this, Peter says, is a fulfillment of Scripture.

The Scripture he has in mind are two Scriptures.

In verse 20, the Scriptures he has in mind are two passages from the Book of Psalms.

Psalm 69:25 says, “May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it.”

Psalm 109:8 says, “‘May another take his place of leadership.’

The Greek word for “leadership” here is the word from which we get the word bishop.

It emphasizes the apostolic office; let someone take the apostolic office of Judas.

In the original context, both of these Psalms are imprecatory prayers.

As the result of imprecatory praying upon the wicked: the wicked are judged and their portion is taken away.

At this point let me explain that when the Brit Chadasha quotes the Tenach it quotes it in four different ways.

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I’m not going to go into this in detail in this study, however the detailed development of the material can be found in Ariel’s Radio Manuscript #134.

That manuscript’s entitled, “How the New Testament Quotes the Old Testament.”

Refer to that manuscript for a full explanation.

For now let me limit my comments to noting the 4 types of quotes.

1. Literal prophecy plus literal fulfillment.
2. Literal prophecy plus typical fulfillment.
3. Literal prophecy plus application
4. Summation

What we have here is the category by which the New Testament quotes the Old, known as literal plus application.

The literal statements of Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8 are applied to Judas.

(3) The Replacement of Judas - 1:21-22

READ 1:21-22

In verse 21, Peter states the need, a replacement for Judas was to be chosen from among these 120.

In verse 22, Peter spells out the qualifications for this new Apostle.

The twelfth Apostle must come from those who accompanied Yeshua during His whole earthly ministry from the baptism of John until His ascension.

That is a key qualification for the twelfth Apostle.

To qualify to be within the apostolic group of 12, he must have been with Yeshua from the baptism of John until the ascension.

That is one reason Paul does not qualify to be a member of the apostolic group of 12.
Another key requirement he mentions is that he must have seen the resurrected Christ.

This is the only requirement for this category of apostles.

There are two categories of apostles.

On one hand you have the inner group of 12, and the prerequisite is that they have been with Yeshua from the baptism of John until the ascension.

But then you have a second apostolic group of an unknown number, and the only requirement for that was to have seen the resurrected Christ.

Others within the Book of Acts who qualify to be in this second category of apostleship included James, Barnabas and Paul.

B. The Selection - 1:23-26

READ 1:23

In verse 23 we are given the names of two men present who qualified.

Of the 120 people in that room, only two qualified who met all the prerequisites of having been with Yeshua from the baptism of John until His ascension and were eyewitnesses to the resurrection.

The first one was known as Joseph.

This is his Hebrew name, Yosef, Joseph who was also called Barsabbas.

Barsabbas means, "son of the Sabbath."

His surname was Justus.

This was his Roman name.

The second name is Matthias, the same as Matthew, meaning "a gift." More specifically, a gift of Jehovah.

READ 1:24-25
In verses 24 and 25, with these two men put forward, they now resort to prayer.

The prayer points out that this is to be God’s choice (v. 24).

They prayed, notice exactly what they prayed, they did not pray for God to choose which of the two.

They didn’t ask God to choose because God has already chosen.

The prayer was for God to reveal which choice He made.

God had already chosen which of the two had already filled the role of the twelfth Apostle.

All they were asking was for God to reveal who that choice was.

They began by acknowledging God’s sovereignty.

They addressed God as, Lord.

And then they pointed out God’s omniscience, “you know everyone’s heart.”

The Greek word here means that He is the searcher of the heart.

He is the heart-searcher.

The request is, in light of the fact that You are omniscient, You know the hearts of these two men, show which of these two men You have chosen.

In verse 25, they bring out the purpose.

The purpose is to replace Judas.

Then they state that Judas left to go :where he belongs.”

Where Judas belonged was perdition.

This statement shows that Judas was never saved, that he is destined forever to the Lake of Fire.

17 2589 kardioagnostes | kar-dee-og-noce’-tace| from 2588 and 1097; TDNT - 3:613,415; n m AV - which knows the hearts 2; 2 GK - 2841 { kardiognwsth” |1) knower of the hearts
READ 1:26

In verse 26, we read about the choice God made.

The means by which God made His choice clear was the casting of lots.

This was a valid Old Testament method for determining God's will (Lev. 16:8; Josh. 14:2; Neh. 10:34; 11:1).

This was a divine method, because Proverbs 16:33 teaches, *The lot is cast into the lap; But the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.*

In other words, God did reveal His will that way.

What was the method, specifically?

The names of the two men were written on stones, and then placed in some type of a vessel.

The vessel was shaken until one of the stones fell out.

The one that fell out, in this case, was the one that had Matthias on it.

The result was that the lot fell on Matthias.

Some question the Apostles' right to use this method, but it was a legitimate method to use at this point.

Remember, the permanent, indwelling Spirit only comes as of Acts two.

After that, they will not need that method.

However, the events of Acts one occurred before then, and that method was still a legitimate, valid method to determine God's will.

This is the last time in biblical history that this method was used.

With the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts two, with the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit among all believers, we can now make our choices by the leading of the Spirit.
And so, the casting of lots is now no longer necessary.

Because it was, at this point, a valid method, came the appointment, *he was added to the eleven apostles.*

Again, many have challenged whether this is a valid way of doing things.

I do not believe there is any invalidity to it.

First, there was no indication later in the Book of Acts that this was wrong.

They are never told that they used the wrong method.

Secondly, the Book of Acts itself sanctions the choice.

In Acts 6:2 it says, *And the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them.*

Notice the expression, *the twelve.*

And who are that twelve?

It includes the eleven plus Matthias.

It could not include Paul because Paul was not saved at that time.

So it is Matthias who will fill the role of the twelfth Apostle.

And what is the role?

In Matthew 19:28, it includes to sitting *upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

In Revelation 21:14 we are told that the New Jerusalem, the eternal abode of all redeemed ones, will have 12 foundations named after the 12 Apostles.

It will be Matthias who will sit among the *twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

It will be Matthias upon one of the foundation stones of the New City of Jerusalem.
A major objection that people raise to accepting Matthias as the twelfth Apostle is that Matthias is never mentioned again.

After chapter one he is not mentioned again in the rest of the Book of Acts.

Therefore, they say, because he is not mentioned again, this invalidates his choice.

But that is not a good argument.

If you go back to Acts 1:13, notice the listing of the eleven Apostles: Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, Judas the son of James.

Most of these are not mentioned again after chapter one either.

We cannot say that because Matthias' name is not mentioned again that, therefore, the choice was invalid.

We would then have to invalidate most of the other eleven Apostles.

The purpose of the Book of Acts is to record the ministry of Peter and Paul, and not the others.

The others, like John, are merely mentioned as they come in contact with these two.

Unless there was contact with these two, the others are not mentioned, except in some passing way.

Matthias was, indeed, the right choice.

With the choosing of Matthias, the apostolic group of 12 is complete.

This concludes the introduction of the Book of Acts.

The Book of Acts proper begins with chapter two.
Chapter two deals with three subjects;

1. the Day of Pentecost,

2. the birthday of the Church, the Messiah’s Congregation and

3. the witness of the Apostles at the Feast of Pentecost.

This chapter divides itself nicely into four main divisions.

I. THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT - 2:1-4

READ 2:1

The occasion was the Day of Pentecost which was known as the Feast of Weeks or Shavuot in the Hebrew Scriptures (v. 1).

The Greek word translated *came* means literally, "in the being fulfilled completely."¹

The point Luke is trying to make in using this particular term is to show that by these events, the Feast of Pentecost is about to be fulfilled.

The prophetic significance of the Feast of Pentecost is about to be realized.

If this was observed on a Sunday in keeping with the Mosaic Law, then this day was also a Sunday.²

The phrase *They were all together in one place* is taken by some to mean that this was in the Temple Compound.

² The Sadducees celebrated it on the 50th day (inclusive reckoning) from the first Sunday after Passover (taking the ‘Sabbath’ of Lv. 23:15 to be the weekly Sabbath); their reckoning regulated the public observance so long as the Temple stood, and the church is therefore justified in commemorating the first Messianic Pentecost on a Sunday (Whit Sunday). The Pharisees, however, interpreted the ‘Sabbath’ of Lv. 23:15 as the Festival of Unleavened Bread (cf. Lv. 23:7), and their reckoning became normative in Judaism after AD 70, so that in the Jewish calendar Pentecost now falls on various days of the week. Logos 2.0, New Bible Dictionary, article Pentecost, Feast of
Most likely, however, this one place was a gathering in the Upper Room as was the case in chapter one.

What happened next included a sound to hear, a sight to see, and a miracle to experience.

**READ 2:2**

The sound to hear was the wind (v. 2).

The verse emphasizes the quickness, the suddenness by which this “wind” came from heaven.

The verse does not say that it was a literal wind, only the sound was like that of a wind.

The "wind" is a very common symbol in Scripture of the Holy Spirit.

A more literal translation would be "an echoing sound as of a mighty wind born violently."³

There was a roar about the wind that caused a shaking.

It was like the whirring sound of a tornado.⁴

Although they had heard the sound of a mighty rushing wind, they never felt a blast of wind.

The result was that the sound filled all the house where they were sitting.

The fact that Luke says that it “filled the house” excludes this from being the Temple; it was more likely the Upper Room.

The sight to see was the fire (v. 3).

**READ 2:3**

They saw something splitting apart and filling the room.

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The Greek word means "to cleave asunder," or "to cut in pieces." 5

The form of the Greek word is the Middle Voice.

The Greek middle voice means, “parting themselves asunder or distributing themselves.” 6

What they saw then was something like a fire.

Again, it does not say that it was fire, only that it looked like fire but they felt no burning.

Each separate tongue was flame-like in appearance and brightness.

What they saw was a cluster of flames, initially all united together.

Then became separated as they distributed themselves into individual flame-like tongues on each person in the room.

What was this bright flame-like substance they saw?

This was the appearance of the Shechinah, the visible manifestation of God's presence.

The result was that it came to rest on each one of them.

In other words, one tongue of fire rested on each disciple; a tongue that looked like fire sat on each one of them.

The miracle to experience was that of the gift of tongues, speaking in other languages (v. 4).

READ 2:4

To be "filled" means to be controlled by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18).

They were suddenly filled, or controlled, by the Holy Spirit.

While only the filling of the Spirit is mentioned in verse 4, this event included other ministries of the Holy Spirit.

For example, it included the Spirit's ministry of indwelling according to John 14:17.

It also included the ministry of Spirit baptism.

This can be seen by comparing Acts 1:5 with Acts 11:15-16.

All this was a fulfillment of a promise that Yeshua made in John 16:7-15.

The result was that they began to speak with other languages.

The word "tongues" means they began to speak in a language other than their own native language.

It was a real, known, spoken language with all the rules of grammar, diction, and syntax common to all languages.

It was not merely the rapid repetition of three or four syllables, that is passed off as "speaking in tongues" today.

The source of this gift of languages is the Spirit.

In other words, it was the Holy Spirit that provided the gift of tongues.

The gift of languages is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

In summary, what happened on this occasion was a new ministry of the Holy Spirit which in turn gave birth to a new entity, the Church or the Body of Messiah.

The significance of the Day of Pentecost can be summarized in nine parts.

First, it marked the coming of the Holy Spirit for a new type of ministry, His New Testament ministry in keeping with John 16:7-15.

Second, the coming of the Holy Spirit was marked by three signs: the sound of a wind, the appearance of fire, and the gift of languages.

Third, Pentecost means the giving of the GIFT of the Holy Spirit.
He IS the gift according to John 14:16; Acts 2:38; and 10:45.

Before this time in history the Holy Spirit did indwell some believers, but He did not indwell all believers.

Even for the few who did experience the indwelling, it was not necessarily permanent.

But now the Holy Spirit indwells all believers and this indwelling is permanent.

That’s the difference between pre-Pentecost days and post-Pentecost days.

Fourth, Pentecost means that the power of the Holy Spirit is now provided for each one of us to complete the commission that God gives us (Acts 1:8).

Fifth, it marks the beginning of the Church; it marks the birth of the Messiah’s Congregation.

This is obvious by comparing several Scriptures.

Colossians 1:18 teaches that the Church is the Body of Messiah.

First Corinthians 12:13 states that entrance into this Body, the Church, is by means of Spirit baptism.

Acts 1:5 states that Spirit baptism was yet future as of Acts one.


Because the Church cannot exist apart from Spirit baptism, it means the Church was born on this occasion.

Sixth, it opened the Gospel to both Jews and proselytes (Acts 2:10).

Seventh, this means that Peter will now use the keys of the kingdom for the first time.

He was given the keys of the kingdom, in Matthew 16:19, to open the door of the kingdom to the three groups: Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles.

Here, he will open the door to the Jews (Acts 2:14).
Eighth, Pentecost is an illustration of the future outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all Israel predicted in Joel.

It’s declared as such in Acts 2:16-21.

Ninth, Pentecost signifies that the worldwide preaching of the Gospel now begins in earnest in accordance with Acts 2:9-11.

II. THE EFFECTS OF THE SPIRIT'S COMING - 2:5-13

Verse five reveals the historical setting of Pentecost.

READ 2:5

There were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews from every nation under heaven.

These were Jews of the Diaspora, faithful, believing Jews from outside the country who came to Jerusalem for the Passover.

Jewish people were also required to be at Jerusalem for Pentecost.

Because there were only fifty days between Pentecost and Passover, it became customary for those Jews who came to Jerusalem from outside the land for Passover to stay all the way through Pentecost before going home.

Therefore, Jerusalem was still full of Jewish people from all over the Dispersion.

The majority of them were Jews by nationality while a minority were proselytes, Gentile converts to Judaism.

Furthermore, the text says that they were God-fearing.

This states something important about these men.

These were believers in the Old Testament sense of the term.

These were Old Testament saints who were separated by geography from Jerusalem.

Therefore had not participated in the rejection and crucifixion of Yeshua.
They simply weren’t physically there during his 3½ year ministry.

At best they experienced only a limited acquaintance with him.

One of the purposes of the Book of Acts was to reach Old Testament believers with the new message.

These believers in the Old Testament sense, now needed to be reached with the gospel.

The reason that we see this situation lies in the fact that the Book of Acts records the period of transition from the Old to the New.

**READ 2:6**

Verse six reveals that there was some excitement in the street.

The cause was, *when this sound was heard.*

The Greek word for "sound" in verse six is not the same as the word for “sound” in verse two.

Therefore, the meaning of the term "sound" is not necessarily the sound of the wind.

It may also be that they heard the sound of the speaking in languages. Contextually that’s probably the sound that verse six is talking about.

The result was that the multitude came together.

This provided the first audience for Peter's first sermon in the Book of Acts.

We are then told something about their state: they were confounded; they were confused.

The reason was that they heard every man speaking their own language.

The Greek word for *language* here is the origin of the English word "dialect." 8

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7  ἀκούω
8  διαλέγομαι
It simply means "language."\(^9\)

It explains what the tongues of verse four were: they were languages, spoken languages with all the rules of grammar, diction, syntax, and all that a language involves.

Everyone who came heard someone speaking in his own native language, heard someone speaking in the language of the country from which they came.

Verses 7-8 give the reason for their confusion.

**READ 2:7-8**

Again, their state was that of amazement.

The Greek word for *amazed* means "to be in wide open astonishment."\(^10\)

The Greek word for "utterly" emphasizes that the wonder kept growing and growing.\(^11\)

The more they looked upon the scene, the more the wonder actually grew.

The basis of the amazement is seen in their question: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?"\(^12\)

They could tell by their accent that these were all Galileans.

The Galilean accent was very distinct (Matt. 26:73; Mk. 14:17; Lk. 22:59).

It was characterized by confusing guttural sounds.

They could tell that these men were Galileans yet they had the ability to speak all these different languages.

Verses 9-11 provide a list of where these people came from.

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\(^10\) *e\jiv\vstanto*, Word Pictures in the New Testament, The Kingdom Christian Scholar Library


READ 2:9-11

The first four include the Parthians, the Medians, the Elamites and dwellers of Mesopotamia.

These came from east of Judea, spoke Aramaic, and were descendants of the Ten Tribes.

The fifth name given is Judea which includes Galilee.

The language here was Hebrew.

The next five names are Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia.

These are all in Asia Minor or present day Turkey.

These Jewish people spoke Greek.

The next two are Egypt and the parts of Libya around Cyrene.

These were in North Africa where they also spoke Greek.

Next were sojourners from Rome and so Europe has representatives.

These spoke Latin.

Next he mentions Cretans who spoke Greek and finally, Arabians who spoke Nabatean.

The make up was that of two different groups: Jews, people born as Jews and were Jews by nationality; and, proselytes, who were Gentile converts to Judaism.

The content of the language is spelled out in verse 11.

What they were hearing in these languages concerned the mighty works of God that had been done.

According to verses 12-13, there were two different types of responses.

READ 2:12

One response was that of questioning (v. 12).
They were at a loss to explain the significance of what they were seeing and what they were hearing.

They were asking one another, “What does this mean?”

They were not questioning the miracle itself, but they were asking what was the significance of the miracle.

As Old Testament type believers, they recognized this to be a supernatural event.

Therefore, what does it mean?

This reaction is very different from the other reaction.

**READ 2:13**

The second response was one of mockery (v. 13).

There were also unbelievers in the group.

Some mocked on the basis that the Apostles were filled with new wine.

In other words, they were drunk.

The Greek word for *wine* actually means "sweet wine."

It means wine that had begun fermenting and was still fermenting.

It had not yet completed its fermentation process.

This kind of wine was much more intoxicating.

These were two responses: the believers questioned what the significance of these events were; and, the unbelievers were mocking and claiming that they were drunk.

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III. PETER'S FIRST SERMON - 2:14-36

Peter's first sermon can be divided into two parts.

A. Peter's Explanation - 2:14-21

READ 2:14

In verse 14, Peter takes the lead and stands out from the Eleven.
This is Peter's first use of the keys of the kingdom.
The fact that Peter is mentioned then the eleven shows that Matthais had been accepted as being among the apostolic group of twelve.
He then lifted up his voice and by so doing he called attention to a very important proclamation.
He begins by refuting what the unbelievers are saying -- verse 15.

READ 2:15

His refutation is based on the customs of the day.
Custom denies the accusation of some that they are drunk.
The reason being that it is only nine o'clock in the morning.
Some translations render this phrase word for word.
The word for word rendering would be, “the third hour of the day.”
That means it is much too early to be drunk.
The Jewish custom was to drink wine only in the evening.
Nine o'clock in the morning was an hour of prayer.
It was the time of the regular morning sacrifice.
On this occasion, there were special sacrifices because it was the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost.

The first explanation is that they cannot be drunk because it is simply too early and it contradicts Jewish custom.

In verses 16-21 he gives the second explanation based on the Book of Joel.

**READ 2:16-21**

The quotation is Joel 2:28-32.

The quotation of Joel 2:28-32 falls in the category of literal plus application.

The literal prophecy of Joel, which will be fulfilled at the end of the Tribulation Period, is applied to the situation found in Acts 2.

Let me explain.

When Peter states, “this is what,” he did not use the normal formula for fulfillment.

He did not say "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Joel."

He simply said, “this is what.”

Nothing that Joel prophesied actually happened in Acts two.

Nothing that happened in Acts, such as speaking in tongues, was even mentioned by Joel.

This is literal plus application.

Literally, what Joel was speaking about was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the whole nation of Israel in the last days.

An application is always based on one point of similarity.

In this case the one point of similarity was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit resulting in some unusual manifestation.
Peter quotes Joel by way of application.

Just as in Joel, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit will result in some supernatural manifestations.

Peter is saying that we now have an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in a limited sense, but it too has resulted in supernatural manifestations.

Peter has refuted the unbelievers claims.

Now Peter moves on to prove the Messiahship of Yeshua.

B. The Messiahship of Yeshua - 2:22-35

1. The Story of Yeshua - 2:22-24

In verse 22 he summarized the public ministry of Yeshua.

READ 2:22

The person they were to focus their attention on was Yeshua of Nazareth, “a man accredited by God to you.”

Yeshua was validated by objective means.

His works included miracles which authenticated his claims.

Peter shows in three ways that the power of God was at work in the life of Yeshua.

First he emphasized His miracles.

The word “miracles” emphasizes the supernatural power that was at work in Yeshua’s life.

16Strong’s Greek and Hebrew Lexicon, entry number 1411, dunamis { doom’-nam-is} from 1410; TDNT - 2:284,186; n f AV - power 77, mighty work 11, strength 7, miracle 7, might 4, virtue 3, mighty 2, misc. 9; 120 GK - 1539 { duvnami’} 1) strength power, ability 1a) inherent power, power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature, or which a person or thing exerts and puts forth 1b) power for performing miracles 1c) moral power and excellence of soul 1d) the power and
The second word, *wonders*, emphasized miracles as demonstrations that appeal to the senses, creating a feeling of wonder and awe.

The third term, *signs*, emphasized the authenticating aspect of the message being presented.\(^{17}\)

In other words, supernatural power was present in Yeshua’s life that produced wonder and authenticated the fact that He was the Messiah.

Furthermore this was all done publicly.

After summarizing the ministry of Yeshua, he next deals with the death of the Messiah (v. 23) and he points out that there was a divine side and a human side.

**READ 2:23**

As for God’s side, He was delivered up by God because the death of Yeshua was part of God's plan.

It was part of the plan of God.

It was part of the fixed purpose of God for the Messiah to die.

It was part of the divine plan.

It was part of the foreknowledge of God.

The word *foreknowledge* means to know beforehand, but not simply intellectually; it means to know beforehand because of preplanning.\(^{18}\)

\(^{17}\) Strong’s Greek and Hebrew Lexicon, entry number 4592 *semeion* \(\text{say-mi’-on}\) from a presumed derivative of the base of 4591; TDNT - 7:200,1015; n n AV - sign 50, miracle 23, wonder 3, token 1; 77 GK - 4956 \(\text{shme’i’on}\) \(\) 1) a sign, mark, token 1a) that by which a person or a thing is distinguished from others and is known 1b) a sign, prodigy, portent, i.e. an unusual occurrence, transcending the common course of nature 1b1) of signs portending remarkable events soon to happen 1b2) of miracles and wonders by which God authenticates the men sent by him, or by which men prove that the cause they are pleading is God’s

\(^{18}\) Strong’s Greek and Hebrew Lexicon, entry number 4268 *prognosis* \(\text{prog’-no-sis}\) from 4267; TDNT - 1:715,119; n f AV - foreknowledge 2; 2 GK - 4590 \(\text{provgnwsi’}\) \(\) 1) foreknowledge 2) forethought, pre-arrangement
In other words, God knew the Messiah would die because He planned for the Messiah to die; it was predestined for the Messiah to die.

From the divine side, God planned the death of the Messiah.

No matter what, even if the Jews had accepted Yeshua, He still would have had to die.

The death of Yeshua was inevitable to fulfill the plan of God.

As for the human side, the guilty ones are wicked men.

These wicked men were Pharisees and Sadducees, the leaders who represented the people, and the guilt of the leaders is the guilt of the nation.

It was these leaders who are responsible for turning Yeshua over to Gentile hands.

In that sense they did crucify Him and they did slay Him, in the sense of accomplices, accessories, partners.

In verse 24 Peter moved on to the resurrection of the Messiah.

READ 2:24

The Greek word for “agony of death” in the NIV means "birth pangs.

It pictures Messiah being born out of death.

He was released from death's agony.

The reason He was released, it was not possible that death could keep the Messiah imprisoned forever.

This is a simple story: Yeshua came, He presented His credentials by miracles, signs and wonders.

He was rejected and killed but then resurrected.

That is the essence of the good news that Peter proclaimed.

Peter supports his statements by quoting from the Psalms.
2. Quotation of Psalm 16:8-11 - 2:25-28

READ 2:25-28

This quotation falls into the category of literal prophecy plus literal fulfillment.

In the context of Psalm 16 the psalmist was clearly speaking of the resurrection of the Messiah.

Even some rabbis understood this passage to be messianic.

In one commentary on this verse a rabbi wrote, "my glory rejoices over King Messiah."\(^{19}\)

Peter declared that the author of this psalm was David, but David was not speaking of himself: he spoke concerning Yeshua.

The point of verse 25 is that the speaker's trust is the Lord.

For that reason the speaker rejoices in and dwells in hope (v. 26).

He can dwell in hope because after death will come the resurrection (v. 27).

Because of the resurrection the speaker will walk in the path of life (v. 28).

Peter then made the application of the psalm specifically to the Messiahship of Yeshua.

In verse 29, Peter points out that Psalm 16 could not possibly have been speaking of David.

3. The Application - 2:29-33

READ 2:29

He starts out addressing the crowd as *brothers* meaning, in this case, not fellow believers, but fellow Jews, brethren in the flesh.

\(^{19}\) The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, pg. 717 -- the Midrash on the passage
His point is this, the evidence that this psalm could not be speaking of David is seen in the fact that David both died and was buried and we can even visit his tomb.

The fact that the tomb of David was right there and known to everybody in that day shows that the psalmist could not have been speaking about David.

According to Jewish tradition, David died on Pentecost.

One rabbi wrote that neither worm nor insect had any power over David, that David did not see corruption.20

But that is not what the psalmist emphasizes: he emphasizes not seeing corruption because of resurrection.

David has not yet been resurrected.

David suffered physical decay.

So who was the psalmist speaking of?

Verses 30-31 declare that David prophesied of the Messiah.

The basis is the Davidic Covenant (v. 30).

READ 2:30

David, besides being a king, was also a prophet and received direct revelation of God.

God had sworn with an oath to him.

The content of the Davidic Covenant included the fact that from David's loins would arrive one who would permanently sit upon the throne.

David understood from God's promise that the Messiah would descend from him, that is from David.

READ 2:31

20 Artscroll Tenach Series, Tehillim, vol. 1, pg. 197
Peter points out that in the prophesy of Psalm 16, David prophesied not of himself, but of the resurrection of the Messiah (v. 31).

In other words, His soul did not remain in Sheol or Hades.

The Messiah was not in the grave long enough for the flesh to get corrupted.

In verse 32 Peter drives his point home.

**READ 2:32**

This Messiah is Yeshua.

Then in verse 33 Peter discussed Messiah's present position.

**READ 2:33**

As to His present place, He’s at the right hand of God the Father.

As to His glory, He’s exalted having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, the promise of 1:4.

God the Father turned control of the Holy Spirit over to the Son.

Then the Son poured forth the Spirit upon these disciples.

This is the explanation regarding what they now see and hear

Speaking in tongues is not a result of drunkenness, it is a result of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Once again Peter supports his argument with a quotation from the Psalms.

Peter quotes Psalm 110:1.


**READ 2:34-35**

The point he is trying to prove is that David did not ascend into Heaven.
How do we know that?

His body was still in that tomb that they all knew about.

Psalm 110:1 falls into the category of literal prophesy-plus-literal fulfillment.

The Lord invited David's Lord to sit at the right hand until the Messiah's enemies become His footstool.

David had no human lord.

David was the top man, humanly speaking.

The only one above David was God Himself.

David's Lord was the Messiah.

The Messiah was destined to sit on the right hand of God the Father.

He will remain there until the Messiah's enemies become the footstool of His feet.

Having preached his sermon, having presented the gospel, Peter now draws his conclusion -- verse 36.

C. Conclusion - 2:36

READ 2:36

Let there be no doubt about this fact, God the Father has made Yeshua both Lord and Messiah.

He is David's Lord, but He is also Israel's Messiah "whom you crucified."

In this context, Peter emphasized the Jewish guilt in the crucifixion.

This does not make Peter an anti-Semite, nor does it make the Brit Chadasha an Anti-Semitic book.

Elsewhere he will emphasize Gentile guilt, but here we have the emphasis upon the Jewish guilt.
Anti-Semites have taken verse 36 and verses like it and twisted them to support their own perverted, polluted, poisoned, prejudices.

However, pulling something out of context and perverting what it says does not change the truth.

The Brit Chadasha is not an anti-Semitic book, however, it does place proper responsibility on proper shoulders.

Israel does bear a measure of responsibility in regards to Yeshua’s death.

The chapter closes with a description of the results of this sermon.

IV. THE RESULTS - 2:37-47

A. Salvation - 2:37-42

READ 2:37

Peter's sermon brought conviction (v. 37).

The audience was “cut to the heart.”

The Greek word means "to pierce," "to sting sharply," "to smite," "to stun."

The Greek writer Homer used the word of horses pounding or beating on the ground with their hoofs.21

God just stomped on them.

Then they raise a question, “‘Brothers, what shall we do?”22

In verses 38-39, Peter tells them what they must do.

READ 2:38-39

What they must do is two key things (v. 38):

first, Repent, which means "to change your mind."

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What they need to change their mind about was that Yeshua was not the Messiah on the basis of being demon possessed (Matt. 12:22-45).

These Jewish people listening to Peter were part of the nation.

As part of the nation they were part of the generation that had committed the unpardonable sin.

They are part of the generation that was under divine judgment.

Nationally the sin of rejecting Yeshua was unpardonable.

Judgment was set against the nation.

A judgment that could not be canceled.

The judgment for the Unpardonable Sin was the destruction of the Temple and city of Jerusalem (Matt. 23:37, Luke 19:41-44).

That judgment fell on Israel in 70ad.

However, although the Unpardonable sin was unpardonable on a national level, it was pardonable for the individual.

If these Jewish individuals would repent, change their minds about Yeshua, that will save them spiritually.

The first thing they have to do is to repent.

The second thing they would have to do is be baptized.

To baptize meant "to change your association."

It’s a change of identification.

True repentance will demand the witness of water baptism.

The individual Jew of that generation, to escape the judgment that was coming in the year A.D. 70 must sever his connection with Rabbinic Judaism.

The means of separating himself from Rabbinic Judaism was by means of water baptism.
By means of water baptism they will make a new identification with a new group.

Every time baptism is closely connected with salvation is when it is mentioned in relation to a Jewish audience.

This is true here in 2:38 and is also true in 22:16.

But baptism with a view to salvation means the salvation from the coming judgment.

Baptism will not save them spiritually; it will save them physically from the A.D. 70 judgment.

Repentance will save them spiritually, but baptism will save them physically from that coming judgment for the unpardonable sin.

This baptism must be in the name of Yeshua the Messiah.

This will distinguish Messianic baptism from all other baptisms, such as proselyte baptism or John's baptism.

The purpose for all this is for the remission of sins.

The Greek word here can also simply mean, "on the basis of," or "because of," as it clearly means in Matthew 10:41 and 12:41.23

They must be baptized because of the remission of their sins, that is, not in order to have their sins remitted but because they have had their sins remitted by repentance.

If they do these things, if they repent, and show true repentance by their baptism, the result will be that they will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Forgiveness will be followed by the gift of the Holy Spirit, because the Spirit is now given to all believers.

Verse 40 gives a summary of Peter's message.

READ 2:40

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In addition to what Luke recorded, Peter testified concerning Yeshua and exhorted them to repent and be baptized.

Only the essential core of the message is recorded for us to read.

Peter said much more than these few words.

The main point he makes in this verse is: *Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.*

The emphasis is that by separating themselves from that generation, they can save themselves.

This is obviously a physical salvation and helps to explain verse 38.

They must save themselves from this crooked generation, the generation guilty of the unpardonable sin.

They must separate from that generation.

Those who will do so become members of the believing remnant.

Verse 41 shows what the response was.

**READ 2:41**

Many responded positively.

On that day there were 3,000 Jews who were saved and were baptized.

There are many pools in Jerusalem and it was only nine o'clock in the morning.

There were also many available that could baptize and so there was no problem baptizing 3,000 people all in one day.

Finally, verse 42 shows growth in discipleship.

**READ 2:42**

The verse shows the four areas of discipleship in the first local church:
FIRST, the Apostles' teaching.

The authority of the Apostles was recognized from the beginning.

They gave doctrinal teaching orally and eventually put it in written form.

SECOND, fellowship, they were sharing in common.

They were sharing spiritual and material blessings.

THIRD, the breaking of bread, the common meal, the communion, the LORD’s supper; and,

FOURTH, prayers.

The continued to be involved in the regular times of prayer customary among Jewish people.

So the first result was the salvation of many Jewish people.

The second result is in verses 43 through 47, the growth of the local church.

B. The Local Church - 2:43-47

READ 2:43

Verse 43 describes the state of the church, *fear fell upon them all.*

This was the afterglow of Pentecost.

This is not terror, this is reverential awe.

In addition, the Apostles did many signs and wonders.

Please note that only the Apostles performed many signs and wonders.

In fact, consistently, the only ones that did signs and wonders in the Book of Acts are the Apostles, or those who were appointed by the laying on of hands by the Apostles, that is, apostolic legates, as it was in the case of Stephen.
Only these did signs and wonders: miracles were not performed generally by the believers at large.

READ 2:44-45

Verses 44-45 show they had fellowship in material things: they had unity (v. 44); and, they shared in the community of their possessions (v. 45).

READ 2:46-47

Verses 46-47 reveal the practice of the local church in Jerusalem.

They came together regularly day-by-day on a daily basis.

They came together to worship in the Temple Compound, and to break bread in private homes.

All this was very, very positive.

Their reputation spread everywhere.
THE WITNESS OF PETER AND JOHN AND
THE SECOND SERMON OF PETER - ACTS 3:1-4:31

The two chapters of Acts three and four comprise one unit in the book.

This unit records the ministry and the witness of Peter and John as well as Peter's second sermon.

Peter’s first sermon occurred in chapter two.

This section of Acts can be divided into six divisions.

I. THE MIRACLE OF HEALING - ACTS 3:1-11

READ 3:1

Verse one gives the OCCASION for the events of these two chapters: Peter and John were going up to the Temple.

These two Jewish Messianic Apostles saw nothing contradictory about attending the Temple service.

The Greek text has an imperfect tense, emphasizing continual action.

It was an habitual practice for them to go to the Temple to pray.

This chapter is an expansion of two verses found in chapter two.

First, 2:43 states: “Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.”¹.

Chapter three gives an explanation of that verse, showing what these signs and wonders were.

These were not done by believers in general, but by the Apostles.

Second, 2:46 states: “Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.”².

Chapter three shows their continued loyalty to the Temple.

They continued praying daily in the Temple.

This chapter records an incident that happened on one of those days while they were going to the Temple.

The reason they were going to the Temple on this occasion was the hour of prayer.

It was one of the set hours of Temple prayer.

It was the ninth hour which makes it three o'clock in the afternoon.

This was the time of the regular daily evening sacrifice.

Verses 2-3 introduce us to a lame man.

**READ 3:2-3**

The man himself comes into view in verse two, revealing his condition he was handicapped, lame.

He was lame from the time he was born, from his mother's womb.

He’s been lame for forty years.

He did not become lame, he was born lame.

He has never walked in his entire life.

He was carried on a daily basis, habitually carried and laid regularly at this particular gate known as the Beautiful Gate.

This was one of the gates of the Temple Compound which led from the Court of the Gentiles or the Outer Court of the Temple Compound TO the Court of the Women or the Inner Court of the Temple Compound.

People going between the Outer Court and the Inner Court would pass by this man.

He would be sitting there for the purpose of asking alms from them.
When he saw Peter and John going into the temple, he was about to ask for alms from them (3:3).

Verses 4-7 record the healing of the lame man.

READ 3:4-7

Peter says to him, “Look at us!”

In response the man fastened his eyes right on Peter with eagerness.

He was obviously expecting to receive some monetary gifts from them.

He probably took Peter's statement as a promise of a large financial gift.

But Peter's response was something very different from what the beggar was hoping for, “Peter said, ‘Silver or gold I do not have’” (3:6).

In spite of the collections which the Apostles took up at the end of Acts two, the Apostles themselves were poor men.

Peter did not dip into the common pot as Judas did.

However, he did have something to offer it to the lame man.

He then made his declaration, “In the name of Yeshua the Messiah of Nazareth, walk.”

The expression “in the name of” means authority.

Peter invoked the power and the authority of Yeshua.

The term "name" in Jewish thinking stands for all a person is.

The Greek tense Peter used in his statement means "begin to walk" and then "keep on walking."

But the beggar does not move, he knows he cannot walk.}

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He’s never walked in his whole life.

He didn’t even know what walking was like.

Verse seven then tells about the healing of the lame man.

Peter then took some action.

He took the lame man by the right hand, and raised him up.

In other words, Peter had to pull him up by his feet before he would even try to walk\(^6\) because the man knew he could not walk.

The result was that immediately his feet and his ankle-bones received strength.

Luke used medical terms here, being a medical doctor himself.

But the point was that the healing was instantaneous.

Verses 8-11 record the three results of the healing of the lame man.

**READ 3:8**

The first result describes the man himself: he began leaping up (3:8).

The Greek tense means he leaped up repeatedly.\(^7\)

He then stood up and began to walk and kept on walking.

He entered with Peter and John into the Inner Court of the Temple, into the Court of Women.

He was filled with joy, walking and leaping and praising God because, for the first time ever, this man was walking.

The second result describes the people, the crowd of onlookers (3:9-10).

**READ 3:9-10**

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\(^7\) Word Pictures in the New Testament, The Kingdom Christian Scholar Library
All the people saw him walking and praising God (3:9) and this had a specific effect upon the people (3:10).

They became aware of something, they took knowledge.

The Greek word used means "full knowledge". 8

They took full knowledge and began to perceive something.

What they began to perceive was that this was the same man that had for so long been asking for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple.

The result was that they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened to the lame man.

The third result was the gathering of the people (3:11).

READ 3:11

Now this beggar has a grip on Peter and John.

He held them fast; he held them with strength or force.

When the people saw this, they began to gather together at the porch known as Solomon's Porch or Solomon's Colonnade.

This was located at the western end of the Court of the Gentiles.

It was called Solomon's Porch because it was built on the remains of the ancient foundation of the Solomonic Temple.

All of a sudden, then, Peter had an audience and this led to his second sermon.

II. THE SECOND SERMON OF PETER - ACTS 3:12-26

8 Strong’s Greek and Hebrew Lexicon, entry number 1921 epiginosko [ep-ig-in-oce’-ko] from 1909 and 1097; TDNT - 1:689,119; v AV - know 30, acknowledge 5, perceive 3, take knowledge of 2, have knowledge of 1, know well 1; 42 GK - 2105 {epiginwskw} 1) to become thoroughly acquainted with, to know thoroughly 1a) to know accurately, know well 2) to know 2a) to recognize 2a1) by sight, hearing, of certain signs, to perceive who a person is 2b) to know i.e. to perceive 2c) to know i.e. to find out, ascertain 2d) to know i.e. to understand
A. **Israel's Rejection of the Messiah - 3:12-18**

He begins his sermon with the introduction (3:12).

**READ 3:12**

He begins his introduction by raising questions.

These were questions of denial that he or John had anything to do with the healing of the lame man?

Why fasten your eyes on us as if by our own power or godliness we had made him to walk?

The point of introduction is that nothing was in either Peter or John that could make this man walk.

Something else made this man whole.

Before going on to that something else, in verses 13-15 he deals with the rejection of the Messiahship of Yeshua.

Peter makes five points.

**READ 3:13**

**First**, God sent his Son (3:13a).

Peter’s referring to the covenant-keeping God.

He called Him the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob.

This was the Biblical formula for the Abrahamic Covenant.

The covenant-keeping God, the God of our fathers, has glorified the Servant Yeshua.

This is the first of seven titles of Yeshua found in this sermon.

He is the Servant.
He is the Servant of LORD found in Isaiah the prophet.

Now He is glorified, exalted.

He was glorified and exalted by His resurrection and by His ascension.

**Second**, He was delivered up to Pilate (3:13b).

The ones guilty of doing so were the people to whom Peter was speaking.

It was they, the Jewish people who delivered up Yeshua to a civil authority for a civil trial.

It is they who denied Yeshua before the face of Pilate when they said they had no king but Caesar (John 19:15), and when they said his blood be upon us and upon our children (Matt. 27:25).

They did that at the time that Pilate himself had determined to release Yeshua.

**Third**, they rejected the Messiah (3:14).

**READ 3:14**

The second of Messiah's titles is the Holy One, emphasizing the divinity of Yeshua.

The third title in the sermon is the Righteous or Just One, emphasizing the perfect humanity of Yeshua.

They denied the Holy One, they denied the Righteous or Just One and instead asked for a murderer to be granted unto them, the murderer was Barabbas.

**Fourth**, they killed the Messiah (3:15a)

**READ 3:15**

Here we come to the Messiah's fourth title (3:15a).

The Greek word translated by the NIV "author" has a number of meanings.
It can mean "source," and indeed He is the source of life, and that is the point of Acts 3:15.

It can also mean that He is the "originator" of life.

Furthermore, it can also mean he is the "author" of life which is the emphasis in Hebrews 2:10 and 12:2.

It can also mean "leader," which is the emphasis in Acts 5:31.

Furthermore, it can mean "pioneer" or "trailblazer."

Finally, the word can mean "champion" whose victory includes those whom He represents.

This victory represents all those who believe on Him.⁹

Fifth, He was also resurrected from the dead.

Peter was an eyewitness of the resurrected Son (3:15b).

Thus Peter presented the Gospel, that Yeshua died and was resurrected.

That is the essence of the Gospel.

Peter then points to who was really responsible for healing the lame man (3:16).

READ 3:16

The means was by faith in his name, trusting the power and authority of Yeshua.

And the result lay in the fact that “his name,” Yeshua’s power and authority made this man strong.

The means was faith in him and the result was that Messiah gave him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

Peter's statement clearly shows that the lame man has faith.

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⁹ Strong’s Greek and Hebrew Lexicon, entry number 747 archegos { ar-khay-gos'} from 746 and 71; TDNT - 1:487,81; adj. AV - prince 2, captain 1, author 1; 4 GK - 795 { ajrchgov’ } 1) the chief leader, prince 1a) of Christ 2) one that takes the lead in any thing and thus affords an example, a predecessor in a matter, pioneer 3) the author
The lame man would have heard Yeshua, or at least heard about Yeshua by this time since Messiah taught in the Temple Compound many times.

Apparently this lame man did have faith.

Peter, recognizing the faith that this lame man had, was able to proceed, using his apostolic authority, to heal this lame man.

But it was the faith in Yeshua of Nazareth that caused the healing, not any internal power of either Peter or John.

Verses 17-18 contain the conclusion.

**READ 3:17-18**

Peter points out that what they did, they did in ignorance.

Peter does not mean that *everyone* did it in ignorance.

Some, like Judas, Caiaphas and Annas did not do it in ignorance.

But most who were involved did do it in ignorance.

Paul reaffirms this in I Corinthians 2:8.

There was recognition that what they did they did in ignorance, but that ignorance did not absolve them from guilt!

But while ignorance did not absolve them from guilt, it did provide a basis for mercy if they repented.

If they repented, they could receive mercy.

Finally, Peter points out that what did happen was a fulfillment of prophecy (3:18).

What the prophets had taught was that his Messiah should suffer.

This is the fifth title of Yeshua in his sermon, "His Messiah."
Having dealt with Israel's rejection of the Messiahship of Yeshua, Peter then spelled out what Israel must do (3:19a).

B. **ISRAEL'S RESPONSIBILITY - 3:19-26**

**READ 3:19**

He started out with the word, therefore.

Based upon the fact that they had previously rejected the Messiahship of Yeshua, what they must do now is repent.

He used the plural form emphasizing both individual and national repentance.

To "repent" means "to change your mind."\(^{10}\)

They must change their mind about Yeshua, that He is not demon possessed, but that He is the Messiah.

This is exactly the same thing he told them to do back in 2:38 and 3,000 Jews did that.

Furthermore, he said "turn to God."

The Greek word means "be converted."\(^{11}\)

To be converted means to turn from sin to God.

They must turn to God in conduct as well as in mind.

When they repent they turn to God with the mind and heart.

\(^{10}\) Strong’s Greek and Hebrew Lexicon, entry number 3340 *metanoeo* [met-an-o-eh'-o] from 3326 and 3539; TDNT - 4:975,636; v AV - repent 34; 34 GK - 3566 {metanoevw} 1) to change one’s mind, i.e. to repent 2) to change one’s mind for better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one’s past sins For synonyms see entry 3338, *metamellomai*. See entry 5862 for comparison of synonyms.

\(^{11}\) Strong’s Greek and Hebrew Lexicon, entry number 1994 *epistrepho* [ep-ee-stref'-o] from 1909 and 4762; TDNT - 7:722,1093; v AV - turn 16, be converted 6, return 6, turn about 4, turn again 3, misc. 4; 39 GK - 2188 {ejpistrevw} 1) transitively 1a) to turn to 1a1) to the worship of the true God 1b) to cause to return, to bring back 1b1) to the love and obedience of God 1b2) to the love for the children 1b3) to love wisdom and righteousness 2) intransitively 2a) to turn to one’s self 2b) to turn one’s self about, turn back 2c) to return, turn back, come back
When they are converted they turn to God in conduct as well.

In this way they will separate from this generation and also turn away from the coming judgment.

Then he spells out what will be the result of Israel's repentance.

When Israel repents, there will be three specific results.

The first result will be salvation (3:19b), that your sins may be wiped out.

If they repent as individuals, then it will mean individual salvation.

If they repent as a nation, it will mean national salvation.

The Greek word translated “wiped out” is a strong word showing that our sins will be totally erased by turning to Messiah by faith.

The second result will be the Messianic Kingdom (3:19c).

If they repent as a nation, they will see the Messianic Kingdom established.

Israel's repentance will bring in the Messianic Kingdom.

The third result will be the second coming in verse 20.

READ 3:20

Peter states “that he may send the Messiah” because the second coming is pre-conditioned by Israel's national salvation.

Until Israel the nation repents, there will be no second coming.

Finally, he points out the present state of the Messiah (3:21).

READ 3:21

His present state is that he is in heaven.

He was received up into heaven in 1:9-11.
He will remain in heaven until the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom at the second coming.

Furthermore, this truth was prophesied.

The prophets predicted that the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom will be preceded by the national salvation of Israel.

Then in verses 22-23 Peter gives two quotations from Moses.

**READ 3:22**

He first quotes Deuteronomy 18:15 (3:22).

Moses predicted another prophet like Moses with whom God will speak face to face.

Yeshua was that prophet like Moses and he’s the one now to be obeyed.

This quotation falls into the category of literal prophecy plus literal fulfillment.

Second, Peter quotes Deuteronomy 18:19 (3:23).

**READ 3:23**

This statement is a warning against disobedience to the prophet like Moses.

He warns them against disobeying Yeshua.

This too is literal prophecy plus literal fulfillment.

The fact that Yeshua is called a prophet makes the sixth title used of Yeshua in this sermon.

It is because this prophet had been disobeyed by the nation, that the judgment of A.D. 70 was indeed coming.

Verse 24 gives a summary of the prophets.

**READ 3:24**
All the prophets from Samuel, all those that followed Samuel had spoken of these days, that is, the days of verses 13-15, the days of coming judgment for rejecting the Messiahship of Yeshua.

Verse 25 reveals Israel's present status.

READ 3:24

They are the heirs of the promises made by God through the prophets.

They are the sons of the prophets because the prophets' promises are to be inherited by them.

Furthermore, they are the sons of the covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant which God made with their fathers, the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Peter then quotes Genesis 12:3, “and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

This also is literal prophecy plus literal fulfillment.

The promises of spiritual blessings from the Jewish covenants were to extend to the Gentiles; however, it must come to the Jew first (3:26).

READ 3:26

Peter declared, unto you first, to Israel first, God, having raised up his servant, the servant of verse 13, the Servant of LORD, Yeshua.

God sent him to bless you.

The way the Messiah will bless them is if they turn away from their evil ways and turn by faith to accepting His Messiahship.

They must turn away from their iniquities and turn by faith to Yeshua of Nazareth.

Here, Peter teaches the same truth that Paul did: it was still necessary for the gospel to be preached to the Jew first.

Three key observations can be made about this sermon.

The first observation is that this sermon was not a re-offer of the Messianic Kingdom.

They rejected the kingdom in Matthew 12.

From then on they were under the judgment of the unpardonable sin, the judgment of A.D. 70.

That judgment was irrevocable and so there was no possibility of change and this was not a re-offer of the kingdom.

It simply states what the requirements of the establishment of the kingdom are.

The prerequisite of the second coming and kingdom is Israel's national salvation.

That will happen some day, but it was not a re-offer to this generation.

This generation was guilty of the unpardonable sin and since the sin was unpardonable, they could not see the kingdom established in their day.

The judgment of A.D. 70 was irrevocable.

A second observation is that in this sermon, Peter gave Yeshua six different titles:

first, he called him a Servant, with the background being the Servant of the LORD of the Book of Isaiah (3:13, 26);

second, the Holy One emphasizing His divinity.

There is none holy except God (3:14);

third, the Righteous One or the Just One which emphasizes His perfect humanity (3:14);

fourth, the Messiah, emphasizing His title and personhood in relationship to Israel (3:18, 20);

fifth, the Prince of Life, emphasizing Him as the source of spiritual life to those who believe (3:15);
and, **sixth**, the Prophet like Moses, emphasizing the office in which he functioned during His first coming (2:22-23).

The **third observation** is that in this sermon Peter presented God's eight point program:

1. **First**, God sent his Son, the first coming;
2. **second**, Israel rejected the Messiah and the Messiah was killed;
3. **third**, the Messiah, however, was resurrected;
4. **fourth**, Israel will eventually repent of her national sin, that of rejecting His Messiahship on the grounds of being demon possessed;
5. **fifth**, Israel will accept the Messiah as a nation;
6. **sixth**, God will then send a revival and Israel will plead for the Messiah to return;
7. **seventh**, the Messiah will then come back at His second coming; and,
8. **eighth**, the Messiah will then bring in the times of restoration.

He will establish His Kingdom.

That is God's eight point program as revealed in the second sermon of Peter.

### III. THE ARREST OF THE APOSTLES - Acts 4:1-4

**READ 4:1**

Verse one records an interruption.

Peter had more to say, but he was suddenly interrupted by the leaders.

These leaders were the priests.

They may have included the common priests but more likely they were the 24 chief-priests who were Sadducees.

It also included the Temple Compound police.
Also, there was the captain of the temple who was the chief officer, the one in charge of the Temple Compound police.

He was a member of one of the chief-priest families.

In authority, he was second to the High Priest himself.

It was the Sadducees who instigated the first persecution of the Church.

They instituted this first persecution because of their jealousy over the control of the Temple Compound.

The Sadducees were in control of the Temple Compound and these events occurred within their jurisdiction.

So they came upon them.

The Greek word means they burst upon them suddenly, and they came against Peter and John with clear hostile attitude.\(^{13}\)

This marks the beginning of the rejection of Peter's message.

Verse two describes their state.

**READ 4:2**

The Greek word means "to be worked up," "to be indignant."\(^{14}\)

The reason they were worked up and indignant is because the Apostles taught the people.

As far as they were concerned, the Apostles were not qualified to teach on spiritual matters.

First of all they were unschooled Galileans.

Secondly, the Apostles were certainly not authorized to teach in the Temple Compound.

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\(^{13}\) Word Pictures in the New Testament, The Kingdom Christian Scholar Library

They were also troubled because the Apostles proclaimed in Yeshua the resurrection from the dead and this created problems with the Sadducees.

The first problem was the teaching on the resurrection because the Sadducees denied any possibility of any resurrection from the dead.

Second, it troubled them when the Apostles proclaimed in Yeshua because the Sadducees from early on rejected the Messiah and helped get Him crucified.

So the Apostles were arrested and placed into a cell (4:3).

**READ 4:3**

This cell was probably a chamber in the Temple Compound.

They were kept there overnight until the next day.

They had to be kept overnight because it was already evening.

By Jewish law no trial could be conducted in the evening hours.

But verse four reveals the results of the second sermon.

**READ 4:4**

The Greek word for men does not mean mankind, but males in contrast to females.¹⁵

In other words, 5,000 males alone believed as a result of Peter's second sermon.

This does not count the many women that also may have come to saving faith as a result of that sermon.

**IV. THE EXAMINATION OF THE APOSTLES - ACTS 4:5-12**

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¹⁵ Word Pictures in the New Testament, The Kingdom Christian Scholar Library, Strong’s Greek and Hebrew Lexicon, entry number 435 aner { an’-ayr} a primary word cf. 444; TDNT - 1:360,59; n m AV - man 156, husband 50, sir 6, fellow 1, not tr 2; 215 GK - 467 { ajnhr } 1) with reference to sex 1a) of a male 1b) of a husband 1c) of a betrothed or future husband 2) with reference to age, and to distinguish an adult man from a boy 3) any male 4) used generically of a group of both men and women
Verse five records the convening of the Sanhedrin.

READ 4:5-6

The Sanhedrin included the rulers, which were the 24 chief-priests who were Sadducees.

It included the elders who were Pharisees; it included the Scribes who were also Pharisees.

They all came together in Jerusalem.

According to verse 6, the family of the High Priest was also present.

The High Priests family included the High Priest himself, his son, and other members of his family like his son-in-law, Caiaphas.

READ 4:7

In verse seven they raised a question: “by what power, or in what name have you done this?”

In Greek there is an element of scorn here.

They were scornful and they were contemptuous.

The emphasis is on the word “you” which comes last in the Greek text -- the emphatic position.16

Literally they said, "By what name, by what power did you do this, people like you."

It was a question that contained a sense of contempt or scorn.

The implication was that the Apostles acted illegally by using some kind of incantation, some kind of magic.

"In what name" or "by what magical name have you done this?"

16 An Introductory Grammar of New Testament Greek, pg. 18, para. 30 -- “Emphasis may, however, be indicated by placing a word either first or last in its clause thus giving it what is called the emphatic position.”
In other words, they clearly admit a miracle had occurred, the lame man was healed.

But now they want to know by what power or by what incantation, by what bit of magic did they perform this deed.

But Peter gave them an answer they did not like (4:8-12).

This was Peter's address to the leaders of Israel.

READ 4:8

Peter once again took the lead because Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit (4:8a).

He was now controlled by the Holy Spirit and issued a divine utterance.

For the first time, Peter, a member of the apostolic group, had a chance to present a message directly to the leaders of Israel.

He began by explaining the source of the miracle (4:8-10),

He and started out by pointing out an irony (4:9): the Apostles were being interrogated because of a good thing they had done.

READ 4:9-10

They healed a man who had been lame from birth for 40 years and now were placed on trial for doing a good thing.

There is a sense of sarcasm here: the miracle was a good deed, not a crime.

Peter then gave the explanation and answer (4:10).

Every one of you leaders of Israel should know, and all the people of Israel should also know this, that in the name of Yeshua this was done.

This then answers their previous question: in what name?

"In the name of Yeshua the Messiah of Nazareth whom you crucified."
We should not miss Peter's boldness in charging the leadership of Israel with out-and-out murder: whom you crucified.

God's answer to their act of crucifixion was to raise Yeshua from the dead.

This answers their other question: by what power: by the power of God.

Next Peter applied Psalm 118:22 to them (4:11).

**READ 4:11**

The builders were the Jewish leaders, who were guilty of rejecting the Messiahship of Yeshua.

They were guilty of leading the nation in rejecting the Messiahship of Yeshua as well.

This is the rejection which was predicted in Psalm 118:22 and serves as a clear indictment of the Jewish leaders.

But this very One which they rejected has now been made the head of the corner.

This is a reference to the exaltation of Yeshua.

His exaltation was a vindication of all that Yeshua claimed.

Peter’s citation of Psalm 118:22 was not a word for word quotation, but a paraphrase with an application to the Jewish leaders before whom they stood.

This paraphrase falls into the category known as literal plus summation.

This Psalm sums up all that the prophets taught and what the nation, in fact did.

Peter then concludes that Yeshua is the means of salvation (4:12).

**READ 4:12**

In other words, He is the only means of salvation.

This is the messianic salvation of Acts 5:31,
“God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. 17.”

The very name by which the healing was done is also the only name by which one can be saved.

Salvation can be found only in Yeshua of Nazareth.

The contrast with verses 10-11 should not be missed: Yeshua the Messiah, whom they crucified but God raised; whom they rejected but God has exalted; is the only name available for salvation.

The clear teaching of verse 12 is that a person must trust in Yeshua to be saved.

He must have a conscious faith, a trust in Yeshua as the Messiah.


Verses 13-14 recap the observation of the Jewish leaders.

READ 4:13

The leadership of Israel makes two observations.

The first observation (4:13) was an observation concerning the Apostles -- they observed three qualities.

First -- they beheld the boldness of Peter and John.

Both Peter and John had confidence and expressed themselves without holding back.

The leaders also perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men.

The word unlearned means that they were untrained in Rabbinic schools. 18

They observed the same thing about Yeshua in John 7:15.

Furthermore, they were ignorant: not stupid, but ignorant.

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They were laymen, not scholars; is the idea.

The fact that they were not scholars and the fact that they were unschooled in Rabbinic education caused the leaders to marvel all the more.

Finally, they took knowledge that these two men had been with Yeshua.

They now remembered where they had seen these men before.

The second observation (4:14) concerns the lame man.

READ 4:14

The emphasis in verse 14 is that a "healed man was standing."

He was not sitting, he was standing, something he could not do before.

The evidence of the healing was right there before their eyes.

Because the lame man whom they knew had been lame for 40 years was standing there, they obviously could not say anything against it.

There was only one possible inference: that Yeshua did it and, therefore, Yeshua was the Messiah.

But the leaders refused to reach that conclusion.

In verses 15-17, the Sanhedrin held a private council.

After clearly observing that these were two Apostles who had been with Yeshua and observing the lame man now healed, they decided to hold a private council (4:15).

READ 4:15

They commanded them to go outside of the council and they conferred among themselves.

When the three men, Peter, John and the formerly lame man, went outside, the leaders began to compare notes and to take stock of their predicament.
READ 4:16

They made a clear admission of the fact of the miracle (4:16).

That was the predicament: they did not know exactly what to do with these men.

The fact was that indeed a notable miracle had been done and they tried hard to find something wrong with that.

Furthermore, not only did they know it, but it was already manifested to all who dwelt in Jerusalem.

Therefore, because this miracle was now too well known, they simply could not deny it.

Since they could not deny that a miracle had occurred, they could not punish the men either, because no law had been broken.

They then came to a decision, a solution to their predicament (4:17): to silence the Apostles.

READ 4:17

They wanted to make sure that the message about Yeshua did not spread any further among the Jewish people.

They were unable to undo what had been done, and so they wanted to make sure that it spread no further.

In other words, the decision was to try to silence the Apostles.

One should note the contemptuous use of the phrase “this name.”

They did not even want to say the name "Yeshua."

They then issued the command (4:18).

READ 4:18
They called the Apostles back into the council room and then gave them a charge, a command not to speak at all, not to even teach at all, in the name of Yeshua.

But the Apostles responded resolutely (4:19-20).

READ 4:19

The issue in verse 19 was this: What is the right thing to do in the sight of God? Is it right in the sight of God to hearken to the leaders or to God?

This was a rhetorical question.

As the spiritual leaders of Israel, the answer should be obvious to them: of course one must always obey God rather than man.

The Apostles then spelled out what their commitment was going to be (4:20).

READ 4:20

They were called to be witnesses.

The major theme of the book of Acts is the theme of witnessing.

They were called to be witnesses.

Because God called them to be witnesses they cannot but speak what things they saw and what things they heard from Yeshua of Nazareth.

The Apostles gave a clear repudiation of the authority of the Sanhedrin.

In this instance, the Sanhedrin had misused the authority they had.

They tried to silence men who had been commanded to speak by none other than God Himself.

Verses 21-22 record the response of the leaders.
READ 4:21

They had no choice but to release the Apostles (4:21).

All they could do for now was to threaten them with future punishment if their orders were disobeyed.

They had to let them go for two reasons.

The first was because they could find nothing against them.

In other words, no law was broken and the Apostles did not claim anything that could be clearly disproved.

On the other hand, it was clear and well known that a lame man, lame from birth, was healed.

The second reason was because of the people.

Five thousand men, not counting women, were saved as a result of the healing of the lame man and they all glorified God.

Perhaps other Jews who were not believers in Yeshua were also glorifying God over the healing of this well known lame man.

Luke then gave a further explanation of the miracle itself (4:22).

READ 4:22

The significance of this event is that it stirred up the first opposition from the Jewish leaders.

This first opposition came from the ranks of the Sadducees.

They were the ones who stirred up this first persecution.


READ 4:23

Following their release, Peter and John reported to the other apostles (4:23) and related to them what the leaders had said to them.
These leaders were the 24 chief-priests who were Sadducees, and the elders who were Pharisees.

The result of the report was prayer (4:24a).

**READ 4:24**

The motivation for the prayer was the threats against Peter and John.

The response of the believers was to take it to the Lord.

The prayer began by emphasizing God as the God of creation (4:24b).

They addressed their prayer to the “Sovereign Lord.”

The Greek word used for "Lord" was Lord in the sense of master-slave relationship\(^{19}\) and so they recognized God's authority.

They also glorified God’s creative power.

God is the one who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all life that is in them.


**READ 4:25-26**

The introduction to the quotation shows how the Bible teaches the dual authority of Scripture (4:25a).

It came by the Holy Spirit, who was the divine author, and it came by the mouth of David, who was the human author.

Scripture is always of dual authorship.

\(^{19}\) Logos 2.0, Matthew Henry’s Commentary, Word Pictures in the New Testament, The Kingdom Christian Scholar Library, 1203 despotes { des-pot’-ace} perhaps from 1210 and posis (a husband); TDNT - 2:44,145; n m AV - Lord 5, master 5; 10 GK - 1305 { despovth” } 1) a master, Lord. 5830 Synonyms, See Definition for despotes 1203, See Definition for kurios 2962, 1203 - relates only to a slave and denotes absolute ownership and uncontrolled power. 2962 - has a wider meaning, applicable to the various ranks and relations of life and not suggestive of either property or of absolutism.
David was the human author, but he wrote exactly what the Holy Spirit wanted him to write.

The Apostles referred to David as our father and God's servant.

The term “our father” recognizes their relationship to David -- David was a fellow Jew who had preceded them in time.

The term “your servant” recognizes David’s relationship to God -- David was submissive to God’s authority.

The point: they will be submissive too by following the example of David.

They then quoted the passage (4:25b-26).

This usage of Psalm 2 falls into the category of literal plus application.

The literal meaning of Psalm 2:1-2 refers to the Gentiles.

The Gentile nations who will come against God and against the Messiah during the Campaign of Armageddon.

The Gentiles in the future will include "kings," but these Jewish leaders were not kings.

The application made here is to the Jewish leaders who have now spoken against God and against His Messiah.

The Jewish rulers did gather together against the Lord and against His anointed.

That is the one point of similarity.

Just as the Gentiles in Armageddon will come against the Lord and against His Messiah, even so, these Jewish leaders have now come against the Lord and against His Messiah.

This is why it is literal plus application.

The application of the Psalm is made in 4:27-28.

READ 4:27-28
In relationship to the death of Yeshua, there was human responsibility and there was divine responsibility.

The human responsibility included both Jews and Gentiles (4:27).

They first bring out Gentile responsibility in the death of Yeshua.

Those responsible are listed as Herod, that is Herod Antipas, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, responsibility included the Roman soldiers who were Gentiles.

They then bring out Jewish responsibility when they state “and the people of Israel.”

In this passage, both Jews and Gentiles are held responsible for the death of Messiah.

That was the human side of the responsibility.

But there was also divine responsibility (4:28).

What happened was what God's counsel had foreordained to come to pass.

In other words, the death of the Messiah was all part of God's eternal plan.

Finally, in verses 29-30, they issued their prayer request which included three things.

READ 4:29-30

First, look upon their threats (4:29a).

In other words, Lord, take note of their threats for the purpose of intervening against those threats.

Second, they prayed for boldness (4:29b).

They needed boldness to be able to stand up against the threats.

Third, they asked that confirmation of their message should come by signs.
What they were asking for in the third prayer request is the continuous ability to perform these miracles of healing with the purpose of authenticating their message to their audience.

Again, throughout the Book of Acts, the only ones who do miracles are the Apostles and those that the Apostles laid hands on.

Believers in general were not performing miracles and signs and wonders as people sometimes teach.

Finally, verse 31 records God's answer to the prayer.

**READ 4:31**

When they prayed there came the sign of answered prayer, the place was shaken.

The shaking showed that God was indeed the Lord to whom they addressed their prayer.

The results were threefold:

**first**, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

This illustrates again that the ministry of Spirit-filling should come many times in a believer's life.

It means they were under the Spirit's control in this specific area of their lives.

**Second**, they spoke the Word of God with boldness.

This was what they prayed they would be able to do and now that prayer request was answered.

and, **third**, they were empowered to continue their witnessing in spite of the threats from the Sanhedrin.

While the story of Ananias and Sapphira proper begins in chapter five, the concluding verses of chapter four present the background.

First, verse 32 speaks about the saints' unity of spirit.

Let me note two points

READ 4:32

First -- By this time, the number of Jewish believers in the Church of Jerusalem was a multitude.

At this point the church included the 120 of the upper room in chapter one; the 3,000 who were saved in chapter two, and the 5,000 males (not counting the females) who were saved in chapter three.

There was a minimum of 8,000 Jewish believers at this point; and no doubt, the figure was considerably higher, because not every situation is recorded.

Although there were so many in this megachurch, there was unity among them.

They were of one heart and mind; they were of one spirit.

There was a unity among them, and nothing negative had crept into the history of the Church up this point.

Second, in verse 32b, we read about the spirit of sharing.

Everything was held in common.

They brought all their material wealth together into a common pot.

In verse 33 the apostolic witness is emphasized (v.33a).

READ 4:33

The word power emphasizes the ability to perform miracles.
This was the answer to the prayer they had made earlier in 4:30.

Furthermore, only the apostles are said to have had this power.

It is an absolutely false teaching to propagate the doctrine that miracles and signs and wonders were being done by the believers in general in the Book of Acts.

It is simply not true.

In the history of the Book of Acts, miracles and signs and wonders were performed only by the apostles and those upon whom the apostles laid their hands, as was the case with Stephen.

It was not a power given to believers in general, even in this Book of Acts.

The apostles used this power to witness.

The content of their witness was the resurrection of the Lord Yeshua.

Earlier in chapter four, it was the preaching of the resurrection to Jews that got them arrested.

The Sanhedrin had threatened them and ordered them to cease preaching in the name of Yeshua, especially over the issue of the resurrection.

But they continued teaching the truth about the resurrection of Yeshua.

The apostles had power, and they had it because of two things.

First, because of prayer; and, second, because of their responsibility to administer the finances.

While they did not try to become wealthy, they were the ones responsible for the distribution of the finances for the early Church.

Another aspect about this community of saints is that they enjoyed God's favor (v.33b).

The word grace teaches that the favor they were receiving from God was itself unmerited, because grace is unmerited favor.

Verses 34-35 reveal the spirit of the community.
READ 4:34-35

First, there was the provision (v.34a).

God provided for their needs.

Second, the means of provision is stated (vv.34b-35a).

Wealthier believers sold their possessions, whether they were land holdings, or homes.

All the money realized from selling these things was laid before the feet of the apostles.

This was a clear recognition of apostolic authority.

We don’t lay these things before people's feet any more because there are no apostles today.

The apostles had a unique authority, and in recognition of this, these things were laid at their feet.

Translations of verse 34 vary among versions.

The Greek tenses used allows for the translation to carry the idea that they brought the money from time to time as it was occasioned by reason of need.

Some translations like the KJV and the NASB don’t carry this idea.

However, the NIV does bring out this nuance of meaning.

In other words, they did not necessarily lay all of the money they received at the apostles feet all at once.

They would sometimes do it piecemeal as needs arose.

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As needs were made known, they would lay what they had from their profits at the feet of the apostles.

**Third**, distribution was made according to need (v.35b).

Some have tried to base a doctrine of communism upon this passage; but this was not communism, it was simple Christian charity.

It was not communism for several reasons.

**First**, it was voluntary (5:4).

**Second**, the Greek tense indicates that varying portions were sold according to the conscience of the individuals (4:34).

It was not a one-time shot.

**Third**, this action was largely based upon a misconception concerning the second coming.

There were strong feelings that Yeshua would definitely return in their lifetime.

Yeshua had clearly indicated that this would not happen, for He prophesied that Peter would die before His second coming in John 21.

**Fourth**, this practice was limited to the Church of Jerusalem; it did not spread to the other churches.

**Fifth**, it proved to be a mistake because it caused the Church of Jerusalem to become poverty-stricken.

After everything had been sold and distributed, there was nothing left in the common pot.

Their poverty caused them to fall in need of help from Gentile churches that did not follow this procedure. (Acts 11:27-30; 24:17; Rom.15:25-27; Gal. 2:10).

The mistake was not in giving the money away and helping the poor.

The mistake was in management.

The mistake lay in eliminating the resources that generated revenue.
For example; if they had kept their landholdings they could have employed the poor on a long term basis or given away the profits to meet the needs.

But by eliminating the source of revenue, they all became poor when the revenue was gone.

There is no basis in this passage for developing the doctrine of communism.

II. THE GOOD EXAMPLE OF BARNABAS - 4:36-37

After giving us a general account of what the believers were doing in verses 32-35, Luke now focused his attention, in verses 36-37, upon one special example.

The example of Barnabas is special for two reasons.

1. What he does here is special and;

2. Barnabas is special because of the role he plays later in the Book of Acts.

So he gives us the good example of Barnabas.

READ 4:36-37

In verse 36, we are introduced to the man himself.

His actual name was not Barnabas, but Joseph, which was his Hebrew name.

He was renamed Barnabas, which is a Hebrew title that can be translated in one of two ways: "son of exhortation" or "son of consolation." ²

Apparently, the apostles gave him this surname because they recognized that his gift was the gift of consolation.

He consoled and comforted and encouraged and sympathized with others.

As for his tribal identity, he was a Levite.

As to his race, or more properly, his nationality, he was from the island of Cyprus.

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So, he was a Jew; a believer in Yeshua; of the Tribe of Levi; and he was born and raised in Cyprus, although he was now living in Jerusalem.

We know some other things about him from other passages of Scripture.

He was the cousin of John Mark, who was the author of the Gospel of Mark (Col. 4:10).

According to Acts 14:12, he was of commanding appearance.

He was taken by the people of Lystra to be the god Jupiter, or Zeus.

He was full of the Holy Spirit (11:24); which means he was a man who was controlled by the Holy Spirit.

He was the man who persuaded the Church of Jerusalem to receive Paul (9:27).

This occurred when Paul returned to Jerusalem from Damascus claiming to be a believer.

Later, Barnabas was sent by the Church of Jerusalem to investigate Gentile salvation in Antioch (11:19-24).

Also, he was the one who brought Paul from Tarsus to Antioch to begin his ministry there (11:25-26).

Finally, he also had the gift of apostleship (14:14).

Their were two categories of Apostles.

The first category consisted of “The Twelve,” the inner circle.

The second category was broader and consisted of men who had seen the resurrected Messiah.

Barnabas was of that second category of apostles.

Like Paul and James, the half-brother of Yeshua, their only prerequisite for apostleship was that they had seen the resurrected Messiah.

Apparently, Barnabas was among the 500 who saw the resurrected Yeshua.

Verse 37 emphasizes the work of Barnabas.
He owned a field; but under the Mosaic law, ownership of land was forbidden to a Levite (Num. 18:20-23; Deut. 10:9).

Was Barnabas disobedient?

The answer is no, because that stipulation only held true within the Land of Israel.

Levites living outside the land were not under that stipulation and, therefore, Barnabas was not sinning in owning land.

Remember, Barnabas was from Cyprus.

Furthermore, after the Babylonian Captivity, this law was no longer applicable since Israel was no longer settled by tribes.

Originally, the Jews were settled by their tribes, and so every tribe had its Levitical cities for Levites to live in.

From these Levitical cities, the Levites were to go out to teach other members of the Tribes of Israel the truth concerning the Law of Moses.

However, after the Babylonian Captivity, the Jews were no longer settled in their tribal territory, and so the law was no longer applicable anyway.

So, Barnabas had a field and sold it.

He then brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

This is a good example of one who possessed the love of the brethren.

In the third division we have the bad example of Ananias and Sapphira.

III. THE BAD EXAMPLE OF ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA - 5:1-11

We can sub-divide this section into two parts.

A. Ananias - 5:1-11

Verses 1-2 spell out their deed.
READ 5:1

Like Barnabas, they did sell something (5:1).

The man was named Ananias, a Hebrew name which means "The LORD has graciously given."

But he did not live up to his name.

His wife's name was Sapphira, which is the Hellenized form of the Aramaic Shaphira, which means "beautiful."3

This husband and wife team who sold a possession.

So far, so good.

However, they then entered into a covenant of deceit (5:2).

READ 5:2

The conspiracy was to keep back part of the price.

In the Greek text, Luke used the same word which is used in the Septuagint version of Joshua 7:1.

There Achan held on to something he was not supposed to.

What Achan was to Joshua, Ananias and Sapphira were going to be to the early Church.

Their act of deceit interrupted the process and the progress of the program of God, just as Achan interrupted Israel's process and progress in the conquest of the Promised Land.

Suddenly, the first sin entered the local church.

While Ananias was the leader in it, his wife was party to the conspiracy.

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Ananias alone brought a certain part of their money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

This was the first internal problem for the church.

The first external problem was in chapter four, when the Sanhedrin arrested Peter and John.

Now, whereas Barnabas was a good example of love of the brethren, Ananias had a false profession of love of the brethren.

What happened next is found in verses 3-4, with Peter's accusation.

**READ 5:3-4**

In his accusation, Peter held two persons responsible for this act of deceit.

The first one was Satan (v. 3).

Speaking to Ananias, Peter said, *Why has Satan filled your heart?*

Peter also used the word "filled."

This is the same word used in Acts 4:31 and Ephesians 5:18, where "filled" means "to be controlled."

Ananias was "satanized," meaning he was controlled by Satan from within.

He had chosen to yield to temptation; he was under satanic control; and being under satanic control, he was "filled" with Satan.

His sin was that he lied to the Holy Spirit.

The means by which he did that was to keep back part of the price he got for his land.

Peter also pointed out Ananias' responsibility.

The selling of the land was not obligatory; it was purely voluntary.

Ananias did not have to sell it.
Even after selling it, he still did not have to give any part of it away.

He had the right to keep all of it.

He had a choice, either to give all of it to the apostles, or none of it, or only part of it.

Giving only part of it was not the sin.

The sin was, that he gave only a part while CLAIMING to have given it all.

Ananias chose to do it because of greed, and this greed led him to the conception of sin.

Because of the conception of this idea in his heart, which led to the deliberate intention to deceive, Satan was able to gain control.

Satan controlled him through the sin of greed.

His intention was to lie to his fellow man.

He was deceived into to thinking that that was the limit of it.

Although this was his intention, audibly he did not lie to men, he lied to God.

This is a clear example that the Holy Spirit is God, because earlier Peter said he had lied to the Holy Spirit.

Here he is told that he had lied to God.

To lie to the Holy Spirit means the same as lying to God.

This shows that Peter had the gift of discernment of spirits.

Ananias' sin led to his death (5:5).

**READ 5:5**

He fell while he was listening to what Peter was saying.

The result was, that **great fear came upon all that heard.**
This is the first of two examples of someone being "slain by the Spirit" in Scripture.

But Ananias did not get up again; he was dead.

This is not exactly what’s being passed off today by that term.

Verse six records the burial of Ananias.

**READ 5:6**

They rolled him up in some type of a shroud with bandages, *and they carried him out and buried him.*

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**B. Sapphira - 5:7-10**

In verse seven, Sapphira came in.

**READ 5:7**

Three hours later, his wife, now knowing what had happened to her husband, came in.

Then Peter asks her a question (5:8a).

**READ 5:8**

With that question, Peter gave her an opportunity to come clean.

But Sapphira did not take the opportunity offered to her, but chose to continue with the conspiracy.

In verse nine, Peter gave his accusation and judgment.

**READ 5:9**

He accused her of a joint-conspiracy *to test the Spirit of the Lord.*

This was sin against the Holy Spirit; it was lying to the Holy Spirit.
When they did that, they "tested Holy Spirit.

The judgment was the death penalty.

Then came the immediate death of Sapphira (5:10a).

READ 5:10

The results of this incident are recorded in verse 11 -- two results.

C. The Result - 5:11

READ 5:11

The first result was that great fear came upon the Church.

This is the first mention of "church" in the Book of Acts, out of a total of 23 times.

The second result was that fear fell on those outside the Church as well.

Everyone, believer and unbeliever alike, everyone who heard about this incident were filled with awe and dread.

We’re not playing games here.

It’s a serious commitment to be a follower of the Messiah.

God means business in the 1st century and in our century as well.

And that is the story of Ananias and Sapphira.

Here are four observations from what happened.

First, we have an example of Peter using his apostolic authority.

In Matthew 16:19 he had been given the authority to "bind" and "loose."

This is a Rabbinic Concept.4

One of the ways binding and loosing was used, was in the realm of Church discipline.

To "loose" was to free from punishment.

But to "bind" meant to bind for punishment.

Peter "bound" Ananias and Sapphira for punishment.

In John 20:23, the apostles were given the authority to retain sin.

Here Peter "retained" the sin of Ananias and Sapphira.

The apostles had the authority to exercise discipline upon the Church.

Today, we have to follow the four-stage procedure of Matthew 18:15-20.

A second observation is, that is seems to be a harsh treatment.

But discipline is always stricter at the start of a new dispensation.

A previous example of this was the death of Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus 10:1-2.

The third observation is, that there were four results that happened:

first, a recognition of apostolic authority;

second, the purity of the church was preserved;

third, there was godly fear; and

fourth, there was fresh apostolic power with new signs and wonders (5:12).

The fourth observation is, that there are three lessons to be learned from this account:

first, the church is not perfect, even the early church;

second, God will judge sin; and

third, as I Peter 4:17 points out, judgment must begin at the house of God.
THE SECOND PERSECUTION OF THE CONGREGATION - ACTS 5:12-42

The second persecution of the Congregation is recorded in Acts 5:12-42.

This part of the Book of Acts has two main divisions.

I.  THE POWER OF THE APOSTLES - 5:12-16

The first main division deals with the power of the apostles which, in turn, led to the second persecution.

The account begins by describing the apostolic signs (v. 12a).

READ 5:12

The Greek tense means that these signs were wrought from time-to-time.\(^1\)

Not ceaselessly, but as needed.

Just preceding this event was the story of Ananias and Sapphira, and their death.

With their death, the Congregation was purged of sin.

With the Congregation purged, God could again do work, as He was doing through the apostles.

Verse 12b speaks about their spirit and the place of gathering.

As to their spirit, they were all in *one accord* -- unified.

As to place, they came together *in Solomon's Porch*.

Because there were now so many believers, it was no longer possible to congregate in the Upper Room.

The upper room was big enough for 120, but now we have over 10,000 Jewish believers, at least.

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\(^1\) \{Were wrought\} (\*egineto\*), Imperfect middle, wrought from time to time. Word Pictures in the New Testament, The Kingdom Christian Scholar Library
They had to meet somewhere else, where many could gather and many could hear.

That place was at Solomon's Porch of the Temple Compound.

The early Congregation, then, met within the confines of the Jewish Temple.

Verse 13 records the response of the population.

**READ 5:13**

Other Jews chose not to believe.

They chose not to join themselves with the Messianic Jews.

This may have been due to two fears.

**First**, fear of persecution, which comes from the outside.

There had already been one persecution against the Congregation and the second persecution is soon to begin.

**Second**, fear of discipline, which comes from within, as was the case with Ananias and Sapphira.

Even those who did not join with them, did not become believers, or associated with believers, still spoke well of the believers for two reasons:

**first**, the signs that the apostles were doing, which were good things (such as healing the sick); and,

**second**, because the accord, the unity of the Jewish believers, was very evident in the sight of the unbelievers.

Verse 14 describes the growth of the Congregation.

**READ 5:14**

The Greek tense means that "they kept on being added."²

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Instead of a decrease, as you might normally expect.  

In spite of the fear of the general population, still Jews were coming to the Lord; they were being added more and more.

As a result multitudes became believers, both men and women.

Verse 15 records the special healing powers that Peter had.

**READ 5:15**

Peter, being the chief of the apostles, had unique abilities.

Although all the apostles had *apostolic authority and apostolic power* to perform unique miracles, Peter, being the head apostle, and the one having the keys to the kingdom, had an ability which was unique even among the apostles themselves.

Sick people who could not walk by themselves were carried by others out into the street.

There, in the open streets, they were laid on beds and couches or pallets.

This they did so that as Peter came by or as Peter passed by, at least his shadow might touch them.

If his shadow touched them, they were healed, every one.

Because of Peter's position as the head of the apostolic group, he had these unique abilities.

Verse 16 shows how the reputation of the apostles spread.

**READ 5:16**

Again, the tense means that "they kept on coming."  

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Multitudes kept on coming, from Jerusalem and from the cities round about Jerusalem, in light of what they were seeing and hearing.

There were two categories of people that were brought to the apostles for healing:

**first**, they brought sick folk, those who had merely physical problems, and nothing more than physical problems; and

**second**, those who had demonic problems.

They may also have had physical problems, but in their case the physical problems were caused by demons.

This verse makes a clear distinction between mere physical sickness and demonic problems.

There are two phrases in this verse that must be kept distinct:

**first**, they brought sick people to the apostles, people who had only physical problems; and,

**second**, they brought people with demonic problems.

It is absolutely wrong to teach that **all** physical problems are due to demons.

Not all physical problems are caused by demons.

In fact, the majority of physical problems are due to human frailty, not due to sin in the believer’s life, nor due to some demonic problem.

The result: everyone that came to the apostles, without exception, was healed.

It does not say that only those who had faith were healed.

Everyone who came to the apostles were healed because the apostles had the apostolic authority to heal, regardless of whether the person healed had faith or did not have faith.

Again, this was a power that was limited to the apostles.

It was part of the package of apostolic authority and apostolic power.
The tense used in Greek means they were healed one at a time, and this was constantly being repeated.\(^8\)

God may choose to heal miraculously.

He may choose to heal through a doctor today.

He may choose not to heal at all.

Verses 17-18 present the start of the second persecution beginning with the cause and the instigators in verse 17.

II. **THE PERSECUTION OF THE APOSTLES - 5:17-42**

A. **The Arrest of the Apostles - 5:17-26**

**READ 5:17**

The instigator was the High Priest, who was Ananias, and all they that were with him.

The men with him were members of the sect of the Sadducees.

Like the first persecution, the second persecution was also instigated by the Sadducees.

The cause lay in the fact that they were filled with jealousy.

To be "filled" means to be controlled: they were controlled by jealousy.

The apostles were arrested and jailed (v. 18).

**READ 5:18**

This would be the same jail that Peter and John spent a night in 4:3.

Verses 19-20 record the divine rescue.

\(^8\) [Were healed every one] (\(\text{etherapeuonto hapantes}\)). Imperfect passive, were healed one at a time, repetition. Word Pictures in the New Testament, The Kingdom Christian Scholar Library
Verse 19 reveals the means.

An angel of the LORD came to them by night and miraculously opened the prison doors and brought them out.

This is the first of several angelic interventions in the Book of Acts with others recorded in 8:26; 12:7-10; and 23.

The angel then gave a command (v. 20), Go and stand.

The word for "stand" means to stand with boldness.⁶

They were to go, not to some secret underground Congregation, but to go to a very, very public place: the Temple Compound.

They were to speak to the Jewish people coming into the Temple in the full message of this life.

This is a Hebraism, meaning, "all the words of life" or "this life."⁷

The implication is that they are to speak about resurrection life which is exactly what the Sadducees deny.

The apostles immediately obey (v. 21a).

READ 5:21

At this point it was just about daybreak, when Jews were starting to come into the Temple.

It was dawn.

They began to teach and they continued teaching.

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⁷ {All the words of this life} (πάντα τὰ ρηματα τῆς ζωῆς ταύτης). Not just a Hebraism for "all these words of life." Probably "this life" which the Sadducees deny and of which the angel is now speaking, this eternal life. (Joh 6:63,68; 1Co 15:19). Word Pictures in the New Testament, The Kingdom Christian Scholar Library
Also in the morning the Sanhedrin convened for the purpose of putting these apostles on trial (v. 21b).

The Sanhedrin was comprised of 1) the High Priest and they who were with him who were Sadducees.

But they called the whole council together.

The whole Sanhedrin included 2) the elders, who were Pharisees.

Though the first and second persecution were instigated by the Sadducees, the Pharisees did participate.

Verses 22-23 discuss the empty prison.

**READ 5:22-23**

First, the prisoners were sent for.

They sent people to the prison house to fetch these apostles for trial (v. 21c).

But what they found was an empty cell (v. 22).

They had to return to the Sanhedrin empty handed.

They gave their report in detail (v. 23).

They declared that they found the prison locked up tight.

There was no possibility of an escape because those prison doors were still shut tight.

Second, they state that the guards were still there as well.

Although the prison doors were shut tight, although the guards were still there keeping things safe, the apostles were not there.

Verse 24 records what the response of the rulers was to this amazing report.

**READ 5:24**
This man mentioned, the captain of the temple, was the one in charge of the prison and the Temple police.

He was the second most important man in the compound area except after the High Priest.

The captain of the Temple guard and the chief priests were all perplexed; they found themselves in a state of puzzlement.

They immediately expressed one fear, what would come of this.  

In other words, their concern was what would happen if this thing should be allowed to go on.

What would happen if the gospel should be allowed to continue to be proclaimed!

In verse 25 they finally discover where the apostles are.

READ 5:25

Someone unnamed suddenly showed up and told them.

The apostles, the ones that were shut tight in the prison, are in the temple compound, and they are standing and teaching the people.

This was not what was supposed to be happening at this point.

In verse 26 the apostles are arrested once again.

READ 5:26

The text indicates that they were probably bringing the apostles in slowly and solemnly, without violence.

The implication is that when they were first arrested they were arrested with violence, but now they were rearrested without any violence.

There was a sense of awe in their hearts, but that was not the primary reason.

---

The primary reason for their gentleness was that they feared the people.

The apostles, as seen earlier, still had a good reputation among the people.

If the officers suddenly treated the apostles violently, they were in danger of being stoned.

In verse 27a the prisoners are brought in.

B. The Examination of the Apostles - 5:27-33

READ 5:27

Verse 28 presents the charge against the apostles.

The High Priest took the initiative and began questioning them (v. 27b).

In the course of his questioning he issued his accusation (v. 28).

READ 5:28

He reminded them of the previous order he had given them not to teach in this name, that is, in the name of Yeshua.

And this was done earlier in Acts 4:17-18.

What they were charged with was not to teach in this name, that is, they were not to teach any further in the name of Yeshua the Messiah.

However, the High Priest points out that they have been disobedient to the command of the Sanhedrin.

They have shown this disobedience because they have filled Jerusalem with their teaching.

He also accused the apostles of having a hidden purpose in what they have been doing.

The hidden agenda, to place the responsibility for Yeshua’s death upon the Sanhedrin.
By using the expression, **this man**, the High Priest refused to even use the name "Yeshua."

But it was not the apostles that brought the blood of Yeshua upon them.

They themselves had brought the responsibility upon themselves in Matthew 27:25 when they said, his blood be upon us and our children.

One thing this shows is that the Sanhedrin clearly understood the message.

They comprehended what the apostles were saying: that Yeshua really was the Messiah and that Yeshua was rejected by the leadership of Israel when they turned him over to Gentile hands.

Verses 29-32 record the apostolic response.

In verse 29a, Peter again takes the lead as the chief of the apostles.

**READ 5:29**

The other apostles either added to what Peter said or they agreed to what Peter said.

While most of the talking was done by Peter, the others did have something to say.

They told the Sanhedrin why they disobeyed them (v. 29b).

The reason, **We must obey God rather than men.**

The expression, *we must*, is a Greek word that means, "it is necessary."\(^9\)

In other words, there was a moral necessity to obey God.

This moral necessity left them no choice; and if obedience to God meant disobedience to men, so be it.

This is an eternal principal: the apostles were under a higher authority, and so are we.

---

We are to obey both God and men where possible because the Bible commands us to obey those in authority over us.

But if human authority commands us to do that which the Bible clearly forbids then we must choose to go with the higher authority: God.

The reason they had to disobey the leaders was because there is a moral necessity to obey God rather then men.

Then, in verses 30-31, the apostles present the story of the Messiah.

READ 5:30-31

By calling the LORD, the God of our fathers, Peter related the coming of Yeshua to the Jewish covenants.

Yeshua is the Messianic King promised in the Davidic Covenant.

The NIV translates the next phrase, “raised Jesus from the dead.”

The literal Greek reads, “raised up Yeshua.”

Some scholars feel that this is a reference to the resurrection.

That’s why the NIV adds the explanatory phrase, “from the dead.”

Some commentators feel that it’s a reference to the first coming.

Those who feel that it’s a reference to the first coming feel that it means God brought Yeshua to the front, to the forefront.

It’s simply describing the first coming per se, just as in Judges 2:18 God raised up a savior, meaning he brought a delivering judge to the forefront.

He did not resurrect the judge from the dead.

Either position is acceptable, and the resurrection of Yeshua isn’t compromised in any way.

The resurrection of Yeshua is covered in verse 31 in either case.

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11 אַשְׁרֵי הָאָדָם הַיְּפֵרָה וְהוֹלָם, יִתְיָדְדֵי מִיַּה יִשְׂרָאֵל, הַיְּפֵרָה וְהוֹלָם. אַשְׁרֵי הָאָדָם הַיְּפֵרָה וְהוֹלָם.
Peter next described the death of the Messiah (v. 30b) and issued the charge: *whom you killed.*

The Greek word is a strong one.

It literally means: "to take in hand," "to lay hands on," "to man-handle," "to kill." They killed Him, and the means by which they killed Him was by hanging Him on a tree.

Peter will say this again in 10:39 and will write again in I Peter 2:24.

Peter was *not* emphasizing death by the cross, but death by being hung on a tree.

The emphasis is not on the shape of the execution stake.

The emphasis is not on the cross shape, not on the shape of a tree.

The emphasis is upon the wooden object itself.

The Greek word simply means wood.13

In the Septuagint it’s used variously for “a tree,” wood of any kind, “a pole,” and various objects made of wood, including a gallows.14

Under the Mosaic Law this was a cursed way to die (Deut. 21:22,23; Gal. 3:13).

It was a cursed way to die, being hung on a wooden object, be it a pole or tree.

Peter clearly charged the Sanhedrin with the murder of the Messiah when they turned Him over to the Gentiles.

Yes, he did intend to put the blood of the Messiah into their lap.

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13 Strong’s Greek and Hebrew Lexicon, entry number 3586 xulon [xoo’-lon] from another form of the base of 3582; TDNT - 5:37,665; n AV - tree 10, staff 5, wood 3, stocks 1; 19 GK - 3833 {xuvlon} 1) wood 1a) that which is made of wood 1a1) a gibbet, a cross 1a2) a log or timber with holes in which the feet, hands, neck of prisoners were inserted and fastened with thongs 1a3) a fetter, or shackle for the feet 1a4) a cudgel, stick, staff 2) a tree.

14 Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 9, pg. 320
Peter next described the exaltation of the Messiah (v. 31a).

In contrast with their murdering Him, God exalted Him.


Now, Yeshua’s by God's right hand.

In the Scriptures the right hand is very significant.

The right hand was used to convey the greater blessings (Gen. 48:12-20).

The right side of the throne is usually the side on which the King’s or God’s associates sit.

It was a mark of distinction.\(^\text{15}\)

The right hand was often a symbol of strength.\(^\text{16}\)

“Here sitting at the right hand signifies no merely an idle honor, but reception into the fellowship of God as regards to dignity and dominion; exhalation to a participation in God’s reigning.”\(^\text{17}\)

The exaltation of Yeshua included His resurrection, His ascension into Heaven, and His present session at the right hand of God the Father.

The exaltation is seen in the two positions that He now has: He is a prince, and He is the savior.

The purpose (v. 31b) why the Messiah died and rose again was to give repentance to Israel.

The repentance of Israel as a nation is the prerequisite for the second coming.

Here Peter also pointed to Yeshua’s future mission.

The remission of sins was accomplished by His death.

In the future, He will remove the sins of Israel.

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\(^\text{15}\) Soncino Books of the Bible, The Psalms, pg. 371
\(^\text{16}\) Encyclopædia Judaica, vol. 14, col. 177-178
\(^\text{17}\) Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, vol. 3, pg. 189
His present mission is to remove sins of those who believe.

Finally, Peter declares that the apostles are witnesses to this fact (v. 32).

READ 5:32

The apostles are the witnesses, as is also the Holy Spirit as promised in John 15:26-27.

The Holy Spirit is also a witness *whom God had given to those who obey him*.

This is a reference to the Spirit's indwelling ministry.

Those who obey receive the indwelling Spirit, and the obedience here is the obedience of faith.

Verse 33 records the response of the leaders.

READ 5:33

When they heard Peter's accusation, the effect was, literally in the Greek, "to be sawn asunder," "to be sawn in two," "to be cut in two." 18

Here it is rage that cuts into their hearts, not conviction of sin. 19

In 2:37, when the audience was "cut to the heart" it resulted in conviction.

But this time it resulted in rage.

The desire was to slay these apostles and be rid of them once and for all.

They were plotting and planning to kill.

There was one problem however: disobedience to a command of the Sanhedrin simply did not carry the death penalty under Jewish law.

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18 [Were cut to the heart] (\dieprionto\). Imperfect passive of \diapriô\ old verb (\dia, priô\), to saw in two (\dia\), to cut in two (to the heart). Word Pictures in the New Testament, The Kingdom Christian Scholar Library

That was the problem they were faced with.

The conspiracy to try to do away with the apostles was interrupted suddenly by the advice of Gamliel.

Verse 34a introduces the man himself.

C. The Advice of Gamliel - 5:34-39

READ 5:34

Gamliel was a member of the Sanhedrin.

As to his religious persuasion, he was a Pharisee.

He was a well known Pharisee.

In Jewish sources, he was known as Rabban Gamliel.

He was a disciple of Rabbi Hillel.

At this time he was the head of the school of Hillel.

Most rabbis were simply called Rav or Ravi which means "teacher" and "my teacher" respectively.

But Gamliel was given a title of Rabban, a title above a rabbi which means "our teacher."

It was a special title for the leader of the school of Hillel.

He was the first of seven rabbis to have this title.

This was the Gamliel who was Paul's teacher (22:3).

He possessed so much influence in his own time that the Jewish Mishnah states,

"Since Rabban Gamliel the elder died there has been no more reverence for the law, and purity and abstinence died out at the same time." Sotah 9:15
The point is that Rabban Gamliel was able to hold a moral force that others followed, simply because of the strength of his own moral character.

The verse also states that he was a teacher of the law.

This refers to his knowledge of the Law of Moses.

He had authority to interpret the law in accordance with the Jewish traditions.

As to his reputation, everybody held him in some degree of honor, including Sadducees as this context will show.

Like other great rabbis he had a great saying:

"Procure thyself a teacher, avoid being in doubt; and do not accustom thyself to give tithes by guess."[20]

He was a man of judicial temper and not prone to go off at a tangent.[21]

This was Rabban Gamliel.

In verse 34b Gamliel issues his command to put them outside the council chamber of the Sanhedrin so that they would not be party to the discussion that was now to be held.

In verses 35-39 Gamliel gave his address to his fellow Sanhedrin members.

The point of verse 35 is that they must use caution.

**READ 5:35**

He addressed them as men of Israel and then told them, consider carefully.

Literally the Greek words are "hold your mind for," or "hold your mind on yourselves."[22]

In other words, do not act too rashly.

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[22] [Take heed] (prosechete heautois). Hold your mind (noun, unexpressed) for or on yourselves (dative case), the usual idiom.
Be very careful concerning these men and what you are about to do to them.

The question that Gamliel's defense of these apostles raises is this: what were his motives?

Three possible things might be involved.

First, Gamliel was well known for his wisdom and would not move rashly.

To try to kill these men would be a very rash move.

Second, this persecution was instigated by the Sadducees.

What they were angry about was the preaching concerning the resurrection.

Third, Gamliel was a Pharisee, and believed in the resurrection of the dead.

As a Pharisee he was against the Sadducees and was not about to follow their lead.

There is no need to assume that he was some kind of a "secret believer.

There is no need to assume that he defended the apostles because he was seriously contemplating the fact that Yeshua might be the Messiah.

On one hand it was a matter of prudence, a matter of wisdom, not to act too rashly, too quickly.

On the other hand, he was not about to follow the Sadducees' lead, especially since he knew that what they were upset about was the preaching of the resurrection.

The Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead.

In verse 36, Gamliel gave the example of Theudas.

READ 5:36

Theudas rose up claiming to be somebody sometime earlier.

The events of chapter five took place in the year A.D. 35.
This event occurred sometime before that year.

Theudas gathered a following of 400 men and lead a revolt against Rome.

He was killed and all who followed him were also killed, or dispersed, and the whole movement came to nothing.

This is the only record we have of this revolt.

There is no other historical account of a revolt by Theudas.\(^{23}\)

Next, Gamliel gave the example of Judas of Galilee (v. 37).

**READ 5:37**

Sometime after Theudas, rose up a man named Judas of Galilee, *in the days of the census*.

The days of the census was the year A.D. 6.

We know more about this particular revolt.

This was a revolt against the census of Publius Quirinius.

Quirinius had passed two orders for a census.

The first one was passed in the year 8 BC.

That census brought Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem where Yeshua was born.

He passed a second enrollment law in the year A.D. 6 when he became the Roman legate of Syria.

It is not the same one as in Luke 2:2.

And it was the second decree that caused the revolt lead by Judas of Galilee.

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\(^{23}\) Logos 2.0, New Bible Dictionary, article **THEUDAS. 1.** In Acts 5:36 an impostor (possibly a Messianic pretender) who some time before AD 6 gathered a band of 400 men, but he was killed and his followers dispersed. His activity was probably one of the innumerable disorders which broke out in Judaea after Herod’s death in 4 BC. Origen (*Contra Celsum*, 1. 57) says he arose ‘before the birth of Jesus’, but that may simply be an inference from this passage, where Gamaliel speaks of his rising as having preceded that of *Judas.*
But he also perished, and all that were with him were also scattered about.

While no other record of the revolt by Theudas exists, there is a record of the revolt by Judas of Galilee by Josephus.

He instigated the revolt by claiming God alone is King.

He proclaimed that to pay tribute to Caesar is treason against God.

He resented the fact that Judah was now reduced to a status of being merely a Roman province.

The purpose of this second census was to determine what the tax should be to Rome, and this is what caused the revolt to break out.

The revolt was crushed by the Romans and Judas himself was beheaded, but the movement he founded survived as the Zealot movement.24

Eventually the Zealot Party did lead the major revolt against Rome in the years A.D. 66-70.

It was also that party that made the last stand at Masada in A.D. 73.

In verses 38-39 Gamliel issued his advice.

**READ 5:38-39**

What Gamliel was saying is to let things be.

If the movement was of God, nothing could be done against it; if it was of man, it will die of its own.

Some have taken Gamliel's words and made them divine truth.

However, Luke simply recorded what Gamliel said and did not confirm the truth of what Gamliel said.

This was Gamliel's personal opinion, but it was not biblically true.

What Gamliel said is not to be considered as biblical truth.

24 Logos 2.0, New Bible Dictionary, article Zealot, see Appendix 1
Why, because many things not of God have prospered: such as the cults, false religions, etc.

Many things which are not of God have survived.

Again, this was Gamliel's opinion, not biblical truth, and we must be careful not to use this as biblical truth.

The results of this conversation are recorded in verses 40-42.

D. The Results - 5:40-42

The results fall into two categories.

First, the result for the Sanhedrin (v. 40).

READ 5:40

The Sanhedrin agreed to Gamliel's advice.

They accepted Gamliel's advice against the Sadducees' contention that they needed to find a way to have these men killed.

At that point the apostles were called back into the council chamber, and they were punished for disobeying the Sanhedrin by being beaten.

They received the "forty stripes save one," which was based upon Deuteronomy 25:2-3.

For the first time, believers suffered in the body because of their faith.

In the first persecution there was no beating.

They were jailed overnight and then let go.

The basis for the beating was for disobedience of the previous order not to preach.

They then gave them a second order.
For the second time they were ordered not to speak in the name of Yeshua: the repeat of the command of 4:18.

They were forbidden to continue preaching and teaching in the name of Yeshua.

They were then released.

Verses 41-42 record the result for the apostles.

**READ 5:41-42**

There were two results.

The **first result** was rejoicing for being able to suffer for the Lord (v. 41).

They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer this type of dishonor for the cause of Messiah.

They were willing to suffer, *for the Name*.

The word "name" is rightfully translated with a capital "N" in the NIV.

For Judaism, that Name was the four letters of God's name.

In English is equated with the four letters of YHVH (Jehovah).

Now, the word *Name* is applied to Yeshua: to Yeshua.

While it was used in the sense of dishonor by the Sanhedrin, the Jewish believers were willing to be proud of it and pay the price for it.

The **second result** for the apostles was renewed zeal (v. 42).

This is seen by the frequency with which they continued in the Temple and in the home to talk about Yeshua.

They went from house-to-house proclaiming and teaching in the name of Yeshua.

**Once again** they disobeyed the order of the Sanhedrin and continued both evangelizing and teaching.
The content was, *Yeshua as the Messiah*; Yeshua of Nazareth is the Messiah of promise.

To summarize the second persecution:

**first**, it was specifically against all the apostles, not just two as in the first persecution; **second**, it was instigated because of apostolic power;

**third**, it was instigated by the Sadducees; **fourth**, at this point the Pharisees basically stayed aloof; and,

**fifth**, it resulted in bodily harm.
THE STORY OF STEPHEN - ACTS 6:1-8:4

The story of Stephen has two main divisions: the appointment of deacons; and, the witness of Stephen.

I. THE APPOINTMENT OF DEACONS - 6:1-7

These verses record the selection of the first deacons in the congregation, with verse one providing the timing and the occasion.

READ 6:1

*Now in those days,* or "in these days," meaning, following the second persecution of the congregation detailed in chapter five.

The disciples were multiplying because of the ministry of the apostles in 5:42.

READ 5:42

Because of this ministry by the apostles, the number of disciples was now growing.

The term used for believers in 6:1 is *disciples.*

This was an early name for believers.

In the synoptic gospels, that is, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the word is used 160 times.

In the Gospel of John, 78 times.

In the Book of Acts, 28 times.

However, not once is it used in the rest of the New Testament.

It is found only in the historical books of the New Testament.

Later, this term gave way to two other terms: "saints" and "brethren."
These became the more common terms, which are used in the epistles and in the Book of Revelation.

Not even the word "Christian" is a very common term.

In fact, in all the New Testament, it is used only three times.

The majority of the terms used are "saints" and "brethren."

As the *congregation* grew, *there arose a murmuring* within the *congregation*.

This is the second difficulty within the body in *church* history.

The first internal problem was the problem with Ananias and Sapphira.

The second internal problem is that of a conflict between two groups within the *congregation*.

The Greek word for murmuring means there was a "whispering" or murmuring.\(^1\)

It’s a word that emphasizes a smoldering discontent, which, if it was not handled correctly, could very easily split the *congregation*.

What was happening was a constant secret whispering and grumbling that buzzed away until it was finally heard.\(^2\)

The grumbling came from the *Grecian Jews*.

The Greek term used here simply means, "to speak Greek."\(^3\)

In other words, these were Hellenic Jews, or Hellenistic Jews.

They were Jews by nationality who had moved into the Land of Israel from outside the land.

They were Greek by language and by culture, though they were born as Jews.

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\(^1\) Strong’s Greek and Hebrew Lexicon, entry number 1112 *goggusmos* [gong-goos-mos'] from 1111; TDNT - 1:735,125; n m AV - murmuring 3, grudging 1; 4 GK - 1198 {IFYJ} 1) a murmur, murmuring, muttering 1a) a secret debate 1b) a secret displeasure not openly avowed,


\(^3\) Logos 2.0, Bible Knowledge Commentary
These are the Diaspora Jews, Jews from the Dispersion who had migrated back into the Land of Israel.

It was among them that this smoldering discontent and murmuring arose.

It rose against the Hebraic Jews.

These were Jews who spoke Hebrew.

They may have spoken Aramaic as well, but definitely Hebrew.

The reason this murmuring arose from the Grecian Jews against the Hebrew Jews was because their widows were neglected in the daily administration.

These widows were Diaspora widows.

Under the Law of Moses, widows were under special protection (Deut. 14:29; 24:19; 26:12).

Under Pharisaic rule, widows were often ignored (Mark 12:38-40).

The widows became a special concern of the Jerusalem Congregation.

We know this fact from other passages such as James 1:27.

However, while the congregation was in deep concern about taking care of its widows, there seems to have been a prejudice in favor of the locally born, Hebrew speaking widows, as against Greek speaking widows who had immigrated into the country.

So they felt neglected and overlooked in the daily distribution of food.

This refers to the common fund that was distributed, spoken of in 2:43-45 and 4:32-35.

The purpose of 6:1-7 is to show the apostolic connection between Stephen and the apostles, which came as a result of trying to solve this particular problem.

In verses two through four, the apostles give some advice.

Verse two spells out the reason why deacons were needed.
READ 6:2

The *congregation* was convened; the twelve apostles called the multitude of disciples together.

The *apostles* were those in charge, while the *multitudes* were the membership of the *congregation*.

The apostles were serving as elders in that *congregation*.

They pointed out that it is not *right*, a word meaning "it is not pleasing,"\(^4\) that these apostles, serving as elders, should forsake the Word of God, to leave behind the teaching of the Word of God, to serve tables.

It is not fit or pleasing that apostles, or elders in this case, should quit studying and teaching the Word of God.

The primary function of an elder is to deal with the Word of God; not to leave the Word of God to serve tables.

So the need for deacons arose to handle the physical needs of the *congregation*.

In verse three, the five qualifications for these deacons are spelled out.

READ 6:3

First, they had to be believers,

second, they had to be male.

The Greek word for *men* means men in contrast to women.\(^5\)

third, they had to be reputable, of good report, having clear ethical qualifications;

fourth, they had to be spiritual, *full of the Spirit*; and,

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\(^5\) Strong’s Greek and Hebrew Lexicon, entry number 435 aner \(\text{an’-ayr}\) a primary word cf. 444; TDNT - 1:360,59; n m AV - man 156, husband 50, sir 6, fellow 1, not tr 2; 215 GK - 467 \{\text{βραδός}\} 1) with reference to sex 1a) of a male 1b) of a husband 1c) of a betrothed or future husband 2) with reference to age, and to distinguish an adult man from a boy 3) any male 4) used generically of a group of both men and women
fifth, they had to be wise, full of wisdom.

A practical aspect necessary because they would need wisdom to manage this distribution equitably.

Seven were to be selected and the appointment made by the apostles.

While the congregation may nominate people, the actual appointment is made by the apostles, functioning as elders.

Those who they appoint will function in this business of distributing physical aid.

The apostolic responsibility is spelled out in verse four.

READ 6:4

It is we, in contrast to the seven, because elders have a different responsibility.

Their responsibility is in the area of praying for the congregation, and the ministry of the Word of God.

The physical needs of the congregation are to be handled, not by the elders, but by the deacons.

Verses five through six list the first deacons of the local congregation.

READ 6:5-6

What the apostles advised them was pleasing to the whole congregation.

This was a peaceful way to resolve the problem of the bickering widows.

Verse 5b records who was selected.

First, Stephen; and this is the link, because the purpose of this first section was to show the link between Stephen and the apostles.

The text states two things about Stephen: first, he was a man full of faith, meaning he was controlled by faith; and,
**second**, he was a man full of the Holy Spirit; he was controlled by the Holy Spirit, which made him a spiritual man.

Stephen received the most detailed description of the seven, because of his role in the next section of the Book of Acts (6:8-8:4).

**Second**, Philip; not Philip the apostle, but another Philip.

He is mentioned second because of the role he will play in 8:5-40.

The other five do not play a role in the Book of Acts, so they are mentioned quickly: Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus.

The last one is described as a convert to Judaism.

He was a Gentile from Antioch, who had previously converted to Judaism, but now he had become a believer in Yeshua the Messiah.

He is mentioned with this detail to point out a contrast: while the others were all born Jews, this one was a Gentile.

Luke also related a detail about this one that he did not cover in relation to the others.

He relates where Nicolaus was from.

He was from Antioch.

Luke mentioned this fact because of the role that Antioch will also play later in the Book of Acts.

These are the first seven deacons and, of course, the one we are concerned about is Stephen.

Three observations can be made about these seven:

**first**, all seven had Greek names.

This means that all seven were Jews from the Diaspora who had immigrated to the Land of Israel.
Second, being Diaspora Jews showed that they cannot be accused of favoritism toward the Hebrew widows at the expense of the Grecian widows; and,

third, it again showed that the murmuring came from the Diaspora widows.

In verse six came the appointment.

**READ 6:6**

In the presentation, the seven were set before the apostles, the elders.

The seven men were only nominated by the congregation, but not appointed by the congregation.

The Bible does not teach a congregational form of government, but an elder-rule government.

The appointment came after they had prayed, with the laying on of hands.

Deacons are to be appointed to their office the same way elders are: by the laying on of hands.

The practice of laying hands on others was a gesture signifying commissioning and granting of authority (cf. 8:17-19; 13:3; 19:6; 1 Tim. 4:14; 5:22; Heb. 6:2).\(^6\)

This has Old Testament background.

This was the means by which Joshua was appointed by Moses (Num. 27:22-23).

Members of the Sanhedrin were appointed to their office by the laying on of hands.

Even so, deacons are appointed by the laying on of hands.

Verse seven records the results with a summary statement.

**READ 6:7**

First, *the word of God increased*.

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The Greek means, "it kept on growing." 7

Now that the apostles were free from the daily serving of tables, and were able to devote themselves to prayer and to the Word, resulting in the increase of the number of disciples.

Second, peace was restored in the *congregation*.

Since the *congregation* was no longer facing a possible division, it would allow the *congregation* to grow even further.

Third, Luke mentions a new element that was not mentioned previously in the Book of Acts, that *a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith*.

The Greek has an imperfect active which emphasizes repetition: one after the other, priests were coming to the faith. 8

Because these were priests, it means that most of these men, if not all of these men, were Sadducees.

The *faith* is the gospel, the good news of eternal life found in Yeshua.

So peace was restored, and the *congregation* was able to move on.

II. **THE WITNESS OF STEPHEN - 6:8-8:4**

A. **The Arrest of Stephen - 6:8-7:1**

Verse eight points out Stephen's character and ministry.

**READ 6:8**

Stephen's character was twofold: first, he was full of grace; and, second, he was full of power.

As to his ministry, he kept on doing signs and wonders.

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This ability of Stephen to perform signs and wonders came only after his appointment by the apostles, and through apostolic authority.

Stephen was not able to do these things before the laying on of hands by the apostles.

Now he is able to do so. 9

He is the first non-apostle to perform miracles in the Book of Acts.

With the laying on of hands he was now officially an apostolic legate, representative. 10

Furthermore, he was doing this among the people.

In other words, although he was appointed to do the ministry of serving tables, he did not limit his ministry to serving tables.

Because of his actions in this context, Stephen will end up being the first one to qualify for the martyrs' crown.

Stephen is the link between two key apostles, Peter and Paul.

He was appointed by Peter, but Paul will consent to his death.

Since the main purpose of the Book of Acts is to tell the story of Peter and Paul, Stephen is the link between those two apostles.

Verses nine and ten record the disputations against Stephen with verse nine giving the source of the attacks.

READ 6:9-10

Certain synagogues are named.

Opinions differ widely regarding how many synagogues are in view here.
Some think 5, some think 2, some think only one.

The Greek text seems fairly straightforward to me.\textsuperscript{11}

I will take the position that 5 synagogues are in view.

According to Jewish sources, at this time Jerusalem had 480 different synagogues.\textsuperscript{12}

Some of these were built by Jewish people coming from various parts of the Diaspora.

The first to be named was the synagogue of the Libertines, as some translations render the word.

The word means "freedmen."

These were Jews who were once slaves of Rome, or sons of Jewish slaves of Rome.

Now had been freed, and so they came from Rome and built their own synagogue.\textsuperscript{13}

The second synagogue was the synagogue of the Cyrenians, Jews from North Africa.

The third was the synagogue of the Alexandrians, Jews from Egypt.

The fourth was the synagogue of Cilicia, Jews who came from Asia Minor, or present-day Turkey.

The province of Cilicia included the city of Tarsus.


\textsuperscript{12} Word Pictures in the New Testament, The Kingdom Christian Scholar Library

\textsuperscript{13} Word Pictures in the New Testament, The Kingdom Christian Scholar Library
These are people that came from the same province that Paul came from.

That may very well mean that this synagogue of the Cilicians was Paul's own synagogue.

That may also mean that he would have been involved in the disputations with Stephen.

He would have been among the ones who lost his arguments with Stephen.

Finally, he mentions the synagogue of Asia, meaning other parts of Asia Minor.

These were all Jews from the Diaspora, disputing with Stephen, who was himself a Jewish man from the Diaspora.

Verse ten points out that they failed.

They were not able to withstand either the wisdom of Stephen or the Spirit of Stephen, by which he spoke.

He kept on speaking, and they kept on disputing, but they were unable to counteract what he was saying.

It is this that would lead to the third persecution of the congregation.

The third persecution began with the conspiracy recorded in verse 11.

**READ 6:11**

The text says that they “persuaded men.”

The Greek means, "to put under, like a carpet," to bring men under their control.

This could be done in one of two ways: either by the power of suggestion; or, by the power of money.14

In this case, it was probably the power of money.

They paid certain people to become false witnesses in a court of law against Stephen.

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Having been bribed, they issued the charge.

They claimed that Stephen spoke blasphemy against two people:

**first**, against Moses.

Stephen may have indicated that the law had come to an end.

**second**, against God.

They thought that he implied that he was against Temple worship.\(^{15}\)

We’ll see these charges come out in verse 14.

However, by Jewish law, one is not guilty of blasphemy unless one has pronounced the name of God.\(^{16}\)

They did not accuse Stephen of pronouncing God's name, but they did say he spoke against Moses and against the Temple.

In verse 12, Stephen was arrested.

**READ 6:12**

The instigators did their job and *stirred up the people.*

The Greek word means "to throw into commotion," into turmoil.

They began shaking the people up together like an earthquake, causing confusion.\(^{17}\)

This time it was not the Sadducees, but the **elders and the scribes.**

The elders and the teachers of the law are the Pharisees.

While the first and second persecutions of the **congregation** were instigated by the Sadducees, this third persecution was instigated by the Pharisees.

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\(^{15}\) Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 9, pg. 336, Jewish New Testament Commentary, pg. 240-243

\(^{16}\) Mishnah Sanhedrin 7:5

\(^{17}\) Word Pictures in the New Testament, The Kingdom Christian Scholar Library
The Greek text indicates that they rushed at Stephen.

They seized him, and they brought him into the Sanhedrin.

He was brought for trial before the Sanhedrin, for charges of blasphemy and disrespect of the Temple.

Verses 13 and 14 report on the false witnesses.

READ 6:13-14

They set up false witnesses, spelling out two charges.

Stephen was accused of preaching judgment against the Temple.

And, indeed, he probably was preaching judgment against the Temple.

He knew of Messiah's prophecy that the Temple was destined for destruction.

His preaching against the Temple would anger the Sadducees.

Second, they claimed he attacked the Law -- the Law of Moses, because he was preaching grace.

This would anger the Pharisees.

They phrased the false accusations in such a way that would anger both the Sadducees and the Pharisees.

Then, to substantiate their charges, they claimed that Yeshua would destroy this Temple.

Probably all Stephen was doing was repeating the prophecy of Yeshua: the Temple was destined for destruction, as a judgment for the unpardonable sin.

Because he was repeating the prophecy of Yeshua, they claimed he was being disrespectful to the Temple, and this would anger the Sadducees.

But, second, they claim they heard him say that Yeshua shall change the customs which Moses delivered to us.
This probably included a charge of blasphemy against both the Torah, against the Law of Moses, and the Mishnah, the body of Jewish tradition.

Stephen was probably saying that: the law has come to an end with the death of the Messiah, and that Judaism -- Pharisaic, Rabbinic Judaism -- was superseded by the new faith.

This would anger the Pharisees.

The accusation is now very clear.

Most people, when being charged by false witnesses, show some kind of emotional expression on their face.

They would show anger or show discontent.

Verse 15 describes what the state of Stephen was like while these false accusations were being brought forward by the false witnesses.

READ 6:15

All that sat in the Sanhedrin, fastened their eyes on him.

They began staring at Stephen as these accusations were being hurled about.

They stared at him, perhaps to further intimidate him.

But as they began to look on his face intently, his face became like the face of an angel.

In other words, he radiated a presence marked by confidence, serenity and courage.18

In 7:1, the examination proper began.

READ 7:1

The High Priest asked, “Do you plead guilty or not guilty”?

Stephen is given an opportunity to answer the charges.

18 Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 9, pg. 337
This statement gives the introduction to the longest single speech in the Book of Acts.

Before dealing with the speech, four observations concerning this third persecution of the congregation should be noted:

**first**, the issue is no longer merely resurrection, for this time the opposition came from the Pharisees, opposition from Pharisaic Judaism;

**second**, the persecution began with Stephen, but it was not confined to Stephen;

**third**, the death of Stephen will make him the first Christian martyr; and,

**fourth**, it resulted in the dispersion of the Congregation of Jerusalem, which, in turn, played a major role in the advance of the Gospel.

Before expounding Stephen's speech, some observations should be made.

In this section, Luke records what Stephen actually said to the Sanhedrin.

What Stephen says is based upon the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, not upon the Hebrew Masoretic text, that came a thousand years later.

Stephen telescopes two events into one picture.

Sometimes there appears to be, as critics have pointed out, discrepancies between what Stephen said and what is found in the Old Testament.

These will be dealt with as we proceed, but it must be kept in mind, Luke is simply stating what it was that Stephen said.

He is not necessarily validating the truth of everything that Stephen said.

When the Bible records direct discourses like this, the Bible does not say the discourse itself was inspired, only the recording of that discourse was inspired.

Luke's inspiration guarantees that this is really what Stephen said to the Sanhedrin word for word.

It may not necessarily indicate the correctness of what he said.
For example; the Bible records lies that people told (Gen. 18:15, 37:29-35, Acts 5:1-10)

Inspiration does not guarantee the validity of those lies.

Inspiration only guarantees that it really did happen, that the statement really was uttered.

As Stephen began his defense, he recounted briefly the story of Abraham, beginning with the call of Abraham in verses two and three.

1. The Patriarchs - 7:2-16
   a. The Story of Abraham - 7:2-8

READ 7:2-3

It was the God of glory, the God of the Shechinah who appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was still in Mesopotamia and before he even moved to the next city, the city of Haran.

Stephen's point was this: the Shechinah, that is, the divine presence of God, was not restricted to the Land of Israel or the Temple.

The Shechinah appeared before there was even a Tabernacle, or a Temple.

The content of the call is in verse three.

Verse 3 is a quotation of Genesis 12:1.

Verse four records the journey Abraham took.

READ 7:4

There appears to be a discrepancy here between what Stephen said and what Genesis 11:32 states.

Stephen indicates that Abraham received his call in Ur, Mesopotamia while Genesis 11:31 seems to indicate that Abraham received the call in Haran.

Creative solutions have been offered by commentators who want to reconcile the two statements.
We need not get disturbed over Stephen’s statements.19

The point is that Luke accurately, without error, recorded what Stephen said.


The very fact that Luke did not try to reconcile what Stephen said and what Genesis 11:32 states, shows how accurate this account is.

Luke apparently wasn’t upset by the statement.

Keep in mind that Stephen was under tremendous pressure in a kangaroo court that was ready to kill him, and he might have made some factual mistakes.

This could simply be an honest mistake while under pressure.20

But, that does not rule out the verbal inspiration of Scripture.

The truth of Scripture is not compromised by what Stephen said.

Some commentators feel that Abraham received two calls, one in Ur and then a confirming call in Haran.

Stephen would be referring to the initial call in Ur while Genesis 11:32 would refer to the confirming call in Haran.21

They feel that Stephen simply either ignored the confirming call or telescoped the two calls into one because the pressure he was facing demanded that he be as brief as possible.

In verse five, Stephen reminded them of the promise of the land.

READ 7:5

Abraham did not own the land, though God promised that he would someday.

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19 Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 9, pg. 340
20 Jewish New Testament Commentary, pg. 244
21 Unger’s Bible Handbook, pg. 63
READ 7:6-7

According to verses six and seven, instead of giving Abraham ownership of the land in his lifetime, God gave him a prophecy of the Egyptian bondage.

God told him that his seed would be strangers and in bondage for 400 years (Gen. 15:13).

Exodus 12:40 states that they were in Egypt for 430 years.

This is the figure given by Paul in Galatians 3:17.

Is there a contradiction here?

I don’t believe so.

Genesis and Paul give the exact figure, while Stephen simply gave a round number.

Then God promised that He will someday judge the nation that enslaved the Jewish people and eventually the Jews would return and worship God in this place, meaning Mt. Sinai, (Exod. 3:12).

READ 7:8

In verse eight, he pointed out that God also gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision (Gen. 17:9-14).

Stephen quickly went over, in passing, the stories of Isaac, and the story of Jacob, for he wants to move quickly to the story of Joseph.

B. The Story of Joseph - 7:9-16

READ 7:9-10

According to verse nine, Joseph was sold by the twelve patriarchs into the Land of Egypt (Gen. 37:25-36).

According to verse ten, the rejected one became the exalted one, because God was with him (7:9), and God did exalt him in due time (7:10).
God delivered him out of all his afflictions.

God gave Joseph favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, and God made him governor over Egypt, and over all his house.

The point Stephen was making was that God's revelation to Joseph also came to him outside the land.

In verses 11-13, Stephen summarized the famine and its results.

READ 7:11-13

There was a famine that came over all Egypt (7:11) so that the patriarchs had to go down to the Land of Egypt (7:12-13).

The first trip (7:12) and the second trip (7:13) showed that the rejected one became the savior of the rejecters.

Stephen’s implying that the same thing was true with the Messiah.

READ 7:14-16

The family eventually moved down to Egypt, and that is where that patriarchs and Joseph eventually died (7:14-15).

Later they were buried (7:16).

To summarize what Stephen said about the patriarchs, three things should be noted:

first, God began the Jewish nation with a covenant; the Abrahamic Covenant.

second, God's revelation came outside the land, as well as inside the land; and,

third, God used a rejected one to save the rejecters.

What was true of Joseph is true of the Messiah.

Yeshua’s connected to the Abrahamic Covenant through the New Covenant and the Davidic Covenant.
Yeshua was primarily within the land but not exclusively.

Yeshua likewise performed ministry outside the land.

Yeshua, the rejected one, will be the savior of the rejecters.

Before leaving this section, there are a couple of discrepancies between what Stephen said and what Genesis records, that should be dealt with briefly.

In 7:16 Stephen states that after Jacob and Joseph died they were carried over unto Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham bought for a price of silver from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.

That statement contains two problems: first, the burial cave, according to Genesis, was in Hebron, not in Shechem.

While Joseph was buried in Shechem, Jacob was buried in Hebron.

Second, Abraham bought the cave from the Hittites, and it was Jacob who bought the field from Hamor.

The two problems are as follows: first, the problem of the location of the burial cave (Hebron or Shechem); and,

the problem of the identity of the seller of the cave (the Hittites or Hamor).

One solution is to remember that what is recorded here is what Stephen actually said to the Sanhedrin.


It only affirms the fact that Stephen really did say it.

In this speech, under pressure, Stephen may have made some factual mistakes.


Luke recorded even the mistakes of Stephen without correcting them, because then he would be playing around with what actually happened.
A second way of solving the problem is to point out that sometimes things are telescoped in Scripture.

Here the two transactions are being telescoped.

Because Stephen was under pressure, he did not have a lot of time.

So, the transaction of Abraham with the Hittites, and the transaction of Jacob with Hamor of Shechem are telescoped together.

Also, the two burials are telescoped together, for the same reason: the burial of Jacob in Hebron; and, the burial of Joseph in Shechem.

This is similar to earlier in this speech where the two calls of Abraham were telescoped together.

So this problem can be solved in one of these two ways.

In verses 17-19, Stephen deals with the Egyptian bondage, beginning in verse 17 with the divine timing.

### 2. The Story of Moses - 7:17-43

**READ 7:17**

God promised Abraham that the Jews would be in bondage for a period of time.

as that time began to draw to a close, God's began to work as well.

**READ 7:18**

There arose a new Pharaoh that did not recognize the authority or the contributions of Joseph (7:18).

He did not "know Joseph" in the sense that he did not recognize any obligation to Joseph's past help to the people of Egypt.

Instead he oppresses the people of Joseph, the Jewish people (7:19).

**READ 7:19**
Pharaoh issued a decree of death, that they should cast out the babies into the water, and so commit infanticide.

It was at this crucial point that Moses was born in the plan of God (7:20).

**READ 7:20**

The parents of Moses recognized that God was going to use their son in some unique way, and for that reason were willing to risk their lives for three months by hiding the baby before they put him out in an Ark upon the river.

But Pharaoh’s daughter found the child and adopted him and made Moses legally her son (7:21).

**READ 7:21-22**

Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of Egypt (7:22).

We know that his education included science, astronomy, medicine, and mathematics.

He’s also described as mighty in his words and in his works.

He was a capable and impressive man.

But one day Moses made a crucial decision (7:23).

**READ 7:23**

When he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, to be able to see for himself the state of the children of Israel.

The purpose was to identify himself with the Jews, and no longer with the Egyptians.

In verses 24-28, Stephen related Israel's first rejection of Moses over the killing of the overseer.

**READ 7:24-28**
They misunderstood his motives.

He came to redeem them from slavery, but they did not understand him and rejected him.

Because of that rejection, Moses fled down to the Land of Midian where he spent the next forty years and begot two sons (7:29).

READ 7:29

Then came the burning bush experience, which called him into the office of being Israel's redeemer (7:30-34).

READ 7:30-34

In this way, the rejected one became the savior of the rejecters (7:35).

READ 7:35

He was the one who led the people out of Egypt in the Exodus (7:36).

READ 7:36

It was Moses who made a prophecy that someday God would raise up another prophet like unto Moses (7:37).

READ 7:37

Through Moses, God gave the Jewish people the law, which contained His divine words (7:38).

READ 7:38

Then came the second rejection of Moses, in that they turned their backs on him in their desire to go back into Egypt (7:39-41).
READ 7:39-41

They turned their backs on Moses by asking Aaron to build them a golden calf to worship.

This led to Israel's idolatry (7:42-43).

READ 7:42-43

Idolatry began early in Jewish history; it began in the wilderness wanderings, while Moses was on top of Mt. Sinai getting the Mosaic Law.

To summarize Stephen's defense in dealing with the story of Moses, six points can be made:

first, God began fulfilling the Abrahamic Covenant.

He did this by delivering Israel out of the land of Egypt;

second, however, Israel in spite of her deliverance, proved disobedient;

third, God's revelation and great works recorded in the Book of Exodus were done outside the land.

God's working is not limited to within the borders of the Land of Israel, but extends beyond that.

In their early history the Jewish people saw great works of God outside the land;

fourth, the rejected one, Moses, became the savior of the rejecters;

fifth, however, Israel was consistently guilty of idolatry, and consistently rejecting what God had revealed through His prophet;

and sixth, through Moses there was a promise made of a future prophet, a prophet like Moses and they are guilty of rejecting that prophet like unto Moses.

3. The Tabernacle - 7:44-50

In the third part of his defense Stephen moved on from Moses to the Tabernacle that Moses built beginning with the construction of it (7:44).
READ 7:44

The point Stephen made by emphasizing the wilderness is that this, too, was outside the land.

Throughout his speech, Stephen has been trying to make the point that God's presence, God's blessings, and God's work cannot be limited to the borders of the land.

Even the Tabernacle was built outside the land.

Furthermore, he built it according to the pattern that he had seen.

What Moses built was merely a copy of something already in existence up in heaven.

The earthly Tabernacle was a copy of the heavenly one.

Stephen then summarized the history of the tabernacle from Joshua to David (7:45-46).

READ 7:45-46

The land here has to do with the land that used to belong to the seven Canaanite nations, but now has been transferred by God to the people of Israel.

The seven Canaanite nations were thrust out before the face of our fathers.

The Tabernacle was brought into the land under Joshua, and it remained in tabernacle form until David.

David found favor in the sight of God, and he asked God if he could build a more permanent habitation.

David wanted to replace the Tabernacle, which was a flimsy tent-like structure, with a more solid permanent structure, the Temple.

The transition from the Tabernacle to the Temple came with David.

However, David was not allowed to build the Temple.
It was Solomon who finally built the Temple for the God of Israel (7:47).

**READ 7:47**

In the history of Israel in the land, there was a movement from the Tabernacle over to the Temple; a transition that began with David and finally culminated with Solomon.

Stephen went on to point out exactly where it is that God really does dwell (7:48-50).

**READ 7:48-50**

In contrast to what David and Solomon planned, God's habitation cannot be limited to any structure made by hands.

God does not dwell in buildings made with hands.

Stephen was not saying, of course, that God's presence was not in the Tabernacle or in the Temple, because he knows from the Old Testament that God's visible presence was indeed in both the Temple and the Tabernacle.

What he was trying to say, was that because of God's immensity, because of God's greatness, the Most High is not confined to any building, either the little Tabernacle or the great Temple.

To prove his particular point, he goes on to quote Isaiah 66:1-2.

The literal meaning of Isaiah 66:1-2 refers to the Tribulation Temple.

The Tribulation Temple will be the only one of the four Temples in biblical history or prophecy that God does not ordain.

God did ordain the Solomonic Temple, He did ordain the Second Temple, and He will ordain the Millennial Temple, since He Himself will build it.

But, the Tribulation Temple of Isaiah 66:1-2 he will not ordain.
Again, the literal meaning has to do with the Tribulation Temple and by way of application Stephen applies it to the present Second Temple of his day, the Herodian Temple.

The point of the quotation is that God cannot be limited.

God's dwelling cannot be limited to any building made by hands.

To summarize, in this part of his defense, Stephen made four basic points.

**First**, the Tabernacle was built outside the land and this means that the Divine Presence, the Shechinah, was not confined to the land.

God was able to work even outside the borders of the land.

**Second**, although God commanded the building of the Tabernacle, and allowed the building of the Temple, it was not for the purpose of confining God's presence or God's work.

It was this point that the leadership of Israel had failed to understand.

They tried to limit God's presence and God's work within the confines of the land and the Temple.

That simply cannot be.

**Third**, God was still free to work and to appear anywhere.

The point Stephen was leading to is that with this new faith, God will be working very well outside the confines of the Temple, and outside the confines of the land.

So, **fourth**, he emphasized the universality of the new faith.

The new faith is universal and is to be applied to both those inside and outside the land.

Stephen, who was a Hellenistic Jew, was able to see the logical implications of the new faith, which even the apostles were not yet able to see.

In fact, it is not until chapter ten that Peter even saw it.

Stephen now brings his discourse to a close with an accusation.
Stephen, the accused, now becomes the accuser.\textsuperscript{22}

Stephen's basic charge was that this generation has done the same as the previous generations.

4. The Accusation - 7:51-53

READ 7:51

This generation has also resisted the Holy Spirit (7:51).

He labeled them with two statements.

First, he called them stiff-necked.

This is a figure of speech that means obstinate and unyielding.\textsuperscript{23}

His comment is derived upon what was already said in the Old Testament about Israel (Exod. 32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9; Deut. 9:6).

Second, he called them uncircumcised in heart,

This, too, was based upon something God said about Israel back in the Old Testament (Lev. 26:41; Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4; 6:10; 9:26; Ezek. 44:7).

Both the Law and the Prophets labeled Israel as being uncircumcised in heart.

As a result, they always resisted the Holy Spirit.

They are resisting the Holy Spirit now, even as their fathers did ( Isa. 63:10).

Their resistance of the Holy Spirit was evidenced by their role in the death of the Messiah.

In verse 52, he pointed out that this generation was guilty of killing the Prophet like unto Moses.

READ 7:52

\textsuperscript{22} Word Pictures in the New Testament, The Kingdom Christian Scholar Library
\textsuperscript{23} Logos 2.0, Matthew Henry’s Commentary
He asked them the question, “Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute?

It was obvious that all of the prophets were persecuted by their fathers.

In the Old Testament this is brought out by II Chronicles 36:15-16.


Their fathers were responsible for persecuting and killing those prophets that predicted the coming of the Righteous One.

The prophets who were persecuted spoke of the coming of the Messiah.

Of this same Messiah they have become betrayers.

The same Greek word used of Judas Iscariot.24

They have not only become His betrayers, they have also become His murderers.

READ 7:53

In verse 53, Stephen pointed out that this generation was without excuse for two reasons.

First, they had received the law.

Being the very ones who received the law, they should have known better.

Second, what made this even worse was the fact that this law was ordained by angels.

There are certain truths which are not found in the Old Testament, but were maintained by Jewish tradition.

While many things in Jewish tradition are not biblically true, a few things are.

These things are reaffirmed by the New Testament.

Here is one example.

No where in the law does it say that the law was given to Moses by God through angels, but Rabbinic tradition said that was true.

Three times this is reaffirmed by the New Testament: Acts 7:53; Galatians 3:19; and, Hebrews 2:2.

The law, therefore, was given by God to Moses by means of angels, yet Stephen declares, they kept it not.

That was the indictment: they did not keep the very law that was ordained by angels.

The evidence of their failure to keep the law was their rejection of the Messiahship of Yeshua.

To summarize the fourth part of his defense, Stephen declared three things:

**first**, this generation has done as their fathers did and they are guilty of the same sin, resisting the Holy Spirit;

**second**, this was, from the mouth of Stephen, a denunciation of that generation for being guilty of rejecting the Messiahship of Yeshua.

In the context of Matthew 12, it meant they were guilty of the unpardonable sin;

Third, there was no offer of salvation from the mouth of Stephen, only a declaration of disobedience.

This concludes Stephen's speech.

Before moving on, an evaluation of Stephen's speech is in order.

Five observations can be made.

**First**, in his speech there was a telescoping of several Old Testament events.

Because of the pressure of time, because he had a very hostile audience, and because he knew he would only be allowed to speak for so long, Stephen telescoped three events:

**first**, he telescoped the two calls of Abraham;
second, he telescoped the two purchases -- the one in Hebron by Abraham, and the one in Shechem by Jacob; and,

third, he telescoped the two burials -- the burial of Jacob in Hebron, and the burial of Joseph in Shechem.

The second point to mark is to note that Yeshua was not prominent in the whole sermon of Stephen; in fact, He was only introduced for the first time in verse 52, and even then He was not mentioned by name.

This was probably because he did have more to say, as will be seen later, but he was interrupted.

It should be noted, however, that at the point that Stephen's speech came to an end, Yeshua was not prominent.

The third evaluation is to point out there was no mention of the resurrection.

It was this issue that earlier aroused the Sadducees.

This time the persecution came from the Pharisees and so there is no need to make the resurrection an issue.

The Pharisees were willing to accept the concept of a resurrection.

The fourth point is to note that Stephen did not answer the charges made against him; he was far more interested in presenting the truth, than to answer the charges.

Fifth, Stephen made five points in his declarations:

first, there was both progress and change in God's program;

second, God's blessing was not limited to the Land of Israel, or to the Temple compound;

Third, Israel had consistently rejected God's plan and His messengers throughout Jewish history;

fourth, the rejected one often became the savior of the rejecters; and,

fifth his implication was that the same was true with the Messiah.
He was rejected by Israel, but He is yet to become the Savior of the rejecters.

Let’s move on to the next section of the chapter.

**C. The Stoning of Stephen - 7:54-60**

Verse 54 records the reaction of the Sanhedrin.

**READ 7:54**

While they were hearing the very things that Stephen was saying, they were suddenly cut to the heart.

Luke again uses the very strong Greek word that means "to be sawn asunder," like being cut in two with a saw.25

As a result, they gnashed on him with their teeth.

The Greek word used here is more picturesque, meaning "to bite with loud noises," "to grind with the teeth," "to gnash with the teeth."

They began to come at him like a pack of hungry wolves.26

Stephen's speech resulted in mob action.

Verses 55-56 record Stephen's dying vision.

The vision itself is in verse 55.

**READ 7:55**

Stephen was at that point especially under the control of the Holy Spirit.

He looked up steadfastly into heaven.

While everybody else was looking at him, while everybody else was staring at him, Stephen was looking up.

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While they were gnashing their teeth at him, while they were making loud noises with their teeth, he himself was in perfect peace, because at that moment he was seeing the glory of God, the Shechinah.

He also saw Yeshua standing at the right hand of God.

Yeshua is here seen as standing at the right hand of God.

The main emphasis in Scripture is normally on Him sitting at the right hand of God.

This was viewed prophetically in Psalm 110:1, in the Old Testament.

The New Testament emphasizes constantly that Yeshua is now sitting at the right hand of God: Mark 16:19; Acts 2:34; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3, 13: 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; and, I Peter 3:22.

The only time Yeshua was ever viewed as standing at the right hand of God is in this verse and again in verse 56.

The difference between Yeshua sitting and Yeshua standing at the right hand of God the Father should not be missed.

When Yeshua is viewed as sitting at the right hand of God the Father, it emphasizes that His work of providing salvation and sacrifice is a finished work.

However, when the Bible views Him as standing, it views Him as still working in the area of sustaining the saints.

So His work of sustaining the saints is still continuing.

Yeshua now stands up to receive the soul of a saint.

Normally, Yeshua is sitting.

But as Stephen was about to die, Yeshua stood up to receive the soul of Stephen to be with Him up in heaven.

In light of the fact that Stephen now saw the Shechinah Glory, and saw Yeshua standing at the right hand of God, he made the declaration found in verse 56.

READ 7:56
Stephen referred to Yeshua by the title Son of Man.

This is the last time in the New Testament that this Messianic title is used.

It was used frequently throughout the gospels, but not used again after Acts 7:56.

From now on He is referred to only as the Son of God.

Also, this is the only time the term “Son of man” is used of Jesus by someone other than Himself, by Stephen.

Verses 57-60 describe the death of the witness, beginning with the mob response in verse 57.

READ 7:57

They began to hold their ears with their hands, and they rushed upon him.

The Greek word means, "to rush impetuously," impulsively.

The same word was used in Luke 8:33 concerning the swine that were demon-possessed, rushing into the water.

They all rushed at him impulsively with one accord, or in unison.

There was no vote by the Sanhedrin; it was purely mob rule.

READ 7:58

The stoning then began (7:58a).

They cast him out of the city, because executions were always done outside the city.

The Greek tense indicates that at this point they began stoning him.

The role of the false witnesses in the stoning of Stephen is also recorded (7:58b).

The false witnesses, by being there, probably cast the first stone and thus gave this execution a sense of legality.

In the Old Testament two or three witnesses at whose testimony someone was being condemned to death had to be the ones to cast the first stone (Deut. 13:9-10; 17:6-7).

Furthermore, they laid their garments down to make it easier to cast the first stone.

They laid it at the feet of a young man named Saul.

With that seemingly passing statement we are introduced to the Apostle Paul, or Saul.

Stephen is the link between Peter and Paul.

Again, the main purpose of the Book of Acts is to give the story of Peter and Paul.

The first part of the book deals primarily with Peter, with incidental mention of Paul.

The second part of the book deals primarily with Paul, with incidental mention of Peter.

Between Peter and Paul is Stephen.

Stephen is the link.

At the laying on of hands of Peter, Stephen became a deacon.

With the laying of the clothing at the feet of Paul, Stephen becomes a martyr.

At this point Paul was a young man.

The Greek word describing his is used of anyone up to the age of forty.28

Verse 59 describes Stephen's response to the stoning itself.

28 Strong’s Greek and Hebrew Lexicon, entry number 3494  { neh-an-ee'-as} from a derivative of 3501;; n m AV - young man 5; 5 GK - 3733 { } 1) a young man, Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 9, pg. 354
READ 7:59

As they kept on stoning Stephen, Stephen kept on calling upon the Lord.

In the Greek, there is a sense of urgency, meaning, "receive it now."²⁹

No temporary holding pattern, no soul sleeping, receive it now.

This is very similar to what Yeshua Himself said to God the Father in Luke 23:46 when Yeshua committed His spirit to God the Father.

Stephen committed his spirit to God the Son.

Then in verse 60, Luke records the actual death of Stephen.

READ 7:60

Stephen’s death is described in three stages.

First, he kneeled down; he placed his knees on the ground.

This is a special Greek idiom.³⁰

The picture is that, at his own choosing, Stephen placed his knees on the ground and so he kneeled down.

Second, he cried with a loud voice and said, literally, "place not to them" Or "against them" this sin.

Here there is a similarity with Yeshua’s own words when He was being crucified in Luke 23:34.

Then the third stage was, he fell asleep.

The word sleep does not refer to the soul, but to the body.

Whenever the word sleep is used as a euphemism for death, it is used only of believers, never of unbelievers.

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The reason is to show God's viewpoint of the death of a believer: death is only a temporary suspension of physical activity; not spirit or soul activity.

In literal sleep, there is a temporary suspension of physical activity until one awakes, but the mind keeps operating and the internal organs keep operating.

When the word sleep is used of death, it does not refer to the spirit, soul, or the immaterial part of man, but it refers to the body.

Sleep, in the sense of death, means there is a temporary suspension of physical activity until we wake up in the resurrection.

In this context, Stephen asked Yeshua to receive his spirit right then and there, and not sometime later, at some soul resurrection.

Soul-sleeping is not a biblical teaching.

One question this incident raises is, how could the Sanhedrin get away with the stoning of Stephen.

We know from the Gospel of John, that the Sanhedrin did not have the right of capital punishment.

That was taken way from them by the Roman Senate?

One explanation is that while it is true that the Roman Senate did take away the right of capital punishment from the Jews, there was one exception.

According to Josephus, the Sanhedrin was allowed to carry out capital punishment in one area, and that had to do with offenses against the sanctity of the Temple.

Basically, the charge against Stephen had to do with a violation of the sanctity of the Temple.

A second explanation is that this event may have occurred in the year AD. 36.

In that year, Vitellus became the new Imperial Legate of the Province of Syria, which included Judea.

He deposed Pontius Pilate from his procuratorship in A.D. 36.
There was a break, between the deposing of Pilate and the arrival of the new procurator.

It could very well be that this event occurred between the departure of Pilate and the arrival of the new procurator.

So they were able to get away with it during the transition period.

There is one more thing about this event that must not be missed.

The stoning of Stephen marked the rejection of the second sign of Jonah.

The Book of Acts is a continuation of the story of the gospels.

When Yeshua was rejected in Matthew 12, at that point they committed the unpardonable sin.

At that point Yeshua declared that He would give the nation no more signs, but one: the sign of Jonah, which is the sign of resurrection.

That sign was to come to Israel on three occasions:

**first**, the resurrection of Lazarus, which was rejected by the Sanhedrin in John 11.

**second**, the resurrection of Yeshua; and,

**third**, the resurrection of the two witnesses in Revelation 11.

The second sign of Jonah, the resurrection of Yeshua, is rejected in this chapter with the stoning of Stephen.

It included, for the first time, a persecution against the new body by both Pharisees and Sadducees.

It was an official act by the Sanhedrin.

The stoning of Stephen marks the official, legal rejection of the second sign of Jonah.

That is why after this event does the gospel go out for the first time to the non-Jewish world.
In chapter eight, it will go out to the Samaritans; in chapter ten, it will go out to the Gentiles.

Now we move to the third persecution of the Messiah’s congregation.

The third persecution of the church resulted from the stoning of Stephen.

The account begins by relating the role of Saul, or Paul.

D. The Persecution of the Church - 8:1-4

READ 8:1

The phrase “giving approval” does not mean he voted for Stephen’s execution, it means he took pleasure in it.

The emphasis is on the pleasure Paul felt in his role, something Paul himself confesses later in 22:20.  

Paul approved what was taking place.

This verse does not mean that Saul was a member of the Sanhedrin.

Sanhedrin trials were public, and Saul was present and approved the action which the Sanhedrin took.

In fact, he may have been one of the ones who lost the argument with Stephen because Stephen preached in a synagogue comprised of his countrymen.

Then, verse 1 goes on to describe the third persecution of the church.

This was a great persecution.

As a result, they were all scattered abroad; they were scattered like grain.

Scattered is a Greek word used of scattering seed.

This is also the word for the Diaspora -- same word.

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The point is that now the Messianic Jews of Jerusalem became the Dispersion of Jewish Christianity.

Just as the word "dispersion" is used of Jews outside the land in general.

Here it is being used specifically of Jewish believers.

This was one of God's ways of removing the Jewish believers before the judgment against the city in AD. 70.

This dispersion and scattering of the Jewish believers away from the apostles created the need for the first writings of the New Testament.

That is why the first gospel written was the Gospel of Matthew.

The first need would arise among Jewish believers.

The Gospel of Matthew was written to give Jewish believers an authoritative written account of Yeshua’s life to refer to.

Until this dispersion, if they had a question they could ask an apostle.

Now that they were away from the apostles, they did not have access to the apostles.

As a result, they needed an authoritative writing.

Matthew was written for them.

Some of the epistles were written as a result of this dispersion as well: Hebrews, James, I Peter, II Peter, and Jude.

They were scattered throughout the regions Of Judea and Samaria.

The apostles did not flee, because there was still some of the flock left, and they stayed to shepherd the flock.

Their apostolic powers probably kept them from being persecuted at this point.

Later they will be, but at this point there was still some fear of the apostles.

Verse two records the burial of Stephen.
READ 8:2

The Greek word for “Godly men” is a word that is used of devout Jews, but not necessarily believers in the Messiah.

In this context, it appears that these were devout Jews who were not believers in the Messiahship of Yeshua; unbelieving Sewis who did not agree with the Sanhedrin verdict, and buried Stephen.

That is why they are called devout men, to distinguish them from the believers and also to distinguish them from the members of the Sanhedrin.

The Greek word for "burying" includes all the normal funeral arrangements, because Luke states that they made great lamentation over him.33

It is a Greek word that means "to beat the breast."34

According to Jewish law of that day, a criminal who died a criminal's death like Stephen did, was to be buried without a public lamentation.

However, contrary to that law, Stephen received a funeral tribute.

Verse three tells about Saul's war against the congregation.

READ 8:3

The Greek word for destroy means to keep on trying to destroy, but he could not.35

He tried to destroy it, to defile it, to ruin it, to devastate it.

In the Greek version of Psalm 79:13 the word is used of a wild boar laying waste a vineyard.36

In using that term, Luke was describing Saul or Paul as being a wild animal, a wild boar trying to destroy God's vineyard.

35 ερότυσεν绩号绩号绩号绩号Jerome, Contra Julianum, pg. 27
Paul was a Pharisee, again showing that the Pharisees had now joined the Sadducees, making this kind of a persecution fully possible.

Gamaliel's advice given in chapter five was no longer relevant.

Saul entered into every house, a reference to house churches because there was no such thing as a church building in those days.

They entered into houses that were having local church meetings.

He dragged out both men and women, again showing that these were church meetings, and at these church meetings were coed.

The fact that women were included in the persecution is a new element at this point.

Saul committed them to prison, something he admits in 22:5.

In verse four, Luke records the ministry of those who were dispersed.

**READ 8:4**

Those who were scattered abroad like seed, those who now went out to the Diaspora, spread and taught the Word of God.

This sets the stage of the eventual salvation of the Samaritans later in chapter eight.

The persecution dispersed the believers, but did not silence them; and they used the forced dispersion to spread the gospel further.

More details are found in 11:19.

The result of the death of Stephen was not the silencing of the gospel, but the spreading of the gospel even further than it was before.
THE STORY OF PHILIP - ACTS 8:5-40

The story of Philip can be divided into two main segments.

He first comes into the picture in Acts 6:1-6.

He was one of the first seven deacons of the Church of Jerusalem.

The story of Stephen and the story of Philip begin at the same time with the selection of the deacons of the Jerusalem Church.

Luke then went on with the story of Stephen in 6:7-8:4; and now, in 8:5-40, he deals with the story of Philip.

The evangelization of Samaria begins in verse five with the evangelist Philip.

I. THE WITNESS IN SAMARIA - 8:5-25

A. The Evangelization of Samaria - 8:5-8

READ 8:5

This is not Philip the apostle from chapter one, but Philip the deacon of Acts 6:5.

Philip the deacon now becomes Philip the evangelist, and is actually referred to that way in 21:8.

Luke states that Philip went down.

He says “went down” because, from a Biblical perspective when you left Jerusalem you “went down from” Jerusalem.

When you went toward Jerusalem you “went up.”

Philip went down to a city in Samaria.

Some translations read “the city of Samaria.”

There is some question regarding how to best translate the phrase.
More than likely this was not the city known as Samaria, but it was simply some city in the region of Samaria.

The name *Samaria* no longer referred to a city, as it did in Old Testament days, but to a region known as Samaria.¹

The city of Samaria was known as Sebaste in New Testament times.²

The name of the actual city which Philip went to is unknown.

Philip proclaimed the Messiah to the inhabitants of this town.

He served as a herald, and began proclaiming the gospel to the Samaritans.

Verse 6 records the response.

**READ 8:6**

Philip, who was a Hellenistic Jew, had great success among the Samaritans in the preaching of the gospel.

Verse 7 tells about his authenticating signs.

**READ 8:7**

Philip's ability to perform these miraculous signs, like Stephen's, was as a result of having had hands laid upon him by the apostles.

Verse seven provides some examples of what these signs were.

**First**, there were those people with demonic problems.

**Second**, in addition to those with demonic problems, there were people with physical problems; and these were also healed.

Once again a clear distinction is made between demonic problems and physical ailments.

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¹ Logos 2.0, New Bible Dictionary, article -- Samaria, Logos 2.0, Harper’s Bible Dictionary, article -- Samaria
² The Moody Atlas of Bible Lands, pg. 176
Verse eight gives the result.

**READ 8:8**

At this point another man enters the picture, Simon the Sorcerer.

Verses 9-11 describe the deception that Simon was guilty of, with verse nine introducing the man and his claims.

**B. The Story of Simon the Sorcerer - 8:9-13**

**READ 8:9**

The verse states that Simon was practicing sorcery.

The Greek word for *sorcery* means the practice of magic.³

Simon was just one of many who practiced magic in those days.

He wasn’t a very humble man.

He promoted himself quite blatantly.

Verses 10-11 describe the response of the Samaritans.

**READ 8:10-11**

They were all deceived by his counterfeit miracles.

This included all classes of society.

They also believed Simon's claims to be *someone great*.

Because they believed they followed him around from miracle service to miracle service, from revival to revival.

This context is the origin of the word "simony."

Simony means "to traffic in sacred things."⁴

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³ Strong’s Greek and Hebrew Lexicon, entry number 3096
It originated with Simon, who used his religious magical abilities to become wealthy by claiming to be the "great power of God" personified.

Verse 12 reports on the response of the Samaritans to Philip's preaching (8:12).

**READ 8:12**

The Samaritans recognized that the power of Philip was greater than that of Simon; and so, by turning to Philip they turned away from Simon the magician.

Philip preached *good news* in two ways.

**First**, he preached *concerning the kingdom of God*.

That meant that Philip proclaimed the program of the Kingdom of God to these Samaritans.

This was necessary because the Samaritans believed that the Millennial Kingdom would be a Samaritan kingdom.

It was important to convey to these Samaritan people that it was going to be a Jewish Kingdom, not a Samaritan kingdom.

*Yeshua* had to do this with the Samaritan woman of John 4:27, when He conveyed to her that salvation was not of the Samaritans, but of the Jews.

The Kingdom of God was going to be a Jewish kingdom, not a Samaritan one.

Jerusalem, not Mount Gerizim, will be the capital of this kingdom.

Now why did the Samaritans believe what they believed?

They had their origin in II Kings 17:24-33.

The Northern Jewish kingdom Israel had been overrun by the Assyrians.
The Assyrians then deported the population and brought in a new population of people.

A new race was brought into the area previously inhabited by Jews of the Kingdom of Israel.

A hybrid religion, then developed, in that they worshipped the one true God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of Israel.

But they also worshipped the foreign gods they brought with them from wherever they themselves originated.

Because of this hybrid religion, when they wanted to join the Jews in rebuilding the Temple, they were not allowed to do so (Ezra 4:1-4).

In retaliation, they built their own temple on Mount Gerizim.

Later, a famous Samaritan, Sanballat, opposed the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem (Neh. 6:1-19).

The animosity between the Samaritans and the Jews developed to the point, in New Testament times, where the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans (John 4:9).

So now, it was essential for the Samaritans to realize that the Kingdom of God will be a Jewish kingdom and not a Samaritan kingdom; and the capital will be Jerusalem, not Mount Gerizim.

The second thing Philip proclaimed, as part of the good tidings, was the name of Yeshua the Messiah.

It was necessary for them to receive individual salvation.

Peter stated in 4:12 that there is no other name given under heaven by which anyone can be saved, except this name.

They had to get their theology correct about the Kingdom of God, and they had to correctly identify who the Messiah is; He is Messiah Yeshua of Nazareth.

This is what they finally believed, and because they believed, they were baptized, both men and women.

Verse 13 reports on the response by Simon the sorcerer:
READ 8:13

The picture is of Simon sticking closely to Philip, to find out the secret of his power.

The question arises: What does it mean when it says that "Simon believed?"

Was Simon saved?

Luke did not specify this clearly, so it is difficult to be dogmatic.

But several facts suggest that Simon probably was not born again:

(1) The verb “believe” (pisteuoµ) does not always refer to saving faith.

Simon’s faith could have been like that of the demons in James 2:19, merely intellectual assent.

(2) Furthermore, faith based on signs is not a trustworthy faith (cf. John 2:23-25; 4:48).

(3) In addition, Luke never stated that Simon received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17-18).

(4) Simon continued to have a self-centered interest in the display of miraculous power (vv. 18-19).

The more Simon watched the signs and miracles performed by Philip, the more the wonder of it all grew in his mind.

Eventually, a desire developed within him to be able to do the same.

But, what he believed was not saving faith.

To believe that Yeshua was that "great power of God" is not enough to save anyone.

There must be faith in the substitutionary death and resurrection of Yeshua.

One must believe that He died as our substitute; and one must trust what Yeshua did on the cross for our salvation, and nothing else.
Verses 20-22 will clearly show that Simon's heart was not right.

There was something altogether lacking in his heart.

Furthermore, the context shows that Simon's faith was grounded in miracles rather than in the name of Yeshua.

His faith was in the miracle, not in the Person.

What resulted was amazement, not holiness.

Faith grounded in miracles alone is not genuine saving faith.

That is why, later, he was told to repent (8:22).

The fact that Peter told him to repent implies clearly that he was not saved to begin with.

He never had salvation-repentance.

The word "repent" throughout the New Testament is generally used of unbelievers.

Verse 20 states that he was in danger of "perishing."

This is the same word as is used of unbelievers in John 3:16.

Those who do not believe are in danger of perishing; but those who believe will not perish.

The fact that Simon was still in danger of perishing, indicates that he did not have saving faith.

Furthermore, that description of him given by Peter in verse 23, is a description of a man who is still lost.

Simon's fear of God and Yeshua was materialistically oriented.

While he had faith in the miracles, and came to believe that Yeshua was that great power of God, he did not have saving faith.

Still one cannot be dogmatic on this point.
Some commentators think that he was a saved by immature individual.

I don’t think that is too likely, however, the Lord knows those who are His (2 Tim. 2:19).[^5]

Verse 14 reports on the response of the Jerusalem Church to the news about the evangelization of the Samaritans.

C. **The Authentication by the Apostles - 8:14-25**

1. **Peter and the Keys of the Kingdom - 8:14-17**

**READ 8:14**

The Apostles, of course, would be concerned.

They had apostolic authority over the church; and now this is a new development.

Jerusalem was the city the Samaritans despised.

Now the Church of Jerusalem is required to authenticate the validity of the Church of Samaria.

When the apostles heard that the Samaritans had received the Word of God, they sent to Samaria two of their number, Peter and John.

This was necessary for three reasons.

**First,** so that Samaritan salvation could be authenticated by apostolic authority.

**Second,** because Peter had the "keys to the kingdom."

Peter had to open the gospel “door,” so to speak to the Samaritans.

**Third,** John was sent so that in the mouth of two witnesses the matter could be established.

This was also a personal lesson for John.

Back in Luke 9:54 he, along with his brother James, had wanted an unnamed Samaritan village destroyed.

There had to be a change of heart on John's part as he went down to Samaria with Peter in order to authenticate the Samaritan's salvation.

This is the last mention of John the Apostle in the Book of Acts.

John does not play any major role in this book, and he is only mentioned here in conjunction with Peter.

The main purpose of the Book of Acts is to tell the stories of Peter and Paul.

The other apostles, like John, are only mentioned as they come into contact with either Peter or Paul.

Verses 15-16 reveal the problem regarding Samaritan salvation.

READ 8:15-16

As yet, no Samaritan believer had been baptized by the Holy Spirit.

When they arrived, these two apostles prayed specifically that they might receive the Acts 1:5 baptism of the Spirit.

At this point, the Holy Spirit had not baptized any of these Samaritan believers.

He had come upon the Jews, but not yet upon the Samaritans.

The reason was that Messiah had given the "keys of the kingdom" to Peter.

It was up to Peter to allow any new group in.

Once Peter had opened the door to any new group, then it stayed open to that group.

There were three main groupings of humanity in New Testament times; Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles.

In Acts two, Peter opened the door for the Jews, and it stayed open for them from then on.
Now, in Acts eight, Peter will open the door for the Samaritans; and from then it will stay open for them.

Later, in Acts ten, Peter will open the door for the Gentiles.

While the Samaritans had been baptized by water into the name of the Lord Yeshua, they had not yet been baptized by the Holy Spirit.

They had believed and they were saved, for the Spirit did regenerate them.

They were in a transition position.

They were in the same position as the Old Testament saint, saved by faith but not in the body of the Messiah.

They had yet to be placed into the body of the Messiah, because the “door” had not been opened, Peter had not yet turned the key.

They were baptized in water and received Christian baptism; but they had not yet been baptized by the Holy Spirit.

It is by means of the baptism of the Spirit that one enters into the Body of Messiah; and Peter had the keys.

So this is a temporary, transitional state for them.

Finally, in verse 17, they did receive the baptism ministry of the Spirit.

READ 8:17

The means of them receiving Spirit-baptism was by the laying on of the hands of the apostles; especially Peter.

It would have been noted by the Samaritans that those who were laying hands on them were Jewish apostles, not Hellenistic Jews like Philip.

These were Judean Jews, Jews of Judah and Galilee.

These were Jewish apostles from despised Jerusalem, but it took the laying on of their hands before the Samaritans received the Spirit.
Then and only then did receive Spirit-baptism.

Peter had opened the door for these Samaritans, and Spirit baptism was obviously visible in some way.

But exactly how it was manifest, the verse does not state.

In the light of what happened in chapters two and ten, what was probably visible was the gift of tongues, or the speaking in languages.

This is by no means certain, but because the text implies it was something visible, it would indicate just that.

Since many people try to build a doctrine of the Holy Spirit from these historical incidents, it might be wise to note the differences in the order by which the baptism of the Holy Spirit was received.

The Jewish order was: first, repentance; second, water-baptism; third, Spirit-baptism.

The Samaritan order was: first, they believed; second, they received water-baptism; third, the laying of the hand of the apostles from Jerusalem; and, fourth, Spirit-baptism.

In chapter two, water-baptism followed Spirit-baptism.

In chapter eight, water-baptism preceded Spirit-baptism.

Also, there was the laying on of the apostles' hands in chapter eight, but no laying on of anyone's hands in chapter two.

There was no consistent pattern in the Book of Acts, so you cannot take an historical incident and make a theology out of it.

And what about tongues in Acts eight?

Let us ask the same six questions here as we did in chapter two, and answer them.

First, who received the gift of the Spirit? **Answer:** Believers in Samaria.

Second, what nationality were they? **Answer:** Samaritans who, historically, did not like Jews.
They were antagonistic to Jerusalem and Judaism.

They went through the five Books of Moses and deleted any possible reference to Jerusalem, like Mount Moriah, and replaced it with "Mount Gerizim."

As Luke 9:51-53 shows, they often attacked and killed Jews trying to get to Jerusalem through Samaria.

This was the reason Galilean Jews often had to detour via Perea in order to bypass Samaria.

Third, what were the circumstances? **Answer:** Philip came to Samaria and preached to the Samaritans, who believed and were saved.

But this raised some questions among the Jerusalem apostles, who had the old Samaritan antagonism in mind.

So Peter and John were sent to investigate and authenticate these reports.

Fourth, what was the means? **Answer:** Spirit-baptism came in some visible way by means of the laying on of Peter and John's hands.

The baptism of the Spirit came through the apostles from Jerusalem.

Fifth, what was the purpose? **Answer:** The purpose was authentication.

For the Jerusalem apostles, it authenticated Samaritan salvation; it proved Samaritans were savable.

For the Samaritans, it authenticated apostolic authority, because they received Spirit-baptism by the laying on of hands by Jewish apostles from Jerusalem.

That meant they were not to set up a separate rival Samaritan church, as they had set up a separate rival Samaritan temple.

Sixth, what were the results? **Answer:** The Samaritans did receive Spirit-baptism, and entered the Body of Messiah.

No rival separate church was set up.

Now we come to verses 18-24.
These verses contain the continuing story of Simon the Sorcerer; beginning in verses 18-19 with Simon's request.

Verse 18 relates what it was Simon saw, which led to his request.

2. Simon the Sorcerer - 8:18-24

READ 8:18

He saw that the laying on of the hands of the apostles resulted in Spirit-baptism, and possibly speaking in tongues.

The Holy Spirit had unquestionably been given through the laying on of the apostles hands, so Simon offered the apostles money.

He wanted to have this apostolic authority and apostolic power as well.

This is how the word "simony" came into the English language.

It comes from this man's name, and "simony" means the buying and selling of things religious or sacred, such as an ecclesiastical office.

In verse 19 he makes his request.

READ 8:19

Earlier in this chapter he had been demoted from being "the power of God which is called Great," and now he wants to be reinstated.

He saw spiritual functions as a marketable commodity, and suggested the apostles engage in "simony," or a religious business deal.

He wanted apostolic authority and apostolic power.

Verses 20-23 report on Peter's rebuke.

READ 8:20

This comment clearly implies that Simon was in danger of perishing, and so, was not a saved man.
He was still on the road to spiritual destruction.

This statement also implies a lack of faith on Simon's part, because his view of God was materialistic.

Because there was a lack of faith, he was still an unsaved man.

Peter describes Simon's heart (8:21).

**READ 8:21**

Because his heart was *not right before God*, it meant he had no righteousness.

This also implies that Simon did not have saving faith.

Peter then spelled out Simon's need (8:22).

**READ 8:22**

The word "repent" is used throughout the Book of Acts for salvation repentance, and this again shows that Simon lacked saving faith.

He was to repent of *this wickedness*; this specific type of wickedness.

He was to repent of his materialistic view of God; he was to repent from the idea that the gift of the Holy Spirit could be purchased with money.

Then Peter continued, “Perhaps he will forgive you.”

"Perhaps" does not imply that there is any reluctance on God's part to forgive, for God is not reluctant to forgive.

"Perhaps" refers to Simon's repentance.

The word is used, because Peter had no way of knowing if Simon would or would not repent.

If he did repent, then he would be forgiven.

---

Then, in verse 23, Peter declared Simon's problem.

**READ 8:23**

He described Simon's inner state.

This appears to be an unregenerate state.

This once again implies that Simon was not a real believer.

Peter describes his state as poisonous and enslaved.

At this point we are told about Simon's response (8:24).

**READ 8:24**

Because Simon's offer was described by Peter as being poison, Simon's response was: *Pray for me.*

However, all he wanted was to escape the penalty for his sins.

He hoped that by praying for him, Peter could somehow avert it.

Simon does not personally enter into prayer and he does not seem to be dealing with the issue of personal sin.

He only seems to be interested in avoiding a penalty.

Verse 25 brings the incident to a close.

3. **Continuation of Evangelization of Samaria - 8:25**

**READ 8:25**

The apostles, after seeing that the Samaritans did indeed receive the Holy Spirit, authenticated their salvation.

Peter had now used the keys of the kingdom to open the door to the Samaritans, and from now on, the door stayed open for them.
They did some further preaching in the same city where Philip had preached.

Then they returned to Jerusalem to give their report and their verdict.

On the way back to Jerusalem, they preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

As they traveled, they continued to evangelize the Samaritans beyond what Philip had done.

This in itself showed apostolic approval of preaching the gospel to the Samaritans.

The problem of the barrier between them had now been resolved and the Samaritan believers were one with Jewish believers.

In verse 26, Philip received a new commission.

II. THE WITNESS IN JUDEA - 8:26-40

A. The Story of the Ethiopian Eunuch - 8:26-39

READ 8:26

An angel of the Lord spoke to him, and so he received a divine, special commission.

In verse 27a, Philip obeyed.

READ 8:27

Although he already had a successful ministry in Samaria, it did not mean he had to stay there.

He was willing to go on to a new ministry if God so led; and God was so leading him at this point.

Verse 27b introduced the Ethiopian man.

Ancient Ethiopia is what is now known as Nubia.
It extended from the first cataract on the River Nile, which is Aswan today, to the city of Khartoum.\textsuperscript{7}

This is just north of modern Ethiopia.

It is not clearly noted whether this man was a Jew, or a proselyte to Judaism.

Most likely he was a proselyte, but he may have been a Jew of the Diaspora.

The text states that he was \textit{a eunuch}.

By definition a eunuch is: A castrated man employed as a harem attendant or as a functionary in certain Asian courts.\textsuperscript{8}

Eunuchs were often employed by Oriental rulers in positions of high office.

They were also male servants of female dignitaries, but only placed in such positions after being castrated.

According to Deuteronomy 23:1, someone who was a eunuch could not enter into the assembly of The LORD.

So he was not allowed to become a full proselyte.

He was limited to becoming only a "proselyte of the gate."

He was a God-fearer, but not a full proselyte.

But this was a man of great authority.

Politically, he was a highly influential official under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians.

The name \textit{Candace} was not a proper name, but the title of the Queen of Ethiopia;\textsuperscript{9} much like the word "Kaiser" was the title of the king of Germany, and "Czar" a title of the king of Russia.

\textsuperscript{7} Logos 2.0, New Bible Dictionary, article Ethiopia, Logos 2.0, Harper’s Bible Dictionary, article -- Ethiopia

\textsuperscript{8} The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition is licensed from Houghton Mifflin Company. Copyright © 1992 by Houghton Mifflin Company. All rights reserved.

Because the king of Ethiopia was considered to be a child of the sun, and therefore too sacred a person to be involved with secular functions of the royal court, all such duties fell to the Queen Mother, who had the title of Candace.

As a result, she was the real power behind the throne.

This man was in charge of her treasure, which means he held one of the highest governmental positions.

His influence in Ethiopia would therefore have been very considerable.

He was the Royal Treasurer, and he had come to Jerusalem to worship.

This had been a private, religious visit, not a state visit.

Verse 28 gives the occasion: he was returning to Ethiopia, sitting in his chariot.

**READ 8:28**

His worship in Jerusalem had been completed, and because he held such a high governmental position, he had the benefit of a royal escort.

While he and his escort were on the way back to Ethiopia, he was reading the prophet Isaiah.

If he was indeed a proselyte, he may have been reading the Greek Septuagint version, which he would have been able to understand.

In verse 29, the Holy Spirit gave Philip his commission.

**READ 8:29**

Earlier it has been an angel who told Philip to do this; but now the Spirit spoke directly to Philip.

He was told, literally, to "glue himself" to this chariot.\(^{10}\)

In verse 30, Philip obeyed.

\(^{10}\) Word Pictures in the New Testament, The Kingdom Christian Scholar Library
READ 8:30

He ran to meet the chariot, showing instant obedience.

He showed no reluctance in obeying the Holy Spirit.

The man was reading Isaiah the prophet aloud, which was a common Oriental practice.

This shows he was not driving the chariot himself; he had a charioteer to do the driving.

When Philip asked him, "Do you understand what you are reading?" he did not mean the meaning of the words, but of Whom the words spoke.

In verse 31, the Ethiopian responded.

READ 8:31

He saw his need for someone to interpret the passage to him, so he invited Philip into the chariot to do so.

According to verses 32-33, he was specifically reading Isaiah 53:7-8.

READ 8:32-33

Isaiah 53:7-8 is an example of literal prophecy plus literal fulfillment.

In verse 34, the Ethiopian raised a question concerning the subject of the passage:

READ 8:34

In verse 35, Philip began to witness.

READ 8:35

The word began shows that Philip also used other Scriptures besides Isaiah 53 to proclaim the gospel to the Ethiopian.
Philip began in Isaiah 53 and then moved onto other Messianic prophecies found in the book of Isaiah, perhaps Isa. 7:14 or chapter 11 of Isaiah.

We don’t know where he went but we do know that he skillfully and clearly taught about Yeshua out of the book of Isaiah.

In verses 36-37 came the eunuch's conversion.

**READ 8:36-37**

As they were still traveling along, they came to a body of water.

He now became a believer and as a result he wanted to make a public confession regarding what he believed.

Because he believed, he now wanted to be baptized, immersed

In some of your Bibles verse 37 is missing.

There is doubt regarding the authenticity of verse 37.

It appears in various forms only in younger manuscripts dating from the 6th century and later.\(^{11}\)

In verse 38 he is immersed.

**READ 8:38**

He told his driver to stop and both he and Philip went down into the water.

In verse 39, the two men were separated.

**READ 8:39**

They came up "from the midst of the water," and the Spirit took Philip away.

He caught him away suddenly and miraculously; the same way Paul was "caught up" into Heaven in II Corinthians 12:2, where the same Greek word is used.  

In fact, the same word is used of the Rapture of the Church in I Thessalonians 4:17.

Suddenly, Philip was raptured; not to heaven, but somewhere away from the Ethiopian eunuch.

But he went back to Ethiopia rejoicing, and helped to bring the gospel to his home country.

B. The Evangelization of the Coastal Plain - 8:40

The first place where Philip was found after being raptured away from the eunuch was Azotus.

This was the Greek name for Ashdod.

That is where the Holy Spirit dropped him off after picking him up near Gaza.

As he passed through the cities of the coastal plain, he preached the gospel throughout the Philistine Plain and the Sharon Plain.

Finally he came to Caesarea, where he made his home.

Caesarea was the headquarters of the Procurator.

It was the Roman capital of Judaea.

Here Philip settled down, for we find him there many years later in Acts 21:8-9.

Because of Philip's movement, Caesarea became the new center of Judean Hellenistic Christianity until A.D. 66, when the leaders emigrated out of the city to the Province of Asia.

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I. THE REVELATION ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS - 9:1-9

Verses 1-2 deal with the purpose of the journey to Damascus, with verse one identifying who the instigator was: Saul.

READ 9:1-2

Actually, 9:1 is a continuation of 8:1-3:

And Saul was there, giving approval to his death.\(^1\)

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.\(^2\) Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him.\(^3\) But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.\(^2\)

Where 8:1-3 left off, 9:1 picks up.

It is a continuation of that same persecution.

Some time had now elapsed since the death of Stephen; but the zeal of the persecutor, Saul or Paul, increased with his successes.

Luke writes he was \textit{breathing} this.

The Greek word means "breathing in" or "inhaling."

In other words, his threatening and slaughter had come to be the very breath that Saul breathed.\(^3\)

As Paul stated, he went to the High Priest who was a Sadducee.

Paul was a Pharisee, showing that now there was a political and religious unity against Jewish believers.

\(^3\)Word Pictures in the New Testament, The Kingdom Christian Scholar Library
This was a combined Pharisaic and Sadducean conspiracy.

Who this High Priest was is not certain for it depends on which year this actually occurred.

If it was AD, 35, the High Priest was Caiaphas.

If it was A.D. 36, the High Priest was Jonathan.

If it was A.D. 37, the High Priest was Theopholis.\(^4\)

In verse two, the High Priest gave to Saul letters of authority.

Paul asked for these letters of the High Priest as a favor to himself.\(^5\)

The Greek word for "letter" is the origin of the English word "epistle."

But the question is: how could the High Priest in Jerusalem give Paul epistles or letters that would give him authority over Jewish believers in far away Damascus?

The answer lies in historical sources from the biblical period.

According to I Maccabees 15:20-24, a treaty was made between Rome and the Jewish High Priest giving the Jewish High Priest the right of extradition in religious cases.

Furthermore, both Julius Caesar and Augustus Caesar granted to the High Priest and the Sanhedrin jurisdiction over Jews in foreign cities.\(^6\)

This authority was not always recognized in every local community outside of Judea, but Damascus recognized this authority.

Paul himself said that he got his authority from the chief priests and the Sanhedrin (26:11), so these letters gave him authority over Jewish believers in Damascus, authority Damascus authorities would apparently recognized.

He went toward Damascus because many of the Jewish believers that fled Jerusalem went to Damascus in order to be outside the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin.

Saul's purpose was to bring them back under the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin.

At this time, Damascus may have been under King Aretus of Arabia, who was a tributary to Rome, and therefore might grant Paul his request.

At this time, Damascus had a total Jewish population of 16,000 Jews.

But, specifically, these letters were not addressed to King Aretus but to the synagogues.

He was hoping to get the support from the local synagogues, especially if King Aretus proved to be uncooperative.

Furthermore, many of these Jewish believers were in the synagogues.

Therefore, Paul would need the support of the synagogues to take these Jewish believers into custody.

Turn your attention for a moment to that phrase, “The Way.”

*The Way* was a common early name for the new faith found six times in the Book of Acts: 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22.

The most common name for the new faith was not "Christianity," or "Messianism," but *The Way*.

This had a very Jewish origin because the term "Way" emphasizes a Jewish definition of life.

For example, Isaiah 40:3 speaks of "the way" of the Lord.

Psalm 1:6 speaks of "the way" of the righteous and "the way" of the wicked.

"Way" describes a Jewish form of lifestyle.

For Rabbinic Judaism it is known as *Halachah*.

In the case of the Jewish believers, they followed "the Way" of Yeshua the Messiah.
It was these followers of "the Way" that Paul came to arrest.

This included both men and women, for Paul made no sexual distinctions in his persecutions.

Three times men and women are mentioned as being the objects of Paul's persecution: 8:3; 9:2; 22:4.

Now that Paul had these letters, he was able to proceed towards Damascus.

He had been greatly successful in his persecutions against the body of Jewish believers in Jerusalem.

He had persecuted many, he had jailed many, and according to his own statements, he even killed many.

But now he was going to try to carry his success outside the borders of the land.

He intended to make the Jewish believers of Damascus the first victims of the Diaspora.

But, of course, God was about to intervene.

Verses 3-6 deal with the revelation from heaven.

READ 9:3

Saul was very close to Damascus, he was within view or sight of Damascus.

As he came, closer to the city limits, at that critical point God began His work of intervention.

In verse 3b came the revelation of the Shechinah Glory.

It came suddenly.

Suddenly there was a dramatic intervention that stopped the plan and the progress of Saul.

This light shone round about him.
The Greek word means the light "flashed," like a flash of lightening round about him.

Verse 4a records Saul's response:

**READ 9:4**

He fell upon the earth for he immediately recognized that it was a divine revelation that was taking place.

This was a typical Jewish response when a Jew was confronted with a revelation of God's presence.

In verse 4b, he heard what we Jews call a *bat kol*, a voice from heaven.

He heard a voice saying *Saul, Saul.*

The way the name reads in the Greek text, it is obvious that the voice came to him in the Hebrew language.

Instead of using the regular Greek form for "Saul" which is *Saulos*, the text uses the term *Shaul*.

It is obvious that Paul was addressed in Hebrew; it was not *Saulos, Saulos*, the Greek form, but *Shaul, Shaul*, the Hebrew form.

The same Hebrew form of the name is found in the other two accounts of his salvation: 22:7; 26:14.

The doubling of his name, "Saul, Saul," was for emphasis, to call special attention too.

This, too, is also in the Old Testament tradition, as God said "Abraham, Abraham," "Moses, Moses," "Samuel, Samuel."

God will double a name to call special attention, as He did here.

Having caught Saul's attention, He asked him a question: “Why do you persecute me?”

---

Although Paul was not actively persecuting Yeshua personally (there is no record of Yeshua and Paul ever meeting during His earthly sojourn), yet, in persecuting the believers Saul was persecuting Yeshua.

To persecute the Body is to persecute the Head.

Verse 5a reveals Saul's response:

**READ 9:5**

This was a valid question for him, and a real surprise to Paul who did not think he was persecuting a heavenly being.

When Paul called him Lord, it meant in the sense of "sir."

At this point, Paul did not recognize Yeshua as Lord.

At this point, he didn’t even know who the speaker was.

Then Yeshua identified Himself

That is a clear identification: "Since you are persecuting one of my followers, then you are persecuting Me."

This is how closely Yeshua identifies with each one of us.

Paul then received a command (9:6).

**READ 9:6**

He was to arise from his prostrate position and to enter the city and wait.

Wait until someone came to him and told him what he had to do next.

Verse 7 records the reaction of the others who were with Paul.

**READ 9:7**

Those concerned were the men that journeyed with Paul.
They stood there speechless and overwhelmed.

According to this verse, they did hear the voice.

But in 22:9, it states they did not hear the voice.

Some claim that this must be a contradiction between the two accounts.

But there is no contradiction if one understands the original Greek text.

In 9:7, the word voice is used with the genitive case.

In 22:9 it is used with the accusative case.

To hear the "voice" with a genitive simply means to hear a sound.

To hear with the accusative, means to hear with understanding.

The point is that they did hear a sound; they heard something; but they could not understand the words.⁸

Only Paul actually understood the articulated words.

Furthermore, they did not see anyone.

They did see the light, but they saw no figure, but Paul did see both.

Having seen the resurrected Messiah became the basis of his receiving the gift of apostleship, that second category of apostleship.

Verses 8-9 give the result and the response of Saul.

**READ 9:8-9**

When he arose, his eyes were opened but he saw nothing.

He had been blinded by the Shechinah Glory light.

It was the light that blinded him according to his own testimony later in 22:11.

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⁸ Logos 2.0, Bible Knowledge Commentary
Earlier he was spiritually blind, but he had physical sight; now he had spiritual sight, but was physically blind.

He had spiritual light, but was now in physical darkness.

But the blindness proved that something had happened to Paul.

It was not an hallucination.

People who have hallucinations do not go blind from those hallucinations.

Because he was now blind, he had to be lead by the hand and brought into Damascus.

He was supposed to arrive as a persecutor; but he arrived believing in the Messiahship of Yeshua.

In fact, he himself later in this chapter will be forced to flee Damascus because of persecution.

He will be persecuted because of his faith in the Messiahship of Yeshua.

He was brought to Damascus and, for the next three days, he was blind.

Those three days proved to be a period of waiting, a period of testing, a period of meditation.

As Paul meditated, he knew that circumstances were about to change the whole course of his life.

During these three days without sight he did not eat, he did not drink; these three days were days of fasting.

It was a three day period of religious, spiritual separation for the purpose of reflection and for the purpose of meditation.

The account of Ananias of Damascus begins in verse ten with the "call" of Ananias.

II. ANANIAS OF DAMASCUS - 9:10-19a

READ 9:10
Damascus was a free city under Rome and a member of the Decapolis, one of the ten Greek cities.

It was, at this time, under King Aretus IV (II Cor. 11:32), the king of the Nabateans from 9 BC until A.D. 40.9

Aretus was the father-in-law to Herod Antipas.

It was the daughter of Aretus that Antipas divorced in order to marry Herodias.

Herodias was the one who instigated the beheading of John the Baptist.

The Church by then had already spread as far as Damascus.

Ananias was among the members of that Congregation.

The name Ananias comes from the Hebrew Chananyah which means "The LORD is gracious."

The LORD’s message came to him in a vision.

God called Ananias by name and Ananias responded probably using the Hebrew, Hineni, meaning "Here am I."

The commission is given in verses 11 and 12.

**READ 9:11-12**

To begin with, he was told where to go to Straight street.

The Greek word for street refers to the narrow alleys or lanes that were found between the houses.

The name of this particular street was called Straight because most city lanes were crooked.

This one ran a straight line from the eastern gate of the city to the western gate of the city.

Along that street Ananias was to walk, inquiring: *Where is the house of Judas?*

---

9 Logos 2.0, New Bible Dictionary, article Damascus
Who *Judas* was is unclear.

It is unknown if he was a believer or unbeliever.

Probably he was an unbeliever since Paul was taken there.

That may have been his original destination where he would stay upon arrival in Damascus.

But it was a known house, so Ananias knew that by asking for the house someone could point it out to him.

He was then to inquire for one named Saul, a man of Tarsus, who at this point was praying.

Ananias is then told what to do (9:12).

By this time, Paul already had a vision while he was praying.

In this vision he saw a man by the name of Ananias coming in.

Even the name of Ananias had already been revealed to Paul.

Though he was blind, Paul was still capable of seeing a vision.

In this vision, Ananias laid hands on Paul.

That would be the means of his healing.

That is what Ananias was to do.

So Ananias received a special appointment for this special job.

By the hands of Ananias Paul would receive his sight which he lost on the road to Damascus.

In other words, Ananias was told to fulfill the vision that Paul just had.

However, in verses 13-14, Ananias issued an objection, with verse 13 pointing out Saul's work in Jerusalem.
READ 9:13

Paul's reputation had by this time spread as far as Damascus.

Carried, probably, by many of the ones who had fled Judea from the persecution and came to Damascus.

In verse 14, Ananias pointed out Saul's purpose for coming to Damascus.

READ 9:14

Even the fact that Saul received letters of authority was known by the believers in Damascus.

They knew that Saul had come for the purpose of arresting Jewish believers.

Verses 15-16 provide God's response.

Verse 15 spells out Paul's calling: to be an apostle of the Gentiles.

READ 9:15

God said go; in other words, fulfill your own commission, just as Paul would fulfill his commission.

The reason is: literally -- he is a vessel of choice.

This is a Hebrewism indicating that the LORD was speaking in Hebrew.

God chose Paul before Paul chose Yeshua.

God chose him to bear His name.

He would represent the very character and nature of God.

God chose him to be a witness before the Gentiles.

That became the chief element of his call.

Paul's key calling was to be the apostle to the Gentiles.
This was brought out twice in his own epistles: Romans 11:11-14 and Ephesians 2:11-3:6.

The Gentiles will not be the only ones to whom Paul will testify.

Second, he is called upon to testify to kings.

It is this calling that will ultimately bring Paul to Rome.

He will bring testimony to Aretus IV, to Herod Agrippa II, and to Caesar (Nero).

Third, he’s called to the children of Israel.

Paul will always go to the Jew first and therefore reflect this aspect of his call.

His calling was three fold; to bear the gospel to the Gentiles, to kings and to the people of Israel.

Then, in verse 16, Yeshua predicted the future sufferings of Saul.

**READ 9:16**

This is a warning that he must suffer.

This suffering will cover his whole career.

He has caused suffering among Jewish believers.

Now he will experience suffering because he is a Jewish believer.

This statement includes all kinds of sufferings.

The fulfillment of this is well recorded in II Corinthians 11:22-23.

Verse 17 deals with the obedience of Ananias to the commission he had received.

**READ 9:17**

Ananias departed and entered into the house, and laid his hands on Saul and said: *Brother Saul.*
Ananias used the Hebrew term Shaul.

This shows he addressed Saul in Hebrew, not in Greek.

The fact that Ananias now called him brother shows that Ananias now accepted Paul as a fellow believer.

He told Paul: the Lord, Yeshua appeared unto you.

The Lord Yeshua was seen by Paul.

Paul did see the resurrected Messiah; therefore he qualified to be an apostle.

This same Yeshua had now sent Ananias.

Paul now clearly saw spiritually, soon he shall see again physically.

Then Ananias added: be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Paul was already regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

He was already baptized by the Holy Spirit by this time, but now he was to be filled or controlled by the Holy Spirit.

This filling by the Spirit would give him the power to fulfill the commission he was just given.

Verses 18-19a describe Paul's healing and actions.

The healing is in verse 18a.

**READ 9:18-19**

Something suddenly fell off of Paul’s eyes

Luke does not say that there actually were scales that fell from his eyes, but that this is the way that Paul was able to describe the what happened.10

Paul received his sight, and the healing was total.

In verse 18b, the healing was followed by the baptism.

---

He arose immediately and was baptized by Ananias.

He was now identified with the new faith.

He identified himself with the death and the burial and the resurrection of Yeshua.

In verse 19a, he took food and so broke his fast and was strengthened.

Verse 19b describes the new fellowship Paul experienced.

Those whom he came to persecute he was now living with.

Apparently, he had to leave the house of Judas because Judas was not a believer and now made his home with the fellow believers.

He was now their guest.

We now come to description of the preaching of Saul.

III. THE PREACHING OF SAUL/PAUL - 9:20-22

Verse 20 relates his message.

READ 9:20

Damascus had many synagogues, and in these many he proclaimed the gospel.

He began to preach; his topic was Yeshua, and the content was that Yeshua is the Son of God.

Son of God is a Messianic title.\(^1\)

Verse 21 records the response of the Jewish community.

\(^1\) Logos 2.0, Harper’s Bible Dictionary, article -- Son of God -- It is a matter of dispute whether the term ‘Son of God’ was already current in pre-Christian Judaism as a messianic title as Mark 14:61 would seem to suggest. But in view of the discovery of Psalm 2:7 in a messianic application in the Dead Sea Scrolls (4QFlor. 10-14), it is probably safe to conclude that it was just coming into use in this context during the period of Christian origins.
They were "astonished."

They were dumbfounded, shocked, dismayed at this radical reversal in Saul, the persecutor.

Paul's persecution of Jewish believers in Jerusalem was violent and was very well-known.

He had come to Damascus for the intent to do the same thing to Jewish believers in Damascus.

Now he was staying with Jewish believers and proclaiming the name of Yeshua himself.

Verse 22 describes Paul's ministry.

READ 9:22

He received power.

There was a progressive increase in strength as opposition grew.

He was able to confound the Jews that dwelled in Damascus.

The more Saul preached, the more the Jews in Damascus were confused.

During all this preaching, he kept on proving that Yeshua was the Messiah.

It is probably at this point, after the events of verse 22, that he left Damascus to go to Arabia as recorded by Galatians 1:15-17.

Arabia was then called Nabatea.

Damascus was the principal city of Nabatea.

The statement that Paul went to Arabia does not mean that Paul went all the way to the Saudi Arabian peninsula.
All he had to do was go into the wilderness that is just beyond Damascus known as Nabatea.

We now come to the conspiracy that arose against Paul.

Verse 23 records the plot.

IV. THE CONSPIRACY - 9:23-25

READ 9:23-24

Notice that the text says that “after many days had gone by.”

The Greek word used here refers to a long time; it was a period of about three years.\(^\text{12}\)

What is now being described is what happened after he returned to Damascus from Arabia.

At that point *the Jews took counsel together to kill him.*

This was the first of many such conspiracies against Paul.

But in verse 24A, the plot became known to Saul and Saul was able to use special caution.

They kept on watching the city gates day and night hoping for an opportunity to see Paul either coming or going, and get him at that point.

According to II Corinthians 11:32, the conspiracy included the ethnarch of Aretas IV.

Not Aretas himself, but his Governor.

The conspirators obtained the consent of the Ethnarch and had him appoint some of them guards at the gates of the city.

In verse 25, Paul escaped.

**READ 9:25**

---

These followers were Paul's disciples, showing that Paul's preaching did bear fruit; he already had a number of disciples.

At nighttime they let him down through the wall by means of a basket.

According to II Corinthians 11:33, it was through a window which opened into a home on the inside of the wall.

Also according to II Corinthians 11:33, Paul saw this event as something shameful.\(^13\)

The context of II Corinthians 11:33 is that of boasting in his weaknesses.

But Paul escaped and made it to Jerusalem.

Verse 26 deals with the response of the saints when he returned to Jerusalem.

V. THE RETURN TO JERUSALEM - 9:26-30

READ 9:26

When he came back to Jerusalem, the first time back since he was saved (he had left three years earlier), he tried to join himself to the disciples and to become a member of the Church at Jerusalem.

He made no effort to make contact with the Sanhedrin.

But the Jewish believers were all afraid of him.

They kept on fearing him because many had previously suffered at his hand.

Some had lost relatives because of Saul.

Perhaps Paul was merely a plant by the Sanhedrin?

They did hear of his conversion, but they had a hard time believing it.

This is the period recorded by Galatians 1:18-20.

In verse 27 came the intervention of Barnabas.

\(^{13}\) Logos 2.0, Harper’s Bible Commentary
READ 9:27

_Barnabas_ means "a son of exhortation" or "a son of consolation."

He lived up to his name and brought Paul to the apostles.

This is the same thing recorded in Galatians 1:18-19.

According to that passage, Barnabas took him to two of the apostles: Peter, who was the head of the twelve, and James, who was the head of the Church.

Barnabas declared to Peter and James that Paul had seen the resurrected Messiah, and Yeshua had spoken to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Yeshua.

Barnabas was able to convince Peter and James on the validity of Paul's salvation and so Paul was accepted.

Verses 28-29a record Paul's ministry in Jerusalem.

**READ 9:28-29**

First, in verse 28, Luke describes Paul's as being with the apostles.

He stayed with Peter according to Galatians 1:18.

And so the fear of Paul vanished from among the believers.

But all this, according to Galatians 1:18, lasted only for fifteen days.

Verse 29a describes his ministry among the unbelievers.

He stayed in Jerusalem and _disputed against the Grecian Jews._

He did exactly what Stephen did with the same group, in 6:9, that brought about Stephen's death.

In verse 29b, as in the case of Stephen, the disputers raised a plot; the second plot against Paul.
They responded to Paul the same way they responded to Stephen.

Paul's vision, mentioned by Paul in 22:17-21, occurred at this point in his life, when he was told by God to leave Jerusalem.

In verse 30, Paul escaped from Jerusalem.

**READ 9:30**

When his fellow believers learned of this plot they reacted swiftly.

They gave him a protective escort, and brought him to the port of Caesarea, from where he could sail by ship to Tarsus.

That is where he stayed for the next ten years.

This is the same event spoken of in Galatians 1:21.

Tarsus was a city in Asia Minor, now in Southeast Turkey.

It was located in a fertile plain ten miles from the sea, near the famous Cilician Gates which was a narrow pass through the Taurus Mountains.

It was located between the east-west transition point for travel by land or by sea.

It was a prosperous seaport and a river city.

The Cydnus River flowed through the city.

It is mentioned very early, as early as the Assyrian records of 850 BC

It was taken by Alexander the Great in the year 334 BC and quickly became a Greek city.

It also became a university town and was one of the three cities with a medical school.

The other two were Athens and Alexandria.

Jews were brought to Tarsus to settle there and to help the economy.

They were forced to live there in the year 171 BC
It was the home of Athenodorus, a stoic who was the teacher of Caesar Augustus.

It was the capital of Cilicia with a population of 500,000.

It was the home of Ciscero when he was governor of Cilicia between the years 51 and 50 BC

In the year 38 BC, Mark Anthony summoned Cleopatra to Tarsus.

Later, Augustus Caesar gave it the title of a metropolis with the right to issue its own coins.

That was the home of Saul/Paul.

Paul himself, was born in Tarsus.

According to tradition, the parents of Paul came from Upper Galilee.

They fled to Tarsus during the Roman takeover of the country in the first century BC

Because he was brought up a Pharisee, means that at the age of five Paul began the study of Scripture.

At the age of ten, he began to study Rabbinic tradition.

At the age of 12, he learned a manual trade, and in Paul's case he was a tent-maker.

At the age of 13, he had his bar mitzvah or his confirmation.

At that point, he was sent to Jerusalem to study at the feet of Gamaliel (22:3).

He had a sister in Jerusalem and may have even lived with her (23:16).

During that time, he would have been supported by his parents.

He was a Roman citizen (16:37-38; 22:25-29) and, therefore, was from a wealthy family.
As a Roman citizen, he would have had three Roman names, but only one is actually known: Paulus or Paul.

He learned four languages: Hebrew and Aramaic from the Jewish community, and Greek and Latin from the streets of Tarsus.

He was probably a short man, because in 14:12 he was taken to be Mercury who was shorter than Jupiter.

According to II Corinthians 10:10, his bodily presence was weak.

He did not possess strong public speaking skills (I Cor. 2:1-5, II Cor. 10:10, and II Cor. 11:6).

His body was marked with scars because of much persecution according to Galatians 6:17, but he was of keen intellect and Rabbinic logic was part of his thinking.

This section of the story comes to a close with report regarding the results of Saul’s salvation.

VI. THE RESULT OF SAUL'S/PAUL'S SALVATION - 9:31

READ 9:31

The churches of all the regions of Judea, Galilee and Samaria had peace because the chief persecutor had become a believer.

They received the comfort of the Holy Spirit and they increased in number.

But the quietness for the church was temporary for a new persecution arose in chapter 12.

A. At Lydda - 9:32-35

Verse 32 deals with Peter's arrival in the city of Lydda.

READ 9:32

At this point in the Book of Acts the apostles began working in places other than Jerusalem.

Until now, the apostles were found only in Jerusalem, except one excursion that Peter and John made into Samaria.

Basically Peter followed in the footsteps of Philip, perhaps to confirm Philip's ministry in Judea as he had earlier authenticated Philip's ministry in Samaria.

In the course of his travels in Judea he came to the believers who were living in Lydda.

By the time Peter arrived, there was already a congregation in Lydda.

This may due to the previous dispersion of believers from Jerusalem (8:4).

No doubt some of them came to Lydda.

However, others also may have become believers as a result of Philip's ministry through the same territory (8:40).

The New Testament Lydda was the same as the Old Testament city of Lod.

Still later, the city was renamed as Diospolis.¹

Today, the main Israeli airport can be found there.

Verses 33-34 record the healing of Aeneas (I-neh-ahs).

Verse 33 tells us about the man.

¹ Logos 2.0, New Bible Dictionary, article -- Lydda
This Aeneas was already a believer.

He was a believer who had been bedridden for eight years because he was palsied, or paralyzed.

In verse 34 came the healing.

Yeshua was the source of the healing.

The tense in the Greek means that "Yeshua the Messiah heals you here and now."²

Therefore, get up, which will be the evidence of the healing, and take care of your mat; literally, the Greek states, "spread thy bed for thyself."³

The implication of the thought is that others had been doing it for him for eight years, but now he was to do it for himself.

There is instantaneous evidence of healing, for immediately he arose and was healed.

The result is given in verse 35.

Lydda was the city, Sharon, is the Plain of Sharon, the region in which the city was found.

A great number of the residents of the city of Lydda and the Plain of Sharon turned to the Lord.

Now Luke turns our attention to the city of Joppa.

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B. At Joppa - 9:36-43

Verse 36 introduces the reader to Dorcas.

READ 9:36

Joppa is the same as Jaffa, or the Hebrew Yafo.

This town is found ten miles northwest of Lod, or Lydda.

In that town was a certain disciple named Tabitha.

Tabitha is the Aramaic word for gazelle.

In Hebrew the name would have been tzvi.

Luke points out by interpretation is called Dorcas.

Dorcas is Greek for gazelle.

So Luke gave both the Aramaic form of her name, Tabitha, and the Greek form of her name, Dorcas.

This woman did many good works, like making dresses for the poor, and she was good in alms giving, she gave money, and this she did habitually.

So, in verse 37, when she died, it caused great stress.

READ 9:37

She died while Peter was in Lydda.

After they washed her body, which was a common Jewish practice, they laid the body in an upper chamber.

By Jewish law a body in Jerusalem had to be buried by sundown, but outside Jerusalem a body was permitted to remain unburied for three days and nights.

In verse 38 they then issued a call to Peter.
READ 9:38

When the disciples heard that Peter was there they sent two men to fetch him.

They entreated him, they applied strong pressure on him, to make no delay but to come quickly and heal Dorcas as he had earlier healed Aeneas.

Verse 39 records the mourners' response and Peter's response.

READ 9:39

When Peter arrived to Joppa they brought him into the upper chamber where the body was.

All the widows were standing around weeping and showing the robes, which were the inner garments, and clothing, which were the outer garments, that Dorcas had made for them while she was still living.²

Verses 40-41 report on the resurrection of Dorcas.

READ 9:40-41

Peter put everyone outside as Yeshua had done in a similar case (Mark 5:40).

He then kneeled down and prayed, obviously expecting to receive a positive answer.

He then turned to the body and said, Tabitha, arise, similar to what Yeshua had said in Mark 5:41.

She then opened her eyes, and she sat up.

Peter helped her up, and then called in the saints and widows and presented her alive to them.

What a simple simple story.

Hardly the silly, flashy stuff of modern so called “healers.”

Verse 42 gives the result of this miracle.

**READ 9:42**

As a result many more believed on the Lord, many people placed their faith in Yeshua because of this miracle.

Meanwhile, in verse 43, Peter decided to stay in Joppa and he dwelt with Simon, a tanner.

**READ 9:43**

The very fact that Peter was willing to live with a tanner shows that he had already given up some of his Rabbinic prejudices.

Based upon Leviticus 11:40, by Jewish law, to be a tanner was considered to be an unclean occupation because a tanner had to handle dead bodies.\(^5\)

For that reason, anyone who was a tanner had to live 50 cubits outside a city.

The fact that Peter would stay with a tanner meant he had already beginning to discard some Rabbinic traditions.

He will have to drop some more in chapter 10.

However, the implication of the text is that Simon the Tanner must have been a believer.

So Peter is willing to drop Rabbinic traditions for the sake of fellowship with another believer.

Now we come to chapter 10.

**II. THE SALVATION OF CORNELIUS - 10:1-11:18**

**A. The Vision of Cornelius - 10:1-8**

Verses 1-2 introduce the man himself.

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Luke begins in verse 1 by describing his office.

**READ 10:1**

The city of Caesarea was earlier known in the Greek period as Strato's Tower.

It was simply a small way-station along the coast settled by Gentile Greeks.

However, it was totally re-built by Herod the Great during the years 25-13 B.C. and was then renamed in honor of Caesar Augustus as Caesarea.

Herod the Great made it into a major seaport with access to all parts of the Roman world.

It was 30 miles north of Joppa.

It would play a major role later in the life of Paul.

This man's name was **Cornelius**.

He was a *centurion*, meaning he was a leader of 100 soldiers, members of a cohort known as the Italian cohort.

A cohort had anywhere from 600 to 1,000 men.

100 soldiers are under a centurion, so there would be six to ten centurions per cohort.

This was the Italian cohort, meaning it was a cohort comprised specifically of those of the Italian nationality.

Many other cohorts were comprised of other nationalities within the Roman army.

The Italians were just one segment of the Roman nation.


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\(^6\) Logos 2.0, Harper’s Bible Dictionary, article -- Caesarea, Logos 2.0, New Bible Dictionary, article -- Caesarea

\(^7\) Word Pictures in the New Testament, The Kingdom Christian Scholar Library
Verse 2 describes his spiritual state.

READ 10:2

First, he was a devout man.

This is a Greek word that means "to worship" or "to revere." The point is that this man was a reverent man who had given up his paganism.

Second, he was one that feared God; in other words, he was "a proselyte of the gate." He was not a full proselyte to Judaism, but he had given up his pagan deities and he was a Gentile seeker after the true God.

He led his family to the same spiritual state, turning away from paganism and being a Gentile God-seeker.

Third, part of his seeking for the true God meant he generously gave to the poor. Alms giving was a characteristic of Jewish piety.

In this case it was alms giving from a Gentile to a Jew.

Fourth, this one prayed to God always.

The Greek word means he "was begging God." It shows that although he was not yet saved, he at least was living up to the light that he did have.

The principle that we see in action here is that if a man lives up to the light that he does have, God will give him more light.

Verses 3-6 record his vision, beginning with the coming of the angel (10:3).

READ 10:3

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He saw a vision that came to him openly, or clearly, at about three o'clock in the afternoon.

It was at that point that an angel of God came to him.

Verse 4a records the response of Cornelius.

READ 10:4

Cornelius fastened his eyes on him, he stared at him, and he was frightened, he was filled with fear.

Then he said, What is it, Lord?

By calling him Lord, he recognized the angel to be a supernatural messenger from God.

In verse 4b the angel told him about God's response to his faith.

His prayers his alms were the evidence of the faith that he had at this point.

They had gone up like the smoke of incense.

In fact, incense is a symbol of prayer in the Bible.

Psalm 141:2 May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.10

His prayers were looked upon by God as that of a burned offering, that went up.

His prayers were for a memorial before God; his prayers and alms proved his sincerity and they won God's ear.

The angel's message used the terminology of the sacrificial system of the Book of Leviticus showing that God views prayers as sacrifices of incense.

This is a teaching in the New Testament as well -- Revelation 5:8, 8:3-4.

In verses 5-6 he received a commission.

He was to send for Peter (10:5).

**READ 10:5-6**

He is told to *send men to Joppa*.

He is not to go himself; but to use men under his authority to go to Joppa and fetch one by the name of Simon, who's surname was Peter.

He has to distinguish Simon Peter from Simon the Tanner, since in that one house there were now two Simons.

In verse 6, the angel then told him where Peter was (10:6):

He lives with one by the name of Simon who, by profession, was a tanner, *whose house is by the sea side*.

These were enough clues for the house to be found.

Verses 7-8 give the obedience of Cornelius.

**READ 10:7-8**

When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his household servants.

These two would be non-military servants.

He also sent with them *a devout soldier* who was a military man.

The fact that he was a devout soldier shows that this soldier was of the same spiritual state as Cornelius.

He was one who waited on Cornelius continually and so was much closer to Cornelius than the other soldiers.

After giving them all the details, he then sent them to Joppa to fetch Peter.

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**B. The Vision of Peter - 10:9-16**
These verses record a second vision, this time to Peter.

Verses 9-10 give the occasion of that vision, beginning with the timing in verse 9a:

**READ 10:9**

It’s now the next day.

The trip from Caesarea to Joppa was a two-day journey.

They would arrive sometime late on the second day after their departure.

As they *drew near unto the city*, something was happening at the same time in the home of Simon the Tanner.

Verse 9b deals with Peter's spiritual preparation for the vision he was about to see:

*Peter went up upon the housetop.*

The rooftops in those days were flat.

Going up on the rooftop would give Peter privacy.

It was now *about the sixth hour*, meaning it was noon.

There are three times a day when devout Jews prayed.

Peter followed the common Jewish custom of praying at noontime.

Verse 10a gives Peter's physical preparation as earlier he was spiritually prepared by means of prayer.

**READ 10:10**

*He became hungry.*

The Greek word means "very hungry," "intensely hungry."\(^{11}\)

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God made him intensely hungry because He wanted him to understand what he was about to see.

He was so hungry, that he desired to eat, he was longing to eat.

At that critical moment, he fell into a trance (10:10b).

The Greek word for trance is the word from which our English word "ecstasy" comes.

The word means "to stand outside of oneself."

It refers to a state of surprise or amazement.

It refers to a disturbance of the mind, usually caused by a shock.12

Literally, the verse states that "an ecstasy came upon Peter."

It is a little bit different than a straight vision.

It was a vision, but it seems a bit more intense than what Cornelius saw.

Verses 11-12 give the vision itself, beginning with the great sheet (10:11).

READ 10:11

Peter saw a great sheet descending.

This is the Greek word for "linen cloth."13

He saw a huge linen cloth descending.

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12 1611 ekstasis [ ek'-stas-is] from 1839; TDNT - 2:449,217; n f AV - trance 3, be amazed + 3083 2, amazement 1, astonishment 1; 7 GK - 1749 | περιπέτεια| any casting down of a thing from its proper place or state, displacement 2) a throwing of the mind out of its normal state, alienation of mind, whether such as makes a lunatic or that of a man who by some sudden emotion is transported as it were out of himself, so that in this rapt condition, although he is awake, his mind is drawn off from all surrounding objects and wholly fixed on things divine that he sees nothing but the forms and images lying within, and thinks that he perceives with his bodily eyes and ears realities shown him by God. 3) amazement, the state of one who, either owing to the importance or the novelty of an event, is thrown into a state of blended fear and wonderment

The sheet was being held by four cords, to which the sheet was fastened.

Verse 12 gives the content of this sheet.

**READ 10:12**

Peter could see all kinds of animals and birds in this heavenly elevator.

The main point lies in the fact that the sheet carried both clean and unclean animals, or both kosher and non-kosher animals.

At that point, in verse 13, God gave Peter a command.

**READ 10:13**

A *bat qol*, a voice out of heaven, said to him, *Rise, Peter, kill and eat*, a strange order for Peter.

Verse 14 records Peter's response.

**READ 10:14**

This was a mild protest, a mild refusal.

To say *not so, Lord* appears paradoxical, but Peter had a good reason for responding this way.

Remember, it was God Himself who forbade the Jews under the law to eat unclean or unkosher animals.

Naturally, there would be a conflict in Peter's mind.

Some of the animals were not kosher and, under the law, he was not allowed to eat unkosher animals.

So, Peter adds, *I have never eaten anything that is impure and unclean.*

*Unclean* means that it was not kosher; *impure* means it was not properly killed, it was not ritually killed.
In verse 15 God gave him His answer.

**READ 10:15**

Once again there is the *bat qol*, a voice from heaven.

What God had made kosher, Peter is not to call impure or unclean.

Already, in Mark 7:18-19, it was predicted that part of Messiah's work was to make *all foods clean*.

With the death of the Messiah, the law was rendered inoperative and, at that point, all foods did become clean.

So God can declare that He has cleansed, or He has made kosher all foods, in fulfillment of Mark 7:18-19.

The immediate context is clearly the context of eating food.

Matthew's account of the same event in Mark 7 (Matt. 15:15-20) shows that Messiah's words of Mark 7:18-19 were particularly addressed to Peter.

However, Peter did not learn his lesson then and now Peter had to learn the lesson again.

Literally, the Greek states: "you stop making common what God has cleansed."¹⁴

God is being very emphatic with Peter.

Verse 16 gives the conclusion of the vision.

**READ 10:16**

The action was done three times, but Peter remained unconvinced.

This is an example of piety beyond the will of God.

Peter was still at this point defiling what God had cleansed.

The vision ended suddenly after the third time.

C. The Application of Peter's Vision - 10:17-23a

Verses 17-18 report on the arrival of the three messengers from Cornelius.

READ 10:17-18

Verse 17 describes Peter's state.

The Greek word is a very intensive form, meaning that Peter was at a complete loss to explain the situation.\(^\text{15}\)

He had seen a vision, he had heard God's voice three times over, but he was perplexed in himself.

There was a complete loss of ability to know what road to take.

He was now out of his ecstasy, but being out of his ecstasy, being back into his own frame of mind, he was more perplexed, more puzzled than ever.

He just sat there on the rooftop meditating on the vision.

But the answer was about to be given with verse 17b when the three men arrived.

They arrived at the very critical moment of Peter's perplexity.

While they were inquiring about Simon Peter, another command came to Peter in verses 19-20 while Peter was thinking on the vision.

READ 10:19-20

Peter’s thinking about the vision.

The Greek word is strong, meaning "to think through and through," "to think in and out."\(^\text{16}\)

He kept revolving in his mind all what he saw and all what he heard.

\(^{15}\) Word Pictures in the New Testament, The Kingdom Christian Scholar Library

Peter was trying his utmost to try to find a meaning to this very strange vision.

At that point the Holy Spirit audibly spoke to him.

It took the intervention of the Holy Spirit to finally put Peter's mind at ease.

The Holy Spirit took full responsibility for the three men being there.

Because the Holy Spirit assumed responsibility, Peter was to go down with a full willingness to go with them.

This is a crucial chapter in the Book of Acts, a crucial turning point because here Gentile salvation begins.

Verse 21 gives Peter's inquiry.

**READ 10:21**

*Peter went down to the men* in keeping with the Spirit's command.

Peter identifies himself.

It could very well be that the Jews inside the house could see that the inquirers were Gentiles, that they were Romans, one of whom was a Roman soldier, and they were somewhat reluctant to let them know where Peter was.

He then asked them about the purpose of their visit.

Verse 22 records their answer.

**READ 10:22**

They explained who Cornelius was and why they were looking for Peter.

Peter now knew exactly what he had to do, but it was late in the day, not a good time to get started for Joppa.

Verse 23 and 24 records their overnight stay and then the journey to Caesarea.
READ 10:23-24

Peter left with the 3 men and he took with him other Messianic Jews.

According to 11:12, he took with him six other Jewish believers.

This was a wise move on the part of Peter so that these six Jewish believers could serve as witnesses.

A day after they left Joppa, they arrived in Caesarea.

Verse 24 reports what Cornelius was doing in the meantime:

He possessed a sense of eager expectation and hope.

He called together his kinsmen, family and relatives, as well as his near friends.

He knew that he would hear a message of salvation.

He was not going to keep it all to himself, or limit it to his family.

It was obvious that Cornelius had no doubt in his mind that Peter would arrive.

Verses 25-26 describe the meeting of the two men, beginning with the reaction of Cornelius (10:25).

The Meeting of Peter and Cornelius - 10:25-34a

READ 10:25

Peter wasn’t expecting such a response from the man.

Verse 26 then gives the reaction of Peter:

READ 10:26

Peter refused to allow anyone to express respect for him in this manner.

This is too close to worship for Peter’s taste.
Peter’s response is a modest and indeed just and pious refusal of this honor that was extended to him. 17

Verse 27 records Peter's entry into the house.

**READ 10:27**

This is a crucial statement because it means Peter went into the home of a Gentile.

Strict, observant Jews of the day did not go into the homes of Gentiles18, as Peter’s next comments will affirm.

In the house he found an expectant group of Gentiles who were eager for Peter's interpretation of the vision of Cornelius.19

In verse 28 Peter explained why he had come.

**READ 10:28**

These Gentiles were living in a Jewish country and they knew about this particular Jewish custom or practice.

They knew that it went contrary to Jewish custom and Jewish law to come into the home of a Gentile.

It was not part of the Law of Moses, but it was part of Rabbinic Judaism.

Yet, God had showed him that he was not to call any man common or unclean.

Peter now took back the two words he used in his protest to the Lord: common and unclean.

Peter now grasped the analogy between the unclean food and the Gentiles.

Just as God had declared all foods clean, so He declares that all Gentiles are clean.

18 Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 8, pg. 390
READ 10:29

In verse 29, because of what he learned from God, and he came without arguing.

He came because of the vision.

He without answering back. 20

He did not protest when the Holy Spirit spoke.

Now Peter wants to know the reason why he was called to the house of Cornelius.

In verses 30-33 Cornelius gave Peter the answer.

In verse 30 he related to Peter the vision of the angel.

READ 10:30

These four days were all inclusive, reckoning backward from the day that Cornelius met Peter to the day he received the vision.

In fact, it was to this hour, it was exactly four days ago to this hour.

He was praying at 3:00 in the afternoon, the ninth hour, in his house when he saw a man standing dressed in bright apparel, a common dress of angels.

In verses 31-32 he told Peter the message of the angel and his response.

READ 10:31-33

Cornelius commended Peter for his courage in breaking with Jewish custom.

Cornelius was now ready to hear what Peter had to say.

E. Peter and the Keys of the Kingdom - 10:34-43

Peter had used the keys of the kingdom twice before in the Book of Acts.

In chapter 2 he let the Jews in; and, in chapter 8 he let the Samaritans in.

Now he is about to allow the third group of humanity in: the Gentiles.

Verses 34-35 provide the introduction within Peter's own sermon.

**READ 10:34-35**

This is part of God's character: He is no respecter of persons.

With the coming of Messiah, insofar as salvation us concerned there is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles.

The one who fears God obviously has faith.

The one who has faith will work righteousness as the evidence of that faith.

Such a person is acceptable to God.

God will draw that person to Yeshua and to the gift of eternal life.

With that recognition, in verses 36-38 Peter went on to deal with the work of Yeshua.

These Gentiles must now hear the gospel.

Peter began in verse 36 with the coming of Yeshua.

**READ 10:36**

The word translated by the NIV as “message” is the Greek word “logos.”

This is the *logos* of John 1 which God had sent to the children of Israel.

This *logos* is Yeshua of Nazareth.

He came announcing good news of peace: peace with God.
He is Lord of all, meaning He is both the Lord of the Jews and He is the Lord of the Gentiles.

In verse 37 Peter spoke about the reputation of Yeshua.

**READ 10:37**

Peter reminded this Gentile audience that the main facts concerning Yeshua and the gospel are known to them.

Yeshua experienced a very public ministry after the baptism of John.

This public ministry extended throughout the regions of Galilee and Judea.

In verse 38 Peter dealt with the life and work of Yeshua.

**READ 10:38**

By way of identification Peter tells them that he’s talking about Yeshua of Nazareth, or more literally from the Greek, "Yeshua the one from Nazareth."

There must be no mistake regarding to whom Peter was referring.

He goes on to say that God **anointed** this particular individual.

The Greek word for "anointing" is the same root as the Greek word for "Messiah."

*He anointed Him with the Holy Spirit.*

Indeed, Yeshua had a special anointing of the Holy Spirit at the baptism in fulfillment of Isaiah 61:1-3 when He was baptized by John.

Because of this anointing by the Holy Spirit, He was able to have power to do His work.

So he **went about doing good, and healing** diseases which were caused by demons.

The reason He was able to do all this is because **God was with Him.**
Peter thus spelled out some of the basic facts regarding the ministry of Yeshua of Nazareth.

This is just a thumbnail sketch of Yeshua’s life.

In verses 39-41 Peter went on to deal with the apostolic witness.

READ 10:39-41

Peter and the others are witnesses of the works of Yeshua.

They’re witnesses of all things which He did in Galilee, Perea and Judea, but also the city of Jerusalem.

This much they already knew.

In verse 39 he dealt with the death of the Messiah.

In verse 40 Peter went on to explain the resurrection.

In verse 41 Peter spoke about His post-resurrection ministry.

His post-resurrection ministry was not to all the people, but only to those who were to serve as witnesses of the resurrection, which were the apostles.

These were chosen beforehand by God.

They were chosen to serve as witnesses of the resurrection of Yeshua.

They ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.

In verses 42-43 Peter concludes his message with the apostolic commission.

READ 10:42-43

Yeshua commanded them to preach the gospel and to testify that He was chosen by God to be the Judge of the living and the dead.

Finally, Peter pointed out that this was in agreement with the testimony of the prophets (10:43).
He’s the Messiah of the Old Testament.

Through His name, through Yeshua’s character, power and authority everyone who trusts in Him receives forgiveness of sins.

Forgiveness, then, is conditioned upon three things;

1) believing on Yeshua being the Messiah

2) believing that He died for our sins,

3) believing that He was buried and rose again.

This is the proper content of saving faith today.

Here the sermon abruptly ends.

Three comparisons with the book of Mark can be made about this sermon to the Gentiles.

First, the order and the scope of the life of Yeshua in this sermon is the same as that of Mark.

This is evident in two ways:

1) there is an emphasis on deeds rather than teaching; and,

2) most of the sermon deals with the latter part of Yeshua’s life.

Both elements are true of the Gospel of Mark.

Second, it shows the truth of that old tradition that Peter was the man behind the Gospel of Mark.

The reason the Gospel of Mark was acceptable is because it received apostolic authority from Peter.

Mark is traditionally considered to be the scribe of Peter. 21

Third, like Mark, this message is addressed to Romans.

21 Logos 2.0, New Bible Dictionary, article Mark (John)
F. The Salvation of the Gentiles - 10:44-48

This section of the chapter records the salvation of the Gentiles.

Again, this is the first time Gentiles were saved purely as Gentiles.

Until now, since the Book of Acts began, only Gentiles who had become proselytes to Judaism had been saved.

Verse 44 presents the Pentecost of the Gentiles.

It came while Peter was still speaking the words of verses 34-43.

Peter's sermon was not really finished and he still had more to say.

However, he had given enough information, he had given enough details of the gospel, so those who believed what Peter had said up to this point could already be saved.

Indeed, that is exactly what happened.

He was suddenly interrupted by the very next event.

READ 10:44

This was the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but this time the Holy Spirit baptized Gentiles into the Body of Messiah as Peter used his keys.

These Gentiles had just heard the basics of the gospel from the mouth of Peter.

They simply trusted what Peter had just said and so they were saved at that moment.

Verses 45-46 record the reaction of the Jewish believers:

READ 10:45-46

The Jewish believers, were amazed.

The six Jewish believers who came with Peter were astonished.
The reason these other Jewish believers were so amazed is because the Gentiles received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

They knew that these Gentiles had just received the Holy Spirit because they had physical, visible evidence.

They kept on hearing them speaking in other languages.

What they were speaking about was magnifying, praising God.

In light of the fact that these Gentiles had been baptized by the Spirit, Peter raised the obvious question.

READ 10:47

The way the question was asked, it required a negative answer.

Or to put it another way to bring out the force of the Greek, "you cannot forbid water now, can you, so that these can be baptized?"

Notice the contrast of pronouns:

they received the Holy Spirit, they being the Gentiles, and we are the Jews.

The reception of the Holy Spirit by these Gentiles was conclusive evidence of their acceptance by God.

The very fact that these Gentiles experienced the same things the Jews did in Acts 2 means that there was no reason to forbid them to be baptized.

In verse 48 they proceeded with water baptism:

READ 10:48

Peter himself did not do the Immersion but he commanded with apostolic authority that the other Jewish believers do the baptizing.

Peter made sure that all the other Jewish believers with him accepted these Gentiles as fellow believers.
They were to show it by being the ones doing the work of immersion.

They were to immerse *in the name of Yeshua the Messiah*.

This is contrasts Believer’s immersion from proselyte immersion and John's immersion.

Following the presentation of the gospel, and the immersion by water, came the third facet of discipling: teaching (10:48b).

Peter stayed with them a number of days as a follow up and as a period of discipleship before Peter moved on to Jerusalem.

Before moving on, we will deal with two other topics.

First, we will again make a comparison between how the Holy Spirit came here as over against how He came upon the Jews in Acts 2 and the Samaritans in Acts 8.

The purpose of the comparison is to show that no one formula is consistently followed.

That is why we cannot take these historical accounts and try to develop a set rule and doctrine from them.

There are variations from one account to the other.

In Acts 2 and the Jews, the order was:

(1) repentance; (2) water baptism; and, (3) the reception of the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 8 and the Samaritans, the order was:

(1) they believed; (2) they were baptized by water; (3) apostles were sent to Samaria from Jerusalem; (4) the apostolic laying on of hands, and (5) they received the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands of the apostles from Jerusalem.

In Acts 10 and the Gentiles, the order was:

(1) faith; (2) they then received the Holy Spirit; and, (3) then they were baptized by water.
The order was clearly different between Jews and Samaritans and between Samaritans and Gentiles.

The second comparison is to deal with the issue of tongues in Acts 10.

As with tongues in Acts 2 and tongues in Acts 8 we will ask and answer six questions.

Again, the point is that the purpose of tongues in the Book of Acts is the issue of authentication.

First question:
Who received it?
Answer:
Cornelius and his household (10:24, 44).

Second question:
Who were they?
Answer:
They were Gentiles (10:1).

There was a far greater rift between Jews and Gentiles than between Jews and Samaritans.

The Samaritans, at least, believed the Law of Moses and were circumcised.

So it was easier for Jewish believers to believe that Samaritans could be saved rather than to believe that Gentiles, as Gentiles, could be saved apart from the Law of Moses and apart from circumcision.

Third question:
What were the circumstances?
Answer:
As a result of special revelation, Peter went into the home of a Gentile to proclaim the gospel.

While he was doing so the Spirit came, resulting in the outbreak of the speaking in tongues (10:44, 46).

Fourth question:

What was the means?

Answer:

It was direct, as in Acts 2.

There was no laying on of hands as in Acts 8.

Whereas with the Samaritans there was a danger of a rival congregation set up, a Samaritan congregation, there was no such danger with the Gentiles.

Fifth question:

What was the purpose?

Answer:

The purpose was authentication.

For the Gentiles, it authenticated the message of Peter.

For the Jews, it authenticated the fact that the Gentiles were savable.

This was the very thing that surprised the other six Jewish believers (10:45-46).

Peter later used this very fact as evidence to defend his actions to believers at the Congregation of Jerusalem (11:1-2, 15-18).

Furthermore, at the Jerusalem Council, Peter will again use this incident to prove that Gentiles were saved by faith, apart from circumcision (Acts 15:7-9).

Once again, the purpose of tongues here, as in chapter 2 and as in chapter 8, was for the purpose of authentication.

Sixth question:
What were the results?

Answer:

It opened the gospel for the Gentiles and prepared the stage for the ministry of Paul.

In Acts 9 Paul received his commission to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles; however, Paul did not have the keys of the kingdom.

So while Paul received his commission in chapter 9, he could not fulfill his commission in chapter 9.

He had to wait until after chapter 10 when Peter, who had the keys of the kingdom, used the keys to open the Body of the Messiah for the Gentiles.

This prepared the way for the ministry of Paul.

With this, Gentile Christianity was recognized as valid by the apostles and by Jewish believers (10:45-46; 11:18).

G. Peter's Defense in Jerusalem - 11:1-18

1. The Charge Against Peter - 11:1-3

In verse 1, the news spread very quickly to Judea.

READ 11:1

What happened in the home of Cornelius spread among the Jewish believers like wildfire.

This led to a charge against Peter in verses 2-3.

READ 11:2-3

The reference to “circumcised believers” refers to a small minority, an extremist group within the congregation in Jerusalem.
This extremist group among the Jewish believers can therefore be labeled as "the circumcision party."

According to Galatians 2:12, this was the pharisaic wing of the Congregation -- also mentioned in Acts 15:5.

These were a group of the Jewish believers, who felt that circumcision was necessary for Gentile salvation.

What happened here laid the seeds for the great controversy that will occur in Acts 15.

These criticized Peter.

The Greek word actually means "to separate."

They separated themselves apart, they took sides against him, they made a cleavage. 22

On the issue of Gentile circumcision these Jewish believers of the circumcision party were not afraid to challenge Peter, the chief of the apostles.

According to verse 3, the specific accusation was: “You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.” 23

To eat with someone in that culture meant much more than it does in our culture.

To eat with someone communicated fellowship, love, and acceptance. 24

So Peter is being criticized for accepting, loving and having fellowship with contemptible heathens.

That was the accusation that Peter had to respond to and defend himself against.

Peter's defense begins in verse 4:

2. Peter's Explanation - 11:4-17

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24 Logos 2.0, New Bible Dictionary, article -- Meals, Logos 2.0, Harper's Bible Dictionary, article -- Food, Meals, Morsel
READ 11:4

The Greek word translated as “explained” by the NIV means "to set forth."

It refers to a deliberate and detailed narrative.

The phrase “precisely as it happened” renders a Greek word that means chronological order.

Because this was a very sensitive issue, Peter intended to give both a complete account, and also a chronological account.

He wanted to give them a careful, step-by-step explanation in the order in which these events occurred.

He began with the vision that he saw (11:5-6), beginning with the great sheet (11:5).

READ 11: 5-6

This account provides us with more information about the event.

Here we get a little glimpse into the mind of Peter.

The Greek text indicates that he “considered carefully” what he saw.

He didn’t take this vision lightly or casually.

In verse 7 Peter reported on the bat qol, the voice from heaven.

READ 11:7

Peter relates to them that he did hear a voice and the voice issued a command and the command was threefold:

first, Peter should rise from his kneeled position of praying; second, he should kill; and, third, he should proceed to eat.

In verse 8 Peter relates what his response was:
READ 11:8

He states his objection to the command.

But then, in verse 9, the *bat qol*, the voice from heaven, returned.

READ 11:9

A voice came from heaven a second time and the declaration to Peter that what may have been common before is no longer unclean.

Verse 10 gives the conclusion of the vision:

READ 11:10

All this happened three times:

three times the sheet came down; three times God said, *Rise, Peter, kill and eat*; and all three times Peter answered, *Not so, Lord* for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.

After the third time all was drawn up into heaven again.

It was at this crucial moment that the Gentiles arrived (11:11).

READ 11:11

At the end of the third time, when the sheet went back into heaven, at that crucial moment the Gentiles arrived.

Peter says that at that point in time three men stood before the house.

Peter pointed out that these three men were sent all the way from Caesarea to Joppa specifically for Peter.

In verse 12a he reports the command of the Spirit.

READ 11:12
It was not just a vision that he saw, he also received an audible command of the Holy Spirit.

Basically, already at this point, Peter had answered the objection.

They accused him of having the nerve to enter the home of a Gentile and not merely preach the gospel to these Gentiles, which was bad enough, but to sit down and eat with these uncircumcised Gentiles.

Peter's response was that he was told to do so by God, so how could he do otherwise.

For him to do otherwise would have been an act of disobedience to the God who showed him the vision and a disobedience to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

Peter reminded his critics that six other Jewish believers accompanied him.

This is another added detail to chapter 10 which only stated that others came with Peter, but never told how many.

Apparently, these six Jewish believers who went from Joppa to Caesarea also now came with Peter to Jerusalem to serve as witnesses.

Peter knew he would have to answer some questions and brought these men as witnesses.

He stated, *we entered into the man's house.*

This is an admission of guilt by Peter.

He did enter into the home of a Gentile, but the point is, it was not the wrong thing to do.

Verses 13-14 summarize the story and salvation of Cornelius.

**READ 11:13-14**

Cornelius told them how he had seen the angel standing in his house.

It’s obvious at this point that Cornelius was not saved, but he was to send for Peter who would give him what he needs to believe in order to be saved.
This shows that while these Gentiles were devout, they were not yet saved.

It is possible to be very devout, and yet not saved.

Until one has received Yeshua as his Messiah, until he has believed that Yeshua did die for his sins, was buried and rose again, there is no salvation, though there may be religion, there may be piety.

In verses 15-16 Peter then reported about the Gentile Pentecost with the immersion of the Spirit.

The immersion itself is recorded in verse 15.

**READ 11:15**

Notice the contrast of pronouns.

The Holy Spirit fell upon them, the Gentiles, as on us, the Jews, at the beginning, the beginning being Acts 2:1-4.

This shows clearly that the ministry of Spirit immersion did begin in Acts 2:1-4.

Spirit baptism did begin at Pentecost.

This Immersion of the Spirit which the Jews received in Acts 2, Peter adds in verse 16, was the fulfillment of Acts 1:5.

**READ 11:16**

What Peter did was quote the very words of which Yeshua spoke in Acts 1:5.

So, just as the Holy Spirit immersed us Jewish believers at the beginning in Acts 2, now also in Acts 10 the Holy Spirit came upon the Gentiles.

In verse 17 Peter drew his conclusion:
If the Jewish believers received the Holy Spirit when they believed, and now the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit when the Gentiles believed, Peter then asked a rhetorical question.

The question, “Could I oppose God?”

Or, more literally, “Should I “withstand” or "hinder God?"

The answer was obvious:

Peter could not withstand God.

The verdict comes in verse 18.

3. **The Verdict - 11:18**

**READ 11:18**

The criticism in verse 2 stopped and there was quiet.

Instead they chose to glorify God, including the critics.

The gospel was now free to go out to the Gentiles.

In the remaining verses (11:19-30), now that Peter opened the door for the Gentiles using his keys, the Congregation of Antioch was now free to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles at large, setting the stage in turn for Paul's great work that will begin in Acts 13.
THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL -- ACTS 11:19-30

THE PLANTING OF THE CONGREGATION IN ANTIOCH -- ACTS 11:19-26

THE FOUNDING OF THE CONGREGATION -- ACTS 11:19-21

READ 11:19

In verse 19 Luke backtracks a little bit in time.

He takes us back to the persecution following the death of Stephen -- end of Acts 7 and the beginning of Acts 8.

The narrative reaches back to Stephen (8:1-2) to point to still another result of his martyrdom.

His death had helped move the gospel into Samaria.

Also Stephen’s death had incited Saul to persecute the believers more vigorously (8:3) and Saul consequently became a believer himself (9:1-30).

Now a third result from Stephen’s martyrdom was the spreading of the gospel to Gentile lands -- Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch.¹

From the death of Stephen, Luke followed Saul through his salvation and back to Jerusalem and to Tarsus.

We left Saul on hold in Tarsus toward the end of chapter 9 -- 9:30

Then Luke switched his emphasis over to Peter because Peter has to exercise the keys of the Kingdom.

Luke dealt with activity of Peter outside of Jerusalem.

The most significant event being the Gentile Pentecost in Caesarea and the salvation of Cornelius.

Now Luke starts over again from the same persecution by Saul and follows a new line of events up to Antioch.

Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch contained large Jewish populations.

This is why the scattered Jewish Believers directed their first outreach only toward the Jewish community.

However, this was destined to change -- verse 20.

**READ 11:20**

The reference to Antioch in Syria prepares the reader for the importance of this city in the subsequent narrative.

This city, one of many bearing the same name, was the third largest in the Roman Empire behind Rome and Alexandria in Egypt.

Located on the Orontes River 15 miles inland, it was known as Antioch on the Orontes.

Beautifully situated and carefully planned, it was a commercial center and the home of a large Jewish community (500,000²).

In spite of the fact that it was a vile city, with gross immorality and ritual prostitution as part of its temple worship, the congregation at Antioch was destined to become the base of operations for Saul’s missionary journeys.

The Roman satirist, Juvenal, complained, “The sewage of the Syrian Orontes has for long been discharged into the Tiber.”

By this he meant that Antioch was so corrupt it was impacting Rome, more than 1,300 miles away.³

That’s the type of city it was.

So these unnamed, anonymous believers began to speak about Yeshua to Gentiles.

For them it was an experiment, something brand new.

This was a bold and critical move by these believers.

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³ Logos 2.0, Bible Knowledge Commentary
The text describes them as coming from *Cyprus*, the island not too far from Antioch, and *Cyrene*, a city in North Africa (cf. Matt. 27:32; Acts 2:10; 6:9; 13:1).

In verse 21, their bold experiment bears fruit.

**READ 11:21**

The fact that the hand of the LORD was with them was proof of God's approval of their experiment to preach Yeshua to the Greeks.

The expression "the hand of the Lord" is a reference to the hand of God, clearly showing that the early disciples put Yeshua on a par with The Father.

Yeshua’s deity was not a late development read back into the early history.

As a result of these new believers, both Jew and Gentile, the Congregation at Antioch took on a decidedly different complexion from any congregation that had been established thus far.

It was a mixed body of Jews and uncircumcised Gentiles meeting together for worship and fellowship in common allegiance to Messiah Yeshua.

Word of this new situation traveled quickly down to the mother congregation in Jerusalem -- verse 22.

**THE EARLY DISCIPLESHIP OF THE CONGREGATION -- ACTS 11:22-26**

**THE MINISTRY OF BARNABUS -- ACTS 11:22-24**

**READ 11:22**

Such an important move could not escape the attention of the mother congregation in Jerusalem.

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6 Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 9, pg. 401
Earlier the Jerusalem apostles sent Peter and John to check up on Philip’s ministry in Samaria.

Now the Jerusalem saints sent Barnabas all the way to Antioch, over 300 miles north.

The selection of Barnabas was of crucial importance.

Barnabas was a wise choice for several reasons.

First, he, like some of these believers, was from Cyprus (4:36; 11:20).

Second, he was a generous man (4:37) and therefore thoughtful of others.

Third, he was a gracious gentleman as attested by his nickname and Luke’s testimony about him in 11:24.7

Here was a crises point in the history of the early congregation.

Much depended on Barnabas’ reaction, counsel, and report.8

His reaction is described in verse 23.

**READ 11:23-24**

Barnabas could not escape the conclusion that God was genuinely at work in Antioch, and as Luke often noted there was the response of joy.

True to his nickname, Son of Encouragement (4:36), he encouraged the believers.9

The Greek tense indicates that this was continuous encouragement.10

This was Barnabas’ way of life, a constant feature of his personality.

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8 Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 9, pg. 401
His constant encouragement and diligent work bears fruit and soon he needs some help -- verses 25-26

**THE MINISTRY OF SAUL -- ACTS 11:25-26**

**READ 11:25-26**

The work in Antioch grew to such proportions that Barnabas needed aid, and he could think of no one better suited for the work than Saul who was living in Tarsus.\(^11\)

It was Barnabas who had supported Saul when there was suspicion at Jerusalem about the sincerity of his faith.

Now, knowing of Saul’s God-given commission to minister among the Gentiles, Barnabas involved Saul in the ministry in Antioch.

There they labored together for a year and experienced a cooperative and effective teaching ministry.

At the end of verse 26 we come across this term “Christian.”

The word simply means “followers of the Messiah’s party” or “belonging to the Messiah.”\(^12\)

The name was evidently given to the followers of Yeshua by the Gentiles.

It was originally a term of contempt or derision.\(^13\)

The Jews would not call them Christians because of their own use of Christos -- the Messiah.

The Jews termed them Galileans or Nazarenes.

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\(^12\) Word Pictures in the New Testament, The Kingdom Christian Scholar Library, Strong’s Greek and Hebrew Lexicon, entry number 5546 Christianos (khris-tee-an-os') from 5547; TDNT - 9:493,1322; n pr m AV - Christian 3; 3 GK - 5985 {�□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□}}
The followers of Yeshua called themselves disciples (learners), believers, brethren, saints, or those of the Way.

The chapter closes with the account of a new arrival in Antioch -- the prophet Agabus.

Verse 27 and 28 explains his prophecy.

**THE COMING OF AGABUS -- ACTS 11:27-30**

**HIS PROPHECY -- ACTS 11:27-28**

READ 11:27-28

Agabus prophesied that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world.

This was actually a series of severe famines that struck various sections of the Roman Empire during the reign of Emperor Claudius.

Claudius reigned from A.D. 41-54. 14

Josephus tells of a particularly severe famine in Israel about AD 45-47.

Josephus’ reference to the famine is in his account of the conversion to Judaism of Queen Helena and Izates.

These two were the King and Queen Mother of Adiabene in northern Mesopotamia.

Helena and Izates provided food and money for the people of Jerusalem.

Josephus summarizes their generosity with these words, “the distribution of this fund to the needy delivered many from the extremely severe pressure of the famine.”15

The response of the believers in Antioch to this warning is summarized in verses 29-30.

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15 Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 9, pg. 404
THE CONGREGATIONS RESPONSE – ACTS 11:29-30

READ 11:29-30

In a similar way, though probably not as extravagantly, the believers respond to the warning delivered by Agabus.

They choose to send help to the fellow believers in Jerusalem.

As a minority group within the nation the believers probably experienced a particularly difficult time.

When Barnabas and Saul brought the gift to Judea, they gave the gift to the elders.

This is the first mention of congregational elders in Acts and significantly they received finances.

According to the Biblical organizational pattern they had ultimate oversight over all aspects of the ministry.\(^\text{16}\)

With this short interlude Luke has brought Saul back into the picture.

Luke will now break from Saul and return to Peter for one last time.

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I. THE DEATH OF JAMES - 12:1-2

James was the first of the Twelve Apostles to die.

Verse one introduces Herod and his goal.

READ 12:1

He was also known by the personal name of Agrippa I.

His full title was Herod Agrippa I.

He was the son of Aristobolos, and the grandson of Herod the Great and Mariamne.

He was born in the year 11 B.C. and later was sent to Rome for his education after his father Aristobolos was executed in the year of 7 B.C.

Herod the Great was always afraid that someone was conspiring against him, and one of the victims of his suspicions was his son Aristobolos.

He had Aristobolos executed along with his mother, who was Herod the Great's wife, Mariamne.

But by then Aristobolos had sired a son who was named Agrippa I.

With his father dead, Herod the Great sent the young boy to Rome for his education, and while in Rome, he grew up with the imperial family.

He became very close friends with one who eventually became the emperor: Gaius, better known by the name Caligula, the grand-nephew of Emperor Tiberius.

When Gaius or Caligula became the emperor in 37 A.D., he gave Agrippa the tetrarchies of Philip, including Gaulan, which included parts of the modern Golan Heights.

He also gave him the tetrarchy of Lysanias which was South Syria.
This Lysanias is mentioned in Luke 3:1.

Caligula also gave him the title of "king."

Two years later, in 39 A.D., Gaius also gave to him the tetrarchy of his uncle Antipas when Caligula deposed Antipas.

That territory included Galilee and Perea.

As of 39 A.D. both Galilee and Perea were in the hands of Herod Agrippa I.

In the year 41 A.D. Claudius, the new emperor, gave him Judea and Samaria, which made Agrippa I the king over all Israel.

From the deposing of Archelaus until the deposing of Antipas, Judea was under procurators.

But when Claudius gave him Judea and Samaria, that made him king over all Israel.

He ruled as king for a total of four years until he died in 44 A.D.

He had several children.

Three of these are mentioned in the Book of Acts: Agrippa II, who will be involved in the life of Paul; Drusilla, and Bernice.

The verse begins about this time.

At the time that Barnabas and Saul had come to Jerusalem to give the gifts from the Congregation of Antioch to the Congregation of Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-30), about that same time King Herod, that is, Herod Agrippa I, began the fourth persecution of the Congregation of Jerusalem.

But it was not a general persecution like the one in Acts eight.

The ones he went after were the apostles.

The previous persecutions were heavily against the general membership of the Congregation of Jerusalem but not specifically against the apostles.
According to chapter eight, while many of the members were dispersed throughout the countryside and outside the country, the apostles were able to stay in Jerusalem.

But now, the persecution was directly aimed at the leadership of the Congregation.

The first one he picked was James the apostle (Acts 12:2).

**READ 12:2**

The first of the twelve apostles to die was James.

By now many Jewish believers had already been killed in previous persecutions, some even at the hands of Paul.

Stephen was the first martyr, but after that, many other Jewish believers lost their lives as well.

But here is a turning point.

Until now, the leadership of the Congregation escaped the persecution.

Now one key leader, James, is killed with the sword.

In a sense, this was a fulfillment of Mark 10:39 for it was the two brothers, James and John, who requested to be able to sit upon the right hand and left hand of Yeshua in the Kingdom.

When Yeshua asked them if they could drink the cup that He would drink, and they answered, “Yes,” Yeshua said, “You will indeed.”

The cup was a cup of suffering, a cup of wrath, a cup of death.

Indeed, the two apostles did drink of that cup.

James was the first one to drink it, and he became the first apostle to die.

His brother John was the last apostle to die.

All the other apostles died between the death of James and the death of John.
John was the only one who died of old age, but even for him, he died as an exile on the Island of Patmos.

James was killed with the sword.

That phrase does not mean that he was "thrust through"; more likely, in the legal and formal execution, it means that he was beheaded.¹

God did not choose to miraculously save James, though He will choose to miraculously save Peter.

This shows that God does not always do things exactly the same way.

God does not always work exactly the same way.

He chose to rescue Peter; He did not choose to rescue James.

II. THE IMPRISONMENT OF PETER - 12:3-5

READ 12:3

In verse three Peter was also arrested.

The arrest took place because Herod Agrippa I saw that it pleased the Jewish community; it pleased them that he killed James.

Herod the Great was of Edomite or Idumean ancestry.

That meant Agrippa I, who was Herod the Great's grandson, also had Idumean/Edomite blood flowing through his veins.

He also had a Jewish connection through his Grandmother Mariamne.

Mariamne was a Maccabean princess.

Because of this mixed heritage he was always insecure about his Jewishness.

To overcompensate for that insecurity he did what he could to appease the Jews.

One of his efforts along this line is quoted in the Talmud which states that once, when he was publicly reading "the law of the kingdom" (Deut. 17:14-20) at the Feast of Tabernacles on the sabbatical year he wept when he read the words, *Thou mayest not put a foreigner over thee who is not thy brother*.

The point of that passage is that a foreigner was not to be chosen as a ruler over the Jewish people.

When he read that phrase, he wept for he remembered his Edomite ancestry.

However, the people accepted his Hasmonaean or his Maccabean ancestry through his grandmother Mariamne, and they cried out repeatedly, "Do not be dismayed, you are indeed our brother.

Herod Agrippa did what he could because of his own insecurities about his Edomite ancestry to please the leadership of Israel.

One of the things he did to please them was to behead or kill James.

To please them even further, he proceeded to seize Peter also.

But Peter was not immediately executed.

Fortunately, it turned out to be *the Feast of Unleavened Bread*.

This is an expression that includes both the Passover Feast and the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

It was the Passover season either in the year 43 or 44 A.D.

**READ 12:4**

Peter was arrested and imprisoned.

This was Peter's third imprisonment, having been in prison twice before (Acts 4:3; 5:18).

Furthermore, Herod Agrippa I had him guarded by a squad of 16 soldiers.

Four at a time, four times a day, for six hours each they would guard Peter.
Of the four who were appointed at any one watching period, two were chained to Peter and two were stationed outside the prison door.

Usually this kind of action was reserved only for dangerous political prisoners such as Barabbas and not for someone like Peter.

Perhaps Agrippa I knew about Peter's previous miraculous escape recorded in Acts 5:19, and he intended to make sure it would not happen again, obviously not believing that the escape was miraculous.

Here the term *Passover* is used of all eight days, the one day of the Feast of Passover and the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

During these eight days executions were not permitted.

The intent was to bring him out after the Feast of Unleavened Bread, bring him forth before the Judgment Seat and execute him.

**READ 12:5**

The response of the Congregation was *prayer*.

The Congregation prayed earnestly on behalf of Peter.

This was a major crisis for the Jerusalem Congregation.

They suffered several crises before, but this was a major crisis because the attack was aimed specifically against the apostolic leaders of the Congregation.

James was now dead, and Peter was in danger of following James' footsteps and be executed as well.

**III. THE DELIVERANCE OF PETER - 12:6-17**

Before moving into that passage, the contrast between the way God dealt with James and the way God dealt with Peter should not be missed.

People like to quote Hebrews 13:8, *Yeshua Ha-Mashiah the same yesterday and today, and for ever* and they like to apply it to the works of God.

Because people were healed then, God must always heal people now, etc.
But one must ignore the context of Hebrews and ignore events like these in the Book of Acts where obviously God did not deal *the same yesterday and today, and for ever.*

Hebrews 13:8 deals with Yeshua’s divine nature.

As to His divine nature, He is *the same yesterday and today, and for ever.*

He always was God; He is still God; He always will be God.

In that sense Yeshua is always *the same yesterday and today, and for ever.*

But in the way He works He is not always *the same yesterday and today, and for ever.*

Take, for example, the issue of eating.

From Adam until Noah man was to be vegetarian.

From Noah to Moses man could eat anything he wanted to.

From Moses to Yeshua only certain foods were clean.

Certain foods were not clean or some were kosher, some were not kosher.

Now all meats are clean.

The events of Acts 12 provide another example.

He chose to allow James to die, but He did not choose to allow Peter to die but chose to miraculously save Peter’s life.

Again, in His work or program He is not *the same yesterday and today, and for ever,* but in His divine nature, He is *the same yesterday and today, and for ever.*

A. **The Circumstances - 12:6**

READ 12:6

It was the night of the eighth day of the Passover.
The very next morning Peter was scheduled to appear before the Judgment Seat where the sentence could be pronounced.

Then he would die the next morning.

That same night Peter was sleeping, a fact that shows he was not concerned, he was not anxious, he was not worried.

Although he knew that James was killed, he was not worried because he had a promise from Yeshua that James did not have.

Yeshua promised him that while Peter would be executed for his faith, it would happen when he was of old age (John 21:18,19).

B. The Escape - 12:7-10

Peter's escape began in verses 7-8 with the angelic visitation.

READ 12:7-8

There was the sudden appearance of an angel.

Once again in the Book of Acts an angel was used by God for the purpose of deliverance.

With the arrival of the angel a light shined in the cell.

The appearance of light was also common with the appearance of angels.

The light was probably a reflection of God's Shechinah Glory.

While the light of the angel did provide light for Peter, it did not awaken the soldiers.

The message of the angel was Rise up quickly.

What gave Peter the ability to rise up quickly was that suddenly, miraculously the chains fell off his hands.

This was a necessary miracle if Peter was to escape without waking the two soldiers who were chained to him.
In verse eight came the angel's instructions for Peter to dress himself step by step.

This was not a hurried escape.

Everything was done slowly and meticulously.

Peter was told to gird himself, to put on his sandals, and to put his coat around him.

Everything was done quietly, step by step.

Only after the preparations were done with that the angel said to him, *follow me*.

Verses 9-10 record the actual escape.

**READ 12:9-10**

At this point Peter did not realize that what was happening was really happening.

He assumed that he was seeing a vision.

But what is happening here is a reality, not a vision.

In verse 10, Peter exited from the prison.

The first guard was the two soldiers at the cell door who were part of the squad that was guarding him.

The second guard was the guard of the prison house itself.\(^2\)

When they got to the gate that led from the prison courtyard into the streets of the city, this iron gate suddenly opened of *its own accord*, a miraculous opening of the iron gate.

In fact, the Greek word is *automatos*, which is the Greek word from which the English word "automatic" comes from.\(^3\)

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\(^3\) Word Pictures in the New Testament, The Kingdom Christian Scholar Library
The doors automatically opened up for Peter.

They then went out through the gate and past the first street beyond the prison house.

The angel continued escorting Peter as far as one street down but no further.

From then on Peter needed no more help from the angel as far as being guided in which direction to go.

C. **Peter's Realization - 12:11**

**READ 12:11**

Following his deliverance by the angel and the disappearance of the angel, Peter now realized that all that happened was not a vision but objective fact.

D. **Peter's Arrival At The House - 12:12-17**

The arrival itself is in verse 12

**READ 12:12**

Finally when he did grasp what had happened he went to the house of Mary.


Mary or Miriam the mother of Yeshua; Mary or Miriam of Bethany who was the sister of Martha and Lazarus; Mary from Magdalene; Miriam the wife of Cleophas; Mary the mother of James and John; and, Miriam the mother of John whose surname was Mark.

This was not John the Apostle but John Mark.

This is the first mention of Mark.

Mark will play a minor role in the Book of Acts.

However he plays a major role in the history in that he wrote the Gospel of Mark.
He was a disciple of Peter.

The name *John* is the English rendering of his Hebrew name, Yochanan.

*Mark* was his Roman or Latin name.

He probably also had a Greek name but it was not given.

He was best known among the Romans.

It was to the Romans that his gospel was written.

This is why he was better known by his Latin name *Mark* rather than his Jewish name of *John*.

In I Peter 5:13, Peter refers to Mark as his "son."

This means Peter was the one who led Mark to the Lord.

His mother must have been a wealthy woman because she had a large home big enough to house these many disciples.

It must have been a regular place of meeting for at least a segment of the Congregation since Peter knew exactly where to go to find fellow believers meeting.

Peter chose to inform the brethren of his release before he fled from the city.

This prayer meeting had been going on all night.

By this time there were thousands of believers in Jerusalem.

It was impossible for them to all come together in one meeting.

There were no congregation buildings in those days.

Congregations were split into smaller house-units.

Every house was apparently headed up by either an apostle or an elder of the Congregation of Jerusalem.
Apparently this was the house-congregation group that Peter was in charge of, and he knew exactly where to go.

Verse 13 records the account of Peter and Rhoda.

**READ 12:13**

Peter came and began knocking on *the door of the gate.*

This was not the door to the house, but the door that led through the gate into a courtyard.

Rhoda, a maid, came to answer.

She was a female slave⁴, and the name *Rhoda* means "rose."⁵

Verses 14-15 give the account of Rhoda and the prayer group.

**READ 12:14-15**

When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so excited that she ran back into the house without opening the door and told everybody inside the house that Peter was standing outside the gate.

But they responded in unbelief (v. 12:15).

People have accused this group of not expecting an answer to their prayers, but that may not be the whole picture.

They may very well have been expecting God to answer, but did not expect God to answer in this specific way.

Or perhaps they were not expecting and perhaps doubts had crept in because James was killed contrary to their prayers.

But Rhoda kept on affirming confidently that it really was Peter who was standing out there.

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Finally they mentioned that maybe it was *his angel*.

She finally convinced them that there was at least something or someone that was out there, but their conclusion was that it might be Peter's angel.

There was a common Jewish concept that a person's guardian angel looked like that person.⁶

They concluded that it was not really Peter, but it was Peter's angel, and because it was Peter's guardian angel, he probably looked like Peter as well.

Finally the group realized that it was indeed Peter (12:16).

**READ 12:16**

Peter continued knocking, and now everybody heard Peter's knock.

This means that Peter, in his frustration for not having seen the door opened earlier, began knocking louder.

When they opened the door the whole group rushed out to the courtyard to make sure it really was Peter.

Finally they saw him and they were amazed their prayer had been answered.

Peter then gave his explanation and his charge (v. 12:17).

**READ 12:17**

He began to signal or to shake his hand in a downward motion.

Peter asked for silence, and wanted instant quiet and their total attention.

Peter told them the full story how the Lord had brought him forth out of prison.

He instructs them to tell James.

This was not James the Apostle who was killed in verses 1-2, but James the half-brother of Yeshua.

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⁶ Logos 2.0, Bible Knowledge Commentary, Logos 2.0, Matthew Henry’s Commentary
By this time had already reached a very prominent position in the Congregation of Jerusalem as the leading pastor.

Now with Peter about to leave Jerusalem because of this persecution, James will have to take charge of the congregation.

When he tells them to inform the other believers he’s speaking of the other house-congregations.

There were too many believers to all meet together in one place so they had to break up into different house-congregations.

Peter led one house-congregation while James was leading another group.

With this Peter flees.

Luke chose not to state where.

But we do know something about Peter's travels from other passages.

According to I Corinthians 9:5, he had an itinerant ministry, and spent some time in Corinth (I Corinthians 1:12), Antioch of Pisidia (Galatians 2:11), Asia Minor (I Peter 1:1), and Babylon (I Peter 5:13).

Except for his brief appearance at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, the story of Peter ends here.

Beginning in chapter 13, Luke takes up the story of Paul.

Again, the purpose of Acts was to tell the story of Peter and Paul.

IV. THE RESULTS - 12:18-25

A. On Herod Agrippa - 12:18-23

Verse 18 records the reaction of the soldiers over Peter's escape.

READ 12:18

The Greek word for commotion means "to agitate."
They were extremely agitated.

All 16 soldiers were agitated since their lives were now on the line. Verse 19 records the reaction of Herod Agrippa.

**READ 12:19**

He made a city wide search, if not more, but failed to find Peter. At that point he examined the guards.

The Greek word examine means "to sift up and down," "to question thoroughly." In other words, they were being court-martialed.

Perhaps he suspected them of complicity in letting Peter escape. He then commanded them to be put to death, and so they were led away to execution.

This was standard Roman procedure for a soldier who failed in his responsibility.

It was then that Herod traveled to Caesarea.

This was also a standard procedure for the ruler of Judea following the Passover. He stayed there because Caesarea was the political Roman headquarters for Judea.

Verses 20-23 detail the death of Herod Agrippa I.

It began with a conflict (Acts 12:20).

**READ 12:20**

They had as the Greek word implies, "a hot quarrel."

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Phoenicia belonged to Syria and was not part of Agrippa's territory.

Ambassadors of Tyre and Sidon seek an audience with him.

They were able to make Blastus the king's chamberlain, the one in charge of Agrippa's bedroom, their friend probably by means of bribery.

They sued for peace, they kept on asking for peace, they needed peace with Herod Agrippa.

Tyre and Sidon were dependent upon Galilee for their food supply, especially grain, and Galilee was under Agrippa's jurisdiction.

Herod, to show his displeasure with Tyre and Sidon, cut off their food supply.

Verse 21 records the occasion.

**READ 12:21**

Josephus recorded this event and states that it was a festival day in honor of Caesar Claudius.

On that day *Herod arrayed himself in royal apparel.*

According to Josephus, it included a robe made with silver threads.

Herod *and sat on the throne,* which was the Judgment Seat, and addressed the people.

According to verse 22, the people began worshipping Herod.

**READ 12:22**

They started shouting to him that this was *the voice of a god, and not of a man.*

Josephus verifies this because Josephus wrote,

"Clad in a garment woven completely of silver so that its texture was indeed wondrous when he entered the theater at daybreak there the silver

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illuminated by the touch of the first rays of the sun was wondrously radiant and by its glitter inspired fear and awe in those who gazed intently upon it.

Straight-away his followers raised their voices from various directions addressed him as god." 10

According to verse 23 that caused the death of Herod.

READ 12:23

It appears that Herod accepted the praise rather than acknowledging God.

For this reason he was judged.

He was worm-eaten and died of acute intestinal problems.

Josephus also wrote about this: "The king was struck with a deadly malady after being hailed divine.

He was smitten one day and died five days later, and the rotting of his flesh produced worms."

Herod was dead after five days, and this allowed Peter to return to Jerusalem later in Acts 15.

The result for Herod Agrippa was death.

B. Upon The Congregation - 12:24-25

Verse 24 states simply that the word of God continued to grow and multiply.

READ 12:24-25

The Congregation continued to thrive in the face of opposition.

As for Barnabas and Saul (Acts 12:25), they returned from Jerusalem to Antioch, taking John Mark with them setting the stage for the first missionary journey in chapters 13-14.

10 Antiquities of the Jews (19. 8. 2).

Verse one introduces the leaders of the Congregation of Antioch.

READ 13:1

The Congregation of Antioch had a plurality of leaders which was the standard for the New Testament Congregation.

As a result of the growth of the Congregation (chapter 11), Antioch now became the base for Gentile Christianity and Gentile evangelism.

This Congregation had two types of leaders: first, there were prophets. Prophets were those who received direct revelation from God.

Second, there were teachers, meaning those who were gifted at communicating what was revealed by the prophets.

The way the Greek reads, the first three listed were prophets and the last two listed were teachers.¹

The first leader was Barnabas, who was an apostle as well as a prophet.

Second, Symeon called Niger.

Symeon was a Hebrew name, showing that he was a Jew by birth.

The word Niger is the Latin term for "black" which shows that he was a Jew from Africa.

Some believe that this was the same Simon as Simon of Cyrene, but there is no hard evidence to prove that.

Third, Lucius of Cyrene.

¹ Word Pictures in the New Testament, The Kingdom Christian Scholar Library, The double use of \te\ here makes three prophets (Barnabas, Symeon, Lucius) and two teachers (Manaen and Saul).
Cyrene is in North Africa.

He could very well have been one of the founders of the Congregation.

The Congregation of Antioch was founded by believers that came to Antioch from Cyrene (11:20).

Fourth, Manaen.

*Manaen* is the Greek form for the Hebrew "Menachem," showing he was a Jew.

The *Herod* here was Herod Antipas.

The term *foster-brother* found in some translations was a title of honor given to a boy of the same age as the royal prince who was brought up with the royal prince in the royal court.

So Manaen was a Jew who was brought up in the same royal court as Herod Antipas.

His presence and leadership shows that this was a Congregation of prestige.

Fifth, Saul, who was also known as Paul, was also an apostle and a prophet.

At this point, Paul had given no prophecy as yet.

That is why he was listed not with the prophets, but with the teachers.

These men constituted the plurality of the leaders of the Congregation of Antioch.

Verse two deals with the call of the Spirit.

**READ 13:2**

The way they served the Lord in this context was by spending time in prayer and intercession.

Not only do other believers minister to us, not only does God minister to us, but we have the capacity to ministry to God by spending time in prayer and intercession.
Not only were they praying, but they were fasting.

Fasting is nowhere commanded for the New Testament believer.

Fasting is not obligatory, but it is a valid option and believers may choose to fast for a specific purpose or reason.

For some reason they were fasting as well as praying in their ministry to the Lord.

It was at that point that the Holy Spirit had something to say.

They received a divine revelation from the Holy Spirit.

Since three of these five men were prophets and since a prophet was one who received divine revelation from God, it means that the Holy Spirit spoke through one or more of these three prophets.

The fact that the Holy Spirit has the capability to speak shows that the Holy Spirit is a personality, not merely a force or a thing.

The Holy Spirit said that Barnabas and Saul must be separated from the others because these two have a special mission.

Barnabas must be separated from being a prophet in the Congregation.

Paul must be separated from those who are the teachers in the Congregation.

They are to be set apart for a special mission.

At this point the order is *Barnabas and Saul*, because at this time Barnabas had the preeminence.

However, after the first missionary journey was over, the order, in most cases, is reversed: *Paul and Barnabas*.

Paul, during this first missionary journey, Paul took over the leadership.

That special work to which the Holy Spirit called Barnabas and Saul was the first missionary journey detailed in chapters 13-14.
In keeping with the command of the Holy Spirit, the two men were set aside by the Congregation in Antioch (13:3).

READ 13:3

They were already fasting and praying, but now they fasted and prayed some more, in order to confirm the call.

After more fasting and more praying, it was very evident that the message they heard was a valid message from God.

As part of the process of separating these two men, they *laid their hands on them*.

This was a Jewish method of identification and appointment.

With the laying on of hands by the leadership of the Congregation of Antioch, they were consecrated.

This was the means of their being set aside.

While they were appointed and set aside by God, they were also set aside by men.

God made His will known through the leadership of the Congregation of Antioch.

Barnabas and Saul were under the authority of the local Congregation of Antioch.

This fact is signified in that the leadership laid their hands upon Barnabas and Saul.

The ministry of these two men, Barnabas and Saul, was to be considered as an extension of the work of the Congregation of Antioch.

This begins the final phase of Acts 1:8, and the order was: first, Jerusalem; second, Judea; third, Samaria; and, fourth, the uttermost parts of the earth.

In the first twelve chapters, the gospel was proclaimed to Jerusalem, to Judea and to the Samaritans.
Now, in chapter thirteen, comes the final phase, the uttermost parts of the earth.

II. THE WITNESS ON THE ISLAND OF CYPRUS - 13:4-12

Verse four describes the journey to Cyprus.

READ 13:4

They went down to Seleucia.

Seleucia was a seaport sixteen miles from Antioch, built in the year 301 B.C.

From that port, they sailed to Cyprus.

Cyprus is an island 130 miles southwest of Antioch; a Greek island in the Mediterranean Sea.

It is the third largest island in the Mediterranean.

It is 148 miles long and anywhere from 15 to 20 miles broad.

It was a very important trade center as early as the 19th century B.C.

In the year 77 B.C., it became part of the Roman Empire.

In the year 27 B.C., it became a separate entity with its own Roman legate.

In the year 22 B.C., it was turned over to the Roman Senate and under the authority of a proconsul, as was the case right here.

By this time, Cyprus had a large Jewish population that had been there for two hundred years.

It was on this island that the first missionary journey began.

The first stop on the island was Salamis (13:5).

READ 13:5
Salamis was the largest city on the island located on the east coast of Cyprus and it was the chief commercial center.

Today, it is known as Soli.

In keeping with Romans 1:16, they went to the Jew first.

As the missionary work of the Apostle of the Gentiles begins, everywhere Paul went, he went to the Jew first.

They will always go to the Jew first.

Although their specific calling was to go to the Gentiles, the principle of Romans 1:16 stands, regardless of specific individual calling.

Evidently a large number of Jews resided there, for Barnabas and Saul proclaimed God’s Word . . . in the . . . synagogues, not “a” synagogue.²

With them was John.

This John was the same as John Mark of 12:25.

He was a helper, he was a servant to the apostles.

John Mark was from Jerusalem (12:12), and he was a cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10).

Verses 6-12 record their ministry in another town in Cyprus, Paphos, known today as Bafro in the western part of the island.

In those days it was a cultic center.

It was the capitol of the senatorial province of Cyprus.

That was where the proconsul lived.

It was also the center of worship of the goddess Aphrodite.

Verses 6-7a introduce Elymas Bar-Yeshua, who was a sorcerer (13:6), an astrologer, a false prophet.

READ 13:6-7

He was a Jew by nationality.

Bar-Yeshua was not a name, but a title meaning, "son of Yeshua".

His father's name was Yeshua, a common name among Jews of those days.

His own name was Elymas.

By way of position (13:7a), he worked for the proconsul.

Sergius Paulus was a proconsul because in the year 22 B.C., Augustus made Cyprus a senatorial province.

This meant that Cyprus was under the control of the senate, rather than being under the control of the Emperor.

That is why the leader was a proconsul and not a procurator.

He is described a prudent and an intellectual man.

As such he was interested in hearing the word of God (13:7b).

But Barnabas and Paul received opposition from Elymas the sorcerer (13:8).

READ 13:8

The interpretation of his name, Elymas, means "wise" or "learned."³

This sorcerer persisted in his opposition, seeking to turn aside the proconsul from the faith.

Verses 9-11a present Paul's condemnation of him.

READ 13:9-11

Some claim that Saul, after being saved, changed his name to Paul, but that is not true.

³ Strong's Greek and Hebrew Lexicon, entry number 1681, 3097
Jews of the Diaspora, like Paul, had two names: a Jewish one and a Gentile one.

Paul did not change his name, but always had both names of Saul and Paul.

At this point the emphasis shifts to his Roman or Latin name.

He was a Roman citizen now operating in the Gentile Roman world.

When his Gentile ministry begins, that is when his Gentile name is used.

He now takes the lead and from now on, with rare exceptions, his name will appear before Barnabas.

Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, controlled by the Holy Spirit, especially for this emergency, now brings forth the message to the sorcerer (13:10).

In Aramaic, Bar-Yeshua means “Son of Yeshua.”

But Paul told him that instead of being a son of Yeshua (“Yeshua” means “Yahweh is salvation”), Elymas was a child (huie, lit., “son”) of the devil.

Paul lashed at him with strong language.

Bar-Yeshua was an enemy of everything that is right, he was full of . . . deceit and trickery and perverting the right ways of the Lord.

Sorcery, exercising power by the help and control of demons, had led him into all kinds of deception of others and distortion of the truth.

The occult is indeed dangerous.4

In judgment, he was suddenly rendered blind (13:11).

He will be kept in physical blindness for a time, meaning that this would be a temporary judgment.

Immediately he lost all vision and then he had to be led by the hand.

As a result, Sergius Paulus became a believer (13:12).

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READ 13:12

This was a major success story in the first missionary journey.

III. THE WITNESS IN ANTIOCH OF PISIDIA - 13:13-52

A. Their Arrival - 13:13-15

The previous ministry in Cyprus was a major turning point in that it began with Barnabas in charge, but ended with Paul taking charge.

This comes out clearly in the next segment.

It starts out in verse 13 with the journey from Paphos to Perga in Pamphylia.

READ 13:13

Perga is now known as Murtana, located in modern day Turkey.

It was the capitol of the Province of Pamphylia.

Perga was seven miles inland on the Cestius River.

From Paphos to Perga was about 180 miles by water.

The way the verse reads, Paul and companions, shows that Paul now took the lead.

Paul and his company set sail from Paphos and sailed 180 miles until they came to Perga in Pamphylia.

It was at that point that John Mark left them to return to Jerusalem.

The Greek word means that he withdrew and he went away from them.⁵

The text does not say why John Mark left.

There have been a number of suggested reasons:

first, that John Mark may have resented the fact that Paul took charge from Barnabas, who was the cousin of John Mark;

second, John Mark, perhaps, did not like the new emphasis to Gentiles;

third, he may was afraid of the dangers facing them;

fourth, he may have been homesick; and,

fifth, Paul may have become ill as is implied in Galatians 4:13 and this discouraged John Mark and so he went home.

All of these suggestions are guess work and no one really knows why John Mark decided to leave.

What is known from the Book of Acts is that Paul did not consider John Mark's reason a good one for leaving.

They then traveled from Perga to Antioch of Pisidia (13:14a), which was about another 100 miles north of Perga.

**READ 13:14**

Pisidia and Phrygia are regions in the Province of Galatia.

Antioch was actually in Phrygia, but it was known as Antioch of Pisidia for two reasons:

first; because it was very near to the border with Pisidia and

second to distinguish it from the Antioch on the Maender River.

Antioch of Pisidia was the center of the east-west traffic in the area.

A military road, a royal road, linked it with Lystra, which was 120 miles to the southeast.

It was one of the 16 cities found in the Hellenistic period between the years 312 and 280 B.C.

In the year 25 B.C., it became part of the Roman Province of Galatia and was named Colonia Caesaria and Antiochia.
Then, in the year six B.C., Augustus made it a Roman Colony.

This meant that army veterans could settle there after twenty years of military service.

This city also had a large Jewish population.

Paul and Barnabas did not stay to preach the gospel in Perga, but they did preach the gospel in Perga on the way back (14:25).

For now, they chose to bypass preaching the gospel to Perga and just pass through to reach Antioch of Pisidia.

This required 100 miles of travel by foot.

The journey required the crossing of rough mountains with many perils, but they went on boldly to preach the gospel to that city.

Once again the Apostle of the Gentiles did not forget the principle of Romans 1:16 and so he once again went to the Jew first (13:14b-15).

They went to the synagogue not only to worship on the Sabbath with their fellow Jews, but they went in there for the purpose of doing evangelism.

Verse 15 reveals Paul’s opportunity to preach the gospel in the synagogue.

**READ 13:15**

Every Sabbath there was a weekly reading of the law, as well as a weekly reading of the prophets.

After the reading of the law and the prophets, then came the sermon.

It was the duty of the rulers of the synagogue to select both readers and speakers.

It was obvious from the way Paul and Barnabas looked that they were distinguished guests.

If there was a distinguished guest present he could be asked to speak.
While none of the rulers in the synagogue really knew Paul and Barnabas, they could see that they were men of learning, and so gave them an invitation to say something by way of exhortation.

This was not an opportunity that Paul could skip.

Paul takes the opportunity to preach a detailed sermon to the Jewish people in the synagogue of Antioch of Pisidia.

1. **Introduction: A Historical Review - 13:16-22**

Verse 16 gives the introduction.

**READ 13:16**

This is the first and only full sermon by Paul to a Jewish audience recorded in the Book of Acts.

Paul address’ the Men of Israel, or fellow Jews, and Gentiles, the God-fearers who were Gentiles who believed in the God of Israel, but did not become full proselytes.

In verses 17-22 Paul began by sharing some historical background.

He began by summarizing the Exodus (13:17).

**READ 13:17**

Paul next summarized the wilderness wandering (13:18).

**READ 13:18**

Then came the conquest of the Land(13:19).

**READ 13:19**

Next he outlines the period of the judges (13:20).
READ 13:20

This was done over some 450 years

Paul is being approximate here.

The 450 years (13:20) probably includes the oppression in Egypt (400 years), the wilderness sojourn (40 years), and the Conquest of Canaan under Joshua (10 years).6

Samuel was the last of the line of judges, but also the first of the long line of prophets.

After the period of the Judges we moved into the period of the monarchy.

The first monarch, the first King was Saul (13:21).

READ 13:21

After the judgeship of Samuel, they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul, the son of Kish of the Tribe of Benjamin.

Paul says he reigned for 40 years.

This is a fact not recorded in the Old Testament, but Josephus does verify this figure.7

Finally, Paul moved on to the Davidic kingdom (13:22).

READ 13:22

The point of this entire historical review from the call of Abraham to the rule of David is two fold,

1) the first point was that God had prepared for the coming of the Messiah and

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2) the second point is that the Messiah was a descendant of David.

After laying that background Paul moves into what he really wants to say.

The first witness to the Messiahship of Yeshua was John the Baptist in verses 23-25.


READ 13:23

Verse 23 picks up with David because the Messiah is a descendant of David.

From the line of David God brought to the Jewish people, a Saviour, which is Yeshua’s title, Yeshua, which is His name.

At this time there is fulfillment of God’s promise.

God finally did send the Messiah to Israel.

As a prelude came John's preaching (13:24).

READ 13:24

John was a herald of the king.

Before Yeshua actually began his messianic mission, John came preaching.

John began a repentance movement in preparation for the acceptance of the Messiahship of Yeshua.

John had a ministry to the whole nation telling them to prepare themselves for the coming of the Messiah, to prepare themselves by means of repentance and water baptism.

Finally, the time came for John's clear identification as to who the Messiah was (13:25).
READ 13:25

As John's mission was about to come to an end he began to raise a question.

John wanted to raise the question regarding the possibility of him being the Messiah, but then he wanted to quickly deny it.

Some people thought that John was the Messiah.

But John clearly denied being the Messiah.

He pointed out that the Messiah was soon to come.

The one coming after him, the very next one, will be the Messiah.

There will be no more prophets between John and the Messiah: the next one will be the Messiah.

B. The Death and The Burial of The Messiah - 13:26-29

Paul next dealt with the essence of the gospel: the death and the burial of the Messiah (13:26).

READ 13:26-29

Paul begins with the rejection of the Messiah (13:27).

Those who rejected Yeshua were responsible for their decision.

They were guilty of ignorance, but ignorance does not absolve them.

They did not know He was the Messiah, nor did they recognize the voices of the prophets.

Prophets read out loud every Sabbath, and so, indeed, they are without excuse.

Inadvertently, they fulfilled the prophets by condemning him, and by condemning him they rejected him.
In their ignorant condemnation they fulfilled what the prophets prophesied concerning the suffering of the Messiah.

Then they became guilty of killing the Messiah (13:28).

They accused him of blasphemy, but could not produce the two witnesses which were needed to prove it.

Nevertheless, they still asked Pilate to execute Yeshua in accordance with civil law and so, as a result, Yeshua was crucified.

Verse 29 records the burial of the Messiah.

Once all the prophecies about the death of the Messiah were fulfilled, then they were able to take him down from the tree.

Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea removed him from the cross, and they laid him in a tomb.

The death of the Messiah, and the burial of the Messiah, are two of the three points of the gospel (I Cor. 15:1-4).

**c. The Resurrection of the Messiah - 13:30-37**

The resurrection is the third part of the gospel.

**READ 13:30-31**

*But God raised him from the dead* (13:30) and there were witnesses to that fact (13:31).

*Yeshua was seen for many days,* a period of forty days -- Acts 1:3.

He was seen by those who traveled with him.

He was seen by his disciples, who knew Him best, and would not be fooled by an impostor.

They are now *witnesses unto the people,* the apostles back in Jerusalem are now witnesses of the fact of the resurrection.
Verses 32-33 present the good news.

**READ 13:32-33**

The good news is that God has fulfilled His promises.

The promise was made to the fathers and it has now been fulfilled.

The Messiah has come, in that *he raised up Yeshua*.

This thought “to raise up Yeshua” is taken in three different ways by commentators.

Some feel that the phrase refers to the birth of Yeshua, others feel that it refers to the resurrection of Yeshua, and finally others feel that it refers to the exaltation of Yeshua.10

Good arguments are put forward for each position, but the point is the same no matter which position you take -- God has fulfilled His promise either by bringing Yeshua, resurrecting Yeshua or exalting Yeshua.

Paul then quoted Psalm 2:7, a Psalm that the rabbis considered messianic.11

Then, in verse 34, Paul again came to the resurrection.

**READ 13:34**

Yeshua will never die again and, therefore, he is the first-fruits of the first resurrection.

Paul then quotes Isaiah 55: *I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.*

This is a reference to the Davidic Covenant.

The Davidic Covenant promised four eternal things: an eternal house, an eternal kingdom, an eternal throne and an eternal descendant.

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8 AG Fruchtenbaum, Ariel Ministries Radio Manuscript 169, pg. 9  
9 Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 9, pg. 426  
10 Logos 2.0, Bible Knowledge Commentary  
11 Sukkah 52a, Midrash Thillim (to Psalm 2:7), Artscroll Tenach Series, Psalms, Vol. 1
The resurrection of Yeshua into an eternal state guarantees the eternity of the Davidic Covenant.

By the resurrection, the eternity of the Davidic Covenant is assured.

In verse 35, he quoted Psalm 16:10 which, likewise, prophesied that the Messiah would not see corruption.

READ 13:35

Finally, in verses 36-37, the application of that psalm is made.

READ 13:36-37

In verse 36, Paul pointed out that the psalmist could not have been speaking of David because he did see corruption.

He did die after serving his generation.

He was buried, and he did see corruption, he went to dust.

In contrast to David’s corruption, the psalm spoke of the Messiah (13:37).

So Paul made his point: Yeshua is the Messiah.

3. **The Conclusion - 13:38-41**

The conclusion of Paul's sermon begins in verses 38-39 with the promise of forgiveness and this involves the remission of sin (13:38).

READ 13:38

This is something therefore that the *brethren*, in this case, fellow Jews, should know: *that through this man*, that is, through Yeshua of Nazareth, forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.12

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The very One who was killed and raised from the dead was now being proclaimed and if they believe they would receive remission of sins, the forgiveness of sins.

They also received justification (13:39).

**READ 13:39**

Justification means "to be declared righteous."

By faith in Yeshua the Messiah, a man can be justified from every charge of guilt under the Mosaic Law.

Paul then concluded in verses 40-41 with a warning from the prophets.

**READ 13:40-41**

This was a warning of the coming judgment of A.D. 70.

Paul then quoted Habakkuk 1:5.

This prophecy falls into the category of literal plus application.

Literally Habakkuk spoke of the Babylonian judgment, but now an application is made to the A.D. 70 judgment.

The one point of similarity lay in the that he was addressing those who might be despising and mocking the Messianic nature of Yeshua.

**C. The Results - 13:42-52**

The first result deals with that particular Sabbath (13:42-43).

**READ 13:42-43**

The Jewish audience came with a request (13:42).

The request was that they would come back the next Sabbath to speak these words again.
This request probably came from the elders of the synagogue.

This would give them a week's time to investigate these claims to see if they were valid.

When the synagogue broke up and the service came to an end (13:43), many individuals followed Paul and Barnabas.

This group consisted of two types of people: Jews, who were born that way, and the devout converts, full Gentile converts.

These wanted to hear more from Paul right away without having to wait until the next Sabbath.

Apparently, these became believers on that Sabbath and so Paul was able to urge them to continue in the grace of God.

Verses 44-52 give the results of the next Sabbath.

Verse 44 gives the response.

READ 13:44

During the week, the news of the new message had spread rapidly and widely and a crowd gathered together.

It not only included the crowd in the synagogue, but the many who had to stand outside.

They came together for a purpose, to hear from Jewish preachers.

From other Jewish preachers they heard about the necessity of submission to the law of circumcision.

From these new Jewish preachers, they heard about the grace of God which was far more appealing.

Verse 45 records what the Jewish reaction was.

READ 13:45
The Jewish leaders saw the multitudes and they saw how the preaching of grace attracted a lot of attention.

They noted that the preaching of the law attracted only a few.

The result was that *they were filled with jealousy*.

They were now controlled by jealousy, and began contradicting Paul's interpretation of Scripture.

They also said things directly against Yeshua the Messiah.

This, in turn, led to the response by the apostles (13:46-47).

**READ 13:46-47**

At this point, the apostles turned to the leaders and took their stand.

This crucial statement, in vs. 46, must not be ignored.

Paul says, “We had to speak the word of God to you first.”

*It was necessary for them to speak first to the Jewish community.*

Why was it necessary?

It was necessary because the gospel is always to the Jew first, in accordance with Romans 1:16.

This necessity has never been canceled.

*It was necessary* for the gospel to be first proclaimed to the Jews, but now that it has been rejected.

Only now are the apostles free to turn to the Gentiles.

Now they declare they will *turn to the Gentiles*, because in accordance with Romans 1:16, the gospel is also to the Gentiles.

Throughout the Book of Acts, the order is to the Jew first and then also to the Gentiles.
To prove this from Scripture, Paul quoted Isaiah 49:6.

Isaiah 49:6 predicted that the Messiah would also be a light to the Gentiles.

Verses 48-49 give two results of this statement.

The first result was the salvation of the Gentiles (13:48).

**READ 13:48**

Those who were appointed by God to receive eternal life through His sovereignty, through election, through predestination, those believed, and only those who were appointed believed.

As a result, many of the Gentiles were saved.

Please stay in balance here.

From this statement don’t jump to the conclusion that salvation is only God’s responsibility and that man has nothing to do with it.

Salvation is a two headed coin.

One side consists of God’s responsibility, the other side consists of man’s responsibility.

In this statement we are looking primarily at God’s responsibility, His sovereignty, election, and predestination.

God chooses who will be saved.

He appoints them to eternal life.

The part man plays in salvation is secondary in this sentence.

Man’s part is lies in the fact that each person makes a deliberate and responsible decision of faith.

These people, whom God had appointed for eternal life, deliberately reached out and received the free gift of eternal life.
The rest deliberately and responsibly rejected the gift.

The second result was the spread of the gospel (13:49).

READ 13:49

The strategic location of Antioch of Pisidia would help its spread throughout the region.

The ministry grew in spite of opposition.

This in turn led to the opposition and expulsion of the apostles (13:50).

READ 13:50

These women were Gentile female converts to Judaism, if not full converts, at least proselytes of the gate.

They were married to city officials.

These women apparently instigated their husbands, which then resulted in a persecution against Paul and Barnabas and, as a result, the expulsion.

This was a forced expulsion.

Paul and Barnabas were treated as if they were a public nuisance.

Verse 51 gives the apostolic response.

READ 13:51

This was a visible, physical, symbolic action marking a complete break of fellowship and a renunciation with a person or community.

This is what Yeshua commanded them to do in Matthew 10:14, Mark 6:11, Luke 9:5 and 10:11.

The procedure was to take the sandals off the feet and the dust was shaken towards the group or place being renounced as a symbolic token.
From there they went to Iconium which will be the next city to be evangelized.

Meanwhile, those of the Congregation of Antioch of Pisidia were filled with joy (13:52).

**READ 13:52**

First of all they were *controlled with joy* because of their salvation.

Secondly, they were controlled by the Holy Spirit.

The persecution had the opposite of the intended effect: they kept on being filled by the Holy Spirit.

**IV. THE WITNESS IN ICONIUM - 14:1-7**

The next city to be evangelized was Iconium (14:1).

**READ 14:1**

The city of Iconium is today known as Konia, sometimes spelled Konya, in Turkey.

It was southeast of Antioch of Pisidia by about 90 miles.

It stood at the foot of the Taurus Mountains and was sometimes known as the Damascus of Asia Minor.

It was the most eastern city of Galacia and became part of the Roman Empire in the year 25 B.C. and incorporated as part of the Province of Galacia.

It was a center of a very thriving weaving industry.

In keeping with the principle of Romans 1:16, Paul went to the Jew first.

When he came to Iconium, they went *as usual* into the Jewish synagogue.  

Please note that going to the Jewish community first was Paul’s standard operating procedure.

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There they proclaimed the gospel to them in such a way that a great multitude both of Jews and of Greeks believed.

This led to Jewish opposition (14:2).

READ 14:2

However, a segment of the Synagogue reacted negatively.

They disbelieved the word of God and this, in turn, meant that they were disobedient to the Word.

The opposition began with Jewish opposition, but it lead to Gentile opposition.

They caused the Gentiles to take an evil attitude towards the brethren which lead to the physical persecution of the believers.

Verse three describes the ministry in Iconium.

READ 14:3

In spite of the opposition, they were able to spend a long time there and minister.

During that time they spoke out boldly for the Lord.

The LORD was the basis of the boldness and the source of their boldness.

The content of their message was an emphasis was upon the grace of God through faith in Yeshua the Messiah.

To authenticate the message God allowed Barnabas and Paul to perform miracles.

This may be what Galatians 3:5 refers to.

**Galatians 3:5** Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?14

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Miracles were not being done on the basis of the law, but on the basis of grace through faith.

Again, only the apostles were able to do these signs and wonders.

This led to a great controversy in Iconium.

READ 14:4

The people were hotly debating the merits of the message.

Some were on the Jewish side and some were on the side of the apostles.

This led to a conspiracy against the apostles (14:5), and the intent was to stone them to death.

READ 14:5

They were both able to escape by help of the brethren (14:6-7).

READ 14:6-7

They escaped to some of the other cities of Asia Minor and Galatia and there continued their work.

V. THE WITNESS IN LYSTRA - 14:8-20a

READ 14:8

Lystra was a city in the region of Lyconia.

Lyconia was a region in the province of Galatia.

This was a district in the center of Asia Minor which was far more pagan than Greek.

The city that Paul went to next was Lystra, also mentioned in II Timothy 3:11, it was south of Iconium.
It was a small rural town off the major route.

It was made a Roman colony in 5 B.C. by Augustus Caesar.

During the years A.D. 37-72, it was ruled directly by Rome.

In verses 8-10, the account begins with the story of the healing of the cripple.

The point is that this man was crippled from the day he was born, he had never walked in his life.

Verses 9-10 describe the healing.

**READ 14:9-10**

H was listening to Paul.

Paul then realized that he had saving faith.

He had responded by faith to Paul's message, and this faith in turn could result in healing.

A miracle was performed as Paul called out with a loud voice, to attract the attention of others.

The result was that he leaped up in a single bound and began to walk around.

Verse 11-13 shows the response of the people.

According to verses 11-12 they drew a false conclusion.

The conclusion was that Paul and Barnabas are gods (14:12).

**READ 14:11-12**

They concluded that Paul and Barnabas were gods because they saw what Paul just did.

They saw the miracle, but they drew the wrong conclusions.
They were not speaking Greek which is why Paul did not understand what they were saying.

They went on to identify the two apostles as specific gods (14:12).

They identified Barnabus with the god Zeus -- which was his Greek name -- Jupiter was the Roman name of this "god."

Many statues of Jupiter/Zeus, picture him as a tall bearded man.

This may indicate that Barnabas was a tall and bearded man, taller than Paul.

Paul was identified with Hermes -- which is the Greek name -- Mercury is the Roman name.

The reason they concluded that Paul was Hermes/Mercury is that he was the chief speaker.

In Greek mythology Hermes, or Mercury, was known as the herald of the gods.

In both Greek and Roman mythology, he was the son of Zeus.

We know that Mercury was short, and this would imply that physically Paul was a short man.

It is interesting to note that archaeologists have uncovered the fact that Zeus and Hermes were the two gods that the people in this town worshipped.

This led to their desire to sacrifice (14:13).

**READ 14:13**

The priest of Jupiter came out because his temple was right there.

When he heard that Jupiter and Mercury were here he wanted to honor them with garlanded bulls.

These were common sacrifices for these gods.

It was at this point that what they were doing became evident to the apostles.
All this shows that although their city was within the Greek-Roman culture, the inhabitants of the city were still very pagan.

The sudden urge to sacrifice to two human beings who were mistaken as the gods Zeus and Hermes can be understood from the background of a legend prevalent in that day: the legend of Baucis and Philemon.

This legend was recorded by the Roman historian, Ovid.

The legend says that Jupiter and Mercury came down disguised as men, but no one in that area was willing to provide hospitality to them, except one elderly couple named Baucis and Philemon.

The two gods destroyed the local population for its inhospitality, but Baucis and Philemon became the priest and priestess of the temple of Jupiter because of their hospitality.

Because of that legend prevalent in the city, and because they just saw a miracle, they felt that to two gods had come again.

Not wanting to be destroyed, they were ready to offer sacrifices.

Verses 14-17 give the response of the apostles.

**READ 14:14-15**

Apparently someone speaking Greek had informed them of what was happening.

They responded by tearing their clothes.

The renting of their garments was a sign of grief and a sign of horror.

They deny being gods in the most emphatic of terms.

They are evangelists, not gods.

They plead with the people to turn from idolatry.

What they needed to do was turn to a living God.

Turn to a God who is a living God, not a lifeless statue.
In verses 15d-17, Paul makes some statements about this living God.

First, He is the God of creation: he made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is (15:15d).

READ 14:16

Second, He is a patient and long-suffering God.

He allowed the Gentiles to walk in their own ways and withdrew the strength of His grace.

READ 14:17

Third, He is the witnessing God.

He let the nations go their own way, but He did not leave Himself without a witness.

What was His witness?

He did good things for mankind, such as gave them rains and fruitful seasons.

Why mention these things?

Paul mentioned rains because Zeus/Jupiter was the God of rains.

But it was not Jupiter who gave them rain, but the God of heaven gave them rain.

He mentioned fruitful seasons because Mercury was the god of merchandise and the dispenser of good.

But it was not Mercury that gave them fruitful seasons, but the God of heaven.

As a result, it filled them with food and joy.

To summarize what Paul said in verses 15-17:

first, God is the living God, not a vain idol;
second, God is the creator of all things;

third, He has given men freedom; and,

fourth, he has given men a witness of Himself in that he has supplied the needs of his creatures.

Verse 18 describes the result.

READ 14:18

In this way, they rejected worship of themselves in contrast to others in those days who would have accepted.

According to verses 19-20a, this led to Jewish opposition again.

READ 14:19

The opposition was now much more organized.

The opposition was willing to travel 90 miles from Antioch of Pisidia and from Iconium to do the deed they are now doing.

This led to the stoning of Paul (14:19b).

This stoning is mentioned again in II Corinthians 11:25.

It was part of the persecution mentioned in II Timothy 3:11 and it was one of the sources of the marks which were branded on his body (Gal. 6:17).

Luke was a doctor, and he did not say Paul was dead.

The mob assumed he was dead because Paul was unconscious.

There is no miracle of resurrection in this account.

However, there was a miracle, the miracle of a miraculous recovery (14:20a).15

15 Logos 2.0, Bible Knowledge Commentary
READ 14:20

The *disciples stood round about him.*

The fact the *disciples* are mentioned shows that there were some that did believe, among whom was Timothy (16:1).

The would-be murderers had left and the disciples stayed behind to determine what to do since they too thought he might be dead.

Suddenly Paul got up.

Paul experienced a miraculous restoration to health.

He then with his own strength and went right back into the camp of the enemy.

VI. THE WITNESS IN DERBE - 14:20b-21a

Verse 20b describes the journey.

READ 14:20b

This was a 40 mile trip, only one day after being stoned, again showing a miraculous recovery.

It was located on the main road running east and west and had the imperial title of Claudia Derbe.

Its main religion was the Cult of Mithres.

Verse 21a tells about the ministry in Derbe.

READ 14:21

After they had evangelized the city for awhile, not being told exactly how long, they chose to leave.

In this case, apparently, there was no opposition; they merely proclaimed the gospel and they were able to proclaim it freely.
Instead of being forced out or expelled, as was the case in the previous cities, they made their own choice as exactly when to leave.

The result was that they *made many disciples.*

Many people within the city of Derbe did become believers and the Congregation in Derbe was, therefore, also established.

**VII. THE RETURN TO ANTIOCH - 14:21b-28**

Verse 21b describes the return route back.

They went through Lystra, where earlier Paul had been stoned; they then came to Iconium where he was earlier threatened; and, they came to Antioch of Pisidia from where he had been expelled.

Verses 22-23 describes their ministry as they want through these cities, a ministry which involved three things.

**READ 14:22**

*First*, they discipled them.

They established the disciples stronger in the faith.

*Second*, exhortation (14:22b).

They exhorted them to continue in the faith and not to be shaken in their belief in Yeshua because of severe trials.

Believers, you and I, may very well suffer on our way to the Kingdom.

*Third*, the appointment of elders (14:23).

**READ 14:23**

It should be noted that the elders were *appointed*, they were not elected by the congregation.\(^{16}\)

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Paul and Barnabas did the choosing here, the appointing.

They did not take a vote in a business meeting.

The congregational form of government is not a biblical, New Testament form of government.

Furthermore, the plural, elders, shows that there was a plurality of co-equal elders in the local Congregation.

The only-one-man-in-charge concept is not biblical either.

These were appointed in every Congregation.

There were a plurality of local Congregations and a plurality of elders were appointed over each local Congregation.

This was done by means of prayer and fasting.

According to Acts 20:28, it is the Holy Spirit who raises up the leaders.

The function of the local Congregation is to recognize who these are.

In this case Paul and Barnabus employed prayer and fasting.

Probably a good example for us all.

Once qualified leaders are recognized, they are to be appointed by fellow elders, not by election by the Congregation.

Paul and Barnabas appointed the elders and then committed them to the Lord.

The Greek word for committed is used of making a deposit in a bank.\(^\text{17}\)

The elders were now deposited in safekeeping to the Lord on whom they had believed.

They not only believed and trusted in Yeshua, but were entrusted to the Lord.

Verses 24-26 deal with the journey to Antioch of Syria.

\(^{17}\) Word Pictures in the New Testament, The Kingdom Christian Scholar Library
READ 14:24-26

In the first leg of the journey (14:24), they passed through Pisidia and they came to Pamphylia, where they had been once before (13:13).

The second leg (14:25), was the time they spend speaking the word in Perga.

They were in Perga earlier (13:13-14), but they did not preach the gospel, so they now take the opportunity to proclaim the gospel in Perga.

They then went down to Attalia, modern Antalya or Adala, which served as a port city for Perga, 16 miles down the Cestus River.

This was the capitol of Pamphylia founded by Attalus II who ruled 159-138 B.C.

The third leg of the journey (14:26); they returned to Antioch of Syria.

They were gone somewhere between 18 and 24 months, between a year-and-a-half to two years.

They were committed to God's grace and, indeed, the grace of God had been with them and they had fulfilled their mission.

This officially brings the first missionary journey to a close.

We can summarize the first missionary journey in three points:

**first**, the gospel had now firmly gone out to the Gentiles;

**second**, they made it very clear that salvation was by grace through faith and not by works; and,

**third**, God had opened the door to them.

Now that they had returned to the home Congregation in Antioch of Syria, they gave their report to the Congregation (14:27).

**READ 14:27**

When they arrived in Antioch of Syria, they gathered the Congregation together.

This is the first recorded missionary meeting.
This teaches a principle: the local Congregation that sends the missionary is then to receive the report from the missionary to their Congregation.

Paul and Barnabas reported all the things that God had done with them.

The word reported means "a long story to tell."18

They told everything, they left nothing out.

They declared what God had done with them, clearly making the point that God did the work and the apostles were merely instruments.

It was God who opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

It is the responsibility of the evangelist to make use of the open door.

The Gentiles could and did enter the Congregation through the door of faith.

They did not enter by morals, not by circumcision, nor by Greek philosophy, nor by pagan mythology, but by grace through faith.

Gentile Christianity had now been firmly established, but not apart from Romans 1:16, to the Jew first.

Verse 28 provides a transition statement.

READ 14:28

They remained with their home Congregation for some time.

This was the time lapse during which Gentile salvation was being discussed in earnest back in Jerusalem.

That discussion comes to the forefront in the next chapter.

THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL - ACTS 15:1-35

I. THE OCCASION - 15:1-5

READ 15:1

Verse one states the issue, the issue of Gentile circumcision.

After Paul’s and Barnabas' first missionary journey, having reported to the Congregation of Antioch, and having spent some time with the Congregation there, certain men came down from Judea.

These men were members of the circumcision party who had challenged Peter about going into the home of an uncircumcised Gentile.

These men had not been sent by the Congregation of Jerusalem; they simply came down from there of their own accord.

The fact that they had not been sent from Jerusalem comes out clearly in 15:24.

In Galatians 2, Paul will make reference to this same Jerusalem Council.

These are the same men described as false brethren in Galatians 2:4.

They came and taught the brethren.

The Greek tense means they began to teach, and they kept at it; they set about teaching with determination. ¹

The term “brothers” here refers to the Gentile believers.

These men from Jerusalem picked on the Gentile believers because they weren’t circumcised.

This was the declaration the Judaizers presented to the Gentiles: believing Gentiles are not saved until they’re circumcised.

This is salvation by works; salvation through ritual.

Just as certain groups today teach believers, “you are not really saved until you have been baptized” so there was an earlier heresy: "you are not saved until you have been circumcised.

Both are equally wrong.

Both involve salvation by works; salvation through ritual.

**READ 15:2**

Verse two tells us about the effect this teaching had in the Congregation at Antioch and their response to the problem.

The effect of the teaching is described in the sentence: “This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them.”

In other words, these two men, who had completed their first missionary journey, who had seen myriad’s of Gentiles saved, would not allow the Gentiles to be browbeaten by these self-appointed guardians of orthodoxy.²

The word “dispute” in Greek means "riot" or "outbreak."³

The implication of the word is that the Judaizers caused a great deal of strife.

They broke up the beautiful unity found in the Congregation of Antioch, which had existed right through to the end of chapter 14.

The response: the Congregation officially appointed, Paul and Barnabas and certain other men to resolve the doctrinal dispute.

The other men are not named here; but according to Galatians 2:1-5, one of these men was Titus.

This group was sent to the apostles and the elders about this question.

It was decided by the Congregation of Antioch that this issue should be resolved by an inquiry to be put to the leadership of the Jerusalem Congregation.

There were two categories of leaders of the Jerusalem Congregation.

The first group was the apostles, the twelve apostles; the inner apostolic group of twelve.

These men had been given authority by Yeshua to bind and to loose; that is, either to permit or to forbid something.⁴

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They had legislative authority.

The second group was the elders, the actual rulers, who would continue after the apostolic office had ceased with the death of the last apostle.

Verse three describes the journey to Jerusalem.

**READ 15:3**

Verse 3 tells us that the Congregation furnished them with everything they needed for the journey and gave them a grand send off.⁵

They then passed south through two territories: Phoenicia, where there were Gentile Congregations, and Samaria, where the Samaritan Congregations were.

On their way, they accumulated support from other Gentile Congregations, as well as from the Samaritan Congregations.

The subject they spoke about in Phoenicia and Samaria was the conversion of the Gentiles.

They related the stories and successes of that first missionary journey.

Their point was that salvation had been granted to these Gentiles apart from circumcision.

They were warmly received by these congregations and their message brought great joy to the assemblies.

The Greek tense here means that they were continually in a state of joy.⁶

**READ 15:4**

When they finally arrived in Jerusalem they received a public reception by the Congregation in general, by the apostles, and by the elders.

Paul also refers to this in Galatians 2:2.

They then repeated all the things that God had done with them.

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⁴ Rabbinic Commentary on the New Testament, pg. 256-257
They retold and recounted their first missionary journey.

Verse five records the opposition that resulted

**READ 15:5**

Paul’s opponents rose up at a critical point in the public reception.

They were Pharisees who had, indeed, become believers; but they still remained within the Pharisaic party.

Their claim was two-fold.

**First**, it was necessary to circumcise Gentile believers.

Why, because circumcision was the means of submission to the Law of Moses.

**Second**, it was necessary to insist that the Gentile believers keep the law of Moses.

These men felt that the Gentile believers had to not only submit themselves to the law by circumcision, but then to continue living a life under the law.

From the book of Galatians we learn that the next step in the investigation was a private meeting with Peter, John and James.

The meeting was successful.

Paul won them over to his view of Gentile liberty from the law.

Then came a public meeting.

This is the second Congregational gathering.

For this we need to go on to verse 6.

**II. The Declarations of the Council -- 15:6-21**

**A. The Gathering of the Congregation -- 15:6**

**READ 15:6**

The Congregation meeting was convened on the authority of the apostles and elders.
The leaders took charge of the matter, which was two-fold.

First, the issue of Gentiles and circumcision; and, second, the issue of Gentiles and the Law of Moses.

This crucial meeting proved to be a turning-point in Congregation history.

B. The Testimony of Peter -- 15:7-11

READ 15:7

The meeting was carried on in an atmosphere much debate and discussion.

The Judaizers (the circumcision party) were given ample opportunity to state their case.

There was no attempt to cut the debate short.⁷

It was after ample time had been given to them that Peter rose up and spoke them.

In verse 7 he starts out by reminding everyone that it was God who chose the Gentiles.

God chose Peter from among the Jewish believers and sent him to the Gentiles, that they should hear the gospel and believe.

Peter had been given the keys to the kingdom by Yeshua -- Matthew 16:19

Because Peter had the keys of the kingdom he had to use them to let the Gentiles in.

This he had done with Cornelius in chapter ten of the book of Acts.

Therefore, Peter, the chief apostle, was responsible for the start of Gentile Christianity.

But it was God's choice, and not Peter's, that the Gentiles should hear the gospel.

READ 15:8-9

Peter goes on to say this was authenticated by the Holy Spirit (15:8-9), because the Holy Spirit was given to those Gentiles who believed (15:8).

This was the key evidence of Gentile salvation.

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It was the fact that the Holy Spirit had been given to these Gentiles, apart from circumcision, which showed that God had accepted them by grace through faith.

They were accepted apart from circumcision, and apart from the works of the law.

The same Holy Spirit that Jewish believers had received had also been received by Gentile believers

God made no distinction between Jew and Gentile regarding this point.

This is because both Jews and Gentiles are sinners.

Both Jews and Gentiles are saved in the same way: by grace, through faith.

Both receive the Spirit on the same basis.

They received the cleansing of their hearts by faith; not by works, not by ceremony, not by ritual, but by faith.

Having said this, Peter issued them a challenge (15:10).

READ 15:10

In the light of what has just been said why do you try to test God?

To challenge Gentile salvation was to put God on trial?

The trial -- the testing of God was this attempt to put a yoke upon the neck of the Gentile believers.

These disciples were Gentile believers.

The fact that Peter used the word disciples when referring to them, showed that he accepted them as fellow believers.

Why should they have to bear a yoke that even the Jews could not bear?

The point Peter made was: "why force these Gentiles to do what we ourselves could not do?"

That is, in fact, what they would be doing by requiring Gentiles believers to be circumcised.
To demand this would have two results.

First, it would put God to the test; and, second, it would put the disciples under an unbearable yoke.

Finally, Peter concluded that salvation is, indeed, by grace in verse 11.

READ 15:11

By calling Yeshua Lord, Peter declared that Yeshua was the agent of grace who bestows salvation.

The Jews had only to believe to be saved.

In like manner the Gentiles only had to believe to be saved.

Salvation was by grace through faith, for both groups.

To summarize Peter's argument:

FIRST, it was God's choice that the Gentiles should hear the gospel;

SECOND, He gave them the Holy Spirit without distinction and without discrimination, which was the evidence of their acceptance;

THIRD, the law was an unbearable yoke upon the Jews, so why inflict it upon the Gentiles?

C. The Testimony of Barnabas and Paul -- 15:12

READ 15:12

After Peter finished his argument, all the multitude became silent.

Peter’s statements had affected everyone deeply.

Now, they listened to Barnabas and Paul.

They listened with rapt attention as both of them rehearsed what signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them.

The point was that God would not have prospered them during their first missionary journey if He had not wanted the Gentiles to hear the gospel.
The fact that He did want them to hear is evidenced by the fact that He did bless the missionary journey of Barnabas and Paul.

Next to speak was James.

**D. The Testimony of James -- 15:13-21**

**READ 15:13**

He was the elder-in-chief, so he would naturally speak last.

As the head of the Congregation at this time, it was his responsibility to offer a solution.

**READ 12:14**

In verse 14, he summarized Peter's testimony.

Gentile evangelism was begun first by Peter, and then carried on by Paul.

God, through Peter, visited the Gentiles, for the purpose of saving them; to take out from among them a people for His name.

That is a major purpose of Gentile salvation: to take out from among them a people for His name.

God always had a people for His name among the Jews, for there is always a believing Jewish remnant.

Now, He’ll also have a people from among the Gentiles; now there will also be a believing Gentile remnant.

To prove that this was part of God's program, in verses 15-18 James quotes the Hebrew Scriptures.

**READ 15:15-18**

The specific prophecy he quoted was Amos 9:11-12.

Of the 4 types of ways that the Brit Chadasha quotes the Hebrew Scriptures this usage falls into the category of Literal + Application.
Literally, Amos nine speaks of the kingdom, when Gentiles will be saved.

Then, by way of application, because of only one point of similarity, the salvation of the Gentiles, he applied this verse to their present situation.

He’s pointing out that the Scriptures actually predicted the salvation of the Gentiles.

Amos used a poetic figure for the House and throne of David, describing it as a broken down hut, and having no power.

The picture was of a desolate, fallen, torn-down tent of David.

But he goes on to say, “I will rebuild David’s fallen tent.”

This is a promise of restoration.

The reason why he’ll rebuild David’s fallen tent is so that the Gentiles will receive God’s salvation.

This was the point of similarity, and this is why this prophecy was applied in this case: Gentile salvation.

This thing is what the Lord has said from of old; this purpose of God is an old one.

He always intended to allow for Gentile salvation, and now He finally made that a reality.

Amos 9:11-12 was taken by the rabbis as a messianic passage.

One of the Rabbinic names for the Messiah is Bar Naphli, which means "Son of the Fallen One."

That name of the Messiah is based upon this passage.

The Talmud reads⁸,

"Rabbi Nachman said to Rabbi Isaac, ‘whence art thou taught when Bar Naphli will come?’ He said to him, 'who is this Bar Naphli?’ The other replied, 'It is the Messiah; for it is written, In those days I will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down.

Having quoted the passage, in verses 19-21, James draws his conclusions.

There were two conclusions.

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⁸ Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, pg. 734-735, Sanhedrin 96b,
First, concerning the Gentiles (15:19-20), he told them what not to do.

**READ Acts 15:19-20**

James summarized the case.

Here was his resolution for adoption by the conference.

The difficulty he refers to was the issue of circumcision.

In other words, they should not make it difficult for these Gentile believers to be saved.

These Gentiles who had turned to God, should not be annoyed with a demand for their circumcision.

However, what the conference should do (15:20) is write unto them a letter in which they were to deal with two issues:

first, Gentiles come to God on the basis of faith alone; and,

second, write the letter to deal with certain issues that would control social interaction between Jewish and Gentile believers.

For the sake of social interaction, James suggests the Gentiles abstain from 4 practices.

**First**, they should abstain from the pollution of idols.

In verse 29, that will be explained to mean abstaining from foods sacrificed to idols.

This was forbidden under the Mosaic law (Exod. 34:15), but it was permitted to eat meat sacrificed to idols under the New Covenant (I Cor. 8:1, 4, 7, 10; 10:19).

**Second**, they should abstain from sexual immorality.

The word used is an umbrella word that covers any kind of sexual vice.⁹

They were to renounce any illicit sexual activity:

adultery, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, bestiality, incest (Lev. 18), relations with an improperly divorced man or woman (Mk. 10:11,12).¹⁰

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⁹ Strong’s Greek and Hebrew Lexicon, entry number 4202

The third abstention is to be from that which is strangled.

This would be meat from which the blood had not been drained, also forbidden by the law (Lev. 17:13).

Finally the fourth abstention, from blood; that is, from drinking blood.

This was a pagan practice also forbidden by the law (Lev. 17:10-14).

James' second conclusion concerned Moses (15:21).

READ Acts 15:21

In every city there were Jewish synagogues where rabbis proclaimed these matters.

The point is that Gentile Believers who continued to practice these things would offend unbelieving Jewish people, as well as believing Jews because of their cultural background.

Let’s go on to verse 22.

III. The Decision of the Jerusalem Council -- 15:22-29

READ Acts 15:22

Verse 22 reports on the selection of the representatives from the conference.

Those who approved the content of this decision included:

first, the apostles, who had authority over the whole Congregation universal;

second, the elders, who had authority over the local Congregation of Jerusalem;

and, third, the whole congregation.

Apparently, some kind of vote was taken which was unanimous.

It seems that the Judaizers, who may not have voted for it, at least abstained, because they did not vote against it.

The whole congregation made this decision, to choose members of the congregation in Jerusalem, who would then authenticate the report in Antioch.
The idea was to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, to witness to the validity of their report.

Two men were chosen.

Judas or Judah is mentioned first, who was also known as Barsabbas, which’ means "Son of the Sabbath."\(^{11}\)

This is the only time he is mentioned in Scripture, and nothing else is known about him.

Then Silas is mentioned, about whom much more is known.

He was also known as Silvanus, which was his Roman name.


He’s also mentioned in several of the Epistles (II Cor. 1:19; I Thess. 1:1; 1 Peter 5:12).

He had the gift of prophecy (Acts 15:32).

These two men who were chosen because they were prominent men in Jerusalem.

This standing gave them authority for what they had to say to the congregation in Antioch.

Verses 23-29 contain the decision itself.

Verse 23 gives the introduction.

**READ 15:23**

The authors of the letter were the apostles and the elders.

It is noteworthy that they call themselves “your brothers.

The very fact that they addressed the Gentile believers as “your brothers” shows they had been accepted as fellow believers.

These were Gentiles who remained uncircumcised, but they were brethren nonetheless.

\(^{11}\) Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 9, pg. 451
The geographical locations of these Gentile Congregations were in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia.

Verse 24 contains a clear repudiation of the Judaizers.

**READ 15:24**

The “some who went out from us” were the men of verses one and two.

It is they who had instigated the problem to begin with.

The letters state that the minds of the Gentile believers had been disturbed.

The Greek term here means "to agitate."

It means to take away your calmness of mind.\(^\text{12}\)

The gentile believers had been disturbed by the words: “you have to be circumcised and you have to keep the law of Moses before you can be saved.”

The result was that the Judaizers were guilty of troubling the minds of the Gentile believers.

The Greek word “troubled” means "to plunder, to ravage.

In classical Greek it is used of stealing, or removing someone's furniture and possessions.

The picture is one of total havoc, caused by the activity of the Judaizers among the Gentile believers.\(^\text{13}\)

The leaders of the Jerusalem congregation quickly point out that they gave no such commandment.

The men of verses one and two were never authorized by, nor did they have the approval of Jerusalem to preach what they preached.

This was a complete disclaimer and a total repudiation of their efforts to impose the Law of Moses on Gentile believers.

Verses 25 and 26 give the approval of Paul and Barnabas.

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\(^{12}\) Strong’s Greek Hebrew Lexicon, Entry 5015

\(^{13}\) Word Pictures in the New Testament, The Kingdom Christian Scholar Library
READ 15:25-26

They state that there was unity regarding the decision, since the Judaizers decided not to vote against the majority.

They apparently abstained during the vote.

Paul and Barnabas are likewise evaluated by the council.

They’re called “dear friends.”

Paul and Barnabas were approved by the congregation in Jerusalem without reservation.

This was in keeping with what Paul wrote about in Galatians 2:9, where he says he received the right hand of fellowship.

In verse 26, they spell out the work of Barnabas and Paul: these men who have risked their lives.

This was a reference to the sufferings they experienced during the first missionary journey.

They risked their lives for the name of our Lord Yeshua Ha-Mashiah

Then, in verse 27 came the authorization of Judas and Silas.

READ 15:27

They would be able to affirm the report which Barnabas and Paul will make.

Paul and Barnabas will give the report and state the Congregation's verdict verbally.

Judas and Silas will be the bearers of the epistle, and they will verbally confirm its contents.

This section ends in verses 28 and 29 with the conclusion of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 28 reveals the role of the Holy Spirit in the whole thing.

READ 15:28

It seemed good to the Holy Spirit.
In other words, the conclusion just reached by the Jerusalem Congregation was a conclusion given by the Holy Spirit.

It was the Holy Spirit also, therefore, who suggested refraining from these four things as a basis for fellowship.

This means that the action of the Jerusalem congregation was the leading of the Holy Spirit.

This was a fulfillment of John 16:13, where Yeshua promised that the Holy Spirit would guide the disciples into all the truth.

**READ 15:29**

The four necessary requirements are listed in verse 29.

Remember, these are not requirements for salvation, but rather requirements that would allow for fellowship.

These concessions on the part of the Gentile believers will bring peace between themselves and Jewish believers in the Body.

This was not a matter of laying down the law, but a matter of guidance.

Two important letters would come out of this decision by the Jerusalem council, each would describe the Law of Moses in the plan of God.

Those two letters would be the letter from James and the letter of Paul to the Galatians.

Verse 30 describes the delivery of the letter to the congregation in Antioch.

**IV. The Report to Antioch -- 15:30-35**

**READ 15:30**

The Jerusalem conference finally broke up, and then these four emissaries went off to Antioch.

They came down to Antioch from Jerusalem.

Then having gathered the multitude together, they held a public meeting of the Congregation of Antioch.
Next they read the contents of this letter.

This meeting was a formal delivery of the letter from the congregation of Jerusalem, which was at the head of Hebrew Christianity, to the congregation of Antioch, which was at the head of Gentile Christianity.

The result is in verse 31.

**READ 15:31**

The Gentile believers in Antioch rejoiced over the letter and were encouraged.

Verses 32 and 33, report on the impact made by Judas and Silas on the congregation.

**READ 15:32-33**

These two had the gift of prophecy, and so received direct revelation from God.

They now encouraged the brethren with many words, because they had the gift of encouraging as well.

With many words and with much talk they brought about encouragement and consolation; and by so doing, confirmed the faith of these Gentile believers.\(^{14}\)

There will be no more detractors coming in to trouble them like the kind found back in verses one and two.

It was now clear that salvation was by grace through faith, plus nothing!

Verse 33 records their departure.

Literally, the Greek reads, "after having done time."\(^{15}\)

This indicates they had remained there for a lengthy period of time.

Exactly how long is not known.

However when the time was over they were sent away with the blessing of the congregation.

Some manuscripts at this point add verse 34,

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\(^{15}\) Word Pictures in the New Testament, The Kingdom Christian Scholar Library
Your Bible may have it in the main text or in the margin.

In some versions verse 34 reads, “But it seemed good unto Silas to abide there.”

This was probably a scribal attempt to explain how Silas could leave with Paul from Antioch in verse 40.

Most likely, verse 34 is not part of the original text, because both Judas and Silas did return to Jerusalem.

Apparently Silas came back to Antioch some time later and went with Paul on his second missionary journey.

The section concludes in verse 35 with the ministry of Paul and Barnabas.

**READ 15:35**

They picked up their ministry from where it had been interrupted by the Judaizers.

They ministered the word of the lord in two areas: teaching and preaching with many others also.

These others are not named, but according to Galatians 2:11 they included Peter.

In fact, the "Peter incident" of Galatians 2:11-21 occurred sometime during the period of verse 35.

The reason was clear: the Judaizers had not accepted the decision of the Jerusalem Council.

Let me summarize the Jerusalem council.

**V. Summary**

The results of the Jerusalem Council included ten things.

**First** the gospel of grace was clearly re-affirmed.

**Second**, the unity of the Congregation was preserved.

This controversy could easily have sharply divided the believers into a Jewish Congregation and a Gentile Congregation.
Third, it meant that the evangelization of the Gentiles could now proceed.

The Body of the Messiah was open to all.

Fourth, Gentile Congregations were encouraged.

Fifth, the future of the Congregation was now guaranteed.

Sixth, it laid down the principle of freedom from legalism.

Seventh, the Congregation’s problem was settled by discussion, with the whole procedure being guided by the Holy Spirit.

Eighth, it freed the gospel from entanglement with Rabbinic Judaism, as well as Mosaic Judaism.

Nine, there was the recognition of the validity of Gentile Christianity.

Ten, two types of missions were recognized: Jewish missions and Gentile missions.

I’ll bring our study of the book of Acts to a conclusion at this point.

This is a natural stopping point because verse 36 really begins a new section -- the second missionary journey.