



PT Butler

Bible Study Notebooks

Study of The Acts of the Apostles

prepared by P. T. Butler Th.D

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These Bible study notes are provided for your use in the preparation of teaching the holy scriptures. They were meticulously prepared over many years to serve the Kingdom of God and aid in the growth of Christians of any age. Please use them in combination with prayer and diligence to promote the clear and honest declaration of God's word.

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TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Introduction

The book of Acts contains 28 chapters, 1007 verses. It was written in the city of Rome by Luke, the Beloved Physician Acts 1:1, ca. A.D. 61-62. Luke probably wrote the book as he was attending Paul who was living in his own “hired dwelling” during his Paul’s first Roman imprisonment. Luke was clearly accompanying Paul on his journey to Rome (Acts 27:29 “we”) and after they had arrived there (Acts 28:16: “we”). The abrupt termination of the book suggests that Luke did not long survive his venerable mentor the apostle Paul. Luke’s authorship of “Acts” is authenticated by its conjunction with the third written Gospel (i.e., The Gospel of Luke). Any testimony in early Christian literature that the Third Gospel is written by Luke is testimony that Acts is by Luke, because Luke’s “first account” (Acts 1:1, i.e., the Gospel) shows that both books are by the same author. Ancient Christian quotations (Epistle to Diognetus, A.D. 130; the Didache, A.D. 140; Irenaeus, A.D. 180; Clement of Alexandria, A.D. 190; Tertullian, A.D. 200; Eusebius, A.D. 264; and Jerome, A.D. 400) allude to Luke’s authorship. Theophilus (“God-lover”) was the patron of both Luke’s Gospel and his Acts of the Apostles. Acts narrates doings and speeches chiefly of Peter and Paul. There is some information about Judas Iscariot (1:16-20), and the man chosen to succeed him (1:21-26); about John (3:1-4, and 31; 8:14-17; and James 12:12. The Twelve, except the betrayer, are listed in 1:13. Acts is not a history of all apostles, but a selection from the deeds and words of some who illustrate the progress of first century Christianity in those phases which interested the author, as he was moved by the Holy Spirit.

The following is quoted from Bible Survey Outlines, by Roland V. Hudson, B.D., Ph.D., professor of Philosophy and Religion, Asbury College, Wilmore, KY, 1954, pub. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, MI: “Many names have been suggested for ‘the Acts of the Apostles.’ It might more properly be named ‘the Acts of the Ascended Christ’ or ‘the Acts of the holy Spirit through the Church.’ David Crawford says that the Bantu give it the picturesque title ‘Words concerning Deeds.’ That is good; but whose deeds? Its seventy-one references to the Holy Spirit make fitting the name by which it was known in ancient times—‘The Gospel of the Holy Spirit.’ The book of Acts...is the only unfinished book in the Bible. The closing is so abrupt that it almost jars the mind. It is like the absolute cessation of a great band in the very middle of a closing crescendo, every instrument remaining in death-like silence after the sounding of a single note. Yet how could it be otherwise? The Gospels record the life of Jesus in the flesh; the Acts records His life in the Spirit. In his gospel, Luke told us what ‘Jesus began both to do and teach’; in this book we see in part what He continued to do and is still doing...The book of Acts opens with the preaching of the gospel in Jerusalem, the great ecclesiastical center of the Jewish nation, by Peter, who had been transformed by the Spirit of Christ from a shaking reed into a stable rock. It closes with the

preaching of the gospel in Rome, the center of the world's political power, by Paul who had been transformed by that same Spirit of Christ from being the chief persecutor of the church to being its chief apostle and foremost missionary. With many Spirit-filled witnesses, the church spread out in ever widening circles through Judaistic limitations, Samaritan compromises, and Gentile paganism to the end of the earth.”

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ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Acts 1:1-26

Jesus showed himself alive by many infallible proofs (Gr. en pollois tekmeriois). The Greek words indicate the strongest type of legal evidence. The term tekmeriois indicates demonstrable proof. In the light of what the apostles were to face when they began preaching repentance (change of viewpoint, change of life-style) and the “kingdom” (rule) of Christ. They must have no doubts about Jesus’ conquest of death! The book of Acts and the history of the apostolic mission is one of calling men to Christ in the face of Jewish unbelief, persecution and indifference—in the face of pagan cynicism, hedonism, violent opposition, mockery, unconcern and the seeming impossibility of the numbers of people and territories to be reached. Twelve men, facing the world! Twelve men, without worldly influence, with a message most of the world did not want to hear, without modern technology, without a visible “Guru—without microphones, copiers, cell-phones, computers, guitars, amplifiers—charged with the task of witnessing to that whole “world” about Jesus Christ. Jesus has got to do more than pump them full of good feelings about themselves, or good feelings about their job, or good feelings about others, or good feelings about “religion.” These men have to know that Jesus can keep his promises “to be with them even to the end of the age.” That promise must be proven—legally, demonstrably, scientifically, and empirically. These men have got to have evidence they can see, touch and tell others it’s real—not something they’ve felt good about!

These men were going out to preach the rule of Jesus in people’s thoughts, ambitions, desires, feelings, actions, possessions, vocations—the rule of Christ over the lives of people! They were going to preach, “His kingdom (has) come, on earth, as it is in heaven.” That was all they were going to preach! That was the goal, the purpose, the aim of all they would say—to bring the rule of Christ over the minds and actions of people! The consequences of striving for that goal, whatever they were, would be only peripheral. They would not be political or social activists first and preachers of Christ’s rule second. It would be the other way. Actually, activism without the rule of God first is destructive of good. It is the deception of the devil that political or social reformation can occur without the rule of God (through his revealed word) over people’s viewpoints and behavior. Jesus spent that month and a quarter (40 days) explaining what the kingdom really was the absolute rule of Christ in human hearts and how it must be produced (belief in his resurrection from the dead.). Heaven is Paradise because its citizens have surrendered to the absolute rule of Christ over their viewpoints and their ambitions and their deeds. The kingdom of God can exist in the midst of the worst of circumstances if the individuals are totally surrendered to God’s will. Jesus proved that here on earth! He was God on earth! Remember when he said, “The kingdom is in the midst of you”? That’s what he meant! They were looking for circumstantial

signs. He wanted them to see God's kingdom is the spirituality he was demonstrating right before their eyes—surrounded by very difficult and bad circumstances.

The immersion (“baptism”) in the Holy Spirit was unique and not intended for all Christians:

- (a) the recipients are not precisely specified at first (Matt. 3:11; Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:16);
- (b) the promise is made again in John 1:33, but again those to receive it are not categorically specified;
- (c) however, there are only four distinct references to the immersion in the Holy Spirit in all the NT—(1) John the Baptist's first prediction (parallel passages cited in ('a') above—(2) John the Baptist's second prediction cited in ('b') above—(3) Jesus' promise in Acts 1:5 (Acts 2:1-21 is the stated fulfillment of this promise) —(4) the experience of Cornelius the Roman centurion, and his household, Acts 20:44-48 and 11:15-17. This last (#4) lone event upon Gentiles seems to indicate the phrase “all flesh” in Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:17 was intended as representative or general (i.e., the immersion in the Holy Spirit upon some Jews and some Gentiles signified God was opening the kingdom to the whole human race. The Greek word baptizo means, “immerse, submerge-in” and the supernatural powers exercised by the apostles were never all exercised by any other Christians (especially, exorcism of demons, raising the dead, punishing with some physical judgment). This has caused some excellent Bible scholars to think that Cornelius did not receive the “immersion in the Holy Spirit,” but only a miraculous “gift” momentarily in order to signify the acceptance of Gentiles by God and not to empower him—certainly not to make him an apostle nor to give him the gospel plan of salvation which had been clearly preached by Peter on the Day of Pentecost, and which was immediately preached to Cornelius (Acts 10:47-48 and 11:13-14).
- (d) the prediction of “power from on high” was made by Jesus to the apostles, exclusively (Lk. 24:48-49) and fulfilled exclusively upon apostles on the Day of Pentecost even though there were other believers present when the miracle occurred. Note carefully in Acts 2:7 that the phenomena (tongues of fire, speaking in other languages) is said by the crowd to have happened only to “Galileans”! It is nearly certain that all the 120 believers (Acts 1:15) present with Peter on Pentecost were not all Galileans—but all the apostles were Galileans!
- (e) there are only two cases where the immersion in the Holy Spirit is said to have specifically happened, i.e., to the apostles on Pentecost and Cornelius (perhaps).
- (f) if Cornelius' experience was for all Christians today, then all Christians should be immersed in the Holy Spirit before they are immersed in water for the remission of sins—in which case God would grant to sinners a greater blessing in the

Spirit than to saints!!!

- (g) the promise of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:38-39 is to all believers! Those who were immersed in the Spirit spoke in foreign languages. All Christians did not, and have not, spoken in foreign languages (see 1 Cor. 12:10,30).
- (h) believers continued steadfastly in the “apostles doctrine” (Acts 2:42), not the doctrine of the “apostles and others”! If “others” received the immersion in the Holy Spirit and “power from on high,” why specify that it was the “apostles” doctrine in which believers continued?
- (i) the 12 apostles were chosen from among other believers who had witnessed Christ’s resurrection, not from among believers who had not witnessed the resurrection (Acts 1:22). Even from among those witnesses of the resurrection, only one was chosen to fill Judas’ place. Since the promise was made to apostles (Lk. 24:48-49), and to those only, the fulfillment of the immersion in the Holy Spirit and the “power from on high” was exclusively to the thirteen called by Christ to be apostles (Matthias, Acts 1:26, called to fill Judas’ place and Saul of Tarsus, i.e., Paul)!
- (j) when Peter denied the accusation that those who had received miraculous phenomena on Pentecost were drunken—concerning whom was the denial made? The “eleven” (Acts 2:14-15), that’s who!
- (k) the nearest antecedent of “all” in Acts 2:1,4, is, “the eleven apostles” in Acts 1:26.
- (l) there is no record of anyone other than the apostles working miracles (Acts 2:43; 3:3,6; 4:33; 5:12-16), until some time later after the apostles had laid hands (Acts 6:6-8) on the seven “deacons.”!
- (m) there is no indication that the phenomena of Acts 2:1-4 occurred to the believers immersed in water in Acts 2:38-47.

A significant question is: For what purpose was the immersion in the Holy Spirit intended? It was :

- (1) to empower specific individuals (12 apostles) that they might become instruments through which the Holy Spirit could reveal all the truth about redemption (Jn. 14:25-26; 16:12-15).
- (2) to empower the 12 apostles to “speak as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4) (i.e., divine inspiration).
- (3) so the apostles claim to revelation and inspiration from Almighty God would give supernatural evidence (Heb. 2:3-4). The immersion in the Holy Spirit became the agency through which God gave the apostles exclusive powers to give evidence that they alone were authorized to speak Gods word (see 1 Cor. 2; 1 John 4:1-6, etc.), or to pass on the authorization for selected others to do so by the laying on of their hands! (e.g., Mark, Luke)

- (4) and, since the Jewish apostles themselves needed evidence to convince them that the Gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles (Acts 10:47; 11:1-18; 15:8), Cornelius received the Holy Spirit “just as we (apostles)” (with some exceptions).
- (5) the completion of the revelation of God’s will required that the apostles be under the control of the Holy Spirit (Lk. 24:44-49; Jn. 16:13; 20:21-22; Acts 1:8).
- (6) when the completion of the revelation of God’s will was made, written in human language, the direct, supernatural, gifts of the Holy Spirit passed to certain people only by the laying on of the apostles’ hands ceased (1 Cor. 13:8-13).

The Greek text is significant—*proskarterountes homothumadon te proseuche*, literally, “...continuing steadfastly with one mind in the prayer...” According to Luke 24:53, this praying was done, not in the upper room where they were staying, but in the Temple at the hours (plural) of prayer. The Greek words *te proseuche* indicate there was only one “prayer” (singular) session. The Greek word *homothumadon* is, literally, “one-souled” or “united in passion.” The 11 apostles, the women, Mary the mother of Jesus, and Jesus’ brothers, and Barsabbas, and Matthias were among the 120 who evidently went together as a group at the designated hours of prayer in the Jewish temple and prayed. It does not portray a 10-day crescendo of emotional hysteria climaxing at Pentecost. Their prayers were simply a part of their everyday practice when in Jerusalem (Acts 3:1; 5:12), and it continued as a part of their lives after Pentecost. This praying was not the cause of the immersion in the Holy Spirit of God. They were doing what any God-fearing Jew would do in Jerusalem. Jesus had told them to wait—that it would not be many days—so they spent much of their time going to the Temple to pray. Of course, they had more to pray about than the usual Jewish worshiper! The marvelous things they had just witnessed; the mystery of things Jesus had promised which they were anticipating; and the godly habits they had practiced all their lives led them to concentrate their minds by praying rather than by sitting around speculating or wondering.

- (a) Judas was “numbered” (Gr. *katerithmemenos*, “arithmeticked-along-with”) among us, 1:17;
- (b) Judas was “allotted his share” (Gr. *elachen ton kleron*, “obtained the portion”) 1:17;
- (c) Judas was allotted his portion “of this ministry” (Gr. *tes diakonias tautes*, “the diaconate—this specific one”) 1:17;
- (d) Judas “turned aside” (Gr. *parebe*, “transgressed”) from “this ministry and apostleship” (Gr. *tes diakonias tautes kai apostles*, (“this ministry, and apostleship”));
- (e) Judas is named with, and given the same powers as, all the other apostles in Matt. 10:2-4; Mk. 3:14-19; Lk. 6:13-16. He is not named with the apostles in Acts 1:13 because he was dead. Jesus chose Judas to be an apostle. He did not choose him to be a betrayer. Judas chose betrayal! Judas was not a thief when Jesus chose him. He was a man with promise, just as the others were.

The others let Jesus down. Jesus even called Peter, “Satan” at one point, just as he said of Judas. The difference was, Peter repented with godly-sorrow and Judas was simply sorry with a worldly grief and did not truly repent but committed suicide (see 2 Cor. 7:10-11). While the rest of the apostles received the teaching of Jesus and grew better, Judas received the same teaching and grew worse. Why? Because Judas chose to be worse! Christ did not force Judas to be worse. In fact, Christ tried over and over to rescue Judas with pointed confrontations. Jesus said, “Whatever you are going to do...” leaving him a choice! This is true of us all!!! This is Peter’s point in Acts 1:17.

The qualifications required of the person to take Judas’ place were: (a) a man; (b) who accompanied with the eleven named in Acts 1:13; (c) must have accompanied with these eleven “during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among” them; (d) “beginning from the baptism of John the Baptist (Jn. 1; Matt. 3; Lk. 3; Mk. 1) until the day when he (the Lord) was taken up from us”(40 days after his resurrection, Acts 1:3ff); (e) must be an eyewitness of the resurrection appearances of Christ. It is apparent from this that there cannot be any “apostles” (Roman Catholic, Mormon, or otherwise) with scriptural sanction today! Apostleship was a divinely ordained “estate” (Gr. epaulis, “dwelling”) and “office” (Gr. episkopen, “episcopate, bishopric”). Apostleship was more than a job. It was more than a “gift.” It was more than a talent or charisma. Men did not make themselves apostles—they were chosen by Christ (Jn. 15:16). There was no congregational vote on who would be an apostle! The apostles themselves did not even get to vote! Nor did they elect any one among themselves to be a “pope.” Apostles were chosen to be “servants” of Christ and his church. That is true of other “officers” in the church (i.e., elders, evangelists, teachers, deacons, Eph. 4:11ff). But apostles were special, unique, instruments of God serving in an “office” which no other Christian could serve, revealing the final, complete, infallible New Testament of God’s saving word in human language. They had to have special, unique powers and qualifications.

The “brethren” (1:15) really did not “choose” Matthias! The “brethren put forth” two men as qualified for Judas’ “office.” Apparently the 120 all agreed that Barsabbas and Matthias were the only two who met the qualifications. Then they “prayed” to the Lord that he might “show” (Gr. anadeixon, “expose, display”) which one of the two the Lord had chosen (1:24). Then they “cast lots” (Gr. edokan klerous) and the “lot fell” on Matthias (1:26). Proverbs 16:33 and 18:18 tells us: “The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.” But “casting lots” under the sanction of God’s apostles is not gambling—it is asking for God’s choice! The choice of Matthias was God’s choice without chance in the casting of lots. God does not act by chance, and men do not live by chance. Peter could not have been running contrary to the Lord’s will in this matter of selecting Matthias: (a) in OT times determining the will of God by casing the lot was an acceptable method of seeking the Lord’s will (Lev. 16:8; Num. 26:55; Josh. 7:14; 1 Sam. 10:20-21; Jonah 1:7ff); (b) if Matthias was the wrong choice, Luke had 30 years afterward to make the correction before he wrote of it in Acts. But Luke tells us that Matthias was “numbered” with the apostles. Is Luke’s account trustworthy or not? Sir William Ramsay proved the book of Acts to be absolutely precise in its historical accuracy; (c) it is possible that one of the things

Jesus told the apostles during the 40 days was to select one to fill Judas' place—and how to do it! (d) Paul never claimed to be filling a post “mistakenly taken by Matthias”! Paul called himself one appointed (i.e., “born”) “out of due time” (1 Cor. 15:8)—that is he was appointed to his apostleship long after the others had been appointed. So, there were 13 apostles—and only 13!

The two subjects to which the apostles were to bear witness were: (a) the resurrection of Christ from the dead; (b) the kingdom of God—i.e., the church of Christ. Did they do so? Check the sermons in the book of Acts! The resurrection of Christ and the church (kingdom of God), i.e., the reign of Christ in the mind and actions of its members. The fellowship of believers of God on earth are the two themes of apostolic preaching and writing (the epistles). As we have said elsewhere, the apostles were not called, empowered, and sent to bring equal economic distribution or educational leveling in society. They were not sent to rally protestors against the Roman empire. They were not sent to crusade against imperialism, pornography, militarism, ecological pollution, or a hundred other “problems.” They were commissioned to preach that “all men everywhere should repent because God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man (Jesus) whom he has appointed, and he has given assurance unto all men in that he has raised him (Jesus) from the dead” (Acts 17:30-31). Jesus, his resurrection, and every human being's necessity to repent (i.e., come under the Sovereign rule of Jesus over their life) was the focus of the apostolic preaching.

When that was preached and believed, the consequences inevitably followed—regeneration of individuals and redemption of society would certainly take place. But more important, that preached and believed would fit sinners for eternal life in the next existence, by God's grace.

A Chronology of the Apostolic Age

Event	Date
The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:1ff)	A. D. 30
The stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:1ff)	32 or 33
Paul's conversion to Christianity (Acts 9:1ff)	33 or 34
Paul's silent years (Gal. 1:11-24)	35-43
Paul's trip to Antioch	43
James (Epistle of) written	ca. 45
Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 13-14)	47 or 48
Peter at Antioch (Gal. 2:11-16)	Late 48 or early 49
Galatians written	Late 48 or early 49
The apostolic council at Jerusalem (Acts 15:36—18:23)	49
Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 15:36—18:22)	49-51
1 and 2 Thessalonians written	40 or 51
Paul's third missionary journey (Acts 18:23—21:16)	52-56
1 and 2 Corinthians written	54 and 55
Romans written	55
Paul's arrest (Acts 21:26-33)	56
Paul's appearance before Felix and Drusilla (Acts 24:24-26)	57
Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea (Acts 24:27)	57-58
Paul's trial before Festus (Acts 25:7-12)	58 or 59
Paul's trial before Agrippa (Acts 26)	59
The voyage to Rome (Acts 27:1-28-29)	59-60
Paul's first Roman imprisonment (Acts 28:30)	60-62
Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, the Gospel of Luke & Acts written	60-61
Philippians written	61
Paul's release from Roman prison	62
Paul's possible trip to Spain (cf. Rom. 15:24-28)	62
The martyrdom of James, the Lord's brother (Acts 12:1ff)	62
Peter in Rome?	62
The Gospel of Mark written (perhaps even earlier about A.D. 50)	62
Paul in Macedonia	62
1 Timothy written	62
Paul's trip to Crete	62
Titus written	62

Acts of the Apostle

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>
1 Peter written	63
Paul taken to Rome the 2nd time	63 or 64
2 Timothy written	63 or 64
2 Peter written	63 or 64
Hebrews written (by Paul in Rome)	63 or 64
Paul's second Roman imprisonment and subsequent death	64
Peter's death?	64
Matthew's Gospel written	A.D. 60-70
The siege and destruction of Jerusalem (Jesus predicted Matt. 24:1-34)	66-70
Jude written	60s or 70s
The Gospel of John written	A.D. 90s
1,2,3 John written	A.D. 90s
Revelation written	ca. 98
1 Clement written	92-101
John's death at Ephesus	Shortly after A.D. 98

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ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

ACTS 2:1-47

The “other tongues” were, without question, “other languages”!

- (a) they are called heterais glossais in Greek in 2:4. In this verse glossais, or “tongue” is a metonym (i.e., a figure of speech where the name of one thing, “tongue,” is used to name another thing, “language,” of which it is a property). The emphasis should be on heterais, “other.”—i.e., a “language” is a property of the “tongue.”
- (b) in 2:6 and 2:8 what the apostles were doing “as the Spirit gave them utterance” was talking, (Greek, hekastos te idia dialektō) “each in his own dialect.” There can be no question that Luke is writing about a human language, understood by the person who was “born” (Gr. egennethemen, “begotten”) in that language or dialect.
- (c) the Greek word glosson is used in Revelation 7:9, and throughout 1 Cor. 14, to mean human languages, not some ecstatic, non-human, “unknown” mumbling.
- (d) Acts 2:8 clearly indicates the surprise of people from 16 different “dialects” hearing and understanding 12 apostles speaking in the “dialects” of 16 different peoples! And so does Acts 2:6. This statement is repeated to keep any one from misunderstanding what the phenomena was!
- (e) it is certain that these “Galileans” could not have been speaking foreign languages without some supernatural help! The crowd of Jews from all over the world (having been born in these foreign countries) acknowledge it as a miracle.
- (f) there were not just Jews there—there were “proselytes” (Gr. proselutoi)—that is Gentile people native to the regions listed who had converted to Judaism. So what the apostles were speaking was not simply different Jewish dialects, but different languages. These Gentiles heard the apostles speaking in their own native languages!!!
- (g) the idea some have that this was an “unknown” tongue comes from 1 Cor. 14:2, where the word “unknown” has been supplied by the KJV translators—“unknown” is not in the original Greek text.

The crowds in the temple contained honest-minded people and dishonest-minded people (just like any large gathering today). Some were perplexed (Gr. existanto, “amazed, surprised, beside-themselves”) and “troubled” (Gr. dieporounto, “doubting, despairing,

without resources to explain”). Some wanted to know what was taking place! Then there were some who were scoffing (Gr. diachleuazontes, “mocking, joking, jesting, jeering” as were the Athenian philosophers at Paul’s preaching about the resurrection, Acts 17). They knew too much to be impressed or to care about this display of the supernatural, so they shrugged it off as “drunkenness.” These said, in Greek, gleukous memestomenoi, a perfect tense phrase meaning “having been filled with and continuing to be filled with new wine.” In other words, they mocked the apostles as drunkards, even though they were telling those present of the mighty works of God in foreign languages. Peter replies: (a) the audience of “devout men” would not have listened to a bunch of drunkards; (b) it was a violation of a strict Jewish law to drink intoxicants on a feast day (Pentecost), especially before noon; (c) on feast days, Jews did not even eat their first meal until about the 4th hour (see Maimonides, Shabb. Ch. 30); (d) when the apostles began speaking it was only the “third hour” (9:00 a.m.) and that is the morning hour of prayer in the temple. No devout Jew would eat or drink before this hour was past; (e) it was not usual even for drunkards to become drunk in the daytime especially in the courts of the temple (1 Thess. 5:7); (f) the apostles were speaking in languages that were understood—about the mighty works of God. Drunkards do not usually speak so that a huge crowd can understand—nor do drunkards usually speak about the “mighty works of God”; (g) there were other inexplicable “signs” in the realm of nature—sounds and sights—that accompanied the phenomena of miraculous speaking of languages. Was “nature” also drunk? Peter explains: (a) the phenomena of sounds, sights (“wonders and miracles”) and foreign languages by those who did not know them, was predicted by God’s prophet, Joel 2:28ff; (b) the phenomena was to usher in the “last days” (the Christian dispensation, i.e., from Pentecost to the end of time). Joel’s prophecy is apocalyptic in style. Joel is saying (2:28ff) that the Christian age will begin with what was happening on that Pentecost Day, and certain natural signs and wonders would continue to come upon the earth before the end of time—so we can expect “catastrophic” signs on the earth from Pentecost until the end of time—and none of them will tell us exactly when the end shall come; (c) the phenomena was to announce that the Messianic salvation had arrived, so that “whoever” (Jew or Gentile) calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. That, too, is a fulfillment of Joel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah, Zechariah, et al. Peter is announcing that the events in Jerusalem in the last 40 days are the climactic events of God’s redemptive program, but not the end of time.

Calling upon the name of the Lord involves (a) believing that God raised Jesus from the dead (Rom. 10:9-13); (b) confessing the identity and authority of Jesus with the lips (Rom. 10:9-13); (c) being immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Cor. 6:11; 1 Pet. 3:21 (the reply of a good conscience toward God); (e) men will never be able to call upon the Lord for salvation until they have heard the Gospel and believed (Rom. 10:14)—that is a very sobering thought for the church today—no preaching—no calling upon the Lord—no salvation. If we wonder why we are not hearing people call upon the Lord for salvation it is because they are not having the Gospel preached to them—they cannot call on him until it is preached;(d) being a member of Christ’s church (1 Cor.1:2); (f) and that Gospel message must include the resurrection of Christ proved so as to bring about “the obedience of faith” (Rom. 1:5; 16:26)—it includes repentance—it includes immersion in water (baptism). This is what Peter said was “calling upon the name of the Lord.” It is what the Lord said

though Ananias to Saul of Tarsus (Acts 22:16). What angel or human has ever been given the authority to change that? (Gal. 1:8-9).

Jesus was “approved” as from God (Gr. *apodeideigmenon*, perfect tense, means Jesus was being “demonstrated as from God in the past and continuing to be demonstrated”). And God “demonstrated” Jesus’ origin with powerful deeds and wonders and signs in the midst of eyewitnesses! And they knew (not, “felt”) this demonstration. It was historic. It met all the criteria of scientific demonstration! But Jesus was also “delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God” to be crucified and killed (Jesus really died on the cross—and was really raised from the dead on the third day). The words “definite plan” in Greek are *horismene boule*. We get our English word “horizon” from *horismene*. It means “definite boundaries or limitations.” The word in English means, “boundary line,” or metaphorically, “range of perception;” *boule* means, “resolve, purpose, decision.” The death of Jesus was “resolved within the boundaries of God’s prognosis” before it took place (the Greek word *prognosei* is translated “foreknowledge”). The OT (esp. Isa. 53:1-12; Dan. 9:24-27) and Jesus himself predicted his death—place, manner, and time. The death of Jesus was no accident. It did not slip up on God or Jesus without their being aware it was coming. It was not an afterthought in God’s redemptive program. It was a part of God’s predetermined plan. This in no way means Christ was not free to act as he wished (Matt. 26:36-46; Jn. 10:17-18). Had he wished, as a free moral agent, he could have avoided the cross. Christ went to the cross of his own free will. But what about those who killed Jesus? Scripture, reason and experience suggest that men are free moral agents. Scripture repeats and repeats the invitation to humans to choose, i.e., “Whosoever will...”. It would be irrational for the Bible to invite choice if there were none! Had God made humans without the freedom to choose, the doctrine of a vicarious death of Christ would have been a lie! Brother L. Edsil Dale, who taught Acts in Bible Colleges for many years, wrote, “The foreknowledge of God in no way predestines the free will of man. A father may clearly see the outcome bound to result from certain acts of his child, but his foreknowledge in no way determines the child’s actions. God fixed the plan of salvation and the way to heaven before the creation, but the “traveler” has within his will the power to depart from the way and doom his own soul. The omniscience of God has nothing to do with the obedience of man. Foresight and free choice stand alone and separate.” God may “urge” us to do his will by various means (by providential chastening and/or blessing—as well as through his propositional revelation in the Bible), but he will not force us to do it! “God, in eternity, determined that those in Christ should be saved. He also determined that those not in Christ should be damned. God brings various influences to bear on a man’s life, but he never forces the man to go against his own free will. The sovereign God determined that there would be two, and only two destinies for human beings—either a life of belief, or one of disbelief. Man is free to choose whether he will be ‘in Christ’ or not.” —Gareth Reese in his commentary on Acts (see Matt. 11:28-30; Jn. 14:23; 15:4; Ezek. 18:23,32; 33:11; Rom. 11:16-24; 1 Cor. 9:24-27; Gal. 5:5; 1 Tim. 2:4; Titus 2:11ff; Heb. 3:7-18; 2 Pet. 1:1-10; 1 Jn. 2:2; 4:14, etc.).

Peter was trying to prove that God made Jesus of Nazareth, both Lord and Messiah

(Christ). The very Jesus these Jews had 40 days earlier renounced, crying, “We have no king but Caesar—Crucify him (Jesus).” This Jesus was now assuredly (Greek *asphalos*, “without doubt, safely, firmly, immovably”) enthroned in heaven as was predicted of the Messiah in ages past. Peter appealed to fulfilled prophecies, to miracles done by Jesus during his life (in their midst) and to Jesus’ resurrection which had been attested to by eyewitnesses (1 Cor. 15:1ff). This Jesus was made Ruler and Savior. He was David’s Lord, he was Abraham’s Lord, he was Moses’ Lord. Peter was saying, in effect, God, in Christ resolved, set aside, and was victorious over the very worst that man, prodded by Satan, could do against the Creator. Men tried to kill the incarnate Creator, Sovereign of all that exists when they crucified Christ. God could send human spokesmen with his message of judgment and redemption. Rebellious human beings could kill them. Once killed, these messengers could be silenced. But God came himself in human form. He proved beyond question that he was God in human form. Then rebellious men “killed” him—but he would not stay dead! He was not silenced! He arose from the dead and appeared to many eyewitnesses proving he was not dead, and kept on talking and working. Then, just like he promised, he ascended into the invisible realm called “heaven” and sent forth the Spirit of God upon his chosen apostles to give his final, complete, warning of judgment and plan of salvation! WHAT PETER WAS PROVING IS BEYOND REASONABLE DOUBT, IMMOVABLE, ASSURED!

For centuries immersion was the only acceptable mode of “baptism” and its necessity was never questioned by any Christian religious persuasion (Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, or any other) in all Christendom. The first allusion to “baptism” by any form other than immersion is not found until A.D. 1160 nearly 1200 years after the New Testament church and the book of Acts! So when did it change? And why? How about this as documentation: The “New Catholic Edition of the Holy Bible,” Douay Version, copyright 1954, states as a footnote to Romans 6:3, “St. Paul alludes to the manner in which baptism was ordinarily conferred in the primitive church, by immersion (our emphasis)...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.” —New Testament, p. 199. But it was the Roman Catholic Church which issued the “theological edict” in 1311 that “baptism by sprinkling” was acceptable. Of course, modern denominationalism (as we have it today) did not come about until about 200 years or more after that edict (Martin Luther separated himself from the Roman church in 1515). So “sprinkling” was well established as an acceptable mode of “baptism” and simply perpetuated for “convenience sake” in forthcoming denominations. But who ever said “convenience” was the criterion by which we practice the clear commands of God in the New Testament?

Consider these scriptural requirements about “baptism”:

New Testament Baptism Requires	Sprinkling	Pouring	Immersion
Water, Acts 10:47	X	X	X
Much water, John 3:23		X (?)	X
Going to water, Matthew 3:13			X
Administered in water, Mark 1:9			X
Down into the water, Acts 8:38			X
Coming out of the water, Mt. 3:16			X
A burial, Romans 6:4			X
A resurrection, Colossians 2:12			X
Bodies washed, Hebrews 10:22			X

The theological renunciation of the necessity of immersion (i.e., “baptism”) is of fairly recent origin! Even Martin Luther, wrote in the margin of his Bible in The Epistle to the Romans that we are saved by faith “alone,” But he baptized people for the remission of their sins. Practically all modern Christian denominations make baptism (even those who “sprinkle” and “pour”) a necessity, if not for salvation, then for membership in their church! Our salvation was accomplished exclusively, totally, wholly, finally, perfectly by what Christ did in his incarnation, sinless life, vicarious death and resurrection from the dead (Heb. 10:1-18, “once for all time”). But our choosing and accepting and appropriating that salvation of grace is by the exercise of our faith in obeying the clearly required ordinance of immersion in water. Acts 2:38 plainly states that “baptism” (i.e., immersion in water) is FOR the remission of sins. The Greek word in the original text translated “for” is eis. It is a preposition which may be translated “for,” “into,” “to,” “toward,” “in order to,” and other words conveying the idea of forward direction. Thus, to be baptized (immersed) “for” the remission of sins indicates that baptism looks forward to the remission of sins as a direct consequence or result of baptism. Notice how the following 26 English translations (representing a wide range of denominational backgrounds) have translated eis. The remission of sins is consistently made to follow and not precede the act of baptism. Thus according to the clear teaching of Acts 2:38 one cannot expect his sins to be forgiven until he is immersed into Christ

“In order to have your sins forgiven” Edgar Goodspeed Translation

“In order to the remission of sins” The Living Oracles (a translation by Alexander Campbell)

“In order to the remission of your sins” H.T. Anderson Translation

“In order to the forgiveness of that and all (your) other sins; and you not only shall obtain the free and full remission of them all” Philip Doddridge NT

“To have your sins forgiven” Ronald Knox Translation

“That you may have your sins forgiven” Charles B. Williams Translation.

“So that you may have your sins forgiven” J. B. Phillips Translation

“Then your sins will be forgiven” William Barclay Translation.

“Your sins will then be forgiven” C. H. Rieu Translation

“That your sins may be forgiven” New American Bible

“That your sins may be forgiven” The Anchor Bible (Johnnes Munck)

“And your sins will be forgiven” New Life New Testament (G. Ledyard)

“In the hope of having your sins remitted” Documents of the NT (G. W. Wade)

“So that your sins will be forgiven” William Beck Translation

“That your sins may be forgiven” The Shorter Bible (C. F. Kent)

“Your bad ways will be forgiven you” Good News for the World (Annie Cressman)

“To the putting away of your sins” Don Klingensmith Translation

“For the forgiveness of and release from our sins” The Amplified Bible

“So your sins can be dealt with” Cotton Patch Version (Clarence Jordan)

“With a view to forgiveness of the sins of you” Greek-English Interlinear (Marshall)

“Into letting go off of the sins of you” The Kingdom Interlinear Translation

“With reference to the remission of sins” Rodolphus Dickinson Translation

“To the remission of sins” Young’s Literal Translation

“Into the remission of your sins” The Emphasized Bible (Rotherham, 1897)

The Meaning of “eis” in Acts 2:38

by G. F. Raines

From The Vindicator, Nov. 1956, republished in Gospel Digest, Dec. 1956

In December of 1953 I addressed the following question to some renowned Greek scholars, understanding that attempts had often been made by sectarians to avert the true import of Acts 2:38 in anticipation of removing baptism from the plan of salvation:

“If such expressions as, ‘he was decorated for bravery’ and ‘he was electrocuted for murder’ were translated into the Greek language, would the Greek preposition ‘for’ be translated in the Greek preposition ‘eis’ as found in Acts 2:38??

Believing that the replies received will be valuable to anyone attempting to study matters of this nature, I think it not amiss to pass on the information received through this medium.

REPLY FROM COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY

“The answer is quite certainly ‘no’!...the first is dative of cause; the second is a genitive of cause. Eis is never used either in classical Greek or in N. T. Greek (Koine) in either sense. Its original meaning (basic meaning) is ‘motion into’; its derived meaning (in quite general use in all Greek from Home and N.T.) is ‘for purpose of.’ Hence eis aphesin in Acts 2:38 means for (the purpose of) remission (forgiveness). —George J. Bryan.”

REPLY FROM UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON AND LEE

“In the expressions, ‘he was decorated for bravery’ and ‘he was electrocuted for murder,’ the preposition for would not be translated into the Greek eis, because eis denotes purpose and not cause. Peter says: let each of you be baptized in order that your sins may be forgiven. In other words, the purpose of baptism is the forgiveness of sins. But when you say, ‘he was decorated for bravery,’ you mean that bravery was the cause of his being decorated, and in Greek you would use the preposition dia. I trust that I have answered the question to your satisfaction. —Henry V. Shelley.”

REPLY FROM VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

“IT SEEMS TO ME THAT WITH Acts 2:38 in mind you chose slightly misleading English parallels. Keeping the same verbs as in your examples, I suggest that these parallels would be more exact: ‘Electrocuted for the public safety’ ‘Decorated for the president’s visit.’

“These would perfectly naturally, though not inevitably, be rendered in the New Testament idiom with the preposition eis. “Note that in such constructions eis expresses either the purpose of the result (or both) of the verb. Therefore the noun after eis expresses a state or an act that cannot be earlier than the time of the verb’s action and usually is future to it.

“May I suggest that you examine in Greek and in the King James these passages in the N.T.: Matt. 24:14; 26:15,28; Lk. 5:4 (second eis); Acts 14:26; Rom. 15:4.—Kendrick Grobel, Professor of Biblical Theology.”

Some will say, “But we are not saved by works, and baptism is a work.” Yes, baptism is a work, but not in the sense of a self-justifying work. We do not appeal to our baptism as a meritorious work which justifies us before God. Baptism is an “answer” to God’s call for us to enter into covenant with him and receive his covenant blessings (1 Pet. 3:21). God declares the covenant terms—we do not—we simply obey God’s terms. We do not question the sincerity of some people today who insist that baptism is not necessary for salvation. We do, however, acknowledge what we believe it to be a sober responsibility to read the Bible and understand it to the best of our capabilities using proper hermeneutics and grammatical rules for interpretation, in all honesty and sincerity ourselves. Sincerity does not save us. We declare what the apostles did—that Christ clearly teaches (Mt. 28:18-20) that baptism is necessary for obeying God’s covenant requirements to receive the salvation which Jesus has provided us by grace. We acknowledge a responsibility to teach that until someone can clearly show (by proper hermeneutics) that the Bible does not make baptism a necessity. Faith is called a “work” in John 6:29. If faith and repentance are necessary “works” for salvation, so is baptism necessary for salvation. Baptism is associated with people becoming Christians in the book of Acts more than “faith” or “repentance” (which all those who became Christians exercised, of course, even though it is not mentioned). I have, in my personal library, a Church Member’s Handbook (Baptist) which states on one page, “Obedience to Christ is necessary for salvation”—and on another page in the same book, “Baptism is not necessary for salvation.” That is what is called an “oxymoron.” It is a basic law of logic that two contradictory propositions cannot both be correct! Did not Christ command the apostles to baptize the whole world? (Matt. 28:18-20). Did not Christ tell the apostles in that same Olivet commandment, order the apostles to teach everyone they

baptized to observe all things which Christ had just commanded the apostles? Did not the apostles, by the Spirit of Christ in them, command all men everywhere to be baptized (Acts 2:38; 22:16) etc.?

As late as the Council of Trent (A.D. 1545-1564) it was unanimous theology and practice that baptism was unto (i.e., for)! Luther wrote an expansive treatise on baptism remission of sins by immersion, and for remission of sins in 1520 called, "The Babylonish Captivity of the Church." A. H. Newman, in his, *A Manual of Church History*, Vol. II, p. 153, writes, "in fact, nearly all of the leading reformers (Luther, Zwingli, Anabaptists, etc.) were for a time brought face to face with the fact that infant baptism is without clear scriptural authorization, but were ultimately led to defend it as a practical necessity." This "facing of the fact" was due to their realization that baptism was for the remission of sins, and since infants could not be held morally guilty of sin, there was no need to baptize them. My research leads me to think that denial of the necessity of baptism for remission of sins arose with the "Great Awakening" in America about A.D. 1740 onward. As late as 1655 Henry Dunster, first president of Harvard, was forced to resign because of his opposition to baptizing infants. A. H. Newman, *op.cit.* states, p. 694, "many of the Congregationalists of the 'New Light' (i.e., Christian Church followers of Barton W. Stone, ca. 1804) type reached the conviction that the pure and spiritual church-membership for which they contended and for which they separated from the churches of the standing order could be secured only by the rejection of infant baptism (sprinkling) and the baptism of believers into church-fellowship on a profession of saving faith." The "Great Awakening" was characterized by "great emotionalism." When the "New Lights" began "separating" from the secularized and often ungodly "standing order" churches, in the "New Light" churches credible evidence of conversion (i.e., baptism) was made a condition of fellowship (Newman, *op.cit.* p. 675)."

Alexander Campbell in his book, *The Christian System*, p. 174-175, quotes Bishop White: "Regeneration, as detached from baptism, never entered into any creed before the seventeenth century." And Whitby, "That our Lord here (Jn. 3:5) speaks of baptismal regeneration the whole Christian church from its earliest times has invariably taught." And Timothy Dwight, president of Yale, "To be born again is precisely the same thing as to be born of water and the Spirit...to be born of water is to be baptized..." And George Whitefield on Jn. 3:5, "Does not this verse urge the absolute necessity of water baptism? Yes!" And John Wesley, "By baptism we enter into covenant with God...are admitted into the church, made members of Christ, made the children of God, by water as the means, the water of baptism, we are regenerated or born again..." And so, just as this plain and universally taught Biblical doctrine (necessity of baptism for remission of sins) was being renounced, God was raising up "prophets" (the O'Kelleys, Barton W. Stone, Thomas & Alexander Campbell, "Raccoon" John Smith, Walter Scott—in the "Restoration Movement") to preach the unadulterated Gospel plan of salvation. We are bound by scripture, history and conscience to continue preaching it!

Jesus himself clearly commanded baptism, and we must: (a) keep his commandments to love him, Jn. 14:15,23; (b) keep his commandments to be his friend, Jn.

15:14; (c) keep his commandments in order to tell the truth when we say we know him, 1 Jn. 2:3-4; (d) be baptized to wash away our sins, Acts 22:16; (e) be baptized to be united with his death, Rom. 6:1-5; (f) be baptized to “put on Christ,” Gal. 3:27; (g) be baptized to “fulfill all righteousness,” Matt. 3:15; (h) be baptized to “justify God” Mk. 1:4; Lk. 3:3; Lk. 7:29; (i) be baptized to be born again, Jn. 3:5; Titus 3:5; (j) be baptized to be sanctified, 1 Cor. 6:11; Acts 18:8; (k) be baptized to be raised to a new life, Col. 2:12; (l) be baptized to be saved, 1 Pet. 3:21. The Gospel “truth” is to be obeyed (Rom. 1:5; 6:17-18; 16:26; 2 Thess. 1:8; see also Acts 5:32; Heb. 5:9; Gal. 5:7; Rom. 2:8; 10:16; 2 Pet. 1:22; 4:17) . Immersion in water (baptism) is clearly, unequivocally commanded of all who would become Christian. Obedience to clear commands of Christ are necessary to salvation. Therefore, baptism is necessary to salvation! To say otherwise is to contradict God’s word, Christ’s word, and the Holy Spirit’s word. One cannot be accused of bigotry, sectarianism, or uncharitableness for a kind, but firm, declaration of this doctrine to all men, everywhere!

12 apostles each immersing 12 persons per hour (one every 5 minutes which is very liberal in time) would take 21 hours to immerse 3000 people. That would probably not qualify for fulfilling the statement, “...and there were added that day about three thousand souls.” But then who said the apostles alone did all the immersing? There is nothing in the scriptures restricting the “immerser” to an apostle, a clergyman, or even to a Christian! Of course it would always be preferable that the “immerser” be a Christian. But he/she certainly does not have to be a preacher. Interestingly enough, however, one of the “arguments” against immersion as a mode, and immersion as a necessity, is that 3000 people could not possibly have been immersed in one day by the apostles on the day of Pentecost! It is altogether possible that some of the first ones to be immersed on that day turned around and began to immerse others. There were a number of large pools in Jerusalem...according to the Oxford Bible Atlas, 1974, p. 96, “In Jerusalem in NT times,” there were 3 large pools just north of the Temple area (one of which was the pool of Bethesda). Then south of the Temple area were two more pools (Siloam and Solomon’s). There was a large pool west of the Temple near the palace of Herod. And another huge one southwest outside the city walls. There may have been others available then, but now unknown. With hundreds of people doing the immersing, 3000 could be immersed in short order! No problem!

Characterization of the first “church” of Christ as outlined in Acts 2:41-47:

- (A) they “saved themselves from that crooked generation” by being immersed (baptized)—thus they were not “saved” before they were immersed. Baptism occurs more frequently in the NT than repentance. Baptism is mentioned in every conversion account in Acts except Sergius Paulus in Acts 13:12
- (B) there were three thousand (3000) in the first church—probably all Jewish by birth
- (C) they continued steadfastly (Greek, proskarterountes, “being strong toward”) in the apostles teaching (Gr. didache, “doctrine”). It was a group of believers strong on apostolic doctrine! Alexander Campbell named “the study of the Bible as an

ordinance” of Christ (Leroy Garrett, The Stone Campbell Movement, 1981, p. 359),

- (D) they were “strong” on fellowship (Gr. koinonia, “sharing, participating”).
- (E) they were “strong” on breaking of the loaf (Acts 2:42) (Gr. klasei tou artou, with the article it means a definitive “loaf,” thus, the Lord’s Supper).
- (F) they were “strong” on prayer (Gr. proseuchais, probably the thrice-daily prayer times of the Jewish Temple as well as their own private prayers at home).
- (G) they were fearful, reverent, every one of them, because they knew they were in the presence of Almighty God!
- (H) the believing ones were together (unified, no dissensions) and what they had, they shared (Gr. koina). They sold their properties and distributed (Gr. diemerizon, “divided-up”) according as anyone had need (Gr. kathoti an tis chreian eichen).

Where were the 3000 meeting to do all this? “Day by day, strongly, of one-mind”? —IN THE JEWISH TEMPLE. An interesting place for the first “church” of Christ to be meeting! “Day by day” they were eating in their own homes (this “breaking of bread” (2:46) is different than the one in 2:42 because it is without the definite article so probably it means they were sharing their meals with one another (Gr. metelambanon, literally, “receive with”). Also the Greek word trophes is used in this sentence to clarify that it is daily food being talked about. The point of this information is that they were partaking and sharing with glad and generous hearts (Gr. agalliasei kai apheloteti kardias). The word apheloteti means, “singleness, simplicity, liberality, generosity, open-handed.” They were strong on hospitality and generosity. “Day by day” they were “praising God and having favor with all the people.” The Greek word karin is the same word from which we get, “grace.” At the first, most of the Jews (the common people) were favorably inclined toward these earliest Christians. But that changed when the rulers of the Jews began to stigmatize the Christians as apostates and seditionists. “Day by day” the Lord was adding to their number those who were being saved (Gr. tous sozomenous, a perfect tense verb, indicating something that took place in the past and was continuing to take place). Evangelism was going on “day by day”! THIS WAS ALL WITHOUT THE AFFLUENCE AND TRAPPINGS OF MODERN CULTURE WHICH WE THINK ARE SO NECESSARY TO BEING THE CHURCH AND TO EVANGELIZING OUR SOCIETY!

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

ACTS 3:1—5:42

Note first: Peter “gazed on” the beggar. Peter selected one sick person out of many others undoubtedly present who could have used some kind of miraculous healing. Physical healing was not the ultimate purpose of the apostles! Had that been their ultimate goal, they would have healed all those present at the Temple and throughout the city of Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth! Nor is physical healing the ultimate purpose of the gospel or the church. Our physical bodies must die (or be shed) for when the Lord comes we will have completely new bodies not like these “corruptible” ones (1 Cor. 15:42-57). We are born to get sick and die—physically! Note second: the lame beggar was a singular case—helpless, totally dependent, no question about the miraculous nature and extent of his healing. His condition was well known and widely known (he was brought daily to the Temple gate). Those who saw him later would be unimpeachable witnesses to the supernatural change in the man. Even the Jewish Supreme Court (Sanhedrin) said, “That a notable sign (Gr. *gnoston semeion*, “acknowledgeable sign”) has been brought about (Gr. *gegonen*, perfect tense verb, something having happened with a continuing result) through them (Gr. *di’ auton*, “on account of them”) is manifest to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it!” (Acts 4:16). This healing was undeniably from divine origin! Note third: the man asked for money and did not expect physical healing—Peter gave him total, perfect healing. Did the man know he was going to be healed; did he have faith he would be healed? NO! How could he? Here is proof that the power to heal is not in the sick person’s expectations or faith, but in the healer—and proof that money has nothing to do with miraculous healing!

The point to be proved by this miracle according to Peter is to provide supernatural evidence that what he was about to say concerning the fulfillment of all Messianic blessings predicted by the OT prophets is in Jesus of Nazareth! This is the point of Peter’s opening statement (Acts 3:12-16). The multitudes were apparently staring at Peter and John as if they were divine beings (angels, gods, etc.). Peter goes to great lengths to point out that it is the apostle’s relationship (“faith which is through Jesus”—the apostle’s “faith,” not the beggar’s) to Jesus of Nazareth (the same Jesus the Jews had crucified about 2 months earlier) that produced this miracle. In this same opening statement, Peter pointedly connects the crucified (and risen) Jesus of Nazareth to “the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, of our fathers.” The identity of Jesus of Nazareth, “despised as blasphemer, apostate” by the Jewish rulers, is the point of the miracle, not the miracle, not the man’s perfect health, not the identity of the apostles, not the excitement or favor of the crowd. The point is THAT ALL THE WORD OF GOD IS FULFILLED IN JESUS OF NAZARETH! The point is, Jesus of Nazareth is “the author of life”—God raised him from the dead—in him are fulfilled all that the

OT prophets foretold! The point is, men must “repent,” i.e., turn their thinking and behavior completely around and bring mind and body under the rule of Christ’s revelation as the apostles were preached it! (“You shall listen to him, Jesus, in whatever he tells you” Acts 3:22). Peter’s point is that he, and the eleven, are telling the world what Jesus of Nazareth wants the world to be told! The point is that the apostles alone had this “end of the ages word”—there isn’t any “word” yet to come!

Gareth Reese says, “Peter does not mean to affirm that they were innocent, he says, ‘ignorant, not knowing.’ Deeds done in ignorance are still sin, and need forgiveness. Their ignorance is admitted; and in fact, that makes the sin forgivable.” In the OT God made provisions for two kinds of sin —presumptuous sins, and unwitting sins. Those who sinned presumptuously (i.e., “sins with a high hand”) were to be cut off from the people (Num. 15:30-31). Those who sinned unwittingly, or as called here, “sins of ignorance,” were to make the proper sacrifices and could be forgiven (Num. 15:27-29). Peter is saying that their sin of denial of Jesus’s deity was a sin of ignorance, and therefore, there was forgiveness for it. Their ignorance did not excuse them, but it was grounds for calling them to repentance. Carl Ketcherside wrote; “Responsibility is conditioned upon three bases according to the scriptures. One is accountable (1) for what he knows and will not do; (2) for what he could know and refuses to learn; (3) and for what he professes to know and will not practice. All of these have to do with the exercise of the will, for will is the determinant factor in life. One will not be damned because of ignorance unless it is willful and voluntary, else heaven would be useless and without an inhabitant, since all of us are ignorant about many things...One cannot be expected to believe in One of whom he has never heard, nor can he be expected to obey a command which he has never learned...whether he could have heard and learned, only God can know...and only an Infinite Mind can determine the extent of responsibility at any given time...” Did these “ignorant” Jews have any knowledge (evidence) who Jesus was???????? Yes—they had certifiable testimony that Jesus worked miracles in the presence of SOME Jews. They should all have believed in him!

The Jewish rulers did recognize that the beggar had been healed by divine power (Acts 4:10). But the question before them was not that of a manifestation of Divine power, but of the identity of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 4:1-4). These apostles were unequivocally declaring this healing was not just from Jehovah, the God of Israel, but from Jesus of Nazareth, whom these rulers had adamantly declared to be a blasphemer of Jehovah. To acknowledge Jesus as the source of the miracle was to acknowledge Jesus as God! Jewish rulers saw 3 ½ years of miracles in the words and deeds of Jesus. They had the testimonies of thousands of others who also saw. But how did they react? They could not deny what they saw so they said his miraculous power was from the devil (Matt. 12). What is the source of such prejudice and dishonesty? Why do free-choosing beings decide against reality? Most people today acknowledge Divine power (calling it “The Force, He, She, Someone-up-there”) but are unwilling to surrender themselves to the specific, historical person, Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Bible. They must keep “God” “up-there” and impersonal (“The Force”) so he can be manipulated or ignored according to their evaluation of their needs. In other words, selfishness is the underlying source of prejudice and dishonesty toward

acknowledging the implications of evidence testifying to the deity of Jesus of Nazareth (see Jn. 5:39-47 & Jn. 10:37-39). Making Jesus the exclusive Savior and Lord is unacceptable to selfish humanistic people.

Is there really no other name under heaven...among men than the name (authority) of Jesus by which we must be saved? THERE REALLY ISN'T! The Bible declares the exclusive Savior-hood and Lordship of Jesus of Nazareth. It nowhere offers to share any portion of cosmic Savior-hood or Lordship with any other being, human or non-human! (a) "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but by me" Jn. 14:6; (b) "He who does not honor the Son does not Honor the Father who sent him" Jn. 5:23; (c) "You will die in your sins unless you believe that I am he" Jn. 8:24; (d) "The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son" Jn. 5:21; (e) "He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son of God has not life" 1 Jn. 5:12; (f) "That in everything he (Jesus) might be pre-eminent" Col. 1:15-20; (g) "Above every name that is named" Eph. 1:20-23. A few other religions claim exclusive Savior-hood. But most other religions proclaim unilateral salvation—many ways—any way you want! So how do we decide the issue? It demands an answer if you want salvation! Shall we decide it subjectively—i.e., how we feel about it? Is there any real, lasting, absolute security in such an approach? NO! It has to be decided on evidence—and that is what the book of Acts is all about!!!

Evangelism is important enough for every Christian to defy any political order prohibiting it—even the threat of death! (a) it is better to preach Jesus and die young and go to heaven than not to preach Jesus, die old, and go to hell; (b) it is better to please Jesus who took upon himself my sin, to love, him to proclaim his blessed name, than it is to dishonor him and shame him by not proclaiming his name in order to please human beings aligned with Satan against him; (c) it is important to every Christian that he be honest with himself and acknowledge that he cannot be silent about Jesus without defiling his own conscience by refusing to do what he knows is the truth (Acts 4:19-20; 5:29); (d) it is important to preach Jesus because doing so is the only ultimate good any Christian can do for his neighbor and the rest of mankind (Acts 3:1-26; 4:8-12). Preaching Jesus can never be done with total secrecy! It may be done with more wise discretion than it is sometimes done, in order to make the message more winsome and powerful. But it can only be done boldly, straightforwardly, and uncompromisingly. And when it is done that way, no matter how discreetly, it will always be opposed until the judgment day. The message of Christ and his apostles is diametrically opposed to the world-mind-set. Even the most liberal, humane, just, democratic, religious unbeliever-in-Christ will oppose the gospel of Christ either militantly or secretly—viciously or hypocritically. But no matter how it's done, hurting Christ's disciples is war against God (see Rom. 8:5-8; Jas. 4:1-4)!

These earliest Christians did really, actually, "renounce" all their possessions as their "own." The text says, "No one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own." They "had all things common" (Gr. koina, "shared, participated, partnered). The Christian church was a "Christian partnership" in all things—not just in singing, preaching, teaching, communion, praying, etc., but in individual possessions. Is that too communistic

for us? Too socialistic? Or is it simply too costly? The church today needs to do some soul-searching in this area! “There was not a needy person among them...as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostle’s feet, and distribution was made to each as any had need.” BUT NOTICE: (a) the qualifier is “need” not want! Someone has to define “need”; (b) “what was sold” does not necessarily mean everyone sold everything they had. We know as a matter of fact that some sold only a portion of what they had (4:36-37; 5:1-4) and gave to the “needy account”; (c) distribution was made according to “need.” There was no dispensing of it all at once, nor any attempt at “leveling” everyone’s economic status to the same level. This was not “Communism” as advocated by Marx, Engels, Mao and Castro. Besides, “Communism” as practiced by Marxists for the last 100 years has not produced any “level” society, neither economic, social, civil, nor political!!!); (d) what was done by the earliest Christians should be qualified by other teaching in the NT on the Christian and his possessions (2 Cor. chs. 8-9).

The meaning of Peter’s statement to Ananias, (“While it remained unsold, was it not at your disposal?”) is that God gives all Christians freedom to choose by their own conscience (as that conscience knows, trusts and is motivated by God’s word) what they shall do with their “possessions.” In other words, Peter agrees with Paul who says in 2 Corinthians chs. 8 & 9 that Christians are to give “of their own free will, according to what a man has, not as an exaction, but as a willing gift, each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” That has always been God’s wish for believers in the area of stewardship and benevolence! No one, not even God, forced Ananias to sell his “piece of property.” No one, not even God, forced Ananias to give any part of the receipts of that sale to the church. No one told him how much he had to give—he decided to pretend he was giving all of it himself. Nobody said he had to give it all! Ananias’ sin was not in the amount he gave. It would appear that God would not even have been angry had Ananias decided not to sell the “piece of property” at all! Ananias’ sin was in attempting to lie to God about what he was doing! God will not force us to act against our will. But he certainly knows what we are doing every moment of every day! He will not tolerate the presumptuous sin of attempting to fool him, con him, or lie to him! Ananias should have said, “Peter, I’ve sold a piece of property, and here is a portion of it to help the needy.” Be honest about your sacrifice!

Some people would not “dare” (Gr. *etolma*, had not the courage or boldness) join themselves to these early Christians because of the “many signs and wonders wrought among the people...” by the apostles. Specifically, the fear of God was put in them by the death of Ananias for telling his “little white lie.” Ananias’ kind of lying goes on every day in our world—in business, politics, marriage, yes, even in religion. Is there no fear of God???? Is there no love for truth???? Of course, the church today has been granted no such powers as Peter had (and Paul in Acts 13:6-12) to physically slay or hurt people as punishment for sin against God. I, for one, would not want such power! But as sure as we live, it is the same God we profess that Ananias professed! It is a “fearful” thing to become a disciple of Christ! Count the cost! Do not put your hand to the plow and look back! We are not doing the church (Christ’s bride) a service if we compromise on the message of the cost of

discipleship! We do the church no good by practicing relativism or situationism in our moral actions or our message. We are not converting sinners if we let them think church membership is easy or that there is nothing to fear in lying to God, presumptuously, circumventing the plain commandments of Christ, or needing no change in mind-set. The church must make herself pure enough that it takes courage and boldness for people to join her. It takes renunciation of the world, self-control, hardship, sacrifice to join Christ's body, the church. The world today is too afraid to join and carry its worldliness in with it!

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

ACTS 6:1—8:40

It is now about A.D. 33 or 34 (3 years after the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2), near the time of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus as he traveled to Damascus. “There is sin in the camp!” There is murmuring in the congregation of Christians at Jerusalem! Murmuring is a sin (1 Cor. 10:10; Phil. 2:14; 1 Pet. 4:9, etc.). Isn’t it interesting that these apostles, who just 3 years earlier had themselves been bickering with one another about who would be the greatest in the kingdom, are now faced with the necessity of dealing with bickering among their own followers? “Hebrew” Christians were those who had been born and reared in Palestine. “Hellenist” Christians were Jews who had been born among the diaspora, (Jews dispersed during the exiles in 721 B.C. and 606-586 B.C.) reared outside of Palestine, and had adopted some of the cultural ways of the Gentiles. The “Hebrews” considered the “Hellenists” as being somewhat less “holy” than themselves. The “Hellenists” would, of course, react defensively. And when it appeared the “Hebrew” widows were being treated better than the “Hellenist” widows, complaining, criticizing, choosing up sides, and accusations began to fly! Very early in the history of the church there was a special provision made for widows (and probably orphans) of the congregation out of the “common funds.” We find widows as a special class in the church at Joppa (Acts 9:41) and at Ephesus (1 Tim. 5:3ff). Paul wrote to Timothy that the widows in Ephesus supported by the church had to meet certain spiritual qualifications! There was no social security or financial aid from civil government then. It was either work, beg or steal (unless you were a Christian). The Jews were accustomed to communities (synagogues) caring for the widows, orphans and needy Jews. But if you were a Jewish-Christian you could expect no help from your non-Christian-Jewish neighbors or your own non-Christian-Jewish relatives! God bless those in the Christian ministry today who provide for needy widows and orphans and the aged! How can the church be so crass and insensitive as to sluff off this Christian responsibility on to the civil state? How much more of this could congregations do today if they were less interested in “creature comforts” in their facilities?

The apostles were not “passing the buck.” They apparently had been doing most of this benevolent work themselves during the three years since Pentecost. In fact, they found themselves beginning to neglect their primary mission—PREACHING THE WORD—because of the increasing burden of benevolence. Neither were the apostles refusing to serve! The apostles took the matter into hand and solved it: (a) they set apart people to concentrate, primarily, on ministering to these widows; (b) they chose people from the “neglected” Hellenists to serve the Hellenists and Hebrews. This showed that there was sufficient Christian love and spirituality among the “Hebrew” Christians to trust the “Hellenists” and this was crucial to the solution; (c) the apostles continued to preach! Would the problem have

been solved had the apostles quit preaching and made their primary mission serving tables? NO! In the Bible order of things, salvation is not a by-product of social progress—rather, social progress is a by-product of the conversion and sanctification of individuals from sin by restoring a right relationship to God through obedience to the gospel! Ministering to people’s physical needs is important. That is undeniable. But, “man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4; Lk. 4:4). Jesus commanded, “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life” (Jn. 6:27). And the word that Jesus spoke is life (Jn. 6:63). **PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL IS IMPERATIVE. NOTHING MUST GET IN THE WAY OF PROCLAMATION! IT MUST COME FIRST, WHETHER ANYONE EATS OR NOT!**

The Greek word translated “freedmen” in 6:9 is *libertinon* (English, “libertine”). It describes a synagogue in Jerusalem of people who had somehow obtained their freedom from Roman slavery, or a synagogue of people from *Libertum* or *Libertina* (a city or district in North Africa near Carthage). If this was one synagogue made up of former slaves from all the districts mentioned, who had suffered greatly for their Jewish religion while Roman slaves, they would be highly sensitive to the defense of Judaism and ready to kill any one who seemed to be proclaiming the demise of Judaism (that it appeared to them Stephen was doing!): (a) Stephen and other Christians were winning many to “The Way” (i.e., to Christianity)—even a great company of the Jewish priests became obedient to “the faith.” (b) Stephen and his brethren had become an immediate threat (they thought); (c) the Jews could not “withstand the wisdom and the spirit with which he spoke.” Their willfulness and their ignorance embarrassed them! Their stupidity was exposed! Defensiveness is the unregenerate reaction to being humiliated. The Christian reaction to being humiliated is repentance and rejoicing; (d) Stephen was rehearsing the unbelief of these Jews and their forefathers from the days of the patriarchs to their present time. And all those centuries the Jews had been “seeking the glory of one another” (Jn. 5:44; Matt. 23:29-39, etc.); (e) finally, Stephen accused them of murdering their Messiah (7:52). Yes! The Jewish people have been severely persecuted through the years, but they have also done their share of persecuting! They have never been as “tolerant” of other people’s religion as they often profess!

Stephen’s “tirade” is not anti-Semitic! (a) Stephen was himself a Jew! He would have no hatred for people just because they were Jews. Stephen’s parents and ancestors were Jews; (b) all the earliest Christians were Jews. They all were continuing to practice many things of their Jewish culture. There was never any Christian dogma that said Jews had to give up all their Jewish culture to become Christians. Even the “apostle to the Gentiles” (Paul) continued living like a Jew in many respects. The only requirement was that Jews should not bind their cultural opinions and practices on other Christians as necessities for being saved in Christ. And, of course, Jews must confess Jesus of Nazareth as Savior, Lord, and God; (c) Stephen was trying to win Jews to Christ by telling them of their sins and the evidence for Jesus’ Messiahship. He was trying to save their souls. Preaching Christ is NOT anti-Semitism! Preaching Christ IS anti-sin. It IS anti-unbelief, anti-ignorance of God’s word. There have been individuals and groups claiming to be “Christian” who have acted

hatefully, viciously and hurtfully toward people just because they are Jews—that is anti-Semitism. But true followers of Christ should not be categorized with those kinds of people simply because they are true to the New Testament and are evangelistic. To say Jews crucified Christ is not anti-Semitic any more than saying Romans crucified Christ is anti-Latinistic. It is simply stating what the historical record (the Bible and the Talmud and secular Roman historians) have written down.

Yes! Jewish people would get upset enough over a religious argument to “grind their teeth” and “stop their ears”! And so would Gentile people! Anyone without the self-control produced through the help of God’s Spirit is vulnerable to such “out of control” reactions. Such behavior and that which is 100 times worse happens every day in “religious arguments.” Defamation, slander, alienation, physical attack, excruciating tortures, homicide and genocide have all been perpetrated during and after “religious arguments” (among Jews and Gentiles alike, even today). How can people be so insane as to react this way to “religious arguments”? Because “religious arguments” are not just about religion! They go deeper than that. Arguments about religion touch us at our moral centers—at our livelihood-centers—at our familial-centers—at our pride, our selfish-centers. When we discuss, debate, teach, argue, evangelize, we are teaching Christ’s religion: (a) Christianity is right—you have been wrong; (b) you can no longer decide issues on your own, for your advantage. You must, as a Christian, decide issues as Christ has decided them—for his advantage; (c) your possessions are no longer your own (of course, they never were)—but now they belong to Christ and his people; (d) you cannot go to heaven without the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. You must accept that, totally, by faith and commitment to him. You can’t be good enough to get to heaven! Worldly-mindedness hates this and “wars” against it (Rom. 8:3-7)

If you were persecuted, wouldn’t you flee??? Jesus told his disciples, “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men—when they persecute you in one town, flee to the next” (Matt. 10:16-18)! Christians are not to be foolhardy in the face of persecution! There is no Biblical precedent or sanction for wasting life, or throwing it away. Not even when preaching the gospel! Our lives are a stewardship just as surely as our other possessions. Compromising the truth to save one’s life certainly is not worthy of the Christian. But neither is a martyr-complex or death-wish. The Lord wants to use us for his glory, but wasting one’s life is not glorifying him. “Spending and being spent”(2 Cor. 12:15) for others is glorifying Christ. This “scattering” is a key point in time as far as the history of the early church is concerned. Luke refers to it several times to show how this “scattering” gave impetus to a number of other events (see Acts 8:4; 9:1; 9:31; 11:19) each of which “increased the number of believers.” We are not really told why the apostles did not “scatter” with the church—perhaps (a) the apostles were waiting for the Lord to change their orders; (b) the Sanhedrin figured if they could get rid of the church they could get rid of the apostles; (c) the Sanhedrin was taking Gamaliel’s advice and were afraid of what the masses would do if they drove the popular apostles out. Whatever the case, this Jewish persecution of Christians continued until A.D. 70 when Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jewish nation dispersed throughout the Roman

empire. This persecution was severe (see Heb. 10:32-39). Saul of Tarsus (later the apostle Paul) was one of its chief promoters and practitioners! Christians continue to be persecuted (as of 2014) by those of other “religions” and/or “non-religionists.”

The Samaritans decided between two people who alleged they worked miracles: (a) Simon “practiced magic” (Greek, mageuon, “magic arts, sorcery, Babylonian astrology”). (b) Philip performed “signs” such as exorcism and healing. Simon’s work was pseudo (pretended). Philip’s work was real! Even Simon himself believed, “seeing (Philip’s) signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed” (Acts 8:13). There is a difference between “magic” and “miracle” (see Acts 13:6-8). And it is possible for anyone to recognize the difference. “Magic” is false, pseudo, pretended, “play-like” sleight-of-hand, trickery (see 2 Thess. 2:9-13). Miracles are real, actual, supernatural, with no possibility of deception! This multitude, including the magician, knew the difference! The seduced are those who want to be fooled or tricked! They have some agenda for being credulous—personal sin! In addition, and perhaps most important, Philip’s message was one of “joy,” and “good news” about “the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ.” The message of “magic” is entertaining and mystifying, and frustrating and depressing. It offers no enlightenment, no hope, no relief. The gospel, on the other hand, offers reality, release from guilt and fear, revelation of the truth, meaning of life, and fellowship with God through Jesus Christ the merciful Messiah. This is the major difference! This is what motivated the multitudes “with one accord to give heed to what was said by Philip...” and it is what motivated them “to be baptized, both men and women...” Even Simon was baptized. These people are no different than thousands of “deluded” people today. Doesn’t your heart break for the millions seduced by “magicians” and “philosophers” of all sorts with their pseudo tricks and words about humanism, evolutionism, hedonism, and a thousand other false “messages”? That is why people are “frustrated, mystified, and depressed” in our 21st century! They need the gospel. Will you give it to them—any and every way you can?

Our pragmatic (i.e., “if it works it must be right”) philosophies of “doing good” are very often in disagreement with the Bible! Too often we think that if a good end results, that justifies any means to accomplish that end. Simon saw that when the apostles laid their hands on people they “received the Holy Spirit” (undoubtedly a manifestation of the supernatural “gifts” of the Holy Spirit were being give to certain selected Christians in Samaria for the same purposes as are outlined in 1 Cor. chs. 12,13,14). Simon had no such power but he wanted it! He was already a Christian. The wanting of such power would qualify him for receiving it in some modern charismatic groups! If he wanted it, and prayed for it, he should receive it modern charismatics would say. But this power, according to the Bible, was passed on only by the hands of the apostles. That is the impact of this incident! The miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit do not come by “wanting and prayer”—they come as God wills to give them. The Bible clearly teaches that God wills to give them through the laying on of the hands of the apostles according to the will of the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:6; Rom. 1:11; 1 Cor. 12:27-31; 2 Tim. 1:6; Heb. 2:4). When the apostles died, there was no more need for miraculous gifts in the church (to reveal God’s word; to discern which were true and false teachers; to substantiate the gospel message by speaking unlearned foreign languages

—see 1 Cor. 13:8-13). Simon knew he had to have the apostles “hands on” him to get the gift. He was willing to pay them for their “hands on” him. Did Simon want to do good with this gift? He wanted to “give” it (sure!) to others! Isn’t that what the charismatics want? But he was not right with God and the Holy Spirit through Peter would not allow indiscriminate passing around of this power. Simon, the Christian, had fallen from grace. He needed to repent and pray!

Most assuredly, the scriptures are understandable to any and all literate people (see Acts 17:11; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 1:3). God’s word has been given to mankind in human languages. And God expects all people to interpret them alike in their own languages. God would not communicate his will, his commandments and his promises in order that human beings might misunderstand them! Jesus expected people to understand the words he spoke (and those are what are written in the Gospels). Jesus expected people to understand the OT and its fulfillment in his earthly ministry (Lk. 24:25ff). Paul expected people to understand what he had written to them (and these are the very same epistles we read). The Ethiopian eunuch was a special case, however, and did need some guidance. First, he was probably not a Jew and had not the advantage of centuries of saturation in the scriptures. Second, he did not have the advantage we have in a written New Testament! Without the NT even if he did understand the OT, he would be in the dark about the fulfillment of the OT until he heard about the facts of Jesus’ death and resurrection and the command to be immersed for the forgiveness of sins. Furthermore, we all need to be “guided” in our spiritual pilgrimage. We all need the help of older and wiser Christians in applying the truth of the scriptures. And in addition, we all need to be taught the scriptures. Some learning can be done individually, and ought to be done that way, but most learning is confrontational (see Paul’s epistles). We need “teachers” who will “confront” us with the ideas, questions, and dogmas of the scriptures. Christ taught the apostles, the apostles taught others, and these taught others (2 Tim. 2:1-2). Paul said “teachers” is one of the offices of the church. Paul said elders must be “apt to teach.” Yes! People still need to be “led” to Christ. Those of us who have studied the Bible for years need to be “teachers” of those who need to be “guided, led, taught, evangelized.” EVANGELISM IS TEACHING!

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

ACTS 9:1—10:48

NO! Everyone is not to get a vision of Jesus like Saul of Tarsus had! Thousands of people became Christians in the book of Acts without ever experiencing a supernatural vision or direct communication from Christ. (a) Paul's vision was especially to accredit him to be an apostle (Gal. 1:15-16; 1 Cor. 15:8-10; Acts 22:14ff; 26:16ff); (b) Paul's background and anticipated work would require a supernatural confirmation (in addition to his conversion)—think about it—he was a Jew's Jew (Phil. 3; Acts 22:3-6; 26:4-8)—he was, in all good conscience, arresting what he considered to be “apostates” (Acts 26:9; 1 Tim. 1:13)—he was going to be sent to Gentiles (which is more cross-cultural than anything possible in our modern world)—he was going to have to suffer almost beyond human imagination; (c) in the final analysis it was not the vision that converted Paul, he was given the final decision in the matter only after Ananias had “told him what the Lord wanted him to do.” Paul could have refused Ananias' command, “Arise and be immersed and wash away your sins” (Acts 22:16). John says clearly at the close of his Gospel (Jn. 20:30-31; cf. Acts 1:1-3) that Jesus did many more miracles than were ever recorded and those which were recorded were written down so that people might read about them and believe and thus have eternal life. Enough is enough! Plenty of people saw miracles with their own eyes and were not converted! Miracles will not overpower anyone and force them to believe! All miracles do is confirm the veracity, the faithfulness of the message, and the authority of the messenger to be who he claims he is. It is the message that converts. God loves people, God has atoned for our sins, God forgives, God promises eternal life. If people won't believe that this has been accomplished in Jesus Christ's vicarious death and resurrection, they won't believe even if they saw someone come back from the dead (Lk. 16:31).

Paul was not converted on the Damascus Road, but in Damascus, through preaching and obedience to the Gospel. Faith comes by hearing the word of God, not through personal appearances of Jesus. Jesus worked miracles in the presence of hundreds of people who never obeyed his message. Jesus did not appear to Saul of Tarsus to save him. Had Jesus appeared to Saul to make him a Christian, he would have been saying in effect that his death and resurrection as proclaimed by the mouth of trustworthy witnesses could not save a sinner such as Saul. And this would be contrary to Romans 1:16-17; 10:14-21, and every sermon in the book of Acts! The fact that Jesus sent Ananias to Saul and Saul to Ananias simply reinforces the clear Biblical teaching that God has called men to be his ambassadors in the great work of reconciling the world unto himself (2 Cor. 5:1-21; Rom. 10:14-17; 1 Cor. 3:5-9). Besides, human beings (e.g., Ananias and Barnabas) had to be involved in the transformation of Saul of Tarsus, at the very beginning, so they might vouch for him to others. To prove to others that he was truly converted and not just disguising

himself in order to trap and persecute Christians (Acts 9:26-30). Paul could use Ananias' testimony later, if needed, to verify that he had been blinded and restored to sight miraculously. He could also use it to verify that the Lord himself had spoken to Ananias about Saul's special experience (Acts 9:10-19), and that Saul had indeed been immersed into Christ in humble obedience.

Paul could quickly "change horses in the middle of the stream" and affirm the "Way" of Christ which he had so recently been violently opposing because he was an honest-hearted man! When Saul was persecuting the Church he thought he was doing a God a service. He never doubted the rightness of this course (Acts 26:9; 1 Tim. 1:12-17). But he was ignorant! And he confesses that his ignorance was unbelief (i.e., inexcusable). He realized he should have availed himself of the opportunities to investigate and research Christianity before he persecuted it. I think Saul simply began persecuting the "Way" of Christ without ever deciding rationally about evidences for the truth of its message. Saul was a devout man; a firm believer in God. And, I believe, a very sensitive, compassionate and loving man. He was a man with an obedient heart and soul. He wanted to do the will of God with all his being. When he knew (or thought he knew) the will of God, he did it without compromise! He simply had not taken the time or the effort to investigate the evidence that the "Way" was indeed the will of Jehovah-God, so he determined to fulfill the OT law and put apostates to death. Once Saul had evidence that the "Way" of Christ was Jehovah's will, he could be just as totally committed to it, militantly, uncompromisingly, and sacrificially as he had been against it. He wanted to do God's will. Just show him evidence that it was God's will and he would do it, instantaneously, and completely! No wonder he was set aside to be the great "apostle to the Gentile world!"

Saul's conversion probably did cause a number of Jewish people to become Christians. He "almost persuaded" King Agrippa. It was Paul who wrote the epistle to the "Hebrews." It was Paul who took the offering of the Greeks to the starving saints in Jerusalem. So he did have great impact on Jews, converting many to Christ. But there were many Jews who hated him and wanted to kill him because they believed he was destroying Judaism! His Jewish enemies followed him, hounded him, beat him, stoned him, slandered him, and tried every way they knew to destroy his work from one end of the Roman empire to the other. We do not really comprehend what is involved in the conversion of a Jew to Christianity!!! Today it involves a complete disenfranchisement! It is as if one becomes dead to every form of Jewish life and living with which he was reared. He becomes "a man without a country"! He no longer exists as far as his family, friends, and race is concerned! They actually hold a funeral for him and mourn his death 7 days. No one is allowed to ever again speak his name. His pictures and personal belongings are burned—any remembrance of him is erased (or attempted to be erased). In Paul's time, as the book of Acts points out, Jewish Christians were "hunted" like animals, imprisoned and executed as apostates. Now you see why Saul's conversion to Christianity did not sweep millions of Jews into the same conversion, even though Saul's stature as a Jew was impressive. The converted Jew's lot may not be that severe (in some places) today. But it is still easier for a Jew to convert to the Muslim religion than to Christianity!

Gareth Reese says in his commentary on Acts, “There were two classes of proselytes: (1) a proselyte of the gate was one who limited his obedience to the Jewish law and was not circumcised. His worship at the temple was also limited; (2) a proselyte of righteousness was one who accepted the full responsibility of the law, and was circumcised. Such a Gentile enjoyed the full privileges of the temple.” Cornelius was undoubtedly devout, generous, and truth-seeking before he discovered Judaism! He was of the “Italian Cohort” meaning he had been born and reared in Italy, loyal to his Italian citizenship and army. He was a commander of a centuria (i.e., 100 men) stationed at Caesarea which was headquarters for the whole Roman occupation forces in Palestine (Pontius Pilate had his headquarters there when Jesus was crucified). Cornelius apparently was an honest-minded man, and a clear-thinking one. Many Gentiles (Greeks and Romans) had become cynical about and disillusioned with their mythical gods and the depraved religious practices of their cults. The writings of their philosophers, historians and poets document that (see Acts 17). Cornelius was one of those who knew the heathen deities were not real. He was one who could see in nature itself (Rom. 1:18-32; Acts 17) that there was an Omnipotent Being to whom all creation was responsible. Having been stationed in Palestine, he undoubtedly found in the teachings of the Jews what nature had also revealed to him! So, now he has turned his truth-seeking mind and open-hearted compassion toward the God of the Jews. Emperor worship had not yet been “officially” commanded although some emperors thought they were gods. Cornelius was apparently praying to God to be led to the ultimate truth! He was giving his alms in search of what was “right” (10:35). God honored such devotion and sent him guidance to ultimate truth!

The Greek word *mnemosunon* is translated “memorial” in 10:4 and *emnesthesan* is translated “remembered” in 10:31. This tells us that Cornelius was being “kept alive in the memory of God” through his prayers and alms-giving. God was being made aware of Cornelius’ search for the ultimate truth, “constantly” as he prayed (Gr. *dia pantos*, i.e., “all the time” Acts 10:2). But that did not mean he was saved by prayer and alms-giving. Listen to what J. W. McGarvey wrote in his commentary on Acts, “Here is the prayer of a man not yet wholly converted to Christ, and...the prayer is answered. But how different is the answer from that which persons in similar spiritual condition are taught to expect in our own time? The angel does not bring him word that his sins are forgiven, nor...leave him rejoicing in the forgiveness of sins because he is assured his prayers are heard. Instead of this, he is told to send for a man who will tell him what he must do to be saved. If similar prayers were answered now, who can doubt that the same God would answer them in the same way, by telling the inquirer to send for the preacher, or for some other disciple, who would rightly instruct him?” How shall they believe in him of whom they have never heard...and how shall they hear without a Preacher...and how shall they preach except they be sent? Rom. 10:14-17. Cornelius’ case was exactly like that of Saul of Tarsus! Visions and miraculous experiences do not save people. Their entrance into covenant with Christ by obeying his covenant (Gospel) commandments is what saves! Visions and miracles were to reveal and confirm the apostolic proclamation of salvation and its initial messengers. Once revealed and confirmed there is no more need for miracles!

For Jews to touch or otherwise contact some uncleanness (as God in the OT law had arbitrarily declared such uncleanness) they became unclean whether they did it on purpose or by mistake, knowingly or unknowingly. When a Jew became “unclean” he was “cut off from Israel—displeasing to God and unable to come into God’s presence.” He was not allowed to worship God in the Temple. No one wanted to be near him lest his defilement be transferred to anyone who touched him. All the condemnation and sentence of guilt from the law of Moses descended upon the unclean. Anyone guilty of one point of the law is guilty of it all (Gal. 3:10; 5:3; James 2:10). And we have discussed only the religious ostracism. Socially, an “unclean” Jew was shunned—even by his own family members, until they made themselves clean by offerings and repentance. The Jew lived his life in constant fear of uncleanness. And God intended it that way! Man, lost in sin, must fear sin—he must feel its burden, its guilt, its alienation, its condemnation. That is what the law was for (Rom. 7:7-20). Anything Gentile was “unclean”! How could a Jew go into a Gentile’s house without becoming “unclean”? That was a problem Peter would face. Perhaps now we can realize the tremendous release, freedom, and liberty that was brought by Christ when he revealed that things in themselves do not bring defilement, but sinful attitudes, thoughts, motives and behaviors are what defile. And, even though sinful in heart and mind, we can be forgiven by faith and penitent obedience and confession simply in the name (i.e., by the authority) of Jesus. This was a very difficult concept for Jews to grasp and appropriate. Peter had a difficult time learning this. He still had his “hang-up” about Gentiles in Antioch (Gal. 2:11ff). Not even this vision in Acts 10 could completely cure Peter!

When Peter said: “Truly, I perceive that God shows no partiality (Gr. *prosopolemptes*, literally, “taker of faces” or “respector of personage”), but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him,” Peter was referring to every one in every nation who desires to know the truth and obey it. Cornelius had already demonstrated he was that kind of person! And Peter could easily anticipate that just as soon as he told Cornelius about believing in Jesus Christ and being immersed for forgiveness of sins, Cornelius would obey the Gospel. Obeying the Gospel is “doing what is right.” Disobeying the Gospel is doing what is wrong, whether the disobedience is deliberate and militant, or unconscious and indifferent! When Christ comes at the end of time he is coming with his angels in flaming fire, to render vengeance upon all those who know not God and obey not the Gospel—that is literally what Paul wrote in 2 Thess. 1:7-8. Obeying the gospel is right for every man—rich man, poor man, famous and unknown, powerful and weak, erudite and unschooled, Jew or Gentile, American or Russian. God knows the human race in only two categories—those who have obeyed the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and those who haven’t—those who have done “right” and those who have done “wrong.” What does wealth or poverty mean to God? Nothing! What does influence or non-influence mean to God? Nothing! What do doctorate degrees or 4th grade education mean to God? Nothing! What counts with God is whether men have honored his Son, Jesus Christ, by obeying his gospel or not! If they haven’t done that, anything they’ve done is wrong!

The substance of Peter’s sermon to Cornelius was not the miracle of the Holy Spirit’s “falling” on Cornelius or the “speaking in tongues.” The substance was the identity of

Jesus and the covenant promise available through faith in Christ's vicarious death and the terms of covenant relationship to Jesus (repentance and baptism in water). Peter identified Jesus as: (a) "the Anointed One of God"; (b) the One with the Holy Spirit and power; (c) the One who went about healing all that were oppressed by the devil; (d) the One with whom God was clearly abiding; (e) the One ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead; (f) the One to whom all the prophets bore witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name (i.e., his authority). Peter offered as proof of this identification of Jesus: (a) the testimony of eyewitnesses to all the above (the apostles); (b) the crucifixion of Christ; (c) the resurrection from the dead of Jesus, seen by eyewitnesses who ate and drank with the resurrected Jesus; (d) the resurrected Jesus's command to the apostles to preach his identity; (e) the OT prophets and Jesus's fulfillment of their prophecies. All of this squeezed into one personal evangelism encounter in a man's house when the whole household was present. This is personal evangelism at its best!

What happened to Cornelius' household was the same thing that happened to the apostles on Pentecost (10:47; 11:17). They spoke in foreign languages (dialects) which they had not learned. Speaking miraculously in foreign languages never confirmed the salvation of anyone. In every other instance of a miraculous gift, remission of sins came at their being immersed in water (baptized) before the giving of the miraculous measure of the Spirit. The apostles had been baptized by John the Baptist for remission of sins; the Samaritans were baptized by water in the name of Jesus prior to miraculous gifts (Acts 8:9-17); the same is true of the twelve disciples in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-7); it is true of all in the Corinthian church who had received similar miraculous gifts (Acts 18:8; 1 Cor. 1:4-7; 12:1-7). In none of these cases was the remission of sins directly connected with the giving of miraculous gifts nor was the giving of miraculous gifts a necessity for knowing one's sins had been forgiven. Why should it be so with Cornelius simply because he spoke in a foreign language before being baptized in water? There is no record that any of the house of Cornelius possessed miraculous powers after the incident here. Once the purpose of this miracle was accomplished (i.e., Peter's enlightenment that Gentiles might be saved), this power was not necessary. "Tongues" were for Peter's sake—not Cornelius's! After the Holy Spirit "fell" upon Cornelius' household, then Peter commanded them (Gr. *prosetaxen*, literally, "laid an order upon them") to be baptized in water in the name of (authority) of Jesus Christ. Acts 10:48. So, what is the point of Peter's command if their salvation is already confirmed by "tongues"? And is not Peter found contradicting the Holy Spirit if he "commands" an additional requirement for salvation?

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

ACTS 11:1—12:25

The “circumcision party” was that group of Judaizers (they were “members” of the 1st century church) within the “brotherhood” of Christians who tried to insist that everyone who desired to become a Christian had to be circumcised and obey the other commandments of the Mosaic Law (see Gal. 2:12; 3:1-5; 6:12-16; Acts 15:1-5, etc.). Paul calls them “false brethren” (Gal. 2:4), “dogs” (Phil. 3:2), “evil workers” (Phil. 3:2), “false apostles, deceitful workmen, servants of Satan” (2 Cor. 11:12-15), “bewitchers” (Gal. 3:1), “troublers” (Gal. 5:10), “enslavers” (Gal. 5:1ff), “practitioners of cunning...tamperers with God’s word...mentally blinded” (2 Cor. 4:1-6), and “predators” (Col. 2:8ff). The word “criticized” (RSV) or “contended” (KJV) or “took issue with,” (NASV), is the Greek word *diekrinonto* (imperfect tense, meaning continuing action), and means to continually “judge—to discriminate against—to dispute with.” This group repeatedly separated themselves from Peter in a hostile, disputatious spirit, charging Peter with being wrong before God in his actions with Cornelius. Their argument was that a true worshiper of God and the Anointed One of God (the Messiah) could have no fellowship, no sharing with, joining with, nor “brotherhood” with a Gentile (uncircumcised, non-Mosaic, non-Hebrew). This “party” was active (as “Ebionites”) long after the book of Acts. The destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 greatly facilitated the separation of Judaizers from true NT Christians. Ebionism persisted as a Jewish sect within Christendom until about A.D. 300. John calls this “party” the “synagogue of Satan” in the book of Revelation (2:9).

Peter “silenced” his “critics” (for the time-being) by citing three revelatory incidents from God: (1) the revelation that came to him from God at Joppa with the “unclean animals” on the sheet (3 times), and God’s three statements, “What God has cleansed, you must not call common (“unclean”); (2) Cornelius’ visit from the supernatural personage (the angel) who directed Cornelius to send for Peter and have him brought to Cornelius’ house to preach salvation to him; (3) the baptism of the Holy Spirit upon Cornelius (the Gentile) and his household, just as it had come upon the Hebrew-apostles at Pentecost! “Now,” Peter says, “who was I that I could withstand God?” And the implication was to those of the “circumcision party”—“Who are you that you can withstand God?” There are two important lessons here: (a) This is a strong indication that there had been no common repetition of the baptism of the Holy Spirit since the day of Pentecost! If the baptism of the Spirit of God was something that all Christians were expected to receive, and did receive, Peter could have simply pointed to the numerous other incidents and not have had to go back to Pentecost for an example! Furthermore, the baptism of the Spirit was not the thing that converted people, for Peter could have shown that the conversion of Cornelius was like the case of any other person who came to Christ to prove his point had the Spirit-baptism been that which

converted people; (b) Here we have a striking example of one of the ways the apostles were “led into all the truth” (Jn. 16:3). Peter did not know by virtue of his inspiration that the uncircumcised were to be admitted to baptism in water. Neither did the other “Jerusalem” (Jewish) apostles. The Holy Spirit could have illuminated all of their minds internally on this, but he chose instead to adopt a different method. To Peter the “truth” came by visions addressed to the eye, a voice to his ear, a message sent to him through the command of an angel, reinforced by just one command from the Holy Spirit—and thus Peter was guided into this new truth. But, by a verbal account (eye-witnessed testimony) of the same “truth” to his brethren, they were brought to the same truth! The brethren were convinced by the same facts which had convinced Peter, however, the facts reached Peter through direct supernatural revelation, while these same facts reached the others through the words in which Peter recounted them. In precisely the same way the power of all Scripture facts (miracles of Jesus and the apostles) reaches the minds and hearts of people at the present day, and thus the Holy Spirit operates on us through the word. This is what Paul is talking about in 2 Cor. 2:1ff. The apostles have the mind of Christ (by inspiration and supernatural guidance) but they give us the mind of Christ in words (i.e., human languages). But that in no way diminishes the power of the facts or the will of God about those facts. The “word” of the cross is just as much the power of God unto salvation when it comes to us by the apostles in human language in the NT as when given to them in visions or illuminations by the Spirit directly and originally!

While there was perhaps a large number of Jews who had become Christians, and who kept insisting Gentiles must observe the Law of Moses to be Christians, there were other Jews, Hellenists, who gradually learned that such was not the case. When those who had accepted Peter’s testimony about the acceptance of Gentiles without having to keep the Law of Moses learned of the conversion of large numbers of “Hellenists,” they sent Barnabas “as far as” Antioch—Why? “Hellenists” were Jews who had adopted some Greek cultural ways and spoke Greek language, but had been born of Jewish ancestors who had been “scattered” to Gentile lands beginning with the exile of the Jews by the Assyrians 722 B.C.; Babylonians 606 B.C.; and Greeks 332 B.C. From the conduct of Barnabas, and from the fact that he probably visited almost all the places where the gospel had been preached, it does not appear that he was sent to “investigate” or “spy-out” in order to carry on some kind of “inquisition.” (a) Barnabas “saw the grace of God” when he got there and that would not be true of a man sent to “spy-out” matters about circumcision and law-keeping; (b) what Barnabas “saw” made him “glad”; (c) Barnabas exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord; (d) a large company was added to the Lord—if they were not doing it “right” (according to the Judaizers) and had Barnabas been a Judaizer, he would have tried to stop large numbers from being added to the Lord; (e) Barnabas went and got Saul of Tarsus, (now the apostle Paul) to teach the church at Antioch. The sincere Jewish-Christians at Jerusalem sent Barnabas, apparently, to express their newly found “fellowship” with the “Hellenist-Christians” at Antioch. We must remember—love needs to be demonstrated—not just mouthed! We could use more cross-cultural “fellowship” in our brotherhood! There are more than 250,000 “foreign” students on U.S. campuses. Texas University alone has non-U.S. citizens as 25% of its student body. The “alien” students in the U.S. are 22,590 from Taiwan; 20,360 from Iran; 13,000 from Korea; 10,100 from China; 14,610 from India, and a lesser

number from other foreign countries. Most are majoring in engineering and business. Some 51,000 are in southern state universities; 51,000 in the Midwest, and 24,000 in California alone. THAT'S QUITE A "CROSS-CULTURAL" MISSIONARY FIELD RIGHT HERE ON U.S.A. SOIL!

"Grace" like "love" does not exist unless it is "seen," i.e., expressed, done, acted out. "Grace" is part of a Christian's essential being, a part of a Christian's character and therefore must be acted out in one's manner of life. If a person does not act "graciously" there is no grace existing in his character! It must be seen to exist. Character is developed in every person through associations and assimilation. In other words, those influences surrounding a person, and the ones he chooses to assimilate, form his character! We become what we choose from what we have to choose. We can overcome bad influences and choices and alter our character by associating with good influences and choosing those. What Barnabas "saw" was a great number of people believing in the Lord and "turning to" the Lord! In other words, he "saw" people being influenced by the character of Jesus, assimilating that character (the grace of Christ), and expressing that character. The "grace" that was exhibited in the words and deeds of Jesus Christ had become, by choice, part of the very nature of the believers in Antioch. There was nothing extra-Biblical about it! They received no special extra-Biblical, charismatic gifts. It became their character through the simple power of faith. Through "the preaching of the Lord Jesus..." (11:20) and the exhortations of Barnabas, and later the teaching of both Saul (Paul) and Barnabas (11:25-26). "Grace" like "agape-love" is goodness by deliberate choice expressed toward others who do not deserve it! The "grace" of God is epitomized in his Incarnate Son, Jesus Christ. That is what Barnabas "saw"!

It is clear as to why Barnabas went to get Saul to bring him to Antioch: (a) Barnabas found a "great number" of converts already there when he arrived (11:21-22); (b) after Barnabas' ministry of exhortation "a large company was added" to the "great number" already there! (11:24); (c) this huge number of converts consisted of many "Hellenists" and Saul was to be the "apostle to the Gentiles"; (d) Saul would have the special gift of the Holy Spirit given to apostles to reveal the word of God, and determine which teachings were true and which were not; (e) Saul would be able to give first-hand, eye-witnessed testimony to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This would especially be needed since the New Testament scriptures were not yet in complete written form. Saul would also be able to pass on the necessary supernatural gifts to selected leaders of the church to last until the NT was completed. To have such a "teacher" and "apostle" was critical in view of the large numbers and the fact that there were great numbers of Hellenists among them. Only a "desensitized Jew" like Paul could handle being around so many Greek-thinking-Jews daily, in a teacher-student relationship. Even Barnabas, great exhorter and gracious Christian that he was, felt incapable of handling such a situation by himself. We do not know how large the numbers were, but here we have a "multiple ministry" situation once again (the first one has already been established in Jerusalem). Besides, the "church" would be scattered about the city of Antioch (not located in one building). Much of what Barnabas and Saul had to do was done "from house to house" (Acts 20:20). The ministry of the church does need people especially

suited, trained, and willing to do special tasks!

The Hellenist-Christians at Antioch sent relief to Judea because: (a) there was a definite, crucial need (the Lord advised them of a need that would be soon forthcoming because of an impending famine); (b) they were “brethren-in-Christ” and Christians are to take every opportunity to do good to all men, and especially to those of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10); (c) they had the “ability” to help. Notice that the disciples at Antioch determined every one “according to his ability” to send relief. No one was coerced or compelled to send—each determined their own ability. And every Christian in the church at Antioch participated in the relief-sending. What could the “Restoration-Plea” churches of America alone do for “crucial” needs if every member of the brotherhood sent one dollar (above their regular giving to the local congregation) for such a need? It would amount to about 2 million dollars in one offering! But perhaps we have too many “crucial” needs which would call for one-dollar-per-saint offerings too often?!; (d) they had men to administer the funds who could be trusted to see that the funds got to the place and people and cause for which they were given without any of the money being spent to “administer” it; (e) undoubtedly part of their motivation was to try to “repay,” in a sense, the saints at Jerusalem for the spiritual supply the Jerusalem church had sent to Antioch in the person of teachers and evangelists (See Ga. 6:6). We all have similar obligations or “debts.”

We are now at about the year A.D. 44 in the history of the book of Acts—about 14 years after the beginning of the church on the Day of Pentecost, A.D. 30, or about 10 years after Paul’s conversion (A.D. 34). Josephus records in his Antiquities of the Jews, that Herod Agrippa died in A.D. 44. Herod Agrippa was born about 10 B.C., son of Aristobulus and Bernice, grandson of Herod the Great, and brother of the infamous Herodias (niece and wife of Herod Antipas, the Herod who had John the Baptist beheaded and who gave consent to have Jesus crucified). Herod Agrippa was named after Caesar Augustus’ (a.k.a., Octavian’s) chief minister, Agrippa. When Herod Agrippa was about 4 his father was murdered by his grandfather and Herod Agrippa was sent to Rome where he became a close friend of Caligula. Because of his friendship to Caligula he was thrown into prison by Tiberius Caesar, but later released by Caligula when he became Roman emperor. Herod Agrippa was given “kingship” over northern Palestine first, then Herod Antipas’ territory (Judea) later. When Caligula died, Herod Agrippa supported Claudius for emperor and was rewarded by confirmation of his holdings in Palestine. He was given nearly “independent” status as a ruler in Palestine! Herod Agrippa was “pleasing the Jews” (12:3) in his actions against the Christians! It was all “politics-first as usual” with any of the Herods. Herod wanted to show his Judean subjects (especially the Sadducees and Pharisees) that he was patriotically “Jewish” and would stand behind them with all his power in the Jewish persecution of the “apostate Christians.” It wasn’t that Herod had any real anti-Christian fanaticism—nor was he particularly interested in justice or protecting the innocent. The Herod family was not exactly the most popular civil rulers in the minds of the Jews. Therefore, the Herods had to secure as much cooperation as possible from the “Roman-occupied” Jews and any expedient necessary to bring this about was Herodian politics. The Herods were “Machiavellian” (attaining political power by cunning, force and fear) 1500 years before

Machivelli (1469-1527) was born

This was James, the son of Zebedee, one of the original 12 apostles. He was a brother of the apostle John (who wrote the fourth gospel, 3 epistles and Revelation). James was a leader in the Jerusalem church. We are not told why Herod selected James, nor why the Lord allowed him, rather than one of the others, to be martyred. No doubt James was doing significant evangelizing and making many converts to Christ or no one would have bothered him! Tradition has it that James was killed on December 27th, A.D. 44. Eusebius (Christian historian) quotes Clement of Alexandria's account of how the soldier who led James to the judgment seat was so moved by the testimony of James that the soldier confessed was a Christian. Both he and James were then led away to be executed at the same time. On the way to the execution the soldier begged James to forgive him; and after James considered it for a moment, did so, kissed him, and said, "Peace be to you." Both were then beheaded at the same time. This is the only one of the 12 whose death is recorded in the New Testament and how extremely brief is the record when compared with the details of Stephen's death (Acts 7). The death of James must have been a source of indescribable grief to the church in Jerusalem, and to his brother, John! But there is not even a hint in John's writings (which were penned around A.D. 90-100) about his brothers' death! Strong inference that the writers of the NT were guided by a supernatural influence—for mortal wisdom alone would have done otherwise!

When it says, "There was no small stir among the soldiers over what had become of Peter," it is an understatement!!! It is the same Greek word, *tarachos*, as is used in Acts 19:23 to describe the upheaval that arose in a riot over the silversmith-figurine incident at the temple of Diana. It was a chaotic, riotous, mad-house among those soldiers. It was life and death! The soldiers were frantic and wild with fear! Roman law required that if the prisoner escaped the guards would suffer the same penalty the prisoner was to receive. Peter was going to die! Because he escaped, the Roman soldiers died! Was it God's fault the soldiers had to die? No! Herod did not have to put them to death! He could have used this miracle (had he investigated and accepted the evidence of divine intervention) to become a follower of the "Way" and spared the guards! It was Herod's decision! No law of man should stand when God has specifically, by divine revelation, indicated man's actions are not in harmony with God's will. God demonstrated that the imprisonment of Peter and his imminent execution was not right! Herod was wrong from the start. If God delivers Peter from the prison, Herod should obey God—not the law that executes guards for letting prisoners escape. Had the escaping prisoner been a criminal, guilty of a capital crime, that would be another situation. Then the Roman law about guards being lax in their duties to protect society against criminals would apply. But not when the "prisoner" should not be a "prisoner" in the first place! Other pagan rulers did acknowledge Jehovah's sovereignty when he delivered those imprisoned illegally (e.g., Nebuchadnezzar, Darius, in the book of Daniel).

Herod Agrippa had planned a war against Tyre and Sidon (probably for some economic pressure they had exerted on Judea). These two cities could not successfully engage in a military struggle so they sent ambassadors to Herod, bribing Herod's "minister"

Blastus, and surrendering to Herod's demands. This pumped up Herod's ego and made him think of himself as a "god." He could threaten, and order people around, and they obeyed. He did not think of himself as "king" to serve and accomplish his Creator's purpose. He believed he was a "god-king" because of the "power" he was able to wield! Power is one of the most intoxicating (but deceiving) temptations man has to deal with! Satan even tempted Jesus with the "power-wish." On August 2nd, A.D. 44, according to Josephus, the second day of the "sports and games held in Caesarea in honor of Roman emperor Claudia (by Herod's orders), Herod dressed himself in a robe of silver tissue, like the ones Caligula used to wear at banquets and games in Rome. The garment glittered with a dazzling brightness as the rays of the morning sun reflected on it. People were impressed, awed, and excited. They kept on (Greek imperfect tense verb) crying out, "The voice of a god and not of a man." Herod was probably shouting and waxing eloquently on how he had told Tyre and Sidon just "who's hog ate the cabbage," and how great he was (like Caesar). The people may have been shouting "Hail, Agrippa! Hail, Agrippa!" and of course Agrippa was believing himself and his "press." Josephus says Herod Agrippa did not reject the flattery. He knew enough Old Testament law to know better than to permit people to "worship him as god." So the death-angel killed him with intestinal worms similar in size and appearance to what we call earthworms. Herod Agrippa was 54 years old when he was "eaten of worms."

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

ACTS 13:1—15:35

The Holy Spirit told the church at Antioch of Syria to “set aside” Baranbas and Saul because world-wide evangelism is the business of the church. Christ wants his bride to be a partner in the “marriage,” a contributing, working partner. The joys and satisfactions of a “marriage” can only be shared if the “work” is shared! Note: (1) the best prepared and motivated persons are “set apart.” (2) only the church at Antioch is involved in the sending—Barnabas and Saul did not have to go to Jerusalem and be “screened or approved.” (3) no missionary society was involved. (4) those sent made the decisions as to where they would go. The travels and work now entered upon by Saul and Barnabas are the most momentous ever taken! More important than Magellan, Marco Polo, Columbus, Simon Kenton, Daniel Boone and Lewis and Clark all put together! Some in the church (and out of the church) today will say, “We ought not undertake any missionary work until we have converted the United States (or our own city).” If this had been said and followed in Palestine or Antioch, you and I would not be Christians today! We would probably be bowing down to some stick or stone and calling it our “god and father”! Certainly we need to preach the gospel in our own country and our own city, but there are always those who will not accept. We must not, dare not, spend such a large percentage of our resources (Christian trainees and money) on our own country (with all its spiritual advantages) when there are so many billions who have never heard the gospel even once!

The first encounter of Barnabas and Saul in their missionary endeavors was on Cyprus—Barnabas’ home country! They were called to the Proconsul’s palace because he, Sergius Paulus, had heard of their “showdown” with Elymas. Cypriot religion of that day involved the worship of Aphrodite, with harlot-priestesses sexually serving worshipers in the temples, and it involved human sacrifices (even in Paul’s day). The length of the whole island is only about 150 miles, so they traveled about 100 miles from Salamis to Paphos (capital city) and found there this “magician” who was “hoodwinking” the Proconsul with his sleight of hand “hocus pocus” and teaching him a perverted religious system. Luke documents him as a “false prophet.” So, whatever he was doing and saying, it was false, no truth or realism to it at all! All the false prophet’s “miracles” were smoke-and-mirrors. The message and actions of God’s missionaries was being reported to Sergius Paulus and it was so different from that of Elymas’ that he wanted to hear firsthand what these two men from Antioch were teaching. But Elymas was also present and he “opposed” them and sought to “divert” (Gr. diastrepesai, literally, “lead around in circles”) the Proconsul from “the faith” being preached by Saul and Barnabas! Paul (Saul) pronounced him “full of deceit and villainy” (Gr. dolou, “a baited trap”) and hradiourgias, “fraud, pseudo, smooth and sly, cunning, and tricky.” This Elymas was not simply mistaken or innocently in error, but deliberately deceiving.

Drastic measures were needed to give Sergius Paulus incontrovertible evidence of the divine inspiration of Barnabas and Saul. What he believed might influence the whole island. And maybe the temporary miracle will bring Elymas to repent! Should Elymas not repent he faces an eternal hell rather than blindness.

Paul makes it plain that “what God promised to the fathers” (OT people), he “fulfilled by raising Jesus” from the dead. They would preach that Jesus is the fulfillment (along with his kingdom, the church) of all that God promised to the Jews in the OT Law! Since Jesus and the day of Pentecost, God’s only “chosen” people are sons of Abraham by faith in Christ (that is clear from Romans, Galatians and Hebrews). God has nothing else for the Jews except what Christ and the Christian church has to offer. Any other concept is an insult to God and Christ! It makes the work of Christ less than perfect and complete (which is a contradiction of the NT). If in Christ the Jew may be freed from everything from which the Law could not free him, why would anyone want a rebuilt Jewish temple and Jewish system and Jewish priesthood? If Christ is the perfect, complete, sacrifice for man’s sin (see Heb. 10), why does it matter if Jews wind up in the “Holy Land” or not. No land is holier than any other land now that Christ has come. Wherever a believer may be, he is with Christ and the church! Those (Christians and Jews alike) who are insisting on something else from God, beyond Christ, had better “beware lest there come upon” them what is said in the prophets. It is one thing to be for a powerful democratic ally in the Mid-East called Israel—but it is another thing to justify it as “Biblically mandated”! If a group of people calling themselves Jews want Palestine, and have the “horses” to take it—go for it, but don’t say God has decreed it in the Bible—unless you rip out of the Bible the complete New Testament!

Paul did not mean in 13:46-48 that from God’s perspective the Jews were not worthy to hear the gospel! Certainly, the Jews are worthy to have the gospel preached to them! They are as worthy as Americans or Russians or Arabs! We definitely need more missionaries trying to convert Jews to Christ! There are some wonderful Christian-Jews doing so right now at great personal sacrifice. They deserve our prayers and support. The Christian Church has perhaps one missionary to Israel right now! What Paul meant was the Jews were no longer “chosen” by God to have the focus, the undivided attention of the apostolic missionary effort as they had been having through Peter and the others. Remember, Jesus ordered the mission of the gospel to begin “at Jerusalem, then to Judea, then to Samaria, and then to the uttermost parts of the earth.” Because of the few faithful Jews who served God and brought the Messiah and the church to the world, God would give the Jews first priority to accept and enjoy the privileges of salvation and the kingdom of God. Had the whole Jewish nation accepted Christ, what an impact that would have made on the world (Rom. 11:11-15)! They were scattered all over the world—millions in the city of Rome itself! Many Jews were highly influential in government, education, commerce, the arts—and millions of Gentiles would have had a powerful witness given to them. But it was not to be. The majority of the Jews opposed, fought the gospel and killed its messengers (1 Thess. 2:14-16). These millions of Gentiles were waiting to hear the gospel. They had no message from God except “nature” (Rom. 1:18-32) and that was a condemnation. The grace of God and forgiveness in Christ would save them and regenerate them. So, since the Jews had

their “time” and despised it—it was now “time” for the Gentiles (see Lk. 21:20-33; Rom. 11:13-36).

Paul does not “run”! He is certainly no coward (see 2 Cor. 11). But he is exercising the “harmlessness and wisdom” of the dove and serpent Jesus ordered his other apostles to exercise (Matt. 7:6; 10:11-5; 10:16-23). Paul has a whole Roman empire to reach! How is he going to do that if he has to spend all his time recuperating from injuries, or if he is dead or in prison? People who try to kill God’s messengers are, in reality, trying to kill God and do not deserve the message of God. Paul stayed long enough in each place to present the gospel and honest hearted people did respond. It would be up to them as natives of the city or area to carry on the work of evangelizing! That is why Paul said, “...through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”(Acts 14:22). Missionaries cannot protect their native converts from tribulation, no matter how much money they can give them or how long they can stay with them. Sooner or later, the locals have to be responsible for evangelizing their own people. And when they do, tribulation is going to come! It comes in all lands to all Christians—if they are evangelizing—even in America! No matter how “harmless and wise” we may be as natives of our part of the Lord’s “field” the proclamation of the gospel must not be silenced! Of course, discretion must be applied. We are not to be foolhardy and throw away our lives senselessly, but we must not be silent! If threatened, move on, but never be silent wherever you move!

Paul did preach the gospel at Lystra (Acts 14:6). His speech to the crowd who wanted to worship him after healing the crippled man does not represent the sum-total of all his evangelizing in Lystra! When they recovered from the shock of having people want to worship him (to Jews this would be blasphemy), Paul and Barnabas tried to address the minds of these idol-worshippers at the theological level they found them. They needed to be led to thinking and reasoning from a monotheistic perspective rather than polytheistic! They needed first to see that their gods of wood and stone were not really capable of delivering the “life” that is evidenced in “heaven and earth and the sea and all that is in them..” and in “rain and fruitful seasons” which satisfy the human heart with food and gladness! No “idea” or “image” can reasonably be thought to be responsible for that! Idolatry is irrational (see Psa. 115:1-8; Isa. 44:9-20). Before we can expect to convert anyone to Christ (really convert them), we must make sure they will approach it rationally, logically, reasoning about the evidence. We must get rid of as many irrational presuppositions and “feelings” as possible to make believers of them! The Christian gospel is a matter of believing Christ on the basis of historical evidence. That belief may produce some feelings, but the feelings do not precede the faith! Facts precede faith (Rom. 10:17). In effect, we have to debunk people’s “other gods” before we can give them the One, True God and his Son Jesus Christ.

Initially, Paul was explaining to the people of that territory the reason he was being so severely persecuted. Gentiles would not understand why a man who would heal cripples and preach such good news should suffer such “tribulation.” The Greek word *dei*, translated “must,” has the impact of “unavoidable compulsion, or requirement, or necessity.” The Greek word *thlipseon*, translated “tribulation” means, “pressure, oppression, anguish, constraint”

(see Lk. 12:50—Jesus felt the “pressure, the constraint, the anguish” of the cross long before it occurred). It is not “tribulation” simply of physical harm—it involves also the spiritual, psychological struggles of the soul with doubt, fleshly indulgence, fear, pride, or loneliness. It involves the “pressures, constraints, self-controls, mental anguishing” necessary to continue being a Christian! It involves walking the “narrow way,” and “counting the cost” and paying it! So what Paul was explaining to the people of Lystra, Derbe, Iconium and Antioch, applies just as surely to the people of Joplin, Springfield, Los Angeles and New York! Tribulation is the door (Gr. dia “entrance”) to the kingdom! The Bible speaks profusely on this concept! There is no entrance to the kingdom on earth or in heaven without tribulation (“pressure, constraint, cost, control”). “The love of Christ controls (constrains) us...” 2 Cor. 5:14. Tribulation is the Christian calling in this world (1 Pet. 2:21; James 1:2-4; 2 Tim. 3:12; Heb. 10:36). Tribulation was a constant companion to Jesus Christ, the apostles and all the saints of all the ages. Why in the world do we think we should be immune??? The church is never nourished apart from “the wilderness” of tribulation (Rev. 12:13-17). The Christian is never made strong apart from “thorns in the flesh” (2 Cor. 12:7f), and “affliction” (2 Cor. 1:3-11).

First, the issue was not resolved by “the church.” The basis for its resolution was divine revelation and apostolic commandments. God had revealed to Peter that Gentiles were to be accepted for salvation. God gave clear predictions in the OT prophets (Isaiah, Amos, etc.) that Gentiles were to become members of his covenant. God had promised divine inspiration and authority to the apostles to deliver the divine will in human language. So, when an apostle spoke, it was the will of God. The church did not “vote” on any doctrinal issue. Nor is it given sanction to do so now! All the doctrine ever needed for man’s salvation and spiritual sanctification is in the Bible (2 Tim. 3:15-17; Jude 3; 1 Jn. 4:1-4; 2 Cor. 2:1f; Acts 20:32; 2 Pet. 1:3-5). The church is responsible for nothing more than learning God’s doctrine from the Bible alone, and teaching it to a world lost in sin! Second, the resolution was not a humanly-worked-out compromise between the wishes of the Jewish-Christians and the wishes of the Gentile-Christians! Long before the Law of Moses, the whole human race (in the Patriarchal era) knew it was to refrain from idolatry, from immorality and from blood (see Gen. 9:1-7, etc.). The Law of Moses never was and never will be binding on Christians. The Judaizers were wrong and their claims were rejected completely: (1) Paul’s miraculous ministry among the Gentiles; (2) Peter’s revelation about Cornelius; (3) the OT prophets—all was evidence given to the Judaizers that they were wrong. Then James made an apostolic “judgment” and that settled the issue. The Judaizers had no authority to go to Antioch and “Judaize” in the first place (15:24). There was no “vote” but God’s vote! Incidentally, but very significantly, James, by quoting Amos 9:11-12 and saying that the acceptance of the Gentiles into the kingdom of God was the fulfillment of Amos 9:11-12, proves that all such prophecies in the OT (in highly symbolic and apocalyptic language) were intended to be fulfilled in the FIRST COMING OF CHRIST and the establishment of the church—not in some future “millennial” parenthesis!

Peter packs almost the entire gospel in one short statement: (1) the law of Moses is unbearable by any man (even a Jew). All men are condemned by the law (even Jews); (2) salvation is by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and his atonement for our sins; (3) we must

hear the gospel and believe and exercise our faith in obedience to Christ's commandments; (4) the initial exercise of that faith, obeying the command of Christ to be immersed in water (baptism), is inferred and understood since Peter commanded Cornelius and his household to do so (and we know that all other Christians who heard the apostolic gospel were baptized—immersed—too!). These are the essential doctrines of the New Testament. They are the gospel in a capsule. Do that and one is saved! Obviously, there are other guidelines in the NT for growing and maturing in righteousness, but essentially the apostolic doctrine is the 4 things above. Now, since these four things could be believed and acted upon apart from cultural, racial, sociological, geographical, economical, and intellectual differences and/or preferences, Christians can be one body in Christ. The Jew can keep his "kosher" preferences; the Gentile can even eat meat bought in the heathen market places. Both can be Christians and brothers so long as they worship only the One True God and his Son, Jesus Christ. Neither the Jew nor the Gentile should judge the other as to cultural practices so long as they are not a violation of apostolic commandments. That was the purpose of the letter from the apostles and elders in Jerusalem to the brethren in Antioch. Let us learn from this!

Many ancient manuscripts omit the "strangled" part. One might say in a most generalized way, this could be a summary of Christian conduct! Most any sin has idolatry at its roots. Covetousness is called "idolatry" (Col. 3:5). Indulgence of the flesh in any way is a form of "self-worship" which is idolatry. The philosophies of evolutionism and humanism are idolatrous. The sins of pride, boasting, and cursing, are all forms of idolatry (because they put human sovereignty in the place of Divine sovereignty). But, obviously, if we deal more specifically with what is involved in living the Christian life, there is more to it than what the apostles wrote to the Christians at Antioch! There are the very clear and very emphatic and very difficult requirements for discipleship as taught by Jesus in the Gospels. There are the frank, explicit, tenets of righteousness demanded by the apostles in the epistles. The claim of the NT is that what is written there is sufficient to equip every person of God completely unto every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17). What is written in the NT is sufficient to transform us into the image of Jesus Christ, the beloved Son of God with whom God was well pleased. So, that is why we find the apostles and other leaders constantly teaching "with many words" far beyond the fundamental things written in the letter by the Jerusalem brethren here in Acts 15. Living the Christian life can never be accomplished unconsciously! It is not a simple, natural, reflex-action. It requires constant edification (learning) and practice (doing). It requires the MIND, HEART, SOUL, AND BODY IN SERVICE TO CHRIST!

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

ACTS 15:36—17:34

An apostle has a “sharp contention” with one of his co-workers just like any other Christian may indulge in “sharp contention” with a “brother”! The Holy Spirit did not, apart from the revealed word of Christ, control the emotions and feelings and prejudices of any apostle. There was no extra-Biblical, irresistible, operation of the Holy Spirit upon any apostle to keep him from choosing a sinful behavior or thought. Nor does the Holy Spirit control our emotions and feelings by some irresistible, miraculous over-powering of our will and choice. He offers us guidance and the power of conviction (2 Cor. 5:14) that we may control our own emotions and feelings through “self-control” which is a “virtue” to be added to our faith (2 Pet. 1:5-7). The Holy Spirit’s guidance and power comes through his word (the Bible), and the “precious and exceeding great promises” that are written there for us to believe and claim. His power is energized only by our faith. All this is clear from 2 Pet. 1:3-11. When faith falters, our feelings get out of control. Faith is the control. Faith comes through conviction (Rom. 10:14-17; 2 Cor. 5:14). The will and word of the Holy Spirit is not irresistible to the spirit of a human being in the matters of salvation and sanctification. Judas Iscariot did miracles by the Holy Spirit but resisted the Spirit’s guidance and shunned his power (Matt. 10:1ff). Peter did miracles by the Holy Spirit but rejected the Spirit’s guidance letting his prejudicial feelings get out of control at Caesarea Philippi, the Garden of Gethsemane, the high priests’ courtyard, and at Antioch (Gal. 2:14ff). When faith falters, feelings take over, and God never intended human urges to rule us (Num. 15:39)! God intends his word, his mind, his will, as he has revealed it in the Bible, to rule us! We are never to let anything but the “peace” of Christ (his redemption and regeneration) arbitrate (i.e., “rule”, Col. 3:15) in our deliberations and decisions. Paul was a strong-willed, strong-tempered, strong-feeling man. He was a man of conviction, who, mostly kept his feelings under control through faith (2 Cor. 12:7-10). But here he let them get out of control and succumbed to his “feelings.”

Paul and Barnabas “disagreed” over John Mark’s personality and fitness for the work. They even “separated.” But it did not make them enemies. Nor did it bring dishonor on the Lord’s church. Paul’s choice of Silas was commended by the brethren and they went on with their work. Just a few weeks prior to this, when Paul had been at the Jerusalem conference (see Gal. 2:3ff.), he had refused to circumcise Titus (a Greek co-worker). Now he circumcises Timothy! Why is Paul so inconsistent? Why doesn’t he appeal to the “letter” from the Jerusalem elders which said circumcision was not necessary (Acts 15)? Paul is not being “inconsistent—he is being completely consistent with his constant teaching in his epistles: (a) to have circumcised Titus (a Greek) would have appeared to be saying that circumcision is necessary for everyone who comes to God; (b) to have refused to circumcise

Timothy who was of Jewish ancestry would have led many immature Jewish-Christians to recoil (as well as yet unconverted Jews) and never give Paul another hearing; (c) to circumcise Timothy would not indicate circumcision was necessary for all Christians because Timothy was a child of a Jewish mother. The Jerusalem conference made it clear (from Jewish apostles) that circumcision was not necessary for salvation. The Greek-Christians did not have to begin practicing it; the Jewish-Christians did not have to cease practicing it! It was in the realm of cultural opinion. There was nothing morally wrong with it so the Jew could continue the practice so long as he did not insist others who wanted to be saved had to practice it. Paul's act of circumcising Timothy did not violate grace—it validated grace! (See 1 Cor. 8-9-10 and Rom. 14).

The Holy Spirit of God did not prohibit Mysia and Bithynia from hearing the gospel. He may have delayed it, or he may have sent the gospel by others very nearly the same time Paul wanted to go there—or even before. Peter addresses his first epistle to “brethren in Bithynia” (1 Pet. 1:1)! The Holy Spirit of God kept Paul and Silas from peaching there because he had more urgent needs which only Paul and Silas could fulfill—they are headed for Europe (Gentile land). Once the gospel has been well planted in an area, and strong leaders among the indigenous inhabitants have been trained, the “trail-blazer” or “pathfinder” (missionary) should move on to untouched fields. The Holy Spirit knows that quite well! The trouble is getting human beings to acknowledge it! Few human beings like to live itinerant lives—here today, gone tomorrow, so, we “settle down” even when we are “missionaries.” Paul wrote to the Romans that he had preached the gospel from Jerusalem to Illyricum (today's Balkan countries), “making it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named.” (Rom. 15:19-20). The Lord expects those converted to evangelize their own “home” lands and territories. He expected the leadership of the local churches to take the word of God and build up the saints in each locale (Acts 20). The longest Paul ever stayed in one place was Ephesus (almost 3 years—Acts 18-21). Is the Spirit of God satisfied with his church today in the light of our missionary strategy and the billions who have never yet heard????

The river Gangites (or, Gargites) was one mile west of Philippi. On the plain just west of this river, the armies of Brutus and Cassius (the major players in the assassination of Julius Caesar) met the armies of Octavian (Caesar Augustus) and Mark Antony in the battle which decided the fate of the Roman Republic. That was in 42 B.C. Just two years before the assassination of Julius Caesar in A.D. 44. Paul was there about A.D. 50 (about 88 years after the battle). Octavian and Antony won—Brutus and Cassius lost and committed suicide, Rome shed its republic-structured government and became an empire, ruled over by despotic (often wicked and cruel) emperors. Jews built synagogues whenever they had 10 families or more living in one place. Less than that, they had a “meeting place” near a river or body of water suitable for all the “ablutions” (i.e., ceremonial washing) they performed in their worship and daily living. Paul assumed there would be such a “meeting place” for Jews at this river, so he went there on the Sabbath day. He found not Jews, but a woman, probably a Gentile proselyte, who had adopted the Jewish religion at her home town of Thyatira. It was in Asia Minor—where there was a large Jewish population. There were

thousands of Gentiles who had become “proselytes” (or “converts”) to the Jewish religion in the Roman world of the first century. There was some kind of a Jewish population at Philippi (see Phil. 3:1ff). There were Jews and a synagogue in the next city where Paul preached (Thessalonica). There were Jews all over the Roman world—even in Rome. So, Paul naturally went to the “river” on the Sabbath in Philippi. This woman named Lydia had opened her own heart and those in her household had opened their hearts by the word of the Lord they knew from the OT long before Paul found them. When he preached the gospel to her and her household (undoubtedly showing them how Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of the OT prophecies), the gospel opened their minds to believe in Jesus Christ and they were immersed into Christ in the river Gangites. The word of God is the only power capable of “opening minds”—miracles alone will not do it!

The Greek word *oikos* can mean a “house” (i.e., a building), a “household” (i.e., one’s immediate family), or a larger “household” (i.e., which includes one’s servants, slaves, or employees) whether one had a spouse or children, or not. Lydia would not have to be married to have a “household” if she had servants and/or employees in her “Purple-dyeing” business. The text does not say she is married! There are 4 cases of “household” immersions (i.e., baptisms) mentioned in the New Testament, and there is positive proof in 3 of these that there could not have been an infant baptized. In the case of Cornelius (Acts 10-11) all who were baptized had previously spoken in foreign languages (“tongues”) and believed. Infants do not “believe.” Belief requires hearing and understanding and making moral choices. In the case of the Philippian jailer (Acts 16), all those who were baptized “rejoiced in the Lord and believed.” Once again, infants do not “believe.” In the case of Stephanas (1 Cor. 1:16; 16:15), “they devoted themselves to the ministry to the saints,” after they were baptized. Infants do not “devote themselves to the ministry to the saints”! In these three cases there is an absence of infants. We are, therefore, justified (no evidence to the contrary appearing) in asserting that it was similar in the case of Lydia’s “household”—no infants were baptized. Curcellaeus (ancient church historian) writes, “The custom of baptizing infants did not begin before the third century (A.D. 200-300). In the earlier centuries no trace of it appears. It was introduced without the command of Christ, and therefore, this rite (i.e. infant baptism) is observed by us as an ancient custom, but not as an apostolic tradition.” The Bible teaches that only penitent believers are proper candidates for baptism. The Bible does not sanction infant baptism. Nor does the history of Christianity sanction it until A.D. 300. What man or group of men has ever been mandated from God with any authority to add or take away from the Bible????

The “maiden” (young girl) was demon possessed. Paul spoke to the demon as a being (16:18) when he exorcized the demon. The demon in the girl was “soothsaying” (Gr. *manteuomene*, a word related to the Greek word from which we get the English word, *mania*, which means “a fury, a madness” and is used in the entire NT only this once!). She was not prophesying! The Greek word for prophesying is *propheteuo*. She was “fortune telling.” It was alleged to be “divine advice” (i.e., guessing, speculation). “Soothsaying” is quite different from real divine revelation of the future in specific, detailed historical events which will absolutely take place. “Most High God” was a title regularly used by demon possessed

people (see Lk. 4:41; 8:18; Mk. 5:7). She cried out, “These men are servants of the Most High God who are proclaiming to you a way of salvation.” The Greek text does not have the definite article in the sentence, so it should be translated, “a way...” not “the way....” The doctrine of the devil and his demons was, and is, that Christianity is “just one of many ways of salvation.” It is “a” way of salvation, according to hell—in order to deceive mankind! Apostolic doctrine, the NT doctrine, Christ’s true doctrine, says Christianity is the only way of salvation Jn. 5:23; 8:24; 14:6; Acts 4:12; Col. 1:15-20; 2:9; Heb. 1:1ff, etc. It is no wonder that Paul became “greatly troubled” and exorcized this demon from the little girl. What the demon was doing was (a) subtle, pernicious lying; (b) Christ did not need testimony of demons; (c) the little girl was being exploited. So, Paul used the miraculous power of demon exorcism apparently exercised only by Christ and the apostles. No exorcisms by any other Christians is recorded in the NT! See *The Gospel of Luke*, by Paul T. Butler, College Press, Special Study on Demon Possession.

Paul and Silas were in no hurry to get out of jail in Philippi, even though the opportunity was clearly available, because: (a) they were safer in the jail, at the moment, than out in the streets because the mobs incited by the unemployed owners of a soothsaying girl would have beaten them to death (Acts 16:19-24); (b) after their praying to God a great earthquake ensued, indicating to Paul and Silas that Almighty God was aware of their predicament and had the power to deliver them from any form of threat that man could bring; (c) they had a captive and interested audience in the inmates of the prison—prisoners know they need deliverance and salvation; of course, whether they accept what is offered or not becomes the crucial question. How salvation in Christ is offered has a lot to do with whether it is accepted or not; (d) their escape would have precipitated the suicide of the jailer—and their remaining there resulted in his salvation and that of his household; (e) they had been jailed unjustly and illegally. Paul was going to see that justice was done—that what was right would be publicly acknowledged. He claimed his civil rights as a Roman citizen which clarified his (and Silas’) innocence of the false charge (16:20-21). Every Christian has the right and the obligation to follow this apostolic precedent (see Rom. 13:1-8). Paul could have gotten the magistrates into much difficulty with their superiors—but he was satisfied with his rights and a public apology!

Paul’s strategy of evangelism in Thessalonica was to find people where they congregated (in a synagogue) and were thinking about religious things, and then to “argue” (Gr. *dielexato*, a compound Greek word, *dia* and *lego*, “dialogue with, reason with”) with them from the scriptures explaining and proving (Gr. *dianoigon kai paratithemenos*, “opening up and contending”) the OT prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Paul was not merely “discussing” the Bible by asking people what they “felt” each verse “meant” to them. He was interpreting and reasoning and proving what the Bible meant from the historical-grammatical method of hermeneutics. There are rules of interpretation, common to all written communications in the languages of the human race which must be applied to the Bible if we are to understand what its authors (writers) intended to say! Paul was persuading (Gr. *epeisthesan*, “bringing to conviction”) because some of them “were persuaded.” Evangelism, missions, converting people to Christ, must deal primarily and ultimately with persuading the

mind. Evangelism is a battle for the thinking—the ideas—the viewpoints—of people (2 Cor. 10:3-5). Even love for God is done “with the understanding” (Mk. 12:33; 2 Cor. 5:14-21). Conversion by impulse is not approved of by Christ (Lk. 14:28-33). He warns that those who would be his disciples must sit down and think it through, and “count the cost.” You don’t “count” the cost without thinking! Paul evangelized by presenting evidence—documented evidence—the Scriptures’ predictions of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ (see 1 Cor. 15:1ff), and the eyewitness accounts of their fulfillment! Discipleship by the very term itself means “learning.” Paul’s strategy of evangelism was correct hermeneutics and teaching evidences to authenticate the facts of the gospel he preached!

There’s nothing unique about Paul’s part of the work! He went to the Jewish synagogue and preached the gospel! What was unique was the reaction of the Bereans. The Bereans were more “noble” (Gr. eugenesteroi, literally, “well-born”—probably figuratively “well behaved”) than those at Thessalonica. The Bereans showed more “class,” more up-bringing and more open-heartedness because they “received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.” It takes open-mindedness, unbiased, honest-heartedness to receive the word of God. It takes “class” to keep oneself open to hear, learn and believe the truth no matter who it comes from, no matter what it is and no matter what it requires from the one who is hearing it! Human beings too often have private falsehoods they enjoy and wish to protect so they will not “receive the word with all eagerness, examining it daily to see if it is so or not...” The self-serving mind-set will never have “class.” Only those who are willing to sacrifice self will be eager for the truth. Jesus even thanked God, one time, that God kept his truth from those who knew they were too smart to be “told” anything (i.e. receive the revelation of God). But Jesus also thanked God that he revealed his truth to “babes” (i.e., those who knew they had a lot to learn and were willing to do so (see Matt. 11:25-30). God wants his Scriptures examined. The truth is not afraid of being known, examined and tested. We must never be afraid of preaching or teaching the truth. We must not hold any of it back (Acts 20:27).

Paul’s strategy for evangelism in Athens, Greece, was to go first to the synagogue, then to the teeming, hostile, public market place (the agora). From there he made his way to the campus of the University of Athens (the Aeropagus, or “Mars Hill”). Capture the minds of the thinkers of a society and you capture the society! And Paul began with them, mentally, where they were! Those who wish to be preachers and missionaries to win the thinking world to Christ, must prepare themselves mentally to reason, discourse and “argue,” to philosophers, scientists, politicians, professors, physicians, and all others in “professional” fields without being intimidated. It will not be an easy strategy! It will take hard work to prepare. The visible results will probably be fewer than if one used a strategy of “emotionally psyching” people into response. We are not being very efficient in our missions strategy in the 21st century. There are many areas we have abandoned to the devil that could multiply proclaimers of the gospel beyond our wildest imaginations if we funneled more personnel and funds into them—e.g., there are campus ministries—chaplains—inner-city works—ministries to legislators. Such ministries do not need years and years of secular educational training. They need a thorough training in Biblical exegesis, hermeneutics, apologetics, and

cannot be intimidated because they know they have the truth and they know how to communicate it, plainly, convincingly, and winsomely.

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

ACTS 18:1—19:41

Paul was a “tent-making” preacher (missionary)! He worked at a trade (tent-making) for his “bed and board” and preached when he wasn’t making a living. That is not always easy to do. There are many different circumstances entering in that allowed Paul to do this: (a) every Jewish boy was taught a “trade” at synagogue-school or at home, along with his religious instruction; (b) Paul was single—he could go, do, work, teach, travel, visit, without having to worry about a family—he did not “lead about a wife” as some of the other apostles (e.g. Peter) and was able to be free from such responsibilities (1 Cor. 7:25-35; 9:5); (c) Paul could travel from one country to another without having to get a passport from his native country, or a “work-visa” from the country he wanted to visit; he was a Roman citizen by birth which gave him “international” access other provincials would not have; (d) perhaps Paul had no desire to accumulate “things” (a house, furniture, retirement, etc., etc., etc.) as we do today and not only needed no place to settle and store “things,” but needed not nearly as much money as other people (see 2 Cor. 11:23-33; Phil. 4:10-13); (e) perhaps he was able to make enough money in short, intense periods of “making tents” to sustain him for long periods of non-gainful activity (preaching); (f) he was supported to some degree by others with their hospitality and even with their money (Phil. 4:15-19). But remember this—Paul’s commitment, consecration, and death-to-self was probably much more intense than ours! We could probably do the same today if we really wanted to and tried to do so!

Paul was not the first person to “call” down upon the Jews their own blood! The Jews did so themselves. Actually, they called down the blood of Jesus upon their own heads, and upon the heads of their children at Jesus’ trial (Matt. 27:25). Jesus called down upon them their blood, and all the righteous blood shed on earth, from innocent Abel to Zechariah (i.e., from the beginning of creation to the very day Jesus was speaking (Matt. 23:29-39). John the Baptist also “called” their blood down upon them (Matt. 3:7-12; Lk. 3:1-17). Jesus predicted the bloody destruction of Jerusalem and Judaism in Matt. 24:1-35; Mk. 13:1-31; Lk. 21:1-36). He wept with great sobs because he knew their bloody end (Lk. 19:41-44). Paul had made this ominous pronouncement at the very beginning of his ministry (Acts 13:40-47). The OT prophets, practically every one of them, said the same thing at one time or another (see esp. Dan. 9:24-27). Paul said it again in 1 Thess. 2:14-16. There was nothing malicious about it! There certainly was nothing “anti-Semitic” in it! It was done with the deepest compassion and earnest desire that it would not come to pass if only the Jews would repent and believe in Jesus (see Rom. 9:1-5; 10:1-4). But Paul was not going to be mealy-mouthed about the consequences of their impenitence!!! What he said is the truth! It is the truth of an absolutely faithful God for all mankind! Do we dare keep silent about it to lost and impenitent sinners today? Every promise in the book is mine—and theirs! Just like

God has promised it!

Who was beating-up on Sosthenes? We don't know for certain. It was either the Jews, or the official "lictors" (Roman sergeant-at-arms) or the bystanders. The Greek word *etupton* ("beating") is an imperfect-tense verb indicating that it was thorough, and continuing. If the Jews were beating their own synagogue leader, they must have been very angry because he, as their spokesman, had presented the accusation so poorly that it was thrown out of court. They wanted blood—since Sosthenes had deprived them of it by bungling the case, they would have his blood! It may be, also, that Sosthenes had been showing signs of "falling" for Paul's Christian gospel and the Jews decided that was why he had bungled the case! If it was the "lictors," it was probably because Sosthenes was too slow in leaving the court and the presence of Gallio. Perhaps he had even tried to continue the case after Gallio had dismissed it. Since the other Jews were raising a tumult, he may have been the nearest at hand to club them and drive them all out! If it was the bystanders (crowds of Greeks), they might have been venting some of their anti-Semitic rage, encouraged by the example of Gallio driving them from the tribunal. The supposition that it was the official "bailiffs" of Gallio would be the most likely culprits. What was it Gallio paid no attention to—the theological argument or the the beating? Perhaps both! Little did he know the significance of what was happening in his court room that day!

Whatever Apollos knew about "the things concerning Jesus," he knew accurately! The Greek word *logios* is translated "eloquent" (RSV) and KJV—it may also be translated, "a learned man." Some "eloquent" men are not necessarily "learned"—they are ignorant but eloquent! Apollos was also "powerful" (Gr. *dunatos*, "dynamite, dynamic") in the Scriptures (the OT "Law and Prophets"), had been orally instructed (Gr. *katechemenos*, lit. "upon the ears" and we get the English words "catechism, catechetical" from it) in the way of the Lord, and zealous in his spirit (not the Holy Spirit). He taught accurately the "things" concerning Jesus, but "understanding" only the baptism of John (the Baptist). Whatever Apollos taught about Jesus had as its basis only the OT and John the Baptist's preaching! He knew there was to be a Messiah—and what he was to be like (from the OT). He knew Jesus of Nazareth was that Messiah, for John the Baptist had said so and pointed him out. He would have known that the Messiah was to be "the Lamb of God (vicarious sacrifice) that takes away the sin of the world." He knew that the Messiah was to baptize somebody with the Holy Spirit, and somebody with fire. He knew that the Messiah was to judge the wicked Jews and save the believing ones. It is doubtful that he knew much more than that about Jesus and the kingdom of God. So, Apollos would need to have "expounded to him more accurately" the following: (a) the details (miracles and all) about Jesus' death; (b) Jesus' resurrection, his appearances, his great commission; (c) Jesus' absolute authority, his ascension, the day of Pentecost; (d) baptism in water in the name (now in the exclusive authority) of Jesus Christ for remission of sins; (e) the indwelling of each believer by the Holy Spirit of God; (f) the Lord's Super; (g) the acceptance of Gentiles without circumcision or keeping the law of Moses.

After Jesus' death and resurrection and great commission, the only authority (i.e.,

“name”) in which men must believe and be saved and baptized. “In the name of” means by the authority of Jesus Christ. Even his apostles had no authority to baptize anyone except by the authority bestowed upon them through Jesus’ commandments. These “disciples” of John the Baptist had not been baptized “in the name of” (i.e., by the authority) of Jesus Christ. Jesus’ doctrine became exclusive after his redemptive work was completed! His doctrine became the completed, finalized, finished, never to be surpassed or revised or supplanted doctrine of Almighty God for the salvation of mankind (Heb. 9:1—10:39). He has “all authority, in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18-20). The law and the prophets were until John the Baptist. When people heard J.B. they were required to obey J.B. But even J.B. knew there was one coming after him who ranked above him and that his ministry was only temporary. So after the “Lamb of God” finished his work, J.B. was no longer to be obeyed—Jesus was to be obeyed, forever after! These who had heard J.B., obeyed him. Now, having heard the “commandment” (authority) of Jesus Christ they had to obey him! They had not received the Holy Spirit. They knew there was a Holy Spirit. They had to know that, if they knew the Old Testament and John the Baptist’s preaching. But they knew nothing about his coming to men and dwelling within them by the authority and through the word of Jesus Christ. Should anyone be re-baptized today? Yes: (a) those who have been only “sprinkled” or “poured” and not immersed; (b) those (even immersed) for some reason other than their own personal belief and repentance—not because of the promises of some “God-parents”; (c) those baptized (or immersed) in some other authority than Jesus’ commandment (i.e., “saved without it but needful to join their church). Re-baptism should be totally a decision of each individual after having been shown what the New Testament plainly says about it. It should never be forced upon any individual just for “church membership.”

The incident with the 7 sons of Sceva and the demon possessed man would be funny if it weren’t so tragic! Only the Holy Spirit of God could report this incident with such prosaic restraint! How much more we humans would like to know and have described. But even with so little information, there are many lessons to learn: (a) there were real demons (by God’s permission) on the loose in the apostle’s age; (b) there were some who pretended to be divine exorcists, but weren’t; (c) only Jesus and those to whom he gave the authority (power) could exorcize demons—that would be only the apostles; (d) it was, and is, dangerous to pretend you have supernatural powers or even to claim them, when you don’t have them; (e) people can recognize the true from the false—hundreds did here—we are obligated to accept Luke’s testimony that they did and to acknowledge there was a difference between the false and the true; (f) good can result from God’s allowing the consequences of evil to be reaped—when these false exorcists were attacked by the demon, hundreds of people “extolled the name of the Lord Jesus” and many believers repented and “burned their evil books”; (g) life does not always have a “story book ending.” Paul did not cast the demon out with a great demonstration of his power. In contrast with Sceva’s sons failure, Paul didn’t save the demon-possessed man, along with Sceva and his 7 sons and the whole city! Paul had, of course, demonstrated his true power before they demonstrated their lack of supernatural power! He had cast out demons through the “medium” of handkerchiefs and aprons. So the people had plenty of evidence by which to decide which was true and which was false!

The “magic arts” these Ephesians were practicing was “hocus-pocus, abra-kadabra” stuff. It was, according to the Greek word *perierga*, “a-working-around-things,” or “a-working-beyond-things.” In other words, it was sleight-of-hand, “the hand is quicker than the eye” boondoggeling. It was trickery that could be performed by anyone who had enough money (and influence) to obtain one of the “instruction manuals” (Gr. *biblos*, “books or scrolls”). These “books” were bibles on how to do magic! They contained not only instructions on how to create illusions, but astrology and horoscope-casting, how to cast spells, incantations for communicating with the “gods,” etc. They would be much like the “books” of “magicians,” or witch doctors and voodoo priests today, with instructions about “magic” illusions and sleight-of-hand thrown in. They would be like a book I used to have by a preacher (Disciples of Christ) which “taught” people how to “speak in tongues.” There was nothing supernatural about the books or the practices. They were pseudo “wonders” and false, fakery! But for a very superstitious people they seemed to be supernatural. These books cost lots of money. Since a silver drachma (Greek, *arguriou*, “pieces of silver”) was one day’s wages, the books they burned eventually totaled 50,000 days’s wages! It is not uncommon for some people to make \$50 per day today! Some plumbers and carpenters make twice that much per day. 50,000 times 100 is \$5,000,000 (five million dollars) worth of books! Now that is real repentance! That is a repentance that cost something. We do not know the exact number but the Greek word is *hikanoi* which is always translated “large, long time, or multitude” in the NT. Widespread and self-sacrificing repentance when demonstrated always has impact for evangelism and glory for God.

Artemis (called, Diana by the Romans) in Ephesus (Asia) was a combination of the Greek virgin goddess with the many-breasted and lewd Semitic moon-goddess called Ashtoreth in the Old Testament. For the Ephesians she was the great Asiatic “nursing mother” of “gods,” men, animals, and plants, and was the patroness of the sexual instinct. Her image was ugly and profane like the lascivious images of modern India. Her worship was centered in the great temple at Ephesus because of the huge aerolite (meteorite) which supposedly fell from the “gods” there. The temple of Artemis was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was 360 ft in length and 180 ft. wide and its platform or foundation was even wider than that. That is six times the length of my son’s three bed-room house (which is 60 ft long and 22 ft wide) and about 8 times wider. An awesome edifice for times when they had no machines with which to move and lift huge stones and columns! It was 220 years in coming to completion. Ephesus had a population of 250,000 and was located at the center of the “backbone” of the Roman Empire (i.e., the Imperial Highway) which was the gateway to Asia Minor and all points east (Mesopotamia, Palestine, Arabia, India and China). Rich merchants, importers and exporters all “banked” their money with the “priests” of the temple of Artemis for easy access at one of the world’s major trade centers. The worship of Artemis was “impure, shameless, and a perpetual festival of vice.” Both male and female “priests and priestesses” were sexual prostitutes. Perverted sexual intercourse was part of the formality of the religion of the Ephesian “mystery” cults.

Great throngs of Asians, Greeks, Romans, Syrians, Semites and others attended the festivals and rituals all year long. We’ve already mentioned the sexual attractions, and

the financial machinery located in this place! There was also a tremendous “market” for Artemis “relics” or souvenirs such as silver statuettes of Artemis. There were hundreds of silversmiths employed in the making of these “shrines” (statuettes). We all know how emotionally wrought people get when unemployment knocks at the door in the U.S. The old “blame-game” begins when people lose their jobs! Many of these people worshiped Artemis, not because they believed her to be a goddess (an actual being) but because they could indulge themselves—because they could make a profit—or because of the political or sociological pressures! It would be highly unpopular to not worship her. Even if you were not a Christian, your neighbors and family would think of you as “an atheist” and a “seditionist” (like those who did not worship Mao Tse Tung in China or do not worship Allah in Moslem countries today). Besides, it was fun, enjoyable, relaxing, and provided diversion from life’s harsh realities, and you might just get to know the right people and make a few “bucks” on the side. You see, the ancient human being was not really so different from the modern human being at heart! What the “sophisticated” heathen of the 21st century laughs at in the superstitious idol-worshiper, he perpetuates today in his own idol-worship—he just doesn’t use statues to symbolize his idols! Today’s “sophisticated” heathen make themselves their “god.”

In the 3 years Paul evangelized in Ephesus he converted such a vast following that the prestige and the profiteering from Artemis was slipping drastically. The licentious idol-worshiping of Artemis apparently reacted even into the churches of Asia Minor (see Revelation, chs. 2-3) some 30 years later. Pliny the Younger (A. D. 62-113, an ancient historian) wrote years after the apostle Paul had been in Asia Minor that there were “deserted temples...worship was neglected...and hardly a single purchaser” found for sacrifice-victims, because the Christians had so converted the whole area to Christianity. This caused a near riot! The unemployed silversmiths were ready to kill Paul! They aroused a huge mob. Had not the high city official called “town-clerk” (probably the chief liaison official between the Asians and the Romans) quieted the crowd and persuaded them with cool reasoning about the consequences of their actions, big trouble could have taken place! Evidently Paul and his co-workers had preached the gospel without directly denouncing Artemis or their practices in worship because the town-clerk testified that Paul and his workers “were neither robbers of temples or blasphemers of our goddess” (19:37). The clerk persuaded the mob that Paul had not theologically or philosophically done any harm to their belief in Artemis. No one had proved to them yet that Artemis was not a goddess nor that the meteorite had not fallen from the “gods.” That was because, of course, they would not accept the facts of the gospel Paul was preaching. If they had accepted it they would have known Artemis to be a false goddess. The clerk cautioned that the mob had no justification for accusation to bring against Paul the riot, they had better not tear up the city—probably threatening them with Roman reprisals.

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

ACTS 20:1-38

According to the text in Acts 20:2ff, Paul went through “Macedonia” to encourage the brethren (which included the cities of Thessalonica and Philippi). He was on his way to Greece and eventually back to Jerusalem. This was on Paul’s third missionary journey, in the fall of A.D. 57. Alexander the Great had been born in Macedonia 300 years before Paul went there. Macedonia was a Roman province in Paul’s time. According to the letters he wrote to Thessalonica and Philippi he wanted to nurture the new Christians he had converted on his second missionary journey 7 years earlier in A.D. 50-51. Many of them were Gentiles and had little indoctrination in the word of God. He would encourage them to: (a) not preach Christ from envy and rivalry (Phil. 1:15); (b) stand firm and not be frightened by their opponents (Phil. 1:27f); (c) be servant-minded (Phil. 2:1-18); (d) look out for the Judaizers (“dogs”) (Phil. 3:1-11); (e) learn how to be free of anxiety and be content (Phil. 4:1-16); (f) be sharing, affectionate, humble and fatherly (1 Thess. 1:1—2:12); (g) endure persecution from their countrymen (1 Thess. 2:13-16); (h) stand against temptation (2:17—3:13); (i) be sanctified “in Christ” (4:1-10); (j) deal with false teaching about the resurrection of the dead (4:13—5:11); (k) that the Lord was going to vindicate their faith and deal with apostasy and false teachers trying to seduce them with pseudo miracles (2 Thess. 1:1—2:12); (l) by instructing them how to deal with idleness, “free-loading,” and faction among the brotherhood of Christians there. No wonder Paul went through Macedonia again, and third time!

The “bread” the Christians were “breaking” at Troas (20:7) was the Lord’s Supper. It was the “first day of the week” (Sunday) and it appears from Scripture and ancient church history that the first century church (in the days of the apostles) that the church met every Sunday (“first day of the week”) (see 1 Cor. 16:2) and at those meetings they observed the Lord’s Supper (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 11:20ff) as well as taking up an offering for needy saints. Justin Martyr, writing about A.D. 150 says the churches met every Sunday for observing the Lord’s supper, reading scriptures, preaching, praying and offerings. Pliny and Tertullian also substantiate weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper by the Christians. It was not until the fourth century (A.D. 300-400) that the practice of weekly communion began to decline. By the 6th century (A.D. 506) it was “decreed” by the Council of Agatha that “none should be esteemed good Christians who did not commune at least three times a year—Christmas, Easter, and Whit-Sunday (Pentecost).” Bible scholars of all religious bodies agree that in the early church the Christians met every Lord’s Day (Sunday) for the Lord’s Supper—John Calvin (Presbyterian); John Wesley (Methodist); Thomas Scott (Anglican). The Lord’s Supper is extremely significant to our Christian life. Through our faith in, and weekly remembrance of, Christ’s atoning sacrifice believers are joined in union as “brothers,” caring for, dependent upon, and rejoicing with one another under the same Heavenly Father and

same Elder Brother, Jesus Christ.

Paul had so much he wanted to say about the word of the Lord. He expected never to see these brethren again. When you go through all the agonies of persecution, repentance, and ordinary vicissitudes of life with a group of people (Paul was 3 years at Ephesus), you become one with them (20:18-27). He had poured himself into them! They wanted to listen to him because they knew he loved them and had important things to say to them! Church meetings were not on a tight time schedule then! No one was looking at his watch wondering when the preacher was going to stop his sermon so they could “get on with more important matters of the day.” The preaching and teaching of apostolic doctrine was the most important matter in their lives! It’s more important to us than sleeping, eating, T.V., housework—more important than anything—even more important than praying! They probably did not start the meeting until well after sunset when the slaves and other common laborers could get free to attend. But Paul kept right on preaching, past midnight, with only a few minutes out to raise Eutychus from death, and to eat a short meal. He taught them until day-break (probably 6 hours total teaching). A Christian can get about 2-3 hours of good Bible teaching in three weeks in most Christian churches. If you had opportunity to hear an apostle’s teaching, would you spend 6 hours listening to him? 4 hours? 1 hour? You do have that opportunity! It’s in your New Testament! Read it aloud to yourself for an hour a day each week—that would be 7 hours!

The text and Paul are both correct! The lad fell 3 stories (30 ft. or more) and was killed. He was dead (Greek nekros, not “asleep”—literally, dead). But Paul “fell on him and closely embraced him” (Greek epepesen auto kai sumperilabon, literally, “with around he took him”—that is Paul lay down on the dead boy’s body and put his arms around it). Paul said, “Do not be alarmed (make a tumult), for his life is in him” (Greek psuche autou en auto estin, literally, “the life of him, in him is!”—emphatically!). Paul did similar to what Elijah and Elisha did in the OT (1 Kings 17:21; 2 Kings 4:34). He raised Eutychus from the dead! Apostles were given that power (Matt. 10:8). The Bible gave that power to none but apostles in the New Testament dispensation. When they died, that power ceased among men. We may imagine how awed the people were in the presence of this power to raise the dead! What a great blessing it would have been to the lad’s parents and family. They went back upstairs, Paul ate a meal, and preached (Gr. homileas, “sermonized”) until daybreak, and departed. The people of Troas took the lad away alive, and were greatly (Gr. pareklesan ou metrios) comforted or strengthened. What strengthened them? Not just the boy’s life—but the miracle proved that everything Paul had taught them was absolutely true! It is the faithfulness of God’s apostolic message that strengthens us—miracles merely confirm the faithfulness of the message!

Paul wrote back to the Ephesians about A.D. 62, during his first Roman imprisonment, 5 years after this meeting at Miletus with the Ephesian elders. Every sentence of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians is pregnant with meaning! It is difficult to make a list of everything Paul would have told them. But here is a list I have made up—you might make a different one: (a) God’s primary blessings to us in this life are spiritual (Eph. 1:3-14)—the

riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints (1:15-23); (b) while men are dead in sin and may expect to inherit only the wrath of God, they may have salvation by God's grace through faith (trust) in Jesus Christ, (2:1-10); (c) Christ's redemptive work (his perfect merit and willing atonement) abolished all the hostility between man and God and joins all those who trust and accept redemption into a "habitation of God in the Spirit" (2:11-22); (d) through the apostolic ministry (the revelation of the plan of God's redemption through Christ) Christ is able to dwell in men of faith and make them comprehend the love of Christ which is beyond any knowledge available in the cosmos (3:1-21); (e) the "gifts" of ministry (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers) are for unifying and maturing the believers by equipping the saints (4:1-16); (f) learning Christ, being renewed in our minds with the gospel, is the way to put on Christ and put off the old nature (4:17-32); (g) as children of a heavenly Father we must imitate him in our earthly walk because we will only be in this "pilgrimage" a short time (5:1-20); (h) we must be on guard against the devil's subtle spiritual attacks upon us because he uses the ordinary areas of life (home, employment, children, etc.) (6:1-24).

We already know from the first part of chapter 20 that Paul's ministry was primarily preaching. But there were other aspects of his "ministry" which are verbalized in the latter half of chapter 20: (a) serving the Lord with all humility—yes, humility is ministry! (See Phil. 2:5ff where the Lord Jesus came to earth to be humbled as part of his ministry); (b) serving the Lord with tears and trials—yes, tears (compassion) and trials (2 Cor. 1:3ff) is part of ministry; (c) declaring everything that is profitable—what is profitable may not always be pleasant to the flesh (1 Cor. & 2 Cor. & Eph. & Heb.); (d) teaching in public and from house to house—ministry is mainly, evangelism, or teaching the word of God; (e) testifying to every culture, repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ—most people have no trouble with "faith"—it is repentance no one wants because it requires conforming one's thinking, values, motives and actions to the word of Christ; (f) imprisonment and afflictions—this may not be part of every Christian's "ministry" but it was of Paul's; (g) to testify to the gospel of the grace of God—this was, is, and will always be the primary function of ministry—note how Paul's instructions to the Ephesian elders here fits in precisely with his subsequent letter to the Ephesians 4:11-16!!!—"feed" the church on the word to keep them from being drawn away by false teachings (especially the hedonistic, materialistic, worldly, "me-ism" found even in religion today). Ministry is to so thoroughly teach (Paul did it 3 years, night and day in Ephesus) that when the "minister" must leave, he can "commend them to the word" which is the only ultimate source able to give people an inheritance among the saints!!!

Paul valued his life only for the purpose of "feeding" people the gospel of the grace of God! If he could not use life for that, it was of no value to him! The same viewpoint is the responsibility of an elder in the church. The only value his life has is its use to "feed the church of the Lord." An evangelist's, elder's, teacher's life is of value only if it is sacrificed to keep members of God's "flock" (the church) from being devoured by the "fierce wolves" (i.e., false teachers). Whatever it takes to accomplish this is what these servants of the Lord must give—even if it requires (a) humiliation; (b) trials and tears; (c) what is unpleasant but spiritually profitable; (d) teaching and testifying of repentance; (e) and imprisonment and afflictions. Only when the church is "fed" the word of the Lord does the life of an evangelist,

elder, or teacher have any value (see also 1 Pet. 5:1-5). Is it any wonder that being one of the Lord's ordained "servants" (evangelist, elder, or teacher, Eph. 4:11) is a very serious matter? Is it any wonder that these servants must have unimpeachable characters and servant-shepherd's hearts (read 1 & 2 Tim. & Titus). Is it any wonder that they must receive the utmost cooperation and encouragement from the "flock"? (Heb. 17:7,17). Their responsibility is to "commend" the saints to the word of God's grace (Gr. paratithemai, for the word "commend" is literally, "put with, deposit upon, place or set upon"). God's faithful promise of grace is what builds and protects God's church. That is what the church is to be fed—God's grace!

The main threat to the church of the Lord, according to Paul's warning to the Ephesian elders, is "fierce wolves" coming into the church from outside...AND "from among themselves (the church itself). "Wolves" will be men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them" (20:29-30). False teaching (which produces false living—see 2 Pet. 2:1—3:18; Rev. chs. 2-3) is the main threat to the church. It was then—it is now—and always will be! **THE MOST DANGEROUS FALSE TEACHING IS THE DENIAL OF THE DEITY OF JESUS CHRIST AND A DENIAL OF THE INERRANCY OF THE BIBLE!** The church can survive and people can still be saved even if the word is preached "from envy and rivalry" (Phil. 1:15). The church can survive and people can still be saved if the church makes a few errors about leadership, discipline, marriage and divorce, matters of opinion, the Lord's Supper, and spiritual gifts (see 1 Cor.). But when false teachers begin to deny the foundations of Christian faith (the deity of Christ, the vicarious efficacy of his death as atonement for sin, his bodily resurrection, the inerrancy of the Scriptures, and his second coming), the church is no longer Christ's church—it has died—and people can no longer be saved by such a dead, graceless cadaver! Legalism is a denial of the efficacy of Jesus' death! Paul deals with legalism in his letter to the Galatians. Materialism is a denial of the efficacy of Jesus' death! Almost any form of religion other than evangelical Christianity is a denial of the efficacy of Jesus' death! Be alert, evangelists, elders and teachers!

The answer to this question, "What builds up a congregation" is plain and simple! Paul said it: "I commend you to God and to the word of his grace" (20:32). Paul had no complicated "church-growth manuals"—no enormous outlay of finances to demand—no "busy-busy-busy" activities that needed attending. He simply said, "I commend you to God and the word of his grace which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among the saints." Jesus said, "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life"—and that food is his word (Jn. 6:35-63). Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God! The ministry of the whole church is primarily and imperatively, the "feeding" of the word (see Eph. 4:11-16; Col. 1:3-29; 2:1-23; Rom. 10:14-21; 2 Cor. 5:14-21; 10:3-5; 1 Tim. 4:11-16; 2 Tim. 2:1-2; 2:15; 4:1-5). It is true! People like a church where there is friendliness, good facilities, reverence, benevolence, and activity—**BUT UNLESS THE TEACHING OF THE WORD COMES FIRST AND FOREMOST ALL THE ABOVE IS USELESS.** Check the letters to the 7 churches of

Asia Minor in Rev. chs. 2-3—check the epistles to the churches by Paul, Peter and John in the NT. It is one thing to have a congregation of friendly people—but quite another thing to have a church of the Lord where the teaching of the word is dominant rather than making an aura of “friendliness” and “serving tables” the primary function.

Where “friendliness” is subordinate to doctrine, there may (or may not) be an alleged compassion—but if the church ever becomes afraid of teaching clear Biblical doctrine in order to maintain a facade of “friendliness” and “tolerance” toward non-Biblical doctrines, we will not be a really compassionate church! False compassion (subordinating doctrine for “feeling”) takes away from the authority of Christ—it takes away the key of salvation from the world! Such a false “compassion” takes the security of an absolute right and wrong away from society—and it takes away its own servant-hood from mankind. Yes! It is more blessed to give than to receive. But this life is only a temporary state. This is not all the life there is! There is another life—eternal life, where the last shall be first—where those who have been the servants of all will be the greatest of all—where those who have been faithful in a very little will be given charge over much. Jesus proved it! But one has to believe that the NT (especially the book of Revelation) is an accurate, inspired account of Jesus’ position in heaven after his 33 year tenure on earth! The One who was the servant of all—the One who was baptized with a baptism of unparalleled suffering—who was made to be sin for us when he did not deserve it—who gave, and gave, and gave, and did not take—THAT ONE NOW REIGNS! That One now receives “glory and honor and power and wealth and wisdom and thanksgiving.” HE DID NOT SWERVE FROM KEEPING THE WORD OF GOD in order to be “tolerant” of wickedness and false teaching! Don’t give to the Lord’s church expecting to be blessed in this life (unless it is an invisible, spiritual blessing). You may be disappointed! Those who do good things to be rewarded here receive the applause of men. But the “weight of glory beyond all comparison” (2 Cor. 4:16-18) in the next life awaits the last, the least and the little who have given themselves like Jesus did!

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

ACTS 21:1—23:25

When Paul's brethren and friends ("we" includes Luke the writer of Acts) heard the prophecies of Agabus that Paul would suffer if he went to Jerusalem, they "begged" him not to go. They certainly had his best interests at heart. They really cared for him. And it appears they almost persuaded him not to go! Their deep and sincere pleading ("weeping" as they begged) was "breaking his heart"! But Paul was ready to suffer even more than was being predicted—even death—if his going to Jerusalem will further the cause of Christ. That was easy to say—but oh, so difficult to carry out! Paul was convinced in his own mind that in the particular case of presenting the Macedonian brethren's offering to the Judean brethren, the cause of Christ would be most benefitted if he, personally, presented it! So, Paul was not being foolhardy. He apparently believed that as an apostle, and especially one who worked first-hand, and intimately, with the Macedonians in gathering the offering he would advance the cause of Christian unity and brotherhood between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians if he presented the offering in person. It would be a great opportunity for him to show how much the Gentiles trusted him, a Jew, to carry the money to its intended destination. It would also be an opportunity for the Judean brethren to get to know Paul as a Christian and an apostle better (he hadn't spent much time in Judea as a Christian). He was willing to commit himself to the sovereign care of God. Anything he might suffer to advance the unity of the Church, he would suffer! God used his Jerusalem persecution to do exactly that! God also used it to give Paul and "all expenses paid" trip to Rome—to witness to "Caesar's Pratorian guard" (see Phil. 1:13).

"Myriads" (millions) of Jewish people, including Jewish-Christians, were attending the Feast of Pentecost (21:20). Jewish-Christians by the tens of thousands were still keeping Jewish feasts and other Mosaic regulations. There was absolutely nothing wrong with that so long as the Jewish-Christians did not insist it was necessary for salvation (theirs and others)! Every ethnic group of people today practices traditional Christian things that other Christians do not practice—or even like! But so long as they do not demand that others conform to anything beyond the doctrines of the NT, their cultural practices are permissible. Someone had been "telling" (Gr. katechetesan, "teaching, catechumening") among the Jewish-Christian brethren that Paul was teaching Jews all over the world to "forsake Moses, not circumcise their male children, and not observe the customs"—but Paul (a) never urged total abandonment of Moses (the Law of God)—he simply urged Jews everywhere to obey Christ and his gospel to which the Law pointed—accusation untrue; (b) he circumcised Timothy, who was of Jewish ancestry, but not Titus of Gentile ancestry—accusation untrue!—Paul did write to the Galatians that in Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availed anything before God—but there is a vast difference between saying it isn't necessary

and saying, do not do it; (c) never told any Jews they could not keep their customs—he did stand up against the Judaizers in every nation who were insisting that Jews and Gentiles alike had to keep Jewish laws and customs to be saved—accusation untrue—(see Paul’s teaching on matters of opinion in 1 Cor. chs. 8,9,10, and Rom. 14). Paul’s personal delivery of the offering to the suffering Jewish brethren was a wonderful testimony of his concern for them. But the Christian leaders among the Jews in Jerusalem were convinced Paul needed to do something “more” to convince the Jews that he was not trying to destroy their cultural way of life. So, they suggested he participate with a certain group of four Jewish Christian men who were undergoing the ritual of ceremonial purification in connection with a “Nazarite vow.” Paul, himself, had kept such a vow after becoming a Christian (Acts 18:18). Keeping a “Nazarite vow” involved imposing certain self-restraints (abstinence from wine; allowing the hair and beard to grow long; not coming in contact with a dead body, etc.) as well as promising certain offerings to God (Num. 6:1-21). The length of such a vow could vary anywhere from 7 days to a month or longer, even for the rest of a man’s life. When the time for the vow expired, the hair was to be shaved off by a priest at the temple, and burned on the altar, and an offering of a male lamb, a female lamb, and a ram was to be made. Evidently these 4 men had defiled themselves (perhaps by touching a dead body) before their vow had ended, so they had to purify themselves and begin the vow all over again. Another Jew might go through the purification process, offer sacrifices, and pay for their sacrifices. This would be considered a very devout act! Such a devout act, James and John hoped, would clear it up that Paul was not advocating abandonment of Jewish customs! At the same time James and John declared publicly they were not imposing this as a matter of salvation for the Gentiles! So, Paul “became a Jew to the Jews” in order to win some (see 1 Cor. 9:19-23). He did not compromise the grace of Christ or the gospel doing this!

There is no specific law against Gentiles entering the temple. In Exodus 12:43-49 it is forbidden for Gentiles to eat the Passover (eating the Passover might have required them to go to the temple to prepare it). In Ezekiel 44:4-9 the vision is that foreigners are to be excluded from admission to THAT temple—but that is a “vision” Ezekiel saw of the Messianic “temple” in Eph. 2:11-22—the NT church—into which no “foreigners,” i.e., non-Christians would be permitted. And in Numbers 18:7, it is prohibited that anyone other than a Levite shall come near the altar lest he die! Certainly, from these injunctions (and others about defilement) it may be concluded that Gentiles were, by Mosaic Law, prohibited from entering the inner courts (courts other than the “Court of the Gentiles”) of the Jewish temple. Some Gentiles did enter the inner courts of the Jewish temple at various eras of Jewish history—certainly not with Jewish permission! Antiochus Euphron (Antiochus IV) (known in Daniel’s prophecy as “the contemptible one”) sent Seleucid (i.e., Syrian) soldiers into these courts and had a pig sacrificed on its altar and put a statue of himself inside it. Josephus tells us how some Samaritans (when Jesus was a youngster) during the procurator-ship of Coponius sneaked into the temple about midnight and threw dead men’s bodies in the cloisters to deliberately defile the temple. Josephus also tells us that Pompey, the Roman general, about 64 B.C., upon conquering Palestine, walked brazenly into the Holy of Holies, looked around, touched nothing, and walked back out giving the Jews orders to immediately “purify” their temple.” There was a wall all around the Court of Israel (next court inside the court of the Gentiles) and signs posted along this wall reading, “No man of alien race is to

enter within the barricade which surrounds the temple. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for the penalty of death that follows.” And the Roman occupation authorities had given the Jews the right to put to death anyone (even Romans) who violated this restriction in the temple! To desecrate the temple was the most serious crime a human being could commit against Judaism!!! It struck at the very foundation of their society—religious, civil, social, and cultural. Non-Jews do not comprehend its significance! Jews willingly laid down their lives by the thousands just to protest and try to stop Roman procurators from placing Roman votive shields and an image of Caesar inside the temple. Some Jews saw Paul in the city in the company of Trophimus the Ephesian. They jumped to the conclusion (perhaps deliberately in order to kill Paul) that he had taken Trophimus into the temple. They had not seen Trophimus in the temple, but they accused Paul of taking him in there! Jews had suffered the wrath of God 500-600 years earlier and had been exiled from their land, had their temple destroyed, their beloved Jerusalem destroyed, and had been dispersed all over the world by Assyria and Babylonia—all because they, themselves, had defiled the temple. Now, they will not stand for Gentiles to defile their temple! The Jews themselves will allow their religious rulers to make it a den of thieves and robbers—they had illegally tried and sentenced an innocent of Jesus of Nazareth in their “holy” temple—but no Gentile will defile it!!!! What hypocrisy!

Several accusations had been made against Paul in 21:28. He sets out to defend himself by reminding his accusers of his past life and he begins to document or explain his reasons for his present life: (a) he was a Jew by birth—reared in strict Jewish culture and education (taught by none other than Gamaliel one of the greatest rabbis of Jewish history)—zealous for the law of Moses—as zealous for God as any of his accusers; (b) he had at one time been a fanatical persecutor of “The Way” (i.e., Christianity), because he thought it was apostasy; (c) and right in the act of his fanatical attempt to destroy what he deemed apostate sect called “Christianity,” he solemnly affirms, he was accosted (on the road to Damascus) by none other than the resurrected Jesus of Nazareth—Paul is willing to lay his life on the line to certify that he is telling the truth about seeing this crucified Jesus alive, manifesting himself supernaturally and vocally. This, Paul expects, will be received by reasonable men as a justifiable explanation for his preaching and acting in accord with the Christian gospel. Paul expected that if the Jesus who was put to death is alive and has supernatural power, any Jew who honestly wanted to do God’s will would certainly give heed to what he says to do—(d) Paul then begins to explain his reasons for preaching among the Gentiles (22:17). But “Gentile” is an “alarm” word for Jews. Most of them just turn off their rationality when they hear it and plug in to emotion and irrationality (like others do with their “alarm” words). All of us need to control our emotions!

If words have a common meaning—if the Bible is in human language—then sins are washed away when a believer is baptized AND NOT UNTIL THE BELIEVER IS BAPTIZED (provided he/she does not die before having had an opportunity to know that God has commanded it). The crucial question is: What constitutes “opportunity to know”??? That will have to be settled between every individual and God himself! Needless to say, I know it! How about you? How about your family? How about your neighbors—your friends? It is

difficult for me to think that anyone in the United States of America has been without opportunity to know what Jesus' will is in the matter of baptism for the remission of sins. I know many do not know—but have they been in any way deprived of an opportunity to know? Peter writes that “baptism saves us” (1 Pet. 3:21). Paul says we are united to Christ's death through baptism (Rom. 6:3-5). Paul says we put on Christ through baptism (Gal. 3:26-27). Technically speaking, of course, it is the atoning death of Christ that takes away our sin. But human beings have been given freedom of will and choice whether they will accept Christ's death in place of their sin, or whether they will attempt to justify themselves before God by human works to atone for their sins. Any honest human being will admit that he/she is never able to clear the conscience by human self-goodness! Very simply, then, baptism is a divinely ordained requirement as are the acts of faith and repentance where God unites us with the already accomplished work of Christ (atonement) and washes away our past sins (Rom. 6:1-11). Repentance, confession and supplication washes away sin afterward (1 Jn. 1:5—2:6). The thief on the cross had not, evidently, been baptized (immersed) in the name of Jesus Christ. Immersion in the name of Jesus Christ did not become efficacious until the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38). John the Baptist's baptism (immersion) “unto repentance for the remission of sins” (cf. Mk. 1:4; Lk. 3:3) was the God-ordained act for those who heard him to please God between the OT and the NT (“The law and the prophets were until John...” Matt. 11:13; Lk. 16:16). John's immersion was a sort of “gap-filler” between the OT and the NT preparing the Jews to turn loose of the law of Moses as the way to repent before God and turn toward the gospel (the impending authority of the Messiah) for justification. Now whether the thief on the cross had been immersed in John's immersion or not, we have no information. But that would make no difference. Because the “Testator” (i.e., Jesus Christ) could give his heritage to anyone he chose, in any way he chose, as long as he was “alive” on earth (see Heb. 9:15-17). “A will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive.” In other words, the “will” of Christ that men may wash away their sins by being baptized in his name (i.e., under his authority) was not in effect until after Christ's death. Today, Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, since a death (his) has occurred which redeems them” (Heb. 9:15). Sins are now washed away only through being baptized (immersed) in Christ's name. This is the way we “call upon his name” (1 Pet. 3:21).

Most Jews could not stand the idea that Jehovah-God would accept any Gentile. Gentiles were “unclean”—less than human—ought to be killed (portions of the Jewish apocrypha—Talmud, Mishna, Gemara, etc. actually say this). Once when Jesus was predicting his return to heaven, he said to some Jews, “I go to him who sent me: you will seek me and you will not find me: where I am you cannot come.” They sarcastically replied, “Where does this man intend to go that we shall not find him? Does he intend to go to the dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks?” (John 7:33-35). That was their evaluation of Jesus—he was a “Gentile-lover.” When Paul declared that Jehovah had commissioned him to go with God's message of redemption to the Gentiles, those self-righteous, malicious, Gentile-hating Jews cried, “Away with such a person from the earth—he ought not to live!” What causes racial hatred? Is it ignorance? No! Is it lack of humanitarian compassion? No! Some who would be extremely compassionate in a humanitarian way to some races other than their own, will hate some other specific races not their own. Racial

hatred is because man is hostile toward God! Racial hostility may be erased only when human beings are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:11-22). Racial brotherhood will never come through education, United Nations, Peace Corps, secular humanism, democratic or republican forms of government. We can't even have racial brotherhood because we're Americans! In the kingdom of God (the church) there can not be hostility because a Christian is Jew or Gentile, black or white, Caucasian or Asian—we are all one in Christ! Only by Christian conversion can racism really be abolished.

Paul had lived “as a good citizen” of God’s kingdom (Greek *agathe peooliteumai*, from which we get the English words “good politics”) and conscientiously until that very moment. The “conscience” is something every human being has. Its main function is to prompt, move, motivate a person to do what his mind thinks is right and avoid what his mind thinks is wrong. The conscience is not the guide—the mind (i.e., knowledge) is the guide—the conscience merely prompts. The conscience is not the standard of judgment as to what is right and wrong. It merely moves the person to do what he thinks! The conscience is a person’s inner judge and becomes the “accuser or excuser” bringing to bear guilt or innocence after the person has acted upon what he thinks is right or wrong. Paul thought he was doing God a service by arresting Christians before he came to the knowledge of Christ’s deity (Acts 26:9) so his conscience did not judge him to be guilty until he came to a more perfect knowledge. Had Christians been apostate Jews, Paul would have been doing what was right. But they were not—and he was wrong. This shows how conscience cannot be depended upon as a guide! People must know the truth and believe the truth and act upon the truth before they can be absolutely innocent in their consciences. The truth is that only when people accept the vicarious atonement of Christ’s death for their sins will their consciences be absolutely clear of guilt (see 1 Pet. 3:21; Heb. 10:1-39; Phil. 3:9; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 4:1-25). And no one can have an absolutely clear conscience until he knows and accepts the blood of Christ by being immersed into Christ—ignorance is not an excuse!

Paul was on trial “with respect” to his constant declaration that Jesus Christ of Nazareth had been raised from the dead! The Pharisees and many other Jews (Jn. 11:24) believed in a “resurrection of the Just (Jews)” in a general way at the “end of the age” (the coming of the Messianic age). So according to the Jewish rulers anyone going around declaring Jesus of Nazareth risen from the dead and ascended to the right hand of God was an apostate, a blasphemer, and a false prophet. The resurrection of Jesus Christ and glorification to the right hand of God was the very core of all Paul’s preaching. In 1 Cor. 15:1-3 Paul says it is “of first importance! He based all his teaching on this fact of history. Every ethical and moral precept or principle Paul demanded was based on the resurrection of Jesus! The resurrection of the dead was clearly a major issue dividing the Pharisees from the Sadducees! One would think that if the Pharisees believed in the possibility and probability of a resurrection of the just they would have believed (in the face of the evidence) that Jesus of Nazareth had been raised from the dead! But we have many modern “Pharisees” in the world today (and many more Sadducees who do not believe in any resurrection). And all these modern “Pharisees” are not Jews! Many believe they will be resurrected but they do not think we have to believe that Jesus was resurrected bodily, in

Jerusalem, seen by eyewitnesses. They believe they will live forever on the basis of their own righteousness (or God's universalism). They do not need the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. It is, in fact, repugnant to them because it opposes their self-righteous hope that God will justify them for their human goodness!

The Roman tribune, Claudius Lysias, in his letter to Felix the governor, deliberately slants his statement so as to claim credit for having rescued a Roman citizen when, as a matter of fact, he did not know Paul was a Roman citizen until he was about to scourge him without a trial (see Acts 22:22-29). Nevertheless, once the Roman soldiers found out that Paul was a Roman citizen, they gave him plenty of protection from the Jewish "mobs." It was directly contrary to Roman law to bind and scourge a Roman citizen (see Acts 16:37). When an official or soldier broke a law, they were themselves subject to the same punishment about to be executed on the prisoner, if the prisoner wished to press charges. Paul was a Roman citizen by ancestry (by birth) which was more honorable than citizenship by purchase (as was the case with the Roman army officer!). No wonder the officer and his soldiers withdrew instantly from harming Paul. Paul stood for law and order! He availed himself of all his rights of citizenship. He would never take the law into his own hands—not even when treated unjustly. But he preached (Rom. 13:1-8) and was willing to practice justice under the civil laws of the Roman empire (Acts 16:37; 25:11). When appeal to principle is exhausted, Christians have a right to appeal to human law and human authorities (see Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Tim. 1:8-9; 2:1-4; 1 Pet. 2:13-17). And it is right for Christians to stand for international justice, as well! Without penalties commensurate with the crime, there is no law against such crime. Without swift and fair execution of the penalty there is no law!

PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS

PLACE	DATE	ACTS	SIGNIFICANT EVENTS
First Missionary Journey			
Cyprus proconsul Sergius Paulus converted;	A.D. 47-48	13:1-12	False prophet, Bar-Jesus blinded; Saul called Paul
Perga in Pamphylia	48-49	13:13	John Mark returned home
Psidian Antioch and Gentiles in synagogue; Jews stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas and expelled them from region.		13:14-52	Paul & Barnabas preached to Jews and Gentiles in synagogue; Jews stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas and expelled them from region.
Iconium believed; unbelieving Jews caused division in city.		14:1-5	A great number of Jews and Gentiles believed; unbelieving Jews caused division in city.
Lystra Hermes; Paul stoned.		14:6-20	Barnabas identified as Zeus; Paul, as Hermes; Paul stoned.
Derbe		14:20-21	A large number of disciples won.
Lystra disciples and appointing of elders.		14:21-23	Strengthening and encouraging of disciples and appointing of elders.
Iconium			
Pisidian Antioch			
Pamphylia		14:24-25	To Pamphylia, Perga, and Attalia
Perga		2 Tim. 3:11	Timothy converted at Derbe
Attalia			
Antioch Gentiles		14:26-28	Report how gospel was accepted by Gentiles

<u>PLACE</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>ACTS</u>	<u>SIGNIFICANT EVENTS</u>
Apostolic Church in Jerusalem			
Antioch Judaizers from Judea.	A.D. 49	15:1-2	Paul & Barnabas in sharp dispute with
Phoenicia converted; people rejoiced.		15:3	Report of how Gentiles were
Samaria		15:3	
Jerusalem		15:4-6	Welcomed by church.
		15:7-21	Question of God's acceptance of Gentiles; speeches by Peter, Paul, Barnabas, and James.
		15:22-29	Problem resolved; Paul, Barnabas, Judas, and Silas sent with letter.
		15:30-35	Letter received; people encouraged and strengthened; Paul and Barnabas remain and teach.

PLACE	DATE	ACTS	SIGNIFICANT EVENTS
Second Missionary Journey			
Antioch disagreed over taking John Mark;	A.D. 49-51	15:36-40	Beginning of journey; Paul & Barnabas
	50-52		Barnabas took John Mark.
Syria & Cilicia		15:41	Paul took Silas.
Derbe		16:1	Timothy joined them.
Lystra		16:1-5	
Iconium		16:1-5	
Phrygia and Galatia		16:6-7	
Troas began using first person in vs. 10.		16:8-9	Paul's vision to go to Macedonia; Luke
Philippi fortuneteller delivered; Paul & Silas jailed; earthquake; jailer converted.		16:10-40	Lydia converted; demon possessed
Thessalonica jealous Jews caused turmoil; mobbed Jason's house.		17:1-9	Jews, Greeks, and women believed;
Berea believed; Jews from Thessalonica came and stirred up people.		17:10-14	Jews, Greek men and women
Athens a few believed.		17:15-34	Paul preached about "Unknown God";
Corinth beaten.	52	18:1-17	Crispus converted; Paul's vision to stay; many Corinthians believed and were baptized; met Aquila and Priscilla; Sosthenes
Ephesus declined; left Aquila and Priscilla.		18:18-21	Asked to stay and preach, but
Caesarea		18:22	
Antioch		18:22-23	

<u>PLACE</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>ACTS</u>	<u>SIGNIFICANT EVENTS</u>
Third Missionary Journey			
Antioch	A.D. 52-56	18:23	Beginning of journey.
Galatia & Phrygia	53-56	18:23	Disciples strengthened
Ephesus widely and grows in power; riot of silversmiths.		18:24–19:41	Miracles; Word of the Lord spreads
Macedonia & Greece	53-56	20:1-6	Plot to kill Paul on voyage.
Troas brought him back to life.		20:7-12	Eutychus fell from window; Paul
Miletus encouragement.		20:13-38	Paul's farewell to Ephesian elders;
To Jerusalem happen in Jerusalem.		21:1-16	Agabus warned Paul of what would
Jerusalem among the Gentiles; Paul took a Jewish vow.		21:17-26	Paul reported what God had done

PLACE	DATE	ACTS	SIGNIFICANT EVENTS
Paul's Arrest and Imprisonment			
Jerusalem arrested Paul.	56	21:27-36	Paul arrested; city mob; soldiers
Jerusalem testimony; crowd angered again	57	21:37–22:22	Paul speaks; defended himself; gave
		22:23-29	Because of angry crowd, Paul to be flogged; commander alarmed when he found that Paul was a Roman citizen.
Sanhedrin-Jerusalem Sadducees disputed.		22:30–23:11	Paul testified and Pharisees and
		23:12-22	Son of Paul's sister warned commander of plot to kill Paul.
		23:23-30	Paul escapes with Roman commander's assistance; Paul and letter from Roman commander travel to Governor Felix at Caesarea
Caesarea		23:31–25:12	Paul on trial before Felix and Festus.
		25:13--26:32	Paul on trial before Agrippa; Agrippa told Festus that Paul could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.
At sea sail rejected.		27:1-12	Voyage begun; Paul's advice not to
		27:13-26	Paul urged courage; told of angel's message and faith in God.
		27:27-44	Shipwreck; Paul encouraged others; ship ran aground; everyone reached land safely.
Malta	59	28:1-10	Paul not killed by snake; healed man.
Rome unhindered.	60	28:11-31	Paul imprisoned; preached salvation

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

ACTS 24:1—26:32

The God of the Jews is the same as the God of the Christians! There is only one God! There is no difference in the Person. The difference is that the Person (Almighty God) arbitrarily chose to act toward humanity differently (see Rom. chs. 9,10,11) in progressing phases of his divine plan of redemption for man and creation. God acted toward the Jews transcendently (i.e., invisibly) and through Law. At a time chosen by God (i.e., “in the fulness of time” Gal. 5:4) he decided to act by becoming INCARNATE (i.e., in a body of flesh, Jesus Christ) toward all humanity (both Jew and Gentile), AND BY GRACE. God has “dispensed” himself and his gracious redemption in gradual degrees of revelation (first, patriarchally—Adam to Moses; second, sacerdotally and provincially—Moses to Christ; finally, incarnate, individually and universally—Christ and the apostles). God predicted all this in his revelation to the “fathers” (see Heb. 1:1ff). Jesus claimed to be exactly One with the Father (see Jn. 5:1-47). Does the God of the Jews heal on the Sabbath? Indeed, Yes! “The Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing: for whatever he does, that the Son does likewise.” It was Paul who wrote, “For in him (Jesus Christ) all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell...” (Col. 1:19), and, “For in him (Christ) the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily...” (Col. 2:9). Paul clearly says, “That according to the Way (Christianity), which they (the Jews) call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the law or written in the prophets.” It was the same God! The persecuting Jews just did not believe the law of the prophets that God was going to fulfill (not “change”) his will by becoming incarnate and offering redemption to the world!

Felix had a better knowledge about Christianity than the Jews gave him credit for having. He knew Paul’s practice of Christianity was no crime against either Rome or the Jews! How did he know that? (a) the Romans had an excellent “CIA” (intelligence system) to keep them abreast of aberrant political developments. Was this his source? (b) perhaps Philip the evangelist (living at Caesarea for years where Pilate and other Roman procurators had their headquarters) had “called on” Felix with the gospel; (c) perhaps he learned something about Christianity (accurately) from his present wife, Drusilla, a member of the Herod family, a family whose fortunes had been intertwined with Christianity for over half a century—Joanna, the wife of Chuza (Herod’s steward) traveled with the women who supported the ministry of Jesus (Lk. 8:1-3). The Greek word akribesteron is translated “accurate” and may also be translated, “exact”! Isn’t it interesting that this Roman procurator (Greek by birth)—a former slave given the name “Felix” (meaning, “Happy”) by the emperor Claudius who freed him, had gained “exact” and “accurate” knowledge of Christianity!! Tacitus says of Felix, “He reveled in cruelty and lust, and wielded the power of a king with the mind of a slave.” A “procurator” was one appointed by Caesar to “procure” the funds (i.e.,

taxes) from the provinces which were deemed necessary to keep the emperors in the style to which they were accustomed. And he was under conviction when Paul preached to him—but it faded and he procrastinated, holding Paul for two years and was then relieved of his duties and replaced by Festus. SADLY, FELIX LOST AN OPPORTUNITY TO OBTAIN ETERNAL LIFE!

Paul “dialogued” (Greek, *dialogomenou*) with Felix, the former slave, now a very important Roman government official. They “talked often.” And Paul talked about “the faith in Christ Jesus—of justice (rightness) and self-control and the judgment to come.” Felix was a “buddy” to emperors Claudius and later Nero. He began his career as procurator of Judea by seducing Drusilla, who was the wife of King of Emesa (in modern Syria) and, sister of Herod Agrippa II, and then by marrying her. Felix, like many modern politicians, because of “knowing the right people” and being “in” with the “right people” evidently thought that he could do as he pleased in life, and was answerable only to the danger of displeasing those with more power than he! Felix needed the kind of conversation Paul was giving him! AND DON’T WE ALL? Enough of the modern sentimental pap of so-called “Christian music” and “Christian get-rich-quick” formulae, and “holistic-health-mind-over-matter” nonsense. If we’re going to have any impact on this hedonistic, humanistic society in which we live (so very much like that of ancient imperial Rome) we are going to have to “dialogue” with people about “the facts of the faith in Jesus Christ, and of justice, self-control, and the judgment to come.” Paul knew he might have only this one face-to-face opportunity with Felix. He did not discuss politics, economics, the weather, or family affairs—HE GOT TO THE POINT—THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST!

Felix would expect Paul to give him money because that is the way Roman politics worked! Just like modern politics!! Theoretically, Roman officials were not supposed to take bribes. But, then, neither were Jewish “judges” supposed to take bribes—but that they did was one of the major reasons God sent the Israelite nation into exile in the days of the prophets. As a matter of fact, the Romans officials, from Caesar, all the way down to the lowliest official (“publican”) and soldier took bribes. This Felix was a scoundrel (according to Josephus). He paid to get his office from Claudius and Nero. He paid money to a “hit man” to kill Jonathan (the Jewish high priest at that time). He kept the Jewish people in a constant state of agitation. He lied, killed, taxed, extorted and was probably most responsible for so agitating the Jews that they began the rebellion which eventually led to that terrible and total destruction of Jerusalem and the nation in A.D. 66-70, some 10 years after facing off with the apostle Paul. Felix heard Paul say he had come to Palestine to “bring alms and offerings” (Acts 24:17). “Ample and indisputable testimony, Jewish and pagan, sacred and secular, reveals to us what he (Felix) had been—how greedy, how savage, how treacherous, how unjust, how steeped in the blood of private murder and public massacre—during the eight years he had spent in the government, first of Samaria, then of Palestine”—F.W. Farrar. Felix sent for Paul quite often! Hinting, threatening, promising, all no doubt to get money. But Paul steadfastly refused to give him a bribe! Two years it went on. Then Felix was called back to Rome to answer charges. Nero saved his skin!

Yes! Paul was volunteering to be executed— IF he had done anything deserving the death penalty! Capital punishment for the crime of intentional, premeditated murder is neither anti-Christian nor anti-Biblical!! Capital punishment is taught in every dispensation of God's administration of human government in history—in both the OT and NT (e.g., Exodus 21:12-14; Rom. 13:1-7). Capital punishment is not primarily for its deterrent factor— it is for justice! God is the Only God of Justice. Human beings created in God's image and human nature demand justice. Society survives only when some semblance of justice prevails in the world. What if there were no sanctions against murder? What if anyone and everyone was free to take any human life, violently, indiscriminately, without cause, or for any cause, at any time? What if there were no sanctions against wars of aggression? Both reason and divine revelation demands that where there are no penalties, and where penalties are not executed—there are no sanctions (laws) against a crime. The punishment must be commensurate with the crime if we are to have any meaning to the word "justice" (which means, "to balance out, to make equal, to make right"). Capital punishment is a vindictory sanction. That is, it vindicates the majesty and justness of the law against taking life in cold blood. Capital crimes are anarchy against social order. The capital criminal forfeits his right to live in an ordered society. Capital punishment for capital crime was the first and most important commandment God gave Noah when God had cleansed the earth of evil with the world-wide Flood (Gen. 9:6) and reinstated the human race on earth. Paul was committed to these principles! So must we be!!!

The Greek word translated "superstitions" is *deisidaimonias*, from *deido*, literally, "to fear" and from *daimon*, literally, "a demon, or pagan god." The compound word came to be used for "reverence" or "religious." Porcius Festus (meaning, "Festal, Joyful") was apparently a far better and more efficient man than Felix. We know very little about Festus outside the Bible. He was a Roman procurator. He was appointed by Nero and succeeded Felix in office in Judea. Festus evidently knew that Paul was a good man (Acts 25:25) but he was unable to understand Paul's reasoning with his countrymen (the Jews) about their religion and culture. When King Herod Agrippa came to Caesarea, Festus thought he would try to clear up his own mind about Paul's "superstition" (i.e., religion or "god") by having him brought before Agrippa (Agrippa being familiar with Jewish religion). Herod Agrippa II had been appointed "King" of Galilee and Perea about 4 or 5 years earlier by Caesar. It did not seem reasonable to Festus that Paul, being a Jew, and professing the greatest reverence for the law and the temple, was so violently accused and denounced by the Jewish leaders! This Jew, Paul, had also been talking about "a certain dead man, Jesus, saying that he was alive"! (Here we learn new information about Paul's defense). Festus did not understand! He would later cry out—"Paul, you are mad" (insane) Acts 26:24. Paul's statements were startling! Festus was intrigued. Note the impact the teaching concerning resurrection has on the heathen mind! The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the very core of Christianity!!!

Paul was happy to be making his defense (Greek, *apologeisthai*—not really a defense in the mind of Paul, but a presentation of evidence to get a commitment from them—an "apologetic-sermon") before Herod Agrippa II. Herod Agrippa was married to his own sister, Bernice. Another of his sisters, Drusa, was the third wife of Felix, Festus' predecessor

as procurator. The Herods were a very dysfunctional family! Roman emperor Claudius (Nero's uncle) had appointed Herod Agrippa II, "king" of Chalcis (a Lebanese ethnarchy) as a teenager in A.D. 48. In A.D. 53 the territories of his brother, Herod Philip, were added to his realm which included also some territory on the western side of the Sea of Galilee. Herod Agrippa II was the last of the Herodian line. He knew the teachings of the Jewish religion (the law and the prophets, the Messianic hopes, difference between Pharisees and Sadducees, etc.). Agrippa would understand why the Jewish rulers had such malice and enmity toward Paul (whether he sympathized with Paul or not, he would comprehend the problem). Perhaps Paul also thought he had a "hotter" prospect for conversion in Agrippa than in Festus—and if he can get Agrippa first, Festus might follow! Paul was always seeking to save the lost—even when he was, himself, in danger. Paul evidently (see Acts 26:24-29) assumed everyone to whom he spoke was a likely candidate for becoming a "brother" in Christ! Even pagan Roman procurators and divorced, disreputable half-Jews—no matter how powerful and influential the office-holders might be and no matter what they might do unto him. Paul was the one who wrote, "From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view" (2 Cor. 5:16). From a human point of view, Agrippa and Festus would be people one would try to either flatter for advantage, or despise for their superiority over you or their "inferiority" to you. But as a Christian one must seem them as precious to God and Christ, redeemable, save-able, and as those for whom a Christian would be willing to give his life just to give them an opportunity to hear Christ's gospel! THINK ABOUT IT!

Yes! All Gentiles were "under the power of Satan." They were in "the dominion of darkness" (see Col. 1:13). Gentiles could no more be saved by being "a law unto themselves" (Rom. Chs. 1 & 2) than the Jews could be saved by the "law of Moses" (Gal. 2:16). Gentiles were "ruled" by the ignorance, fear and guilt that Satan produces through his deceptions and lies. The only power Satan has is falsehood. He really has no power to accomplish any of the things he or his cohorts (even human sorcerers, magicians, voodoo witch-doctors, etc.) may claim to be able to do! He simply lies and deceives. Human beings—having been created with the freedom to choose what and whom they will believe—accept his lies—and thus become ruled or dominated (manipulated is a better word) by their self-chosen ignorance as to what is truth and reality and what is not! It is the truth that makes human beings free of the devil's manipulations. Ultimate truth and reality are in the Person and Word of Jesus Christ (Jn. 8:31; 14:6). Implacable, total, falsehood is in the devil (Jn. 8:44). The devil rules human beings through the "fear" of death (Heb. 1:14-15). The devil has deceived willing mankind into believing that physical death is the ultimate reality, and he is able then to manipulate these deceived ones into rebelling against God, hating God, hating their fellow man, hating themselves, and doing all kinds of wickedness because of that fear of death. Jesus Christ died and arose from the grave to prove that the devil is a liar (Heb. 2:14-18). Jesus' resurrection proves that death is not the ultimate reality—that human beings, trusting and loving Christ, do not have to fear physical death. What human beings should fear is the SECOND DEATH which the devil tries to deceive the world into believing does not exist! Human beings are never forced to be under the power of Satan.

Paul's "personal evangelism encounter" with Herod Agrippa II is a classic! He appealed to the fundamental evidence that should be sufficient to motivate any human being to accept, trust, believe in, love, and obey Jesus Christ (see 1 Cor. 15:1-58; 2 Cor. 5:14-21). Paul's order of presentation does not necessarily need to be followed, but this is the way he proceeded: (a) the Messianic hope of the Jewish scriptures (OT) (Acts 26:6-8); (b) the belief or teaching of the Jewish Bible scholars (Pharisees) that the OT taught a "resurrection of the dead" (26:8); (c) the resurrection and glorification (divine enthronement) of Jesus of Nazareth by eyewitness testimony—proved beyond a reasonable doubt by Paul's (the former persecutor) conversion; (d) the providential and miraculous help which Paul had personally received up to that point in his ministry which authenticated Paul's adherence to Christ as approved by God Almighty (26:22); (e) the predictions of Moses (law) and the evidence of the prophets precisely fulfilled in Jesus Christ of Nazareth (the Messiah would suffer and be raised from the dead) (26:23); (f) none of the aforementioned predictions and fulfillment had "been done in a corner" but were available for any reasonable person to know—even king Agrippa! (26:26). There is nothing mystical or secret (known only by certain elite, "gifted" "elected" "predestined" individuals) about Christianity! Anyone can know it and believe if they are willing to investigate the facts. The facts, the facts, the facts. Believing and being saved has to do with the facts of history—divine history—the Bible!

Agrippa was evidently under conviction! He is not being sarcastic or flippant. He really means, that if Paul were granted just a little more time to discuss this matter with him, he might just become a Christian! Paul's reply, "Whether short or long, I would to God..." indicates the seriousness of the conversation. But Agrippa, for some reason known only to himself, cut the conversation off and left. Agrippa's conclusion about Paul and the accusations made by the Jews was, "not guilty." But for Paul, that was not the pressing matter. Paul was willing to bear a "guilty" charge and the chains if Agrippa would accept Christ! Why did Agrippa withdraw? Our speculations, based on our experiences in like situations, may be nearer to the truth than we think! How often have you heard the same statement—"With a little (more) you will persuade me to be a Christian..." But your "prospects" will never give you the "more" time to teach the evidences, reason with them, explain—they withdraw. Why? (a) is the cost of becoming a Christian too great (i.e., We'll have to give up too many pleasures)?; (b) they say your evidence is still inconclusive but if they could experience the fact of "seeing" God or Jesus with their own eyes, they certainly would become a Christian; (c) or "Why would a good God allow evil to exist?"; (d) or, we will have other opportunities to become a Christian and we will do it then! THE EVIDENCE IS MORE THAN SUFFICIENT FOR ANYONE TO BELIEVE AND OBEY JESUS—as Paul pointed out to Agrippa. There is always a moral problem with people to whom the evidences and explanations have been clearly given when they "withdraw" from any more conversation about Jesus Christ!

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

ACTS 27:1—28:31

Paul was not treated like a criminal, or like most “prisoners” would have been treated by Roman soldiers: (a) his Roman citizenship, by inheritance, gave him great prestige in the eyes of at least one Centurion (Acts 22:25-29); (b) Felix, Festus, and Herod Agrippa II, all had declared him innocent of the charges against him; (c) Paul had demonstrated exemplary self-control and docility—when the Jewish high priest had ordered him smitten on the mouth, Paul cursed no one, showed no rage, exhibited no inclination to strike back; (d) Paul had volunteered to suffer capital punishment if he were guilty of a capital crime; (e) the Roman centurion, Julius “treated Paul kindly” (the Greek word is *philanthropos*, “with human love”—it is almost the same word from which we get Philadelphia, “brotherly-love”). Julius was a humane person. Maybe it was out of this Roman centurion’s gentle heart that he allowed Paul to go off the ship and into the home of a friend at Sidon, and be cared for; (f) it would, of course, make one less prisoner to guard and feed, and otherwise take care of on board ship. I am most inclined to believe Paul’s treatment was a consequence of his exemplary behavior up to this point as a prisoner—unjustly accused and sent as a “prisoner” to Rome. Paul’s conduct was always exemplary in the presence of political officials, the educated, or the poor people, or the contentious people. We could have only one other better example to follow than Paul—Jesus Christ!

Sailors on the Mediterranean called the days between September 14 and November 11 as the “Dangerous Season.” It was “sail at your great risk” during that period. And from November 11 until about March 10 all navigation on the Mediterranean ceased! “The Fast” (27:9) was another name for the Jewish “Day of Atonement” (i.e., Yom Kippur). It fell on October 5, in A.D. 59, this voyage took so long they were right in the middle of “the Dangerous Season.” Every day they had to wait made it more apparent to any seasoned seafarer (as Paul was) that they were not going to complete the voyage to Italy that season. Paul’s advice was they should remain at Fair Haven, “under the lee of Crete.” Since Paul was such a veteran traveler of the Mediterranean, the officers probably asked him what he thought. He told them! From his own judgment here—and from revelation from God also (27:22). “I perceive” represents the result of experience and observation, not revelation. And the words came very near being fulfilled to the letter! Gareth Reese observes, “As we study the last few chapters of Acts, we are left with the impression that God is turning the direction of Paul, more and more, over to Providence. In the earlier chapters, Paul was led directly by the Spirit, and by visions, often. Now, it seems that more and more Paul is left to exercise his own good judgment.” When the voyage was over, no lives were lost, but everything else Paul warned them about came true. He was a sharp judge of such things! Archaeological note: “four” ancient ship anchors of 1st century Roman “vintage” have been discovered at the

bottom of a “bay at Cauda” (25 mi. so. of Crete, now called “Gavdo”) about 20 fathoms deep—they could very well be those of the ship upon which Paul had sailed for Rome (see Acts 27:27-31)

God saves lives, but he almost always demands the cooperation of human beings in carrying out his Providential deliverance! It doesn't mean that God could not have saved the lives of all on board and all who abandoned ship, had God wanted to do so—even without the help of the sailors. But the messenger from God (the angel) told Paul, “Lo, God has granted you all those who sail with you...” Now, if the sailors abandoned ship and tried to escape in the tiny life-boats, they would have surely perished, because God's guarantee for rescue was for those “on board with Paul.” The lesson these heathen needed to learn was that Almighty God speaks to Paul, their prisoner! That could save their lives and souls! From then on, they listened to Paul! This is what the world of heathenism needs today—to listen to the apostles of Jesus Christ in their revealed word of God in the New Testament scriptures. The “Ship of Zion” (the church) is the only safe place in the storm we call life on earth. It is the apostles who know Who is in control of the “storm.” Christ's apostles have demonstrated their straight “pipeline” to the throne of the universe (which is revelation and inspiration). God has revealed his mind to them, and only to them (1 Jn. 4:1-6; 1 Cor. 2:1ff, etc.). Anyone who will not listen to the apostles in the NT cannot know God (except as he is revealed in nature) because God has chosen to be known for redemption and salvation in no other place than the New Testament scriptures!

Gareth Reese says: “The account of Paul's voyage to Rome is like no other story in all the Bible. In it the reader's attention is directed, not to spiritual truths and acts of devotion, but rather to such mundane things as ships and seas, and winds and waves, islands, towns, and harbors. Altogether Luke has given a description of first century ships and seamanship surpassing anything else in extant Greek and Roman literature. A fascinating story of adventure, it stands also as a descriptive masterpiece. Its nautical descriptions are authentic to the last detail.” Thus we have in this account of Paul's sea-voyage: (a) evidence of the highest caliber that the book of Acts is authentic history—its accuracy has been tested against secular history and archaeology on almost every page—and all the places, people, circumstances, things are accurate history, thus, so are the miracles, and recorded words and actions of the apostle Paul and his contemporaries; (b) the account of a man who began a voyage as a prisoner among other prisoners, but who gradually assumed a position of respect and even of command—Christians are not “sissies”—the apostle Paul wasn't—while otherwise bragging and swaggering seamen were trembling with fear and paralyzed against taking any action, the so-called “weakling” Christian (Paul) was calm, cool, and collected—when the “moment of truth” came, when death was staring everyone in the face, it was the Christian who was the hero; (c) the revelation is that if God wants a man at a certain place, that man will get there and no circumstance can thwart God's plans!

It was evident to the Maltese that Paul was a prisoner since he would be guarded constantly by a Roman soldier (even though his chains may have been removed earlier so he could swim). The “snake” that bit Paul was a viper (Greek, echidna, “poisonous viper”)

and the vipers of the Mediterranean area are among the deadliest known in the snake family. This viper did not just strike and withdraw, but fixed its poisonous fangs in Paul's hand and was hanging on! It was a common belief among the pagan people of that century that the mythological goddess, Justice, saw to it that criminals always got the proper "justice" that was coming to them. The fact that this poisonous viper had fastened on Paul and that he must inevitably and quickly die, inferred to their minds that he was guilty of a capital offense like murder. While their fundamental conclusion (which is actually "written" in the natural order of the universe, Rom. 1:18-32) that there is a God of wrath against wickedness and that the guilty will all inevitably be punished was half-correct—they reasoned incorrectly by supposing that every calamity is a judgment for some particular sin. The general proposition that all sin will be punished at some time is true, but we should not assume that every particular tragedy or suffering is always a direct judgment from God for sin against a person directly from God. It was clear, shortly, when Paul did not die, that something supernatural had occurred. The Maltese shifted their thinking to the other end of the pagan spectrum—Paul must be a "god."

There seems to have been two kinds of "healing" going on—(Greek, *hiaomai*, or "miraculous healing" and Greek, *therapeuo*, "medicinal curing"). Paul was doing the miraculous—Luke was doing the medicinal. Both Paul and Luke were being "honored" (Greek, *timais*) with many honors. But the interesting thing is that there is not the slightest indication that any of those "healed" or "cured" were believers at the time of their healing! There are many documented cases of miraculous healing in the NT where the recipient was not a believer at the time of healing. Christian faith was not always necessary for healing—lack of faith never kept God, Christ, or an apostle from performing a miracle if the Divine Will decided a miracle should take place!!! God's promise of atonement for sin through the death of Christ is not a guarantee of an accompanying promise of physical well-being throughout this life. Physical healing was performed in the OT before Christ's atoning death had in fact occurred or had even been understood! Physical healing occurred in both OT and NT on those who had not accepted Christ's atoning death, even after their healing (e.g., the ten lepers). Miraculous healing was to substantiate and validate the truth of the doctrine of the atoning-death and justifying-resurrection of Jesus Christ. Miracles were to prove the message of the Gospel true. When that had been established beyond any reasonable doubt there was no more need for miracles—and they ceased (1 Cor. 13:8-10).

Paul used the term, "The hope of Israel," twice before (Acts 23:6; 26:6-7). The "Hope of Israel" is the very message Paul preached. Israel's "hope" was the fulfillment of the law and the prophets! Israel hoped that God would bring to pass all the glorious promises made in his covenant with them. They looked for God's "Messiah" (God's "Anointed One") to come and carry through on all those promises. Israel dreamed about this—they prayed about it daily—they talked about it in their synagogues and in the temple! They symbolized it every single weekend in their homes on the Sabbath! Physical deliverance, redemption, renewal and restored sovereignty was what Israel hoped for, because they believed all that was promised in the law and the prophets. But the prophets and the law promised all that to be fulfilled in a spiritual reality, and not merely in a physical way! It would be done by a "Messiah" who was meek, lowly, humble, righteous, just, fair, loving, universal, and through

the rule of this “Messiah” over the minds, feelings, and actions of his subjects. It would be a kingdom of God! And this was what Paul was preaching! He would have these Jews in Rome know that he was not going around destroying Judaism—he was proclaiming its fulfillment! He preached that what God had promised to the Jews, God had brought to pass in Jesus Christ—and not for the Jews only, but for all the people in all the world! There is nothing left for God to give the Jews, or the world, as far as salvation is concerned! God is going to redeem the “whole creation” (Rom. 8:18-25) at Christ’s 2nd coming. When Christ comes the 2nd time God will create a “new heaven and earth” for “new creatures.”

Paul was trying to “convince” (Greek, *peitho*, “persuade so as to elicit obedience”) the Jews concerning the “kingdom of God.” He was trying to get these Jews to come into the kingdom of God by becoming Christians. Biblical Christianity is the kingdom of God! Judaism was not to last forever as the kingdom of God on earth! That is clearly taught in the OT prophets (Jer. 3:15-16; 31:31-34; Dan. 2:44; 9:24-27; 12:7, etc.). But the law and the prophets did teach that God would establish, on earth, a kingdom that would never perish. That kingdom would be eternal and never need to be altered, changed, or added to. Over that “new creation” God would reign in the person of his Anointed One, the “Messiah.” Paul then tried to convince these Jews that Jesus of Nazareth was that “Anointed One” (Messiah) of God and that they should obey him! There was already a Christian community (church) in the city of Rome. Paul’s letter to the Romans was written 3 years before his arrival there. How long the church existed in Rome before A.D. 57 we do not know—but it had been there long enough for the Jews to know about the Christian gospel! There were people from Rome who heard Peter’s sermon (Acts 2:8-11) and, perhaps, were baptized that day! At least these Jews were fair-minded enough that in spite of Christianity being “spoken against” (some of the pagan rumors about Christianity were atrocious and despicably false), they decided they would hear from its greatest advocate (Paul) personally as to what it was all about! So, Paul told them!!! And some were persuaded (obeyed)!

Paul quotes from Isaiah 6:9-10. Isaiah found this willful hardening of heart a characteristic in almost the whole Jewish people of his own day! It was a characteristic of the Jews long before Isaiah (in their “wilderness wanderings” with Moses, in the times of the Judges, in the times of the Davidic monarchy, in the times of Isaiah and the prophets just before the captivities, during the captivities, and after the captivities—clear down to the days of Malachi in 400 B.C.). Jesus quotes from Isaiah 6:9-10, in Matthew 13:14, when he was preaching his message of the kingdom of God and applied it to the Jews of his day! John, the Gospel writer, quotes the same passage (Jn. 12:40) as his evaluation (and that of the Holy Spirit of God) of the Jews contemporary with him (A.D. 95). Stephen, the first Christian martyr said the same thing in Acts 7. Paul was not being unfair! This was the history of the Jews (for the most part)! Of course, some Jews did accept Christ—but the majority rejected him! And that is what is so tragic and pathetic about the whole matter! Those whom God blessed so abundantly, prepared so thoroughly, and to whom God extended such great mercy and grace and privilege, could so utterly reject his Anointed Son! They were not just ignorant, or mistaken, or indifferent—they were militantly, arrogantly, maliciously opposed to Jesus as God’s Son (in spite of the evidence that he was) and took action to eradicate,

annihilate, obliterate, God's "Anointed" from the face of the earth (and all those who had accepted this "Anointed One"). No wonder Paul says in 1 Thess. 2:14-16 that God's wrath has come upon them completely! Jewish rejection of Jesus as the Christ is, today, just as pervasive and incorrigible as 2000 years ago.

It is nothing short of amazing what this man Paul accomplished even as a "prisoner" in Rome. Of course, as the text points out, "he lived there two whole years, in his own hired dwelling (not in a dungeon cell) and welcomed all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly and unhindered." Knowing Paul now, as we have been his companion through 30 years of his life in Luke's "Acts of the Apostles," we knew he was going to be proclaiming the gospel one way or another: (a) his trip to Rome covered about 1800 miles—all during that time he has been proclaiming the gospel; (b) he made contact with influential Jews, converts some, but made sure even those who rejected his message and him, knew where they stood with the Lord; (c) during his whole 30 year ministry he established churches all over the Roman Empire, healed factions within many of those churches by personal visits, wrote over half of the New Testament scriptures, supported himself by making tents; (d) during his Roman imprisonment he wrote at least six of his most profound writings (Ephesians, Philippians, Galatians, Colossians, Philemon and Hebrews); (e) in Philippians he could write that the gospel had been made known throughout the whole Praetorian guard (Phil. 1:13) and that even some of Caesar's own household had become Christians; (f) and in Colossians (1:23) he could write that the gospel had been "preached to every creature under heaven." PAUL WAS A BUSY MAN, EVEN CONFINED TO A HOUSE UNDER ROMAN MILITARY GUARD, AWAITING TRIAL! WE WOULD LOVE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT HIS LIFE AND ABOUT THE END OF HIS LIFE—WE SHALL, SOME DAY, AROUND THE THRONE OF GOD!

Introduction to Paul T. Butler Th.D

Paul was born in Springfield Missouri and graduated from Conway High School prior to enlistment in the US Navy. He began serious bible study with correspondence courses from San Jose Bible College. He later enrolled in Ozark Bible College and acquired his Bachelor of Theology degree June of 1961. He received a Master of Biblical Literature degree from Ozark in May of 1973. He received a Doctorate of Theology from The Theological University of America in October of 1990.

Paul taught at Ozark Christian College from 1960 to 1997. He also served many years as registrar for the college.

Introduction to the Sound Bible Study project.

The Sound Bible Study project is a cooperative effort of Christian educators and Jordan Media Enterprises LLC to provide the serious examination of the Scriptures for the conscientious student. All the teachers are experienced educators who have spent countless hours in the classroom on both sides of the lectern. The audio recordings and written notes are made available for those who wish to learn God's Word at a collegiate level but have been unable to matriculate. There is no intention to compete with the many faithful Bible schools, but rather to serve along side and strengthen both the student and the teacher for a stronger and more effective Kingdom of God that knows how to properly divide the Word of God.

