

LESSON TEXT: Acts 1:1-26

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

In ancient Corinth there used to be staged the Isthmian Games, the forerunner of the modern Olympics. There were many events, but the one which received the most attention was the **relay race**. The competitors lined up side by side at the starting line, each bearing a torch. In the distance waited still another line of men, and father on other lines. When the signal was given, the men started to run, bearing their lighted torches. When a runner reached his teammate in the next line he would pass on his light, and so on from man to man until the finish line was reached. With the famous relay race in mind, the Greeks coined a phrase. **“Let those who have the light pass it on.”**

Picture the apostles in Acts 1, poised at the starting line with “the Gospel light” in their hands. In this chapter, Jesus gave them starting instructions and the command to start. The book of Acts is an account of how they ran their leg of the race. They have run their leg and passed the torch. The millions who came after them have also finished their course. The torch has been put into our hands.

It is now our turn to run and pass the Gospel on to others. We have “the light.” It is the Bible. We **are** in the race if we are Christians (1 Cor. 9:24-27; 2 Tim. 2:1-7; Heb. 12:1-2). The Lord expects every Christ to “pass on the light of the Gospel.” **BE IN BIBLE SCHOOL AND LEARN WHAT THE GOSPEL IS AND HOW TO PASS IT ON!**

**THE ONLY ONE AMONG THE TWELVE APOSTLES WHO DID NOT
BECOME A GOSPEL LIGHT-BEARER BECAME A TRAITOR**

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Jesus spend 40 days after his resurrection proving he was alive? 1:3
2. Why was Jesus speaking about the kingdom of God to them? 1:3
3. Why were only the apostles baptized in the Holy Spirit? 1:8
4. What does it mean, they **devoted** themselves to prayer? 1:14
5. What share was Judas allotted...in their ministry? 1:17 (cf. 1:25).
6. What were the qualifications Judas' replacement had to have? 1:21-22 Why?
7. How come the brethren chose Matthias but God chose Paul? 1:26
8. Did God appoint any apostles after Paul? How do you know?
9. What two subjects would make up the Gospel these witnesses would be passing on? (hint---see 1:3 and 1:22).

“The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers teaches that Christians in the executive suite or on the factory floor can and should be as ‘sold out for Christ’ as those in the pulpit or the mission field. In our work---as in our callings as family members, neighbors, citizens, etc.---we are to use the skills God has given us to glorify him and serve others first and foremost, with self-interest taking a back seat.”
---Timothy Lamer, Media Research Center, in *World*, 3-14-98

LESSON TEXT: Acts 2:1-47

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Brethren, what shall we do? That was asked by people convinced they had crucified God's Anointed One. They certainly did not feel like they were saved although they *believed* what Peter had just declared---that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ! There is more to being saved (having one's sins forgiven) than acknowledging the factuality of Jesus deity.

Peter told these convicted and believing people that to obtain the forgiveness Jesus offers that they had to repent and be immersed every one...in the name (by the authority) of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of...sins (Acts 2:38). **There is something MAN must DO to be saved.** He must change his mind (repent) from rebellion against God's will, surrendering his will to that of Christ in the NT. Then he must allow himself to be immersed in water (baptized) in order to receive the covenant promise of forgiveness accomplished by Christ. There is no scriptural sanction for thinking a person is a Christian without this fundamental, essential, initiating action. This is not all there is to remaining a Christian---but **it is the beginning.**

Why did Peter insist that people submit to being immersed in water unto salvation? Who knows? We don't! There is, of course, some symbolic value to the act (Rom. 6:1-11; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:12). But its symbolic value does not detract from its literal efficacy. There is a definite experiential value, too (1 Pet. 3:21). It is a picture of the death of the sinner, and his resurrection to a new life, done at a point in time, at a particular place, in the presence of witnesses, which forever registers on the heart of the participant that he/she has obeyed Christ and may trust his promise of forgiveness and eternal life from that moment forward. Actually, *it is enough* that Christ (Matt. 28:18-20) and his apostles commanded it!

Search history wherever you wish and you will find that neither Christ nor his apostles have ever revealed a change in either the necessity or the mode of baptism.

---P. T. Butler

QUESTIONS:

1. What were the other tongues the apostles spoke? 2:4-11
2. How did Peter explain this language-miracle? 2:14-21
3. How does one call on the name of the Lord to be saved? 2:21
4. If Jesus was delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God why hold these people responsible? 2:23
5. What was Peter trying to prove by repeating the statements about Jesus' death and resurrection? 2:24-36
6. If baptism is **necessary** for salvation, and to be administered by **immersion**, why do some sincere people today declare it to be otherwise?
7. Make a list of at least 10 other NT scriptures stating baptism is necessary for salvation.
8. How could the 12 apostles immerse 3000 people in one day? 2:41
9. Make a list of the characterizations Luke gives us of the first church of Christ 2:41-47

"A man...converted in heart...is prepared for a conversion of state...he must be translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son..

How is this effected?

I answer, by Christian immersion."

---from a sermon by J. M. Mathes in

Pioneer Sermons and Addresses

A footnote on Romans 6:3 in the "New (Roman) Catholic Edition of the Holy Bible, 1953, states: "St. Paul alludes to the manner in which Baptism was ordinarily conferred in the primitive Church, by immersion....St. Paul obviously sees more than a mere symbol in the rite of Baptism. As a result of it we are incorporated into Christ's mystical body and live a new life."

LESSON TEXT: 3:1---5:42

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The Navigators magazine tells about a businessman who landed at the Dallas airport and realized he had an hour and twenty minutes before his next plane connection. Asking himself how he could be used of the Lord there, he suddenly remembered he had a supply of gospel tracts with him. He inserted one of his business cards inside each tract. Then he gave these to single men sitting waiting for their planes. But he didn't just hand them out and pass on. Instead he said to each man, "Pardon me---I have a little booklet here that explains how a person can become a Christian. Inside is my business card. I would like you to read this over and if you have any questions, I will be sitting over there. I have some time before my plane takes off. Or if you would like to write, my address is there." At the end of the hour and 20 minutes, men were standing four deep to ask questions about how to become a Christian. And, for weeks afterwards, he received correspondence because of the business cards in the tracts.

Some of us would say, "Oh, I could never do that---I would be afraid." And we would be right! Nearly every Christian I have known, including me, has had some kind of reservation or fear about doing personal evangelism. But what we have to fear, compared to what the first century Christians had to fear, is of little consequence. This is what we will learn from our studies of Acts of the Apostles---BE IN BIBLE SCHOOL AND GET A HOLY BOLDNESS.

In scribed on the memorial to Sir Lawrence of Arabia in Westminster Abbey: "He feared man so little because he feared God so much."

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Peter and John select the lame beggar to heal? 3:1-10
2. What was the *point* to be proved by Peter in this miracle? 3:11-16
3. The Jews were not ignorant in crucifying Christ? 3:17-19 Why repent?
4. Why couldn't the Jewish rulers *recognize* divine power in the healing? 4:1-7
5. Is there really *no other name* except Jesus Christ unto salvation? 4:8-12—see John 14:6!
6. Why would the apostles *defy* the orders of the Jewish authorities? 4:13-31 Is preaching and evangelism that *important*? Why not evangelize secretly?
7. Why did these early Christians renounce ownership of their possessions? 4:32-37 Are we to do likewise? Is what's mine, *yours*?
8. What is the meaning of Peter's rhetorical question to Ananias: "While it remained unsold, was it not at your disposal?" 5:1-11
9. Why were some *afraid* to join themselves to the Christians? 5:12-16
10. Would you disobey a U.S. Federal law against Christian evangelism if such a law were enacted? 5:17-42 Would you do it secretly?

In North Korea, October 1948, a 19-year-old Communist pointed a pistol at Tong-In and ordered him to renounce Christ. Tong-In plead with the Communist to accept Christ. Tong-Sin, his younger brother rushed forward and cried, "Shoot me and let my brother live." Tong-In said, "I am the elder. If you must kill someone, shoot me." The Communist killed them both. When the killer was arrested, Pastor Son, the slain boy's father, asked that he be paroled and took the killer into his home.

---from the book, *By Their Blood*, by James & Marti Hefley

LESSON TEXT: Acts 6:1---8:40

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The following is borrowed from *The Carthage Christian*, which borrowed it from Frank Bush, who borrowed it from *The British Weekly*:

“Dear Sir: It seems that preachers feel their sermons are very important and spend a great deal of time preparing them. I have been attending church quite regularly for about 30 years, and I have probably heard 3000 sermons. To my consternation, I discovered that I cannot remember a single sermon. I wonder if a minister’s time might be more profitably put to some better use?

Sincerely, _____”

For several weeks there were a number of editorial articles and letters. The letter that seemed to answer the matter best, went like this:

“Dear Sirs: I have been married for 30 years. During that time I have eaten at least 32,850 meals, mostly my wife’s cooking. Suddenly, I have discovered that I cannot remember the menu of a single meal.

And yet, I know I received some nourishment from every one of them. I have the distinct impression that without them, I would have starved to death long ago.

Sincerely, _____”

This will be the main thrust of the events we study in Acts 6-8. The 6th chapter begins with people in the early church complaining that the apostles should leave off preaching and concentrate on what would appear most important---feeding the hungry. In chapter 7 we see that, on the surface, Stephen’s sermon only served to make people angry. And in chapter 8 we read about a preacher who met a man only once, baptized him, and never saw him again. BUT, BE IN BIBLE SCHOOL AND LEARN “THE REST OF THE STORY” ABOUT PREACHING.

“TODAY WE HAVE SERMONETTES BY PREACHERETTES, FOR CHRISTIANETTES.”

---Anonymous

QUESTIONS:

1. What caused the first recorded dissension in the church? 6:1-6
2. Why did the apostles “pass the buck” in the matter? 6:2-4
3. Why did the Jews of the Freedmen’s synagogue get cross-wise with Stephen? 7:1ff
4. Why would a Christian like Stephen make such a bitter anti-Semitic tirade against the Jewish people? 7:1-5
5. Would Jewish people get so upset over a religious argument they would grind their teeth and stop their ears? 7:54-60 Why?
6. Why did persecution scatter the Christians? 8:1-3 Why weren’t the apostles also scattered?
7. What caused the Samaritans to decide between Philip and Simon the sorcerer? 8:12
8. What’s so bad about Simon’s wanting to buy a power which does good for people? 8:9-24 Shouldn’t we do good no matter what we have to do to get it done?
9. Why, if the Ethiopian eunuch had a Bible and could read, did he need someone to guide him? 8:26-40 Does everyone need a guide?

“Saturate your sermons with Bible, the essence of Bible truth, and you will always have something new to say ...We cannot play at preaching. We preach for eternity. Life, death, hell, and worlds unknown hang on the preaching and hearing of a sermon.”
---Charles Haddon Spurgeon

LESSON TEXT: Acts 9:1---10:48

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

“Five times I have received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I have been beaten with rods; once I was stoned. Three times I have been shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brethren; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And apart from other things, there is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches...At Damascus, the governor under King Aretas guarded the city of Damascus in order to seize me, but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped his hands” (2 Cor. 11:24-33).

This is a partial list of what Saul (Paul) the persecutor-turned-proclaimer, Tarsus, had to suffer (Acts 9:15-16) to become Christ's apostle to the Gentiles...and sons of Israel. And he had about 10 more years of ministry, imprisonment and execution to face when he wrote 2 Corinthians. See what one man was willing to endure that **all people (both Gentile and Jew)** might have the opportunity to have the Gospel heritage! He suffered the loss of all position, possessions, pride and life that he might know Christ and that **WE** might know Christ. Have we passed on this heritage? We owe it to Christ, we owe it to Paul, to do so!

“I am a Bible-bigot. I follow it in all things,
both great and small.”
---John Wesley, founder of Methodism

QUESTIONS:

1. Is everyone supposed to get a vision of Jesus in order to become a Christian? 9:1-19 Did the 3000 (Acts 2:38)? Did the Corinthians (Acts 18:8)?
2. Why didn't the Lord just tell Saul what he was to do---why bring in Ananias? 9:10-17
3. How could Saul affirm so quickly, what he had just been opposing? 9:18-22
4. Why wouldn't thousands of Jews be drawn to Christ when they saw this famous rabbi, Saul of Tarsus, become a Christian? 9:23-30
5. What was a Roman army officer doing giving alms and praying constantly to Jehovah? 10:1-4,22-31
6. Cornelius' piety was memorialized by God, why did he need a preacher to lead him to salvation? 10:30-33
7. Why was it necessary for God to give Peter a vision to dispel his bias against Gentiles? 10:34 (see 10:9-16)
8. What is the “doing right” by any person that is acceptable to God? 10:34-35
9. What was the substance of Peter's sermon to Cornelius? 10:36-43
10. Was “speaking in tongues” the confirmation of the salvation of Cornelius and his household? 10:44-48 What was?

“What, then, is the immediate, the instrumental cause by which he (God) regenerates the heart and transfigures all the purpose of the soul and spirit?...It is by the gospel....in Scripture styled ‘the word, the word of life, the word of truth’...This has been, is now, and ever will be the exclusive instrumentality, whether the agent that speaks it be God, or Christ, or the Holy Spirit, or the holy apostles, or the Church, or her ministry. The agents or preachers may be many---the instrumentality must be one---the gospel working faith and working by faith.”

---Walter Scott, in his book, *The Messiahship or Great Demonstration*, 1859

LESSON TEXT: Acts 11:1---12:25

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Robert Ingersoll, after delivering one of his addresses, pulled his watch from his pocket and said, "According to the Bible, God has struck men dead for blasphemy. I will blaspheme him and give him five minutes to strike me dead and damn my soul." There was perfect silence while one minute went by; two minutes passed, and people began to get nervous; three minutes, and a woman fainted; four minutes, and Ingersoll curled his lip. At five minutes he snapped shut his watch, put it in his pocket, and said, "You see, there is no God, or he would have taken me at my word." The story was told to the preacher Joseph Parker, who said, "And did the American gentleman think he could exhaust the patience of God in five minutes?"

When one of the builders of the *R.M.S. Titanic* said, "God himself could not sink this ship.." that was also human arrogance! The men who built the ship, the civilized world, the credulous public---all believed and boasted that the ship was unsinkable. It is said that when the captain gave the order to abandon ship, many passengers simply could not believe that the *Titanic* could possibly sink and refused to board the lifeboats. And the crew was almost criminally complacent. So 1502 men, women, and children plunged into the depths.

God is never mocked or humiliated by human arrogance. In this lesson we will study the arrogance of Herod Agrippa I (brother of the infamous Herodias) who thought he could kill God's people with immunity and commit blasphemous idolatry by letting people worship him and not suffer the punishment of God. BE IN BIBLE SCHOOL AND LEARN "THE REST OF THE STORY!"

"Whenever vanity and gaiety; a love of pomp and dress ...expensive diversions and elegant entertainments, get the better of principle and judgments of men and women, there is no knowing where they will stop, nor into what evils ---natural, moral, or political ---they will lead us." —John Adams

QUESTIONS:

1. Who is the circumcision party and why did they criticize Peter? 11:1-3
2. How did Peter silence their criticism? 11:18
3. If Peter silenced them, why did they send Barnabas to Antioch? 11:19-22
4. How does one see the grace of God? 11:23
5. Why did Barnabas bring Saul to Antioch? 11:26
6. Why did the Christians at Antioch send relief to Judea? 11:27-30
7. What caused Herod to kill Christians? 12:1
8. Why would the Lord allow James to be slain and spare Peter? 12:1-17
9. Why should Peter's guards be slain? They couldn't prevent Peter's escape!
10. Is not giving God the glory serious enough to die of worms? 12:20-24

The story is told about a man who lived through the great Johnstown, PA, flood in 1889 which killed thousands of people. Every time he got a chance, he would tell people about it. He died and went to Heaven, where he was told he could have anything he wanted.

The man said he wanted a great hall where he could tell his story to tens of thousands. The wish was granted. The day came. The hall was packed. As he was ready to make his talk about the Johnstown flood, the master of ceremonies told him he would be the *second* speaker on the program. *He would be preceded by a man named Noah!*
---1000 Windows, by Robert C. Shannon

LESSON TEXT: Acts 13:1---15:35

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The apostle Paul was one of the most widely traveled men of his day. He visited many lands, and saw many new scenes in different countries. He was also a prolific writer; his letters were widely read by the early churches. And yet, in all his writings there is not a line that is descriptive of the scenery of the countries through which he passed; not a line telling of the wonders of the architecture of his day; not a line describing the customs of the peoples. Is this not amazing? There is a reason for it. Paul was blind--blind to all else but one thing. His mind's-eye was constantly on the lostness of the multitudes and the glorious grace Christ could effect in their lives.

Antioch of Syria, his headquarters was a city of 500,000 people. Third in the whole Roman empire to Rome itself and Alexandria. Perga had a drama theater which would seat 13,000 people. Antioch of Pisidia had about 5000 Jews (in addition to 1000s of Gentiles) in it, along with a huge Roman military garrison. The immorality and violence in modern cities is nothing compared to what went on in these ancient cities. Paul was not intimidated by this! He had a message that could move "almost the whole city...to hear the word of God." (Acts 13:44). It was a Jew who brought the gospel to Rome; a Roman who took it to France; a Frenchman who took it to Scandinavia; an Irishman who took it to Scotland a Scotsman who evangelized Ireland; an Englishman and Scots, Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Barton Stone, Walter Scott, et al., who brought the Restoration Plea to America. **No people have ever received the Gospel except at the hands of an alien!** BE IN BIBLE SCHOOL...CATCH THE MISSIONARY FEVER!

"We are the children of converts of foreign missionaries; and fairness means that we must do to others as men once did to us."
---Maltbie D. Babcock

QUESTIONS:

1. Why didn't the Holy Spirit just set aside Barnabas and Saul without telling the church at Antioch to do it? 13:1-3
2. Why would the Holy Spirit deem it necessary to make Elymas blind? 13:11
3. What, according to Paul, is the fulfillment of the OT promises to the Jews? 13:21-41 Is that **all** there is for the Jews
4. Are the Jews never again to get the gospel? 13:46-48
5. Why does Paul run every time tribulation comes his way? 13:51; 14:6,20
6. Why didn't Paul preach the gospel in Lystra? 14:8-18
7. What did Paul mean, "...through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God?" 14:22 What if we haven't had tribulation?
8. How could the church have a meeting to resolve an issue that God had already settled? 15:1-21 Does the church vote on doctrine?
9. What impact does the short sermon of Peter have for church doctrine? for Christian unity? 15:6-11
10. Is abstaining from idol-offerings, blood, strangled-meat, and sexual immorality all there is to being a Christian? 15:20-29

"The church is an assemblage of Christ's disciples, associated on the principle of faith, derived from the Holy Scriptures; and therefore, such society ought to acknowledge no other book besides the Holy Scriptures, as the rule of its faith and morals, discipline, ordinances, manners, and customs"
---Walter Scott, in,
The Evangelist, 1833

LESSON TEXT: Acts 15:36---17:34

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

A survey was conducted a few years ago at the great Erlangen University in Germany. Many of the thousands of students enrolled at this university participated in this survey. Some very revealing facts came to light. Among the questions asked were the following:

1. Who is Christ? Only 16% could answer!
2. How does one become a Christian? 92% were ignorant--in the land of Martin Luther, only 8% knew how to become a Christian!
3. Would you like to know more about becoming a Christian? 70% answered "Yes," revealing widespread spiritual hunger.

The apostle Paul found the same kind of spiritual ignorance at the peripatetic university of Athens when he stood and preached at the Areopagus. Paul found the huge cities and the places where people congregated the *best* places to evangelize. He was never intimidated by numbers, erudition, wealth, or political clout. That was because he knew the Gospel facts and the evidence which substantiated them. Truth has nothing to fear---it can conquer all. But it can conquer only if it goes to battle!

There is certainly no dearth of huge cities, large universities, and marketplaces in the world which have never yet heard the truth of the Gospel. We aren't exactly lacking such places in our native land! The church must get "a fire in its bones" until it *cannot* hold back on sending its best (young or old) to train in Bible colleges as urban and foreign missionaries, campus ministers, and evangelists. The church must renounce all that it has and dig deeper into its collective pocket-book to support Bible colleges, campus ministries and urban missions. The early church put its ministers and money where the *people were*--in the huge urban centers. That ought to be our strategy today! BE IN BIBLE SCHOOL---LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

QUESTIONS:

1. How can an apostles have a "sharp contention" with one of his co-workers? 15:36-41
2. Was having Timothy circumcised a compromise of the Gospel of grace? 16:1-5
3. Why did the Spirit of God prohibit Mysia and Bithynia from hearing the gospel? 16:6-10
4. Why did Paul go to the riverside in Philippi? 16:11-15
5. Would infants have been "baptized" with Lydia's household? 16:11-15
6. Why forbid the soothsaying girl from testifying that Paul was God's servant? 16:16-18
7. Why didn't Paul and Silas escape from the Philippian jail? 16:19-40
8. What was Paul's strategy of evangelism in Thessalonica? 17:1-9
9. What is unique about Paul's work in Beroea? 17:10-15
10. What was Paul's strategy of evangelism in Athens? 17:16-34
But haven't we outgrown methods used 2000 years ago?

"General Longstreet's forces are not yet committed to battle," was spoken at the battle of Gettysburg during our Civil War. To often a similar statement can be made regarding the church!
---1000 Windows, by Robert C. Shannon

"While churches concern themselves with missions abroad, many miss the opportunity afforded by the 400,000 international students who study in the USA each year. Many of them are open to new ideas and would be responsive to the gospel."
1000 Windows, Robert C. Shannon

LESSON TEXT: Acts 18:1---19:41

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

On his 3rd missionary journey Paul caused a stir in Ephesus, to put it mildly,. He worked some miracles, and taught constantly for 3 years proving that Jesus of **Nazareth** was the Anointed of God (Christ); and about the kingdom of God. A number of those who practiced magic arts (Gr. *perierga*, “working-around-things,” i.e., sleight of hand, devious, trickery, etc.) brought their books together and burned them. These books were worth 50,000 days wages! The fact that they had to have books to tell them how to do their magic indicates it was not supernatural.

Kurt Koch, after 30 years study of the evils of occultism, concluded that 95% of all fortune telling, communicating with the dead, and other alleged supernatural manifestations were clearly fraudulent, fake, and hoax. The other 5% was probably inexplicable only because of lack of material to be researched or lucky confluence of things and events which made them seem to be beyond the natural.

The great Houdini also spent much of his life and money investigating mediums, seances, and the occult. He declared it all a hoax to swindle people out of money. The two women who gave birth to Spiritism (communicating with the dead) were crafty enough to hide for some time their method of producing “knocking noises” from the dead---until someone discovered they produced the noises at seances by cracking the knuckles of their toes (under the table, unseen by anyone).

The New Age religion that is permeating *every facet* of our society is the newest form of this pseudo mysticism. It is a lie and a fraud. We must learn what the Bible says about false teaching. BE IN BIBLE SCHOOL!

Truth is always strong, no matter how weak it looks, and falsehood is always weak, no matter how strong it looks.

---Phillips Brooks

QUESTIONS:

1. How could Paul make tents and evangelize at the same time? 18:1-4 (see also 1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:6-13; 1 Cor. 4:12; Eph. 4:28).
2. Isn't Paul malicious to call the Jews blood upon their own heads? 18:6
3. Why beat Sosthenes when Paul was the one with whom they were angry? 18:12-17
4. What did Apollos need expounded to him more accurately? 18:24-28
5. Why re-baptize the 12 disciples at Ephesus? 19:1-7
6. What do we learn about demon possession and exorcism from the 7 sons of Sceva? 19:11-16
7. What are the magic arts these Ephesians were practicing? 19:17-20
8. Who was Artemis? 19:23
9. Why were the Ephesians so zealous for worshiping Artemis? 19:23-34
10. Did the town clerk contradict himself saying the authenticity of Artemis-worship could not be contradicted, and then saying, they could give no cause to justify the commotion? 19:35-41

“Truth is incontrovertible.
Panic may resent it;
ignorance may deride it;
malice may distort it;
but there it is.”
---Winston Churchill

LESSON TEXT: Acts 20:1-38

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Saturday, Feb. 21, 1987, I was watching one of my favorite TV game shows, "Jeopardy." The statement was made, "Jesus said to his disciples, Be as wise as serpents and harmless as these birds." The answer was worth \$200 and the lady said, "What are sparrows!" **WRONG!** What is the answer? Another statement in the category "Bible" was: "Jacob's, red-complexioned, hairy son.." The answer—"Who was Esau" and the man won \$800. **BUT THE JEOPARDY STATEMENT WAS WRONG!** Esau was **not** the **son** of Jacob! Whose son was he? Brethren, we have a nation of biblical *illiterates!*

For 25 years I administered a simple Bible Content Exam to incoming freshmen at Bible college. For 25 years the *average* score has been steady at 39-40% (out of 100%). We usually consider 70% "passing" and anything below 70% to be "failing." The majority of these young people are coming from our Restoration Movement churches and Sunday Schools! Our brotherhood was known in the 19th and early 20th centuries as "a people of THE BOOK." Surely we need social activities for our young people and adults--but we need Bible training **more!** Let's get back to being, "a people of THE BOOK."

In our lesson on Acts 20, we hear Paul saying to the leadership (elders/shepherds of the flock) of the church, "feed the church of the Lord...from among yourselves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them...be alert...I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified." **TO THE WORD, TO THE WORD! MAKE SURE YOU AND YOURS ARE IN BIBLE SCHOOL EACH SUNDAY, STUDYING THE WORD!**

"No sciences are better attested than the religion of the Bible."
---Sir Isaac Newton

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Paul go back to Macedonia and spend so much time there? 20:1-6 (Hint: read 1 & 2 Thessalonians)
2. What bread were the Christians breaking at Troas? 20:7
3. What would prompt people to listen to a preacher until midnight and even until sunrise the next day? 20:7,11
4. The text says Eutychus was dead, but Paul says his life was in him---which is correct? Is this a contradiction in the Bible? 20:9,10
5. Make a list of the things Paul did not shrink from telling the Ephesians which would have been profitable for them. 20:20-21 (see Ephesians)
6. Paul said he was willing to sacrifice his life for his ministry--what **was** his ministry? (20:24ff).
7. What, according to Paul here, is the primary responsibility of Christian elders? 20:28
8. Where is the main threat to the church of the Lord? 20:29-30
9. What builds up a congregation? 20:32 (see Eph. 4:11-16)
10. Is it really more blessed to give than to receive? How can that be? 20:35

At a missionary committee meeting in England the chairperson startled the audience by claiming he had founded a growing Christian group in India. They knew he had never been outside of England. He explained that when he was 5 years old, he had been impressed by a story of missions in India. He didn't want to just put his penny in the box. The pastor had a friend who was a missionary. The little boy bought a Bible, put his own name on the flyleaf, and mailed it to India. The missionary gave it to a poor man who had walked miles to ask for a Bible. Twenty years passed, and a visitor to a remote village in India found the people there were Christians. No missionary had ever visited them. But they showed him a well used New Testament with a boy's name on the flyleaf.
---from *1000 Windows*, by Robert C. Shannon

LESSON TEXT: Acts 21:1---23:35

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The Japanese phrase for *foreigners* means “stinking of foreign hair.” What is called “the French Pox” in England is called “the English Pox” in France. In Czechoslovakia, drinking too much is “to drink like a Dutchman,” but in Holland it is to “drink like a Pole.” In Hungary and Austria, the cockroach is known as a “German,” in Poland as a “Prussian” and in Germany as a “Frenchman.” Each nation associates a host of miscellaneous vulgarities, vices, diseases and disagreeable traits with foreign countries.

Jewish hatred for all “Gentiles” is no secret. Rabbis interpreted Ezek. 34:31 to mean that only Jews are “men” while Gentiles are “animal” (Talmud, Ker. 6b; Pran. P. 53). The Talmud permitted Jews to deceive a Gentile (Baba Kama 113b; Pran. P. 72). Hatred of Gentiles is one out of three or four dominant themes of the Talmud. Maimonides in the 12th century A.D. wrote, “Either turn them away from their idols or kill them.” (Hilkoth Akum X, 1). Rabbi Simeon Ben Yohai, regarded as one of the giants of Judaism, wrote in the 2nd century A.D., “Even the best of the *Goim* (Gentiles) should be killed” (A.Z. 26b Tosephoth, Pran. P. 82).

This hatred turned some Jews into a raging mob which attempted to kill the apostle Paul while he was visiting Jerusalem after his 3rd missionary journey. They had seen Paul, the former rabbi, in the company of a Gentile (Trophimus) and jumped to the conclusion that Paul had taken this Gentile into their Temple. Since Jews all over the Roman empire had been trying to kill Paul, this may have been *more* than a conclusion---it may have been a deliberate lie! BE IN BIBLE SCHOOL AND LEARN WHAT PAUL SUFFERED FROM HIS OWN PEOPLE FOR CHRIST.

“I am determined to permit no man to narrow or
degrade my soul by making me hate him.”
---Booker T. Washington

QUESTIONS:

1. His arrest in Jerusalem was certain; his friends begged him not to go---was Paul foolhardy to go anyway? 21:1-16
2. Wasn't it a compromise of the gospel of grace for Paul to observe Jewish vows? 21:17-26
3. Was it against the law of God to take a Gentile into the Jewish temple? 21:27-36 How could the Jews be so upset they would want to kill Paul?
4. Why did Paul expect relating his conversion to be a defense against his Jewish accusers? 22:1ff
5. Must a person be baptized to have his sins washed away? 22:16
6. Why did the Jews stop listening to Paul when he told them God sent him far away to the Gentiles? 22:22ff
7. How could Paul say he had lived in all good conscience? 23:1 Can anyone?
8. Was Paul really on trial with respect to the resurrection? 32:6
9. Why were the Roman soldiers and the governor so careful to protect Paul from the Jewish plots to assassinate him? 23:12-35

“Beware prejudices. They are like rats,
and men's minds are like traps;
prejudices get in easily,
but it is doubtful if they ever get out.”
-----Lord Jeffrey

LESSON TEXT: Acts 24:1---26:32

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

A modern fable tells how His Satanic Majesty solved the problem of the loss of patronage in his Infernal Domain. It seems that he found there were still many prospects on the planet Earth. But why weren't they coming to him? After cudgeling his brain until both horns hurt, he decided he'd use Earth's method for solving problems. He'd have a contest. So, he gathered all his little imps together and explained the problem. "One week from today," he growled, "we will meet together right here...and the one who has the best solution to the problem will receive an asbestos helmet and a gold pitchfork." Since the prizes offered were so attractive, the little imps of Satan diligently picked their own and each other's brains all week. Many were the suggestions offered, but Brother Brimstone won the prize. "First," chortled Brimstone, "we will pick out a nice, juicy prospect. Then we will put our arm around his shoulder and say, 'Tell me, Mr. Smith, would you like to go to Heaven when you die?' Naturally, he'll say yes, so then we proceed by saying, 'Here's what you'll have to do: Stop that heavy drinking and carousing, stay away from your neighbor's wife.'" He was interrupted by a clamor from the rest of the imps. "Whose side are you on---anyhow?" they screamed. But Brother Brimstone had anticipated their clamor. He held up one front hoof to quiet them. "Hear me out," he smiled...." I then whisper in his ear: 'But you don't have to start doing those things right now...JUST SOME MORE CONVENIENT TIME!'" And Brimstone got the prize!

Humorous, but tragically true! King Agrippa was "*almost* persuaded." He knew of Paul's conversion and believed the prophets, but thought he needed more time to decide to become a Christian. He *wasted* the precious moment of conviction---and it never returned!

If you are here this morning, and you believe Christ, and you are waiting for another, more appropriate, time to confess him and obey him---DON'T DELAY, BECOME A CHRISTIAN TODAY!

IT'S NEVER THE WRONG TIME TO DO THE RIGHT THING!

QUESTIONS:

1. How could Paul be a Christian and worship the God of the Jews? 24:14-15
2. Where would Felix have gotten an accurate knowledge of the Way? 24:22
3. Why would Paul argue justice, self-control and judgment with a Roman procurator? 24:25
4. What would prompt Felix to expect Paul to give him money? 24:26
5. Is Paul volunteering to be executed? 25:11 Isn't that being flippant?
6. What is the Jewish superstition Festus refers to in 25:18-19?
7. Why was Paul glad to be defending himself before Agrippa? 26:2
8. Were all Gentiles under the power of Satan? 26:18 What is Satan's power?
9. To what did Paul appeal to convince Agrippa to accept Christ? 26:22-27
10. Why was Agrippa surprised that Paul was trying, in such a short time, to make him a Christian? 26:28

"Our grand business is not to see
what lies dimly at a distance,
but to do what lies clearly at hand."---Thomas Carlyle

LESSON TEXT: Acts 27:1---28:31

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

When the Confederate army retreated after Gettysburg, General Robert E. Lee wrote to Jefferson Davis, "We must expect reverses, even defeats. They are sent to teach us wisdom and prudence, to call forth greater energies, and to prevent our falling into greater disasters." True of a nation's life, this is also profoundly true of the life of an individual. And what shall we say of sickness, sorrow, and affliction? Shall these things overwhelm us, or shall we be able to say with that great soldier of the cross who kept both his soul and body under the dominion of a great and holy purpose: "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom. 8:37).

After all Paul suffered in three missionary journeys (2 Cor. 1:3-11; 11:23-33), and at the hands of his own Jewish countrymen for some 30 years of preaching, we would expect God to give him a restful journey to Rome and an enjoyable retirement. But God doesn't work that way! He wants us to be faithful unto death so that we can receive the crown of life (Phil. 3:13-16; 2 Tim. 1:11-12).

Paul had a tempestuous, life-threatening trip to Rome in chains as a prisoner. The whole trip was filled with trouble. But after he got there he had more than two years of opportunity to proclaim the gospel, openly and unhindered. He did so to such an extent that the gospel became known through the whole praetorian guard...and some of Caesar's own household became saints (Phil. 1:13; 4:22). In addition to that, Paul wrote four of his most profound epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Galatians, and Colossians). **BE IN BIBLE SCHOOL---TRAVEL WITH PAUL TO ROME!**

"Stormy weather is what man needs from time to time to remind him he's not really in charge of anything."

---Bill Vaughn

QUESTIONS:

1. How come Paul had freedoms other prisoners did not have? 27:3
2. Did Paul contradict himself about lives being lost? 27:22
3. Why did the sailors have to remain on board if God was going to save everyone's life? 27:31
4. Is there anything to learn from all the seafaring expertise and geographical detail of Acts 27-28?
5. How could the Maltese say first Paul was a murderer and moment later say he was a "god?" 28:1-6
6. Were all those Maltese natives believers whom Paul healed? 28:7-10
7. What is the hope of Israel for which Paul was in chains? 28:20
8. What did Paul propose to convince these Jews about Jesus from the law and the prophets? 28:23-24
9. Wasn't Paul unfair to quote a scripture from Isaiah and apply it to the Jews disputing with him 700 years after Isaiah wrote it? 28-25-28
10. Just how could Paul accomplish what he did as a prisoner in Rome? 28:30-31

There is an old fable that says the gold objected to the heat of the furnace and asked how long it should be expected to endure such heat. The answer was, "As soon as the refiner's purpose is accomplished." "And when will that be?" asked the gold.

The answer was, "When the refiner can see his own face in you."

1000 Windows, Robert C. Shannon