

The Acts of the Apostles



Introduction to the Acts of the Apostles

The Object.— The fifth book of the New Testament begins where the first four end. These have recorded the life, words and acts of our Savior from his birth to the Cross, the tomb, the resurrection, and the Great Commission. They leave the apostles and the nucleus of the apostolic church waiting in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father which they must receive in order to endue them with power from on high needed for the work of preaching the Gospel of the Risen Lord. The historian of Acts begins with the Ascension, then portrays to us the waiting and praying disciples, ready to begin the great work as soon as they shall receive the promised baptism of the Holy Spirit. Then when the signal was given that all things were ready by the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, he enters upon the record of how the apostles and apostolic men preached the gospel under the Savior's commission, how sinners were made saints, how the church was founded, and how it was built up, nurtured and trained by the apostles. Acts is the history of apostolic evangelization, the book of conversions, the first book of ecclesiastical history.

It has been forcibly stated by Dean Howson that Luke declares in his preface that he had in his former treatise (the Gospel) given account “of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day in which he was taken up,” while in Acts, he “reveals to the world what the same Jesus, having ascended into heaven, and being exalted to the right hand of God, *continues 'to do and to teach,'* not any longer within the narrow confines of Palestine, or during the few years of an earthly ministry, but from his royal throne in his imperial city, the heavenly Jerusalem; and what, there sitting in glory, he does and teaches, by the instrumentality of apostles, apostolic men, and apostolic churches, in all ages of the world; and what he will ever continue to do and to teach from heaven, by the power of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven after his ascension, even till he comes again in glory to judge both quick and dead.” This view of the purpose of Acts is not to exalted, as will be seen, when we bear in mind that the apostles were forbidden to begin their work until endowed by the Holy Spirit which was “shed forth” by the Lord from his throne on high, and then, “spake as the Spirit gave them utterance,” acting in all things under the immediate guidance of the Spirit. Thus, they became simply the agents of the Lord, led, directed, preaching and speaking as they were directed from on high. All that the Lord continued “to do and to teach” thus through them has been recorded as examples to his followers in all times, from which they cannot lightly depart without disloyalty to the King.

The Author.— The preface shows that it was written by the same author as the third Gospel, which has been ascribed by the church in all ages to Luke, and in the first canon of the New Testament Scriptures he is named as the author. Eusebius places it as Luke's among those books that were *never* disputed in the church, and it is quoted by the earliest Christian writers, such as Polycarp, who was a companion of the apostle John. It is also attributed to Luke by Irenæus in the

second century, a hearer of Polycarp, who was a hearer of John. We learn from Acts itself that it was written by a companion of Paul, and one who attended him to Rome. His Epistles inform us that Luke was an attendant upon his imprisonment in that city.



Time and Place of Writing.— Acts could not have been completed before the year a.d. 63, as it is continued at the time at which Paul had closed his second year of imprisonment at Rome, which is placed in that year, and it must have been completed before the year 68, as it makes no mention of his death, which did not occur later than that year. The closing chapters were no doubt written in Rome, as Luke was there in attendance upon Paul (Col. 4:14) but it is probable that the greater portion might have been written during the two years' imprisonment of Paul in Cæsarea under the immediate direction of the great apostle. While the two years of Paul at Rome were busied with epistles to the churches, and preaching the gospel in Rome, the records are silent how his time was occupied while confined at Cæsarea. It would be impossible for such a man as Paul to be idle, and as his friend had full access to him, there is strong reason to believe that at this period Luke, his constant companion, under his direction, not only prepared his Gospel, but by the aid of such men as Philip the Evangelist, who had his home in Cæsarea, and Cornelius, the first Gentile convert, aided by the records preserved in the church at Jerusalem, prepared the history of Acts to the period of the departure to Rome. From the apostles themselves, no doubt, were obtained the accounts of the ascension, the preaching and founding of the church on the day of Pentecost, the acts of Peter, the dispute between the Hellenists and the Hebrews, the martyrdom of Stephen and of the Apostle James. And there was also the information which he could obtain from the Church of Cæsarea; in that city he met with Philip the Evangelist, (Acts 21:8,) and perhaps also with Cornelius, the devout centurion. From this source he would derive his information concerning the evangelistic labors in Samaria, the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, the visions made to Peter and Cornelius, and the particulars connected with the death of Herod Agrippa. That portion of the history in which Paul is the principal figure would require no other source of information than the great apostle could furnish himself.

The Outline.— I. *Preaching the Gospel "in Jerusalem" and Judea.* (1) Preparation for the work (1:1–26). (2) Events of Pentecost (2:1–47). (3) The Church unfolding in miracle and endurance of persecution (3:1–4:37). (4) The Church unfolding in penal power (5:1–16). (5) The Church in the second persecution (5:17–42.) (6) The Church forming its economy (6:1–8). (7) The Church in last struggle and dispersion (6:8–8:4). II. *Preaching the Gospel "in Samaria" and about Palestine.* (1) The deacon Philip evangelizes Samaria (8:5–25). (2) The new Apostle of the Gentiles called (9:1–30). (3) Gentile induction; new Christian center, Gentile Antioch (10:1–11:30). (4) Desolation of Jerusalem Church by Herod; its avenging (12:1–25). III. *Preaching the Gospel "in the Uttermost Parts of the Earth".* (1) Paul's first mission from Antioch (13:1–14:28). (2) Jerusalem Council on Circumcision (15:1–34). (3) Paul's second mission from Antioch (15:35–18:23). (4) Paul's third mission from Antioch (18:23–21:17). (5) Paul in council with James—Arrest—Sent to Cæsarea (21:18–23:35). (6) Paul's two years at Cæsarea (24:1–26:32). (7) Paul *en route* for Rome; at Rome (27:1–28:31).



Chapter I

Summary —*The Preface. The Promise of the Father. The Command to Witness in Jerusalem, and in All Judea, and Unto the Uttermost Parts of the Earth. The Ascension. The Charge of the Angels. The Week of Prayer. The Fate of Judas. The Choice of an Apostle.*

1. The former treatise. Luke's Gospel. **Theophilus.** See note on Luke 1:3. Luke, whose history of *Acts* is really a continuation of the history of his *Gospel*, very naturally refers to the former.

2. Through the Holy Ghost. Jesus received the Spirit without measure, and all he did was in the Spirit. He also imparted a measure of the Spirit, before he ascended, to the apostles to help them in their work (John 20:22). **Commandments.** The Great Commission. (Matt. 28:18–20; Mark 16:15, 16; Luke 24:49).

3. To whom he shewed himself alive. He is a living Savior. Otherwise he could no more be a Savior than Socrates, Buddha, or any other sage. **After his passion.** Suffering on the cross. **Seen of them forty days.** At various times during forty days. Eleven appearances are recorded. There were probably others. **Pertaining to the kingdom of God.** His church, about to be established on the earth.

4. Commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem. Because, right in the citadel of his enemies, where he had been slain, the Risen Lord was to be first proclaimed, his Gospel preached, the Holy Spirit shed forth, and his kingdom established. Because, too, the prophet (Isa. 2:3, 5) had declared that Jerusalem should be the place where the Gospel should be first preached. **But wait for the promise of the Father.** Joel 2:28; Zech. 2:10; John 14:16; 15:26; Matt. 3:11. They must wait for the Spirit, that they might speak, on the great day of the inauguration of the kingdom, as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:4). The conditions of citizenship in the kingdom must be spoken by the Spirit.

5. John truly baptized with water. They had received John's baptism; they were now to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. **Not many days.** Only ten days after these words were spoken.

6. Wilt thou at this time, etc.? They still held to their old ideas of a worldly restoration of the kingdom of Israel. Their only question was, "Wilt thou restore it *now*?" After the Holy Spirit was given, this delusion was dismissed, and they understood that Christ's kingdom is not of this world.

7. It is not for you to know. This was a reproof, not only to them, but to those in all ages who seek to know "the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power."

8. Ye shall receive power. Not temporal power, such as they dreamed of, but spiritual and moral power. **Shall be witnesses unto me.** Testify of him of their personal knowledge. They all *knew* personally of his life, his miracles, his death, his resurrection, and the Great Commission. There could be no mistake. Their witness is true, unless they were deceivers. **In Jerusalem.** First, in the headquarters of Judaism, the capital of their own country, the place where the Lord was crucified; then in an ever-widening circle from that center; in Judea, then in Samaria, then to the uttermost parts of the earth. This order was followed exactly. It should always be followed in our efforts to evangelize the world.

9. He was taken up. See Luke 24:51, and the notes there.

11. Ye men of Galilee. The apostles were mostly, if not all, Galileans. **This same Jesus ... shall so come.** The cloud received him from their sight. He shall come in the clouds of heaven (Dan. 7:13; Matt. 24:30; 26:24).

12. Then returned they ... from the mount called Olivet. See Luke 24:50. The place of ascent was near Bethany. A church now stands on the supposed place. **A sabbath day's journey.** "The traditions of the elders" defined the distance that might be traveled on the Sabbath. It was a little less than a mile. Bethany is nearly two miles, but Luke here is stating the distance of the Mount of Olives from the city.

13. Went into an upper room. A guest chamber on the second floor. **Where abode.** All the apostles are named except Judas Iscariot, who had fallen away and was now dead.

14. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication. The latter clause is omitted in the Revision. They were waiting for the "promise of the Father," and the time was spent in worship. There were ten days of prayer, the best preparation for the Pentecostal blessing; an example to all churches which seek an ingathering of souls. **With the women.** Especially those women who had followed and ministered to the Lord, lingered at his cross, and at his tomb. **Mary.** This is the last time she is named in the sacred history. Tradition reports that she lived until the near the time of the overthrow of Jerusalem. **His brethren.** The sons of Joseph and Mary. One of them, James, was afterwards the James of Jerusalem and the author of the Epistle of James. See Acts 15; also Matt. 13:55. They were unbelievers six months before (John 7:5), but now believed. James had seen the risen Lord (1 Cor. 15:7).

15. And in those days. The interval of ten days. **Were about a hundred and twenty.** This was the number of disciples at Jerusalem, but not all who were then disciples. See 1 Cor. 15:6.

16. This scripture must needs have been fulfilled. Psal. 69:26.

18. This man purchased a field. He returned the bribe money to the priests, who used it to purchase the potter's field. Peter here intends to say that his money bought the field. The Greek verb rendered "purchased," has the form that means "caused to be purchased." **Falling headlong.** Matt. 27:5 says he hanged himself. Peter tells some additional particulars, which Matthew omitted. He probably hanged himself on a tree projecting over the precipices of the Valley of Hinnom, and afterwards, on account of the rope or limb breaking, fell headlong with such force as to burst his body open on the jagged rocks. This is the traditional account of his death.

19. That field is called. The field bought with the bribe money of Judas. He came to such a bloody end that this, and the origin of the purchase money, gave the field its name.

20. His bishoprick let another take. Psal. 109:8. His office. This is, rather, an application of the spirit of the Psalm, than its exact words. It sets forth the desert of persecutors.

21, 22. Must one be ordained to be a witness with us. These verses set forth the necessary qualifications of an apostle. In order to be a *witness*, he must have been a disciple of John, left him in order to follow Jesus, attended his ministry, and seen him after his resurrection. He must be able to testify of all these as an eye witness.

23. They appointed two. Not the apostles, but the brethren, men who met these conditions, then cast lots between them in order that the Lord might make the choice. The two men named are not mentioned elsewhere.

24. They prayed. That the Lord might choose between them. A choice of men for any responsible church work ought to be made with earnest prayer. It is likely that one of the apostles offered the prayer, all joining in the petition.

26. The lot fell on Matthias. Some have held that the choice of Matthias was unauthorized and that he was never accepted as an apostle. The reasons for this view are that he is not named again, and Paul was finally chosen as an apostle. To this it may be replied: (1) Neither are more

than half the other names in the apostolic band again mentioned, Thomas, Thaddeus and Bartholomew, for example. (2) Paul was not an apostle to the Jews, but to the Gentiles, and hence, not one of the Twelve. (3) There is no hint anywhere in Acts, or elsewhere, that the selection of Matthias was not recognized. (4) In Acts 6:2, “the twelve” are spoken of, and he must have been one of “the twelve,” for Paul was not yet converted. These facts show that such speculations as those referred to above are without foundation.



Chapter II

The Day of Pentecost

Summary —*The Disciples Gathered Together. The Baptism of the Spirit. The Apostles Speak as the Spirit Gives Utterance. The Gospel Heard in Many Tongues. The Theory of the Scoffers. Peter's Sermon. The Prophecy of Joel Fulfilled. Christ and the Resurrection Preached. The Jews Convicted of Crucifying the Lord. The Inquiry of Convicted Sinners. Peter's Reply. Three Thousand Baptized. Continuing in the Apostles' Doctrine. The Progress of the Church.*

1. When the day of Pentecost was fully come. The entire period between it and the passover, the waiting period of the disciples, was filled full. Pentecost, one of the three great annual festivals of the Jews, lasted only one day, was on the fiftieth day from the morrow after the passover Sabbath (Lev. 23:15–22). The Savior, crucified on Friday, was in the tomb on the passover Sabbath, and rose on Sunday, the day from whence the count began. The Sunday following would be the eighth day, and the fiftieth day would fall on Sunday, the first day of the eighth week. Hence, the ancient church observed Pentecost on the first day of the week. For fuller discussion, see Meyer, Howson and Milligan on this passage. All agree that Pentecost came on Sunday. Pentecost was the feast of the grain harvest (Exod. 23:16; 34:22, 23), and was also held by the Jews to be the anniversary of the giving of the law. **They were all ... in one place.** Not only the apostles, but the hundred and twenty disciples. They probably had an intimation that the promised day had come.



2. There came a sound. As this day, the day of the founding of the church, was to be a day of signs and wonders, the shedding forth of the Spirit was made perceptible to all. The sound was heard, the tongues of fire were seen, the word was spoken in many languages. **It filled the house.** The mighty sound. At the same time the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, their spirits baptized in the Spirit.

3. There appeared unto them cloven tongues. Luminous tongues sat on each of them, “parting asunder” (Revision), or “distributing themselves” (margin). Meyer says that the idea is that they parted and distributed themselves on those present. These tongues symbolized the fact that the kingdom now inaugurated was to conquer by the spoken word, by the sword of the Spirit.

4. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit. All the disciples present. To be *filled* implies that the human spirit within was overwhelmed by, or immersed in, the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Spirit was not a sprinkling, but an outpouring that overwhelmed the human spirit. **Began to speak.** This was the “Beginning.” See Luke 24:47 and Acts 11:15. **With other tongues.** In the languages of all the different countries from which Jews had come up to Pentecost. Many would be unable

to understand the Hebrew dialect of Judea in that period, and hence, they must be preached to in the tongue of their own country if they understood. That the gospel on this, the first day the Great Commission was ever preached, was preached in all tongues, symbolized the fact that it is for all nations. **As the Spirit gave them utterance.** They were not allowed to preach the Great Commission until now, in order that every word uttered on this day might be the word of the Spirit, not of man. The words were to be spoken to an audience, not of those in Jerusalem only, but to our whole race in all time, in order to show how sinners are to be saved under the gospel.

5. There were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men. Devout Jews who had come up to the great feast of Pentecost. The Jews were already scattered in many nations, but foreign Jews were wont to flock to the great national feasts. Some, too, had come to end their days at Jerusalem. **Under heaven.** From all quarters of the world. Jews, in foreign lands, attended Pentecost in larger numbers than the other feasts, because the time of year favored travel.

6. The multitude came together. Led by the sound (Revised Version) and the marvellous events. **Speak in his own language.** Of the foreign country in which he had been reared.

7, 8. Are not all these who speak Galileans? Most of the disciples to this time were. The Galileans were not generally learned men, yet now all hear, every man his own tongue.

9. Parthians. The long list of nations embraces the various races embraced in the *we* of verse 8. Parthia was east of the Tigris. **Elam** was an ancient name of Persia. **Media**, another part of the Medo-Persian empire, east of the Tigris. **Mesopotamia** was the seat of Babylon. These four countries just named were thickly populated with Jews descended from those carried into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar. **Cappadocia.** A Roman province not far from the Black Sea. **Pontus.** A province south and east of the Black Sea. **Asia.** The Roman province of which Ephesus was the capital. All the “seven churches” were in the province called “Asia.”

10. Phrygia and Pamphylia. Parts of what is called Asia Minor. **Egypt.** The great African province where many ten thousands of Jews had their home. **Parts of Libya.** Of Africa. **About Cyrene.** A great Grecian city on the coast west of Egypt. It is said that one-fourth of the population of Cyrene was Jewish. **Strangers of Rome.** Roman Jews sojourning at Jerusalem. **Proselytes.** Gentiles who had been converted to Judaism.

11. Cretes. From the island of Crete. **Arabians.** Many Jews dwelt in the desert lands south and east of Palestine, all called generally Arabia.

13. Others mocking. Some were amazed and bewildered; others, stubbornly skeptical, scoffed and suggested that the speakers were drunk. **New wine.** More exactly, sweet wine, a wine made by soaking raisins, pressing out and fermenting the juice, which was very intoxicating. Most wines of Palestine had very slight intoxicating qualities.

14. Peter, standing up. In the name of all the apostles. Jesus had said (Matt. 16:19) that Peter should receive the keys of the kingdom, and they are now to be used to open its doors. **With the eleven.** Eleven other apostles besides himself. He now begins the first gospel sermon. He and the apostles now begin their witness to Christ.

15. These are not drunken. It was only the third hour, nine o'clock. The Jews at their festivals seldom ate before this hour, and as their drink was taken at a meal, could not be drunken.

16. This is that which was spoken. He turns to their prophets for an explanation. **By the prophet Joel.** Who lived about 800 b.c. See Joel 3:1–5.

17. It shall come to pass in the last days. The phrase “Last days” was used by the Jews to denote the last dispensation, that of Christ. See Isa. 2:2. **I will pour out of my Spirit.** A figurative

expression to indicate abundant gifts of the Spirit. **On all flesh.** On all races, not on the Jews alone. **Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.** “To prophesy” in the New Testament means to communicate religious truth by divine authority, as well as to foretell the future. The prophecy was fulfilled in the inspired speaking on Pentecost and afterwards, as well as by the daughters of Philip (Acts 21:9). It will be seen that both sexes are included. **See visions ... dream dreams.** Such visions as that of Peter at Joppa. Such dreams as that of Paul at Troas, where he saw the Macedonian asking him to “Come and help us.”

19. I will shew wonders in heaven. Peter not only quotes that part of the prophecy of Joel which was applicable to the events now transpiring, but he quotes that part also which pertains to the calamities coming on the Jewish nation, and to the final judgment. I understand verse 19 to apply directly to the overthrow of Judea and Jerusalem.

20. The sun shall be turned into darkness. See notes on Matt. 24:29.

21. Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, etc. To turn to the Lord for salvation in his appointed way. It means far more than simply prayer. He who would call on the name of the Lord for salvation must do more than say, “Lord, Lord, open unto us.” He must hear and obey (Matt. 7:21).

22. Hear these words. Peter now begins to preach Christ directly to them. He boldly declares that they knew of his miracles, and wonders and signs. He demonstrates the Messiahship in verses 22–36: 1. By the miracles of which they were witnesses. 2. By his Resurrection, proved (1) by the prophecy of David; (2) by the testimony of all the apostles present who were witnesses; (3) by the phenomena then witnessed, which could be only due to his exaltation to the right hand of God.

23. Being delivered by the determinate counsel. It was the will of the Father that he should die, and was known to the Father before his coming. See Isaiah, chapter 53. **By wicked hands have crucified.** By the hands of wicked Romans, whom they caused to crucify the Lord.

24. Because it was not possible that he should be holden. It was not possible that Jesus be held by death, because he had life in himself, and, besides, it was the Father's will that he should arise. This verse epitomizes the four Gospels.

25–28. David speaketh. Psa. 16:8–11. **27. Not leave my soul in hell.** In *hades*, the unseen abode of the dead. The meaning is that he would not remain under the power of death. David did not speak this of himself, but of the Son of David. See verse 29. **Thy Holy One.** The Lord Jesus. The promised Messiah.

29. He is both dead and buried. David. His sepulchre was in their midst, within the walls of the city. All his hearers had seen it.

30. Knowing that God had sworn. God had promised to David that Christ should sit on his throne. See 2 Sam. 7:11–16; Psa. 89:3, 4, 35, 37; 132:11.

32. This Jesus hath God raised up. David foretold it; we are all witnesses of it. There were, including himself, at least twelve witnesses there who had seen the risen Lord again and again. The next point is the exaltation of Christ to a heavenly throne.

33. He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. The supernatural marvels of this wonderful day were the proof of Christ's exaltation. He had *shed* them forth.

34. For. Peter now shows that David had foretold the exaltation of Christ. **David ... saith.** Psa. 110:1. Jesus (Matt. 22:43, 44) quotes the same passage and applies it to himself. **The Lord.** God, the Father. **My Lord.** Christ. **Sit thou on my right hand.** See verse 33. “To sit at the right hand” implies participation in the Supreme Government.

35. Until I make, etc. When the work of the Mediator is ended and all conquered to Christ, then all power is given up to the Father. See 1 Cor. 15:23–28.

36. Therefore let all the house of Israel know, etc. This is the grand climax, the conclusion to which the whole discourse had been directed.

37. When they heard this. The conclusion, supported by such convincing demonstration. Before Peter began to speak they did not understand the signs; but now it was clear to them that they had rejected and crucified the Lord. **Pricked in their heart.** Convicted of their sins, and pierced with sorrow. They believed Peter's affirmation; their faith revealed their sin in rejecting Christ. Overwhelmed with sorrow, they ask, **What shall we do?** Is there any way that such sinners can be pardoned?

38. Repent, and be baptized. For the first time the terms of pardon under the New Covenant and the Great Commission are given; given once for all time, and always the same. The convicted, broken-hearted, sorrowing sinner, believing that Jesus is the Christ, is to repent and be baptized. **Repent.** Not sorrow. They already sorrowed; but a change of purpose; the internal change which resolves to serve the Lord. The Greek term rendered repent, means a change of mind. The act of obedience in baptism is an outward expression of both faith and repentance. **In the name of Jesus Christ.** “Upon the name” (Revised Version). Upon the ground of the name. In submission to the authority of Jesus Christ. **For the remission of sins.** Thus, by complying with the conditions just named, they shall receive remission of sins. No man can receive pardon without faith and repentance, nor can he without submission to the will of Christ. “*Eis* (for) denotes the *object* of baptism, which is the remission of the guilt contracted in the state before *metanoia* (repentance).”—*Meyer*. “*In order to the forgiveness of sins* we connect naturally with both the preceding verbs. This clause states the motive or object which should induce them to repent and be baptized.”—*Prof. Hackett*. **The gift of the Holy Spirit.** Promised as a comforter to all who obey Christ, but whom “the world cannot receive.”

39. For the promise. Of pardon, and the gift of the Spirit. **Unto you.** Even unto those who rejected the Lord. **To your children.** Your children after you. **To all that are afar off.** To the Gentiles. That he refers to the Gentiles is shown in the next clause, **even as many as the Lord our God shall call.** Peter spake as the Spirit gave him utterance, and perhaps did not fully comprehend his own words.

40. Save yourselves. This was the object of the “many other words.” They could “save themselves” by complying with the conditions named in verse 38, and thus accepting Christ as their Savior. **From this untoward generation.** The wicked Jewish race.

41. They that gladly received his word. Every believing penitent would gladly receive it. **Were baptized.** Not indefinitely in the future, but that day. **The same day there were added about three thousand souls.** “It is proper to add that pools numerous and large which encircled Jerusalem, as both those still in use, and as the remains of others testify of at the present day, afforded ample means for the celebration of the rite of baptism. The habits of the East, as every traveler knows, would present no obstacle to such a use of the public reservoirs.”—*Hackett, Commentary on Acts*. It has been objected to the immersion of the three thousand that the apostles could not have done it in one day. We are not told that the apostles only were the baptists, or even baptized at all. There

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were at least 120 disciples there; perhaps even more on this great day. Perhaps the Seventy were all there. But the apostles alone could have discharged the office. There would be 250 to each one. Sixty persons have been immersed easily in an hour by one person. At this rate the whole work could have been accomplished by twelve men in about four hours. The celebrated Chrysostom, aided by his elders, baptized (immersed) 3,000 in a day in a.d. 404.

42. They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine. In the things taught by the apostles. **And fellowship.** Contribution to the common fund and its distribution. **The breaking of bread.** The Lord's supper. From this time it is observed as an ordinance of the church. **In prayers.** I think the prayers of the regular worship are meant. These four items are all features of the public church life.

43. Fear came upon every soul. Of the unbelievers.

44. Had all things common. Many, perhaps most, were sojourners at, not citizens of, Jerusalem. It was needful that they remain together for the time, and while sojourning here, they threw their common funds together. Alford says: "In order, however, rightly to understand this *community*, we may remark, *It is only found in the Church at Jerusalem*. No trace of its existence is discoverable anywhere else; on the contrary, St. Paul speaks constantly of the rich and poor. See 1 Tim. 6:17; Gal. 2:10; 2 Cor. 8:13, 15; 9:6,7; 1 Cor. 16:2; also James 2:1-5; 4:13."

45. Sold their possessions. Real estate. **Goods.** Personal property. **Parted them to all men.** On this special liberality we may note, (1) It partly arose from the non-resident or pilgrim character of a large part of the converts. (2) It was not an obligatory rule; the laws of ownership or property were not disturbed or questioned. Even Ananias might have kept all his land unblamed,

46. Continuing daily ... in the temple. They gathered there for the purpose of teaching the multitudes. **Breaking bread from house to house.** Eating their food from house to house. It may refer to observing the Lord's Supper in private residences.

47. The Lord added to the church. This is the first time the church is named as existing. It had been founded on Pentecost. **Such as should be saved.** "Those being saved" (Revised Version). Those being saved on the conditions that the Gospel imposes the Lord added to his church.

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Chapter III

The First Persecution

Summary —*Peter and John at the Temple. The Lame Man Healed. The Wonder of the Multitude. Peter Preaches Christ to Them. The Prophet Like Unto Moses.*

1. Peter and John. These two apostles were very closely associated in the early work of the church. They are often named together. **Into the temple.** The Jewish Christians still continued to observe many of the rites of Jewish worship, and, in addition, they preached Christ to the multitudes in the temple courts. It was years before they were fully emancipated from Judaism. **At the hour of prayer.** The ninth hour, three o'clock P.M., the hour of the evening sacrifice, when devout Jews were accustomed to gather at the temple to pray. The miracle that follows is one of many (see 2:43), but is recorded because it led to the first persecution.

2. Laid daily at the gate ... called Beautiful. Generally thought to be the gate opening towards the Mount of Olives. Josephus, who calls it the gate of Nicanor, describes it as wonderfully rich and beautiful (Jos. Ant. 15:11). It was common for the unfortunate to be placed at gates where their condition would appeal to the multitudes entering for worship. Then, public charities were almost unknown, and the helpless were compelled to beg.

6. Silver and gold have I none. Though the early church had poured out its gifts abundantly (2:45), Peter had not enriched himself, and was a poor man, presenting a great contrast to the popes who claim to be his successors. It is related that Thomas Aquinas came to Rome and visited Innocent IV. He looked somewhat amazedly upon the mass of plate and treasure which he saw there. "So," said the pope, "you see, Thomas, we cannot say as did St. Peter of old, 'Silver and gold have I none.'" "No," said Aquinas, "neither can you command, as did he, the lame man to arise and walk." Peter had that which the popes have not. **In the name of Jesus Christ.** Christ worked his miracles in no one's name. The power was his own, but with the apostles all things were done in Christ's name, and the power ascribed to him.

7. He took him by the right hand. To encourage and strengthen his faith. He was bidden to "arise and walk in the name of Jesus Christ," and thus to show his faith in act. He did, and was healed in doing so.

8. Leaping up, stood. His alacrity and eagerness are shown in the language used.

9, 10. The people ... were filled with wonder. They had often seen the lame beggar, but now saw him "walking, and leaping and praising God," and did not know how he had been healed.

11. Ran together ... in the porch that is called Solomon's. The marvel assembled a concourse who gathered in Solomon's porch, a great covered portico of the temple, built on foundations that had been reared by Solomon, and hence called by his name.

12. Ye men of Israel. Peter seized the opportunity to preach Christ.

13. The God of Abraham. The God of the patriarchs whom they all worshiped **hath glorified his Son Jesus.** They delivered him to Pilate, and denied him when Pilate would release him, but demanded a murderer, instead of the Holy One, and slew him. This One God had raised and glorified. A wonderful contrast; a terrible arraignment.

15. We are witnesses. The Twelve, all of whom had seen the risen Lord. Observe how prominent in the early preaching is the resurrection and the apostolic witness to it.

16. His name. Not Peter's power, but Christ's name, had done all. **Through faith in his name.** Not only the faith of Peter and John, but the faith created in the lame man. In an act of faith he was made strong. "The faith alike is in the healer and the healed."—*Plumptree*.

17. I wot. I know. It was in ignorance of the majestic personality of Jesus that they slew him. Their rulers, ignorant also, might have known better had they not blinded themselves by prejudice. God "had foreshown all these things by the prophets," even that Christ should suffer. See Isaiah, chapter 53; Dan. 9:26.

19. Repent ye therefore. The same command given on the great occasion of Pentecost (2:38). Repentance is not sorrow, but the fruit of sorrow (2 Cor. 7:10). Those, on Pentecost, *pierced to the heart* were told to *repent*. Judas sorrowed unto death, but did not come to repentance. Repentance is an internal change resulting, not from remorse, but from conviction of sin and godly sorrow for it. The Greek term means a change of mind. It is the change of determination or will, the resolve to turn from sin to God, what, in religious language, is often styled "a change of heart." **And be converted.** In the Revision, *Turn again*. The Greek term is not passive, but active. The command

is to do some act, not to have something done to us. The Greek term (*Epistrepho*) occurs thirty-nine times in the New Testament and is uniformly in the active voice. A false idea is given in the Common Version by making it passive. To *repent*, or change the heart, is the internal change wrought by faith, and this is to be followed by a definite act, *to turn*. If one is on the wrong road, is convicted of this, repents of it, the result is an *act*, to “turn,” and then to go the right way. This figure applies to the sinner. Convicted of sin, repentant, there must be some outward act of turning. That act, following repentance, is given in Acts 2:38. The penitent is required to be baptized, and then to go on in the new way following Jesus. “Baptism is not here expressly named, as in 2:38, but was now understood of itself, seeing that thousands had been baptized, and the thought is suggested in the figurative expression *in order* that your sins may be blotted out, namely, by the water of baptism.”—*Meyer*. “In a similar exhortation (2:38) Peter adds, 'Be baptized,' but this would now be understood.”—*Dean Howson*. See 22:16. **When the times of refreshing shall come.** The Revision is correct, “That so there may come,” etc. In 2:38 the steps are, (1) Repentance, (2) baptism, (3) remission of sins, (4) the gift of the Holy Spirit. Here, the order is (1) Repentance, (2) to turn, (3) the blotting out of sins, (4) the seasons of refreshing. One passage aids in interpreting the other.

20. And he shall send Jesus Christ. Again we have to turn to the Revision for the meaning. The great hope of the Jews was the Messiah. He had come, been rejected, and had returned to heaven. His return will be prepared for by repentance, and turning to the Lord. The blotting out of sins, the seasons of refreshing, and the return of Christ are all, in some measure, dependent on their repentance and turning. *The Christ* appointed is *even Jesus*, the crucified One.

21. Whom the heaven must receive. Until all the work predicted by the prophets had been accomplished. **The times of restitution.** The restoration (Revision). The moral restoration of the world. Christ will come in person, not before, but after the millennium is ushered in (Rev. 20:11–15).

22. A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up. See Deut. 18:15–19. **Like me.** In that he is the Mediator of the New Covenant as Moses was of the Old.

23. Shall be destroyed. The Jews could be saved only by hearing Christ. Nor can we be saved otherwise.

24. And all the prophets also from Samuel. “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” Samuel is named because he was the founder of the schools of the prophets.

25. Ye are the children of the prophets. The natural heirs of their promised blessings. **And of the covenant.** The covenant of Christ made with Abraham, in which the Savior was promised (Gen. 12:3). This covenant was older than that of Sinai.

26. Unto you first. To Israel first in order, before the Gentiles, but Peter here recognizes the fact that the Gospel is also for other races. **Sent him to bless you.** Not in person, but by the preaching of Christ as the Savior from sin. The best of all blessings is “the turning of them from iniquity,” as that brings all others.

Chapter IV

Peter and John Before the Sanhedrim

Summary —*The Arrest. The Trial Before the Sanhedrim. Peter's Reply. The Counsel of the Sanhedrists. Their Charge to Peter and John. The Appeal of Peter and John to the Higher Law. The Meeting of the Church for Prayer. The Divine Blessing.*

1. As they spake. Peter and John were both speaking, to separate groups probably. **The priests.** Those of the course then on duty in the temple. See notes on Luke 1:5. **The captain of the temple.** The head of the temple police, who were composed of Levites, and whose duty it was to guard the sacred precincts. See Luke 22:4. **And the Sadducees.** See notes on Matt. 3:7 and Matt. 22:23. They were rationalists, and denied the resurrection of the dead. Annas and Caiaphas, the ex-high priest and the acting high priest, were of the sect, and hence, though the sect was not numerous, it was now very powerful.

2. Being grieved. There were three classes of assailants: *priests*, military, and Sadducees. They had three grounds for action: that Peter and John taught the *people*, that they taught *in the name of Christ*, and that they bore witness of the *resurrection*. The last doctrine, of the resurrection, uprooted the creed of the Sadducees. While Jesus lived, his assailants were chiefly Pharisees; when his apostles began to preach his resurrection the Sadducees came to the front as his chief opposers. This will be noted throughout Acts.

3. Put them in hold. In prison until the next day, for it was now late in the evening.

4. Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed. Became converts. This (believed) is a usual scriptural expression for the whole change wrought by belief. "Faith comes by hearing ... the word of God" (Rom. 10:17), and faith leads to obedience. **The number of the men was about five thousand.** It is probable that the meaning is that the number of men was now increased to five thousand. The term in the Greek (*andres*) does not properly include women, so that this is the number of male believers. It is probable that most of the converts of Pentecost and of this occasion were men. Oriental women were not likely to attend in large numbers on such public occasions.

5. Their rulers, and elders, and scribes. A meeting of the Sanhedrim, the great council of seventy, is meant. These classes, with the priests named in the next verse, constituted it. The members of the Sanhedrim were usually called *rulers*; the *elders* were old men, selected for the place on account of wisdom; the *scribes* were the lawyers, or theologians.

6. Annas the high priest. Still so called, though deposed ten years before by the Romans. The Jews held him still as high priest by right. **Caiaphas.** Son-in-law of Annas, and the high priest now in office by Roman appointment. **John and Alexander.** No doubt great men at the time, but we know nothing of them. **Kindred of the high priest.** Of the family of Annas, all of priestly rank, and many of them holding high offices. The Sanhedrim usually met in a hall of the temple.

7. Set them in the midst. The high priest acted as president, and the members were arranged in a semi-circle around him, with the prisoners in front. **By what power?** They could not deny the miracle, but they thought that it had been done by some incantation. They ask an explanation.

8. Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit. They had been promised the Divine help when put on trial (Matt. 10:19, 20). It was now given. Here was an opportunity to preach Christ to the very body that had sent him to death.

9. If we this day be examined of the good deed. Observe Peter's point, that they are prisoners on trial for a *good* deed.

10. By the name of Jesus Christ. It was the power of that one whom that very court had condemned which had wrought the miracle. **Whom ye crucified.** Peter becomes the accuser. They,

his accusers, have been guilty of crucifying the Messiah. They crucified him, but God raised him from the dead.

11. This is the stone which was set at nought. Quoted from Psa. 118. A figure drawn from a building where a rejected, despised stone is the most important and indispensable stone of the structure. Christ quoted the same passage, applied to himself (Matt. 21:42).

12. Salvation in none other. No other Savior but Jesus; no salvation if his is rejected; no other name or power to save from destruction, unless he is accepted. Why, then, should men invoke the Virgin, or the saints?

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13, 14. Perceived that they were unlearned. Not educated in the schools of the rabbins. They had, however, a better learning. **They had been with Jesus.** In them the crucified Jesus stands before them, fearless as their Master. **Beholding the man.** He was the unimpeachable proof of the miracle.

15. When they had commanded them to go aside. They sent them from their presence in order that they might confer freely together. The substance of their deliberations is condensed and reported. The conclusion they arrived at was, not to punish them for a miracle that all the people knew had taken place, but to stop their preaching by threats.

19. Whether it be right in the sight of God. They appeal to the higher law. Their earthly government commanded them not to do what God had directed them to do. In a conflict of this kind there is only one course, that is, to obey God.

20. We cannot but speak. Are under a moral and spiritual obligation to speak. They had a Divine message, and must tell it.

21, 22. Let them go. With threats, afraid to punish them lest they should exasperate the people. **Above forty years old.** Therefore known to everybody as a life-long cripple.

23. Came to their own company. To the body of Christians assembled together, and there reported what had taken place.

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24. Lifted up their voice to God with one accord. All engaged in prayer. It was a time of trial. They were forbidden, under awful threats, to preach Christ. Hence they go to God.

25. Why did the heathen rage? Quoted from the second psalm. The predicted facts were all fulfilled in the trial and death of Christ. Verse 27 shows how they were fulfilled.

28. To do whatsoever ... thy counsel determined before to be done. It is not said that God decreed that Pilate, Herod and the rulers should do what they did, but that they did what God had decreed should be done. It was God's will that Christ should die, but they chose, of their own malignity, to slay him. Their will was free.

29, 30. And now, Lord, ... grant. Note their petition. They do not ask to be saved from pain, persecution, or death. There is nothing asked for themselves personally, but they ask (1) that they may have boldness, in the face of threats, to speak the word, and (2) that God would bear them witness by gifts of miraculous power. Their prayer is all for the work's sake.

31. The place was shaken. As a sensible evidence that their prayer was granted, and then **they were filled with the Holy Spirit**, as on Pentecost, so inspired that all fear was shaken off.

32–35. The multitude of them that believed. All the church. **Of one heart and soul.** Perfectly united as one body and with one life. **Neither said any of them.** Note the language that follows.

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It does not describe a community of goods, but a miraculous benevolence: (1) the goods were not a common fund, but each one had *goods that he possessed*; (2) he did not say that his goods were *his own*; (3) they used all as if it belonged to all; (4) there were none that lacked, for (5) those that had houses and lands sold them and brought the proceeds to the apostles. It was a time when a great liberality was called for. Thousands of Jews from abroad had become Christians and must remain at Jerusalem until instructed in the gospel. It was a great emergency, and the church was equal to it, for they brought money, goods, and the proceeds of houses and lands to sustain those who lacked. This continued until God was ready to send them forth, and when the persecution arose about Stephen they “went everywhere preaching the word.”

36, 37. Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas. His name was Joses; but the apostles from some feature of his character called him Barnabas, “the son of exhortation” (see Revision). **A Levite.** Of the sacred tribe. **Of the country of Cyprus.** The famous island of the Mediterranean. He and Paul afterwards carried the gospel there. **Having land.** Possibly a possession somewhere in Judea. See Num. 35:1–8 and Deut. 10:8, 9. As a Levite, Barnabas would have rights in the Levitical possessions. This is the first mention of this celebrated companion of Paul's missionary labors. He next appears on a mission to Antioch (chap. 11:22).

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Chapter V

The Sin and Punishment of Ananias and Sapphira

Summary —*The Deceit and Death of Ananias. Of Sapphira. The Increase of the Church. The Signs and Wonders. The Rage of the High Priest and the Sadducees. The Imprisonment of the Apostles. The Prison Doors Opened. Teaching in the Temple. Again Arrested and Threatened. Their Bold Answer. The Resolve of the Sanhedrim to Slay Them. The Wise Counsel of Gamaliel. The Apostles Beaten and Let Go.*

1. But. Amid the peace, grace and abounding liberality of the church there was one dark spot. The sin and fate of Ananias and his wife must be recorded.

2. Kept back part of the price. Like many others, of their own accord they sold a possession for the benefit of the church. They were not compelled to sell it, or when sold to give the money, or to give all. Their sin was not withholding a part, but lying about it. (1) They gave from the wrong motives, not for the Lord, but for human praise. (2) There was hypocrisy and falsehood. **His wife being privy to it.** Hence equally guilty. There was a guilty conspiracy between them. **Brought a certain part.** Pretending it was all. His was a deliberate, public lie.

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3, 4. To lie to the Holy Ghost. The sin is here pointed out. The lie was not to men, but to God. The apostles were moved by the Holy Spirit. These verses show clearly that the sin was hypocrisy and deception in the name of religion. These verses also show that the gifts of goods were purely voluntary.

5. Ananias ... gave up the ghost. Fell down and expired. There was a visible judgment upon him for his great sin. It was inflicted by the Holy Spirit through Peter, and shows how hypocrisy is regarded by the Lord.

6. The young men arose, wound him up. Wrapped his mantle tightly around him. **Carried him out.** Of the place of meeting and out of the city for burial. It was common, in the warm climate of Palestine, to bury on the day of death. Severe examples occurred at the outset of both Dispensations. Note the case of Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10:1, 2) and the sin of Achan (Josh. 7:16–25).

7. His wife ... came in. To the place of assembly, not having heard of her husband's fate, but full of his spirit.

8, 9. Whether ye sold the land for so much? Naming the amount offered by Ananias. Instead of the confession that would have saved her, she persisted in the lie agreed upon, died as he had died, and was buried in the same tomb.

10. The young men came in. It had required three hours to carry Ananias out of the city to the tomb and return. The gloomy incident occurred and is recorded for a wise purpose: to teach the church in the outset that even if we can deceive men, we cannot hope to deceive God. It is an example.

11. Great fear came upon all the church. Not of outward enemies, but of so sinning as to invoke the punishment of God. It was a salutary fear.

12–14. By the hands of the apostles were many signs. Note that no one thus far has miraculous power but the apostles. The gift of miracles was not general. When it was imparted to others, we learn how it was imparted. **All with one accord in Solomon's porch.** The apostles, in order to preach. See 3:11. The brethren also with them.

13. Of the rest. Of their enemies. That the phrase does not include all who were not Christians is shown by what follows in verse 14. Multitudes of converts were constantly made.

14. Both men and women. This is one of a number of instances in which women are named in early church history. As remarked elsewhere, at first the converts were mainly men. Now there are also women.

15, 16. They brought forth the sick into the streets. The fame of the miracles, and especially of Peter's, caused this to be done. It is not said that the shadow of Peter falling on them did any good, but the people supposed it might. The object is to show the great favor of the apostles with the people. It was a time, however, when multitudes of miracles were wrought.

17. Then the high priest rose up. Was stirred to action. Annas is, no doubt, meant. See note on 4:6. His sect, the Sadducees, co-operated with him. They were determined to stop the preaching of the resurrection. See note on 4:1.

18. Put them in the common prison. In the city jail, among malefactors. "The 'common prison,' corresponding to our jail, consists of a single room in the governor's cellar, with a floor of earth, and one small window, where all manner of people, from the murderer to the insolent debtor, are promiscuously crowded together. The only furniture consists of a bench, always occupied by the strongest; the rest lie on the floor, or stand. We have visited prisons of this kind where we could only stand a few moments upon the threshold on account of the foul air. The keepers remain outside of the door (Acts 5:23), but the prisoners are not bound.—*Van Lenneps*."

19. The angel of the Lord ... opened. The language would apply, if the doors were opened by any providential agency, but the messenger was probably a celestial one.

20. Go, stand and speak in the temple. They were to return at once to their interrupted work. It would give a powerful impulse for the imprisoned preachers to be at their place and work the next morning. **This life.** The eternal life denied by the Sadducees.

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21. Called the council. The Sanhedrim, for the trial of the apostles, supposing them still in prison. **All the senate.** Many think that a body of elders and other influential leaders were called to assist in the deliberations.

23. The prison truly found we shut. All was as usual and the guards before the doors, but the prisoners gone.

25. Then came one and told them. The mystery was explained by the word that, as usual, the apostles were preaching in the temple.

26. Brought them without violence. The favor of the people for the apostles was so shown that they feared a tumult.

27, 28. The high priest asked them. As president. He charges (1) that they had disregarded the authority of the Sanhedrim; (2) they had filled Jerusalem with their doctrine; (3) they would work up the people to indignation against the rulers for condemning Christ.

29–32. Peter's defence asserts (1) that God must be obeyed rather than earthly rulers; (2) God raised up Jesus whom they hanged on the cross; (3) exalted him to his right hand; (4) to be a Prince and Savior, to grant Israel the opportunity to repent, and to obtain forgiveness; (5) that they were witnesses of these facts, and so was the Holy Spirit. **Given to them that obey Him.** The Holy Spirit is given only to those who have submitted to the Lord (Acts 2:28 and John 7:38, 39). It dwells only in the obedient heart.

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33. Cut to the heart. Convulsed with rage, not sorrow. **Took counsel to slay them.** Concerning the expediency of putting them to death.

34. A Pharisee, named Gamaliel. Observe that it is a Pharisee that opposes violence. Gamaliel was the most distinguished Jewish rabbi of this time. His fame is preserved in the Talmud. He was a grandson of Hillel, a still more famous teacher. Paul was his pupil (Acts 22:3).

35–39. Ye men of Israel, take heed. Gamaliel's temperate and wise speech advises (1) deliberation; (2) if they were impostors their movement would come to nought like that of other impostors, if let alone; (3) but if of God, it could not be overthrown. **Theudas.** Some leader, only mentioned here, probably raising a commotion in the disturbances that followed the death of Herod the Great. **Judas of Galilee.** A zealot who had opposed the payment of tribute not many years before, in a.d. 8, and was overthrown and slain. He is named by Josephus.

40. To him they agreed. He carried the Sanhedrim with him. **Called the apostles, and beaten them.** While rejecting the punishment of death, they decided to scourge them for disobedience. Scourging was often inflicted even by the rulers of the synagogues. The scourging was on the bare back, and bloody and cruel.

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41. Rejoicing. This was their first experience of physical torture for Christ, but not the last, and it gave them joy to suffer for one who had suffered for them. One of the features of the early church was the welcome given to shame, suffering and martyrdom endured for Christ's sake.

42. Daily in the temple. Undeterred by suffering and threats, they still preached the cross in the most public place in Jerusalem, as well as from house to house.

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Chapter VI

Stephen Seized and Called Before the Sanhedrim

Summary —*The Complaint of the Grecians. The Choice of Seven Deacons. Many Priests Converted. Stephen Preaches Christ with Power. His Controversy with the Jews. The Charge of Blasphemy. Brought Before the Sanhedrim.*

1. In those days. About that time. It may have been several years after the planting of the church. The believers had become very numerous in Jerusalem. **Arose a murmuring of the Grecians.** “The Grecians” were not Greeks, or Gentiles, but foreign Jews, who were born and brought up out of Palestine, and spoke the Greek language. This class of Jews was found in almost every city where Paul preached. See Acts 13:14–16. **The Hebrews** were Jews of Palestine. They held themselves superior to the foreign Jews, and something of this spirit showed itself in the church. **Their widows were neglected.** There was “distribution to all men, as every man had need,” not to those who did not need, but to the needy, and the dependent widows would especially need care.

2. The twelve. This language shows beyond doubt that Matthias was recognized as an apostle. **Called the multitude.** The masses of the church. **And said.** That it was not proper that the apostles should give their time to these matters instead of preaching. **And serve tables.** To look after the distribution of food.

3. Look ye out. Be it noted that the church was called upon to choose these men. The apostles did not assume the right. There is no warrant here for pope or bishops assuming the right. The apostles guide the choice by describing the kind of men that must be chosen. **Seven men.** Why seven is only a matter of conjecture. **Of honest report.** Men whose reputation was a guarantee that they would handle the trust faithfully. **Full of the Holy Ghost.** Whose lives indicated the fruit of the Spirit. **Of wisdom.** Prudence and judgment would be essential. **Whom we may appoint.** Ordain. The people selected under apostolic direction; the apostle inaugurated into office.

4. We will give ourselves continually to prayer, etc. Observe that the apostles regard prayer of equal importance with preaching. Every preacher ought to heed this.

5. They chose Stephen. He is specially described on account of the glory of martyrdom that so soon followed. **Philip.** Distinguished as “Philip the evangelist.” He gave the gospel to Samaria, converted the eunuch, and afterwards lived and labored at Cæsarea (Acts 21:8). The others are not again mentioned. **Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch.** A Gentile (Greek) of the great city of Antioch, who had been converted to Judaism and been circumcised. This is the meaning of “proselyte” in the New Testament.

6. When they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. The scriptural method of inducting into office. The prayer and imposition of hands was an appeal to God to give the necessary gifts rather than their impartation. See Num. 27:23; Gen. 48:13. There has been some discussion whether these seven were deacons, and whether this is the origin of the deacon's office in the church. They are never called deacons, but the Greek word rendered to *serve* (verse 2), is the verb form of which the word deacon is the noun. The usual view is that they were deacons.

7. A great company of the priests were obedient. There was harmony and progress after the trouble was adjusted. The seven became preachers and greatly aided. Not only vast multitudes of the people, but even many of the priesthood obeyed. The priests were very numerous. Ezra 2:36

says that 4,289 priests returned from Babylon, and they must have been much more numerous at this time. **The faith.** The Gospel, which is faith in and obedience to Christ.

8. And Stephen ... did great wonders. He is the first gospel preacher, not an apostle, whose work is named. He is also the first, not an apostle, under the new dispensation, to work miracles. Philip, also, of the seven, possessed miraculous power (Acts 8:6). Both received the imposition of apostolic hands. This seems to have been necessary to impart this power (Acts 8:15, 17, 19). See also Rom. 1:11. As far as we know, it was limited to apostles, and to those whom the apostles laid hands.

9. There arose certain of the synagogue. This was the ordinary place of worship where Jews met on the Sabbath. The Rabbins say (Talmud) that there were 480 synagogues in Jerusalem. **Of the Libertines.** "The Freedmen." Thousands of Jews had been carried away captives and sold into slavery by Pompey in 63 b.c. These, or their children, were mostly freed at a later period. Those of them who returned to Jerusalem had a synagogue of their own. **The Cyrenians.** A synagogue of. See Revision. See note on Acts 2:10. The Cyrenian Jews who returned to the city of their fathers, like those of other countries, had their own synagogue. **Alexandrians.** Jews from the great city of Alexandria in Egypt, where they were said to be almost one-third of the population. **Of Cilicia.** Of this synagogue the brilliant disciple of Gamaliel, born at Tarsus of Cilicia, was no doubt a member, and one of the most active opposers of Stephen. See 7:58. **Of Asia.** The Roman province in Asia Minor of which Ephesus was capital. **Disputing with Stephen.** These synagogues were all composed of "Grecians," foreign Jews. Stephen's name is also Grecian, and he probably preached especially to his own class.

10. They were not able to resist. They attempted to argue, but were silenced.

11. They suborned men. Induced men to give perverted testimony. They determined to silence Stephen. **Heard him speak blasphemous words.** This was the charge against Christ. It is likely that, like Paul, he plainly preached that the Old Covenant had given place to the New, and that God's people were no longer under Moses, but under Christ. This was perverted into blaspheming Moses.

12. They stirred up the people. By their misrepresentations. Thus far the gospel seemed to enjoy great popular favor. It was needful to arouse their hostility. This could be done by perversion of what was preached. The Pharisees, apparently neutral since Pentecost until now, were aroused by Stephen's attack on legalism. **The elders, and the scribes.** See notes on 4:5. **Brought him to the council.** The Sanhedrim.

13, 14. Set up false witnesses. False, in that they perverted what he said, so as to give it a meaning not meant. **Against this holy place.** The temple. He may have said that it would be destroyed (see Matt. 24:2). **And the law.** He probably said what Paul so often said. See Gal. 3:24, 25. The next verse shows the tenor of his preaching. He no doubt did preach the end of the Jewish dispensation and the reign of Christ, but he neither blasphemed Moses nor God.

15. Fastening their eyes on him. To see what effect the charges had on him. One of those who thus looked was Saul of Tarsus. It was probably from him that Luke obtained his account of this trial. **As it had been the face of an angel.** His face was radiant, either with his own divinely inspired

peace and joy, or shining with a supernatural splendor. I incline to the first view, for had the latter been the case it would have awed the Sanhedrim, and probably suspended their proceedings.



Chapter VII

The Martyrdom of Stephen

Summary — Stephen Outlines God's Dealings with Abraham. The Christ Promised. Abraham a Man of Faith Before Circumcision Was Appointed. The Patriarchs Sell Joseph into Bondage, Ignorant of the Counsels of God. The Israelites in Egypt First Reject Moses Their Deliverer. The Rejected Moses Is Their Savior. He Predicted a Prophet Like Unto Himself. The Tabernacle and Temple Built, Though God Dwells Not in. Temples Made with Hands. The Jews of Stephen's Time Were Like Their Fathers in Resisting God. Had Slain the Holy One and Had Not Kept the Law. The Outburst of Rage. Stephen Stoned by the Mob.

1. Are these things so? As president, the high priest asks what reply Stephen has to make to the charges.



2. Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken. In order to make his defence, to unveil the fact that his accusers were fighting God, and to preach Christ, Stephen rapidly outlines Jewish history. Every fact cited has a point. Note (1) that Abraham was called in uncircumcision, and the Christ promised through his seed before he was circumcised; (2) that Joseph, the type of Christ, was rejected by his brethren, and afterwards saves them; (3) that Moses is also rejected and despised, but that God makes choice of him to save Israel; (4) that the Israelites went whoring after false gods and were carried into captivity; (5) that God had the tabernacle and temple built, but was particular to assure Israel that he dwelt not in temples made with human hands; (6) that their Moses, rejected, whom the people refused to obey, predicted a prophet like unto himself, and (7) that in the rejection of Christ they showed just the same spirit as their fathers who had rejected and slain the prophets who predicted Christ's coming. The speech is pointed, logical, and powerful, not intended to conciliate, but to show the Jews their own sins. **The God of glory appeared unto ... Abraham ... in Mesopotamia.** See Gen. 12:1. Abraham's childhood home was at Ur of the Chaldees in Mesopotamia, the country between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. Gen. 12:1 gives a second call at Haran, or Charran (the same), but Stephen declares that the family had gone from Ur to Charran, because of an earlier call. Charran was on the route to Canaan, and Abraham made a stop there of five years, until his father died (Gen. 11:31, 32). See verse 4 of this chapter.

5. Gave him none inheritance in it. Abraham possessed Canaan only by faith. He looked to the fulfillment of the promise, that it would be the possession of his children when he had neither land nor seed. See Heb. 11:8–16.

6. His seed should sojourn in a strange land. See Gen. 15:13, 16. In Egypt. **Four hundred years.** In round numbers, counting from the time *the seed*, Isaac, should be born to the Exodus. It is stated in Exod. 12:40 that the sojourning of the children of Israel was 430 years. This includes the period from the call of Abraham to the Exodus. See Gal. 3:16, 17. But Isaac was born about thirty years after the call of Abraham, which leaves Stephen's period of 400 years.

8. And he gave him the covenant of circumcision. After his call and the promise of Christ. See Gen. 17:1–14. The covenant of Christ was for all; circumcision for the Jews.

9. The patriarchs, moved with envy. The sons of Jacob. See Gen. 37:28. As they rejected Joseph, their descendants rejected Jesus. **God was with him.** With the one rejected, and raised him to royal honors in the house of Pharaoh.

11. There came a dearth. For the history of Joseph, begin at chapter 39, and read to the close of Genesis. For the account of the famine and the visit to Egypt of the ten brethren, see Gen. 42 and 43.

14. Then sent Joseph. The rejected Joseph becomes the prince and savior of all Israel. **Threescore and fifteen souls.** Gen. 46:27 says that sixty-six persons besides Jacob, Joseph and his two sons, seventy in all, were in Egypt. But the Septuagint Version, quoted almost invariably by Christ and the apostles, as well as by Stephen here, after giving the sixty-six, adds: “And the sons of Joseph born in Egypt were nine souls.” The nine, added to the sixty-six, make the seventy-five that Stephen gives. Why this clause was omitted from the Hebrew text, followed by the Common Version, is unknown. Stephen simply follows the text received by Christ, the apostles, and the Jews generally.

16. And were carried over into Sychem. Jacob was buried at Hebron in the cave of Machpelah (Gen. 50:13), but the *fathers* were buried in Sychem. We are told (Josh. 24:32) that Joseph was buried there, and Jewish tradition always affirmed that his brethren were buried there also. Jerome, in the fourth century, said that their tombs were still to be seen. He lived in Palestine. **That Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor.** For an account of this purchase, see Gen. 33:19 and Josh. 24:32. The difficulty arises that it was *Jacob* that made the purchase instead of Abraham. Some have supposed that Stephen, in the hurry of a rapid speech under exciting circumstances, by an oversight used the name of Abraham for Jacob; others have thought that Abraham did make the purchase first and that it was repeated by Jacob. Neither of these views are probable. Had Stephen made a *lapsus*, it would have been corrected by Luke, who wrote under Paul's supervision (see Introduction), so as to give Stephen's meaning. It is far more probable that some copyist, by oversight, first wrote “Abraham” for “Jacob,” and that the MSS. that have come down to us were made from that copy. There can hardly be a doubt that a man so learned in the Scriptures as Stephen, and making an inspired defence, said *Jacob*.

17. The time of the promise. Of deliverance from Egypt. See Gen. 15:13, 14. **Which God had sworn.** Solemnly promised. There is no account of a formal oath. “Every divine assurance is equivalent to an oath.”—*Maimonides*.

18–21. For an account of the persecution of Israel and birth of Moses, see Exod. 1 and 2.

22. Moses was learned. He was reared as “the son of Pharaoh's daughter” (Heb. 11:24), and would be educated in all the accomplishments of his time. We know from the researches of the Egyptologists (see Rawlinson's *Egypt*) that at the period of Moses there were great universities for the education of all who were expected to engage in public employments. Eber's *Uarda* gives a good picture of Egypt when Moses was a child.

23–29. For the accounts here given, see Exod. 2:11–15. Compare Heb. 11:24. Observe the point of Stephen, that Israel rejected Moses as “a ruler and judge over them,” as they had rejected Joseph and Jesus. Yet God chose both Joseph and Moses to be their saviors and rulers.

30–34. For the call of Moses, see Exod. 3:1–10.

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35, 36. This Moses whom they refused. With great force Stephen makes his application. *This Moses* they refused, but God sent him as their ruler and deliverer. If his hearers failed to see the point, the next verse makes it clear.

37. This is that Moses, which said. This rejected Moses who was chosen by God to be a prince and a savior hath said, **A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up ... like unto me.** Like me, “of your brethren;” like me, rejected and despised by Israel; like me, exalted to be a Prince and a Savior by God. See Deut. 18:15–19.

38. This is he. Moses. That was in the church in the wilderness. The congregation of Israel, the typical church. Moses was its mediator. **With the angel.** The angel of the Covenant, who communicated the law to Moses in Sinai. See verse 53 and Exod. 23:20, 23. **Lively oracles.** The Word of life.

39–42. These verses summarize the unbelief, disbelief and waywardness of Israel under Moses. The point is to show that the rejection of Christ harmonizes with their past history. See Exod. 16:3; 17:4; 32:1–14; Deut. 4:19. **Did ye offer unto me slain beasts and sacrifices?** This passage is quoted from Amos 5:25–27. The emphasis is on *me*. Did ye not offer them to false gods also? The next verse gives the reply.

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43. Ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch. Israel turned to the abominable worship of Moloch and other false gods, and hence shall be carried into Captivity. *Moloch*, a god of the Amorites, worshiped by human sacrifices. **Remphan.** Some planet worshiped as a god. **Beyond Babylon.** A punishment brought on all Israel for its sins, predicted by Amos. Observe still his point of showing their national sinfulness.

44–50. Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness. The tabernacle built at Sinai, a witness of the Covenant (Num. 18:2), and of the good things to come (Heb. 8:5). This tabernacle, built by God's command, according to his pattern (Exod. 25:9, 40), they had rejected for “the tabernacle of Moloch” (verse 43). **Which also our fathers ... brought in with Jesus.** Joshua, the Hebrew form for Jesus. He and the later generations of Jews brought this tabernacle into Canaan when they conquered it. **Desired to find a tabernacle.** David, who sought to build a permanent temple (2 Sam. 7:2; 1 Chron. 22:7). He was restrained from building the temple, and it was erected by Solomon (2 Chron. 6:7, 8). **48. Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not.** See 2 Chron. 6:18. The argument is that the tabernacle was laid aside for the temple by God's command; that God does not confine himself in any house made with hands, and hence the temple also might be laid aside. God's real temple was greater than the building they revered so superstitiously. See Isa. 66:1–2.

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51. Ye stiffnecked. Stubborn, like the ox which refuses to bend its neck for the yoke. Stephen now makes his direct application. **Uncircumcised.** Aliens in heart from God. The uncircumcised were aliens from Israel. Stephen told them that spiritually they were *heathen*. They, like their fathers, **resist the Holy Ghost.** The will of God.

52, 53. Which of the prophets, etc.? Their fathers habitually persecuted the prophets and slew some of them who predicted Christ (see lives of Isaiah and Jeremiah). Now they, his hearers, were murderers of the Just One. **Received the law by the disposition of angels.** Through the ministration of angels. See Deut. 29:29. **Have not kept it.** Pretending to be very scrupulous observers of the law, they were wicked law-breakers.

54. They were cut to the heart. Convulsed with rage. Stephen's speech was now violently interrupted. Their rage is shown by their gnashing their teeth.

55. Looked up steadfastly into heaven. The Lord who had promised his presence was with him. His faith was so strengthened that, by faith, he saw the Savior in Heaven, through the opened heavens. The scene was revealed to his soul, instead of his eyes.

57. Cried out with a loud voice. They cried, closed their ears to what they called blasphemy, then, in a tumult, without a vote on his guilt or innocence, rushed upon him to slay him, though yet uncondemned legally.

58. Cast him out of the city. See Lev. 24:14. Though committing murder, they were scrupulous to comply with their custom of execution outside of the city. **And stoned him.** Jesus was crucified, because the Romans put him to death; Stephen was stoned, because Jesus slew him. Stoning was their usual method of execution. **The witnesses.** The witnesses had to cast the first stones (Deut. 13:10; 17:7). Though doing all in a tumult, without the consent of the Roman governor, the forms of the law were observed. **At a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.** Chrysostom says that this young man, who was to become so celebrated, was now about thirty-five. Hackett thinks we was about thirty. For a fuller account of him, see Acts 9:1, note.

59, 60. Stoned Stephen. Repeated to show that in the storm of stones he committed himself to Jesus. **Kneeled down.** Either voluntarily, or brought to his knees by the cruel blows. The point is that in his sufferings, like his Master, he prayed for his enemies. Saul, no doubt, noted this, and it had its effect. **He fell asleep.** To wake again at his Savior's voice. The death of Stephen was a murder, instead of an execution, because (1) no vote of the Sanhedrim was taken, and (2) the consent of the Roman governor, requisite to capital punishment, was not obtained. Consult John 18:32, note.



Chapter VIII

The Missionary Labors of Philip

Summary —*The Persecution at Jerusalem. Saul's Zeal in Persecution. Philip's Conversion of the Samaritans. Simon the Sorcerer Believes. Peter and John Sent Down to Bestow the Miraculous Powers of the Holy Spirit. Simon's Wicked Offer and Peter's Rebuke. Philip Sent to Preach to the Ethiopian Eunuch. He Explains the Scriptures on the Way and Preaches Jesus. The Eunuch's Request for Baptism. Baptized and Goes on His Way Rejoicing.*

1. Saul was consenting unto his death. The first three verses of this chapter ought to be attached to the one preceding. Saul consented, that is, approved and gave his voice to the death of Stephen. He did not actively take part in the stoning, but aided and abetted. The memory of this sad event clung to him painfully even to old age. See Acts 22:20. Luke no doubt here records the facts given him by the apostle himself. **At that time.** “On that day.” See Revision. Not satisfied with the blood of Stephen, their persecutors turned their rage at once on the whole church. **They were all scattered.** The meetings of the saints were for the time broken up, and the disciples generally fled from the storm, into the country portions of Judea and the adjoining district of Samaria. The apostles, in some way not explained, shielded from the destruction, remained, and many of the scattered brethren,

residents of Jerusalem, soon afterwards returned, while others that were foreign Jews went to other regions, carrying the gospel.

2. Devout men carried Stephen to his burial. Not disciples, but pious Jews, deeply impressed by the gospel, but not yet brought to its acceptance. They were “devout” like Cornelius the Gentile before his conversion. **Made great lamentation over him.** They made their protest against the deed by a public funeral with all the usual Jewish demonstrations of mourning.

3. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church. This mad violence he often recalled and mentioned while serving Christ. See Acts 22:4; 26:10; 1 Cor. 15:9; Gal 1:13; Phil. 3:6; 1 Tim. 1:13. **Entering into every house.** Where he supposed disciples could be found. **Haling.** Hauling, dragging with violence. As we learn from Paul's statements elsewhere, the saints were not only committed to prison, but scourged in the synagogues and persecuted unto death.

4. Went every where preaching the word. The rage of the persecutors only extended the reign of Christ. The scattered saints, long prepared at the feet of the apostles, went everywhere as preachers of Christ. The blood of Stephen was the seed of the church.

5. Philip went down to the city of Samaria. This was not Philip, the apostle, for all the apostles remained at Jerusalem, but Philip, one of the seven (Acts 6:5). **The city of Samaria.** The Greek does not render it certain that this was the capital named Samaria, as there is no definite article. It is literally “a city of Samaria.” The district (see map) lies between Judea and Galilee. Samaria and Sychar were, at this time, two of its principal cities. It was probably one or the other of these to which Philip went.

6–8. The people with one accord gave heed. It was the miracles that, at first, fixed their attention. Observe that Philip, another of the seven, has the gift of miracles, the second recorded instance in the church of the possession of this power by one not an apostle. The next verse describes the nature of his miracles, similar to those of Christ. See note on Matt. 4:24. See also Mark 3:11 and Luke 4:41.

9. There was a certain man, called Simon. Called the sorcerer, or magician, who bewitched the people by his enchantments. Whether this was done by the conjurer's art or by the power of Satan, it is perhaps impossible for us to know. **Giving out that himself was some great one.** Claiming to be more than a mere man.

10. This man is the great power of God. Unable to explain the things that he did, the Samaritans ascribed them to divine power manifested through Simon.

12. When they believed Philip. This verse states in the concisest manner the apostolic order of converting men: (1) Philip preached; (2) he preached the kingdom and name of Jesus Christ; (3) faith came by hearing, for the Samaritans believed; (4) when they believed they were baptized. This describes the uniform course in apostolic days. **Both men and women.** Note that (1) only believers are baptized, (2) that men and women are both included, but children are not named.

13. Then Simon himself believed also. There has been much needless discussion whether Simon was sincere. It would never have been doubted had we not been told that later he fell into sin. It is best to take the Scripture in its manifest sense. He became a believer like the rest. He was baptized like the rest; then, like many others, at a later period, under temptation, he fell into sin. It is impossible to believe that a man of his power and influence in Samaria would have yielded outwardly to the gospel and shown the deference he manifested to Philip unless he was at the time sincere. But he was of the class described by the Savior when the seed of the sower fell among thorns.

14. The apostles ... heard. They had remained at Jerusalem. The word reached them of Philip's faithful work. Christ had directed that the gospel be carried to "Jerusalem, and unto Judea, and unto Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." In this order it had been carried to Samaria and been received. The preacher sent there was not an apostle. He had miraculous powers, but could not confer them. It seemed needful, now that the gospel was accepted by a new people, not Jewish, that spiritual gifts, such as had been given to the apostles on the day of Pentecost and imparted through them to others, should be bestowed upon this alien nation. Observe, (1) when the Jews first had the gospel on the day of Pentecost these gifts were imparted by the descent of the Holy Spirit; (2) when the Samaritans were converted these were imparted by the presence of the apostles; (3) when the first Gentiles were converted, an apostle being present, they were imparted. There is no record of their impartation, save in or by apostolic presence. See Rom. 1:11. **Sent unto them Peter and John.** This is positive proof that Peter was not a pope. The body which sends is superior to the one sent. He and John go at the bidding of the whole apostolic body. This is the last mention of John in Acts.

15–17. Prayed for them. That the Holy Spirit might fall on them. They had been born of water and the Spirit (John 3:5), but had not received that baptism of the Spirit which conferred miraculous powers. This was bestowed by apostolic prayer and the laying on of hands. I suppose, not on all, but on those selected for teachers and preachers among the Samaritans. "The prayer clearly pointed to such a power of the Holy Spirit as had been bestowed on Pentecost."—*Plumptree*. "Luke speaks not of the common grace of the Holy Spirit, but of those singular gifts with which God would have certain endowed at the beginning of the gospel."—*Calvin*. **Laid ... hands on them.** "This was part of that miraculous supremacy of the apostles that they could not communicate to any successor."—*Whedon*. This reception of the Holy Spirit was manifest in speaking with tongue and other powers.

18, 19. When Simon saw ... he offered them money. Uninstructed in the lofty spirit of the gospel, ambitious to possess this power peculiar to the apostles, he is sordid enough to offer money for it. His sin was not that he aspired to this power, but that he sought to buy it. He had very crude conceptions of the spirit of Christianity. It is not stated, but it is easy to infer, that he was not one of those upon whom the apostles had bestowed the divine gift.

20–24. Peter said. Peter's outburst of indignation is characteristic. **Thy money perish with thee.** Not an anathema, but the statement of a fact, unless he repents. **Because thou hast thought.** Observe that, in Peter's rebukes, the thought is, not that he has never been converted, but that he has now committed an awful sin. It is *one sin*, not his *sins*, that stands out in every sentence. **Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter.** In these gifts of the Holy Spirit. He can neither receive them, nor impart them. Perhaps salvation is also included. **For thy heart is not right.** This offer to purchase the gift of God shows that it was not. Because it is not, he can have no part nor lot, etc. **Repent, therefore, of this.** Observe that Peter does not bid him to repent of his sins, but of *this* one great sin. **If perhaps the thought of thine heart.** This one sin is so great that Peter seems doubtful whether it will be forgiven, even on repentance and prayer. **For I perceive that thou art.** His great sin had brought him into the state now described. **Gall of bitterness.** The gall of reptiles was considered by ancients the source of their venom. The expression would denote moral corruption. **Bond of iniquity.** Bound by iniquity. **Pray ye to the Lord for me.** Simon's language indicates that he was terror-stricken and perhaps deeply touched. The sacred record is silent concerning his

future career. Whether he repented or relapsed into his old life is conjecture. Tradition insists that he pursued the latter course.

25. When they had testified. Peter and John did not return until they preached in many Samaritan villages.

26. The angel of the Lord spake unto Philip. In some way he was supernaturally directed to go far south of Samaria to the road from Jerusalem to Gaza for his next work. **Gaza.** An old Philistine city, on the sea-coast plain in southwest Palestine. It was taken by Alexander the Great, and had endured many sieges, but is still a town of 15,000 or 16,000 inhabitants.

27. A man of Ethiopia. The term is applied to that portion of Africa which lies south of Egypt. **A eunuch of great authority.** This mutilated class of men often rose to great power in Oriental countries. This one was the royal treasurer. **Under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians.** Candace had her seat of power on the island of Meroe, a large island of the Nile, about a thousand miles from the mouth of the river. The name Candace seems to have belonged to several queens of this kingdom. It is still seen inscribed on the ruined palace walls of Meroe. **Come to Jerusalem for to worship.** He was probably a proselyte to the Jewish faith. His long journey, his study of Scripture, and his ready hearing all indicate a believer in Jehovah, a devout man, and one seeking for the Christ.

28. Was returning and ... reading. Reading aloud in the Oriental manner. Perhaps he had heard at Jerusalem of Jesus and the Christians. At any rate, he was reading in Isaiah a prophecy of Christ.

29, 30. The Spirit said. How we are not told. Philip promptly obeyed, ran to the chariot, listened and heard what he read, and then asked his question, the result of which was that he was asked to take his place in the chariot to explain the Scripture.

32, 33. The place of the scripture ... was this. See Isa. 53:7, 8. The whole chapter is a wonderful delineation of the sufferings of Christ. Philip found Christ in the text, and from it *he preached to him Jesus*. **Led as a sheep.** Unresisting. **Opened he not his mouth.** Made no defence. **His judgment was taken away.** Justice was trampled under foot. **Who shall declare his generation?** Meyer, De Wette, Robinson and Hackett all agree that this refers to portraying the wickedness of the generation which slew him. Others insist that it means Christ's spiritual posterity, his followers.

34, 35. Of whom speaketh the prophet? This gave Philip the opportunity of preaching Jesus. He showed the prophecies of the Messiah, that it behooved him to suffer, die, and rise again, and that he commanded his gospel to be preached and believers to be baptized in his name. That the eunuch calls for baptism, shows that in preaching Jesus Philip preached the rite.

36. They came to a certain water. The locality of the baptism is not certain. There are several roads from Jerusalem to Gaza. The one by Hebron is through "desert" more than the others. Eusebius and Jerome state that the baptism occurred at a perennial stream, coming from a fountain at Bethsur, not far from Hebron. Robinson places the baptism not far from Gaza, at the old site of Eglon. **See.** The Greek is, "*Behold! Water!*" As if his soul was filled with joy that he could obey. **What doth hinder me?** Nothing, if he was a believer and the means were at hand.

37. If thou believest, etc.? This verse is omitted in the Revision. It is not found in the oldest extant manuscripts, but was certainly in manuscripts older than any now extant. It is referred to by Irenæus in the second century, and by Augustine in the fourth. Whether written by Luke or not, it shows that the custom of the early church was to require such a confession of faith. **With all thine heart.** A living faith must seize upon and control the heart.

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38. They both went down into the water. “The original undoubtedly implies a going, not *to*, but *into*, the water.”—*Abbott*. “No sufficient reason can be given why the parties went down *into* the water, but for the sake of the immersion of the new convert.”—*Ripley*.

39, 40. When they were come up out of the water. They did not go *to* and come away *from* the water, but they went, “both Philip and the eunuch,” down *into* (Greek, *eis*) and came up *out of* (Greek, *ek*) the water. **The Spirit ... caught away Philip.** Led him to depart abruptly. He was snatched away. **Went on his way rejoicing.** In his new-found Savior. **But Philip was found at Azotus.** The old Philistine city of Ashdod, near the sea-coast, between Gaza and Joppa. It is now a ruin. Here he preached in all the sea-coast cities, probably founding churches (see Acts 9:32, 36), **till he came to Cæsarea,** the seaport northwest of Jerusalem, the Roman capital of Judea. We are not told how soon he reached Cæsarea. It may have been months or years. At any rate, it is likely that it did not take place until after Peter's missionary work there. Many years later we find Philip living in this city (Acts 21:8).



Chapter IX

The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus

Summary —*Saul's Journey to Damascus. The Lord Meets Him on the Way. Called to Be a Witness to the Gentiles. Baptized by Ananias. Preaches Christ to the Jews in Damascus. They Seek His Death. His Escape to Jerusalem and Meeting with the Apostles. Departure to Tarsus. Peter Heals Æneas at Lydda. Raises Dorcas at Joppa.*

1. And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter. See Acts 8:3, from which the narrative is now resumed. As the great change in the life of Saul is now recorded, it is proper to state what can be known of him before his conversion. Probably about a year before he appears in the history at the death of Stephen. He was of the tribe of Benjamin (Phil. 3:5); his father, though a Jew, had been admitted to Roman citizenship, and Paul was therefore a “Roman” (Acts 22:28); he was born at Tarsus, a Grecian city, the capital of Cilicia; there he had become familiar with Grecian literature, as well as educated in the law; at what time we know not, but while still young he went to Jerusalem to study in the great Rabbinical schools, and had the celebrated Gamaliel for his teacher (Acts 22:3); he had, according to Jewish custom, learned a trade, being a tent-maker (Acts 18:3); he was a Pharisee after the strictest manner of the sect (Acts 23:6). How long he had been in Jerusalem when he appears in this history, whether he was there for the second time, or had not returned after his attendance at the school of Gamaliel, is uncertain, but when we first behold him he is a “young man,” prominent and influential, active in his opposition to the church, and a trusted leader of its enemies. **Went unto the high priest.** Probably Theophilus, the son of Annas, who was made high priest by the Romans in a.d. 37. He was a Sadducee.



2. Desired of him letters. A commission and letter addressed to the rulers of synagogues. The sway of the high priest was recognized in the synagogues of all the East. He was a sort of pope with the Sanhedrim for his cardinals. **To Damascus.** Situated about 140 miles northeast of Jerusalem, east of Mt. Hermon, in Syria, a beautiful city in a fertile spot redeemed from the desert by the

mountain streams, Abana and Pharpar. It is one of the oldest cities in the world, existed in the time of Abraham, and now has about 150,000 inhabitants. **Of this way.** The way of Christ, a phrase often applied in the New Testament to Christianity. Paul's commission, while given in the name of the high priest, was from the Sanhedrim (Acts 26:10).

3. And as he journeyed. It would require six or seven days to make the journey. It was probably made on foot. **There shined round about him a light.** Brighter than the sun (Acts 26:13). It was the splendor of the glorified Savior as seen at the Transfiguration, or by John at Patmos. In order to get the full history of this revelation of Christ and Paul's conversion, we must compare the accounts given by Paul himself in chapters 22 and 26 with Luke's account here.

4. Heard a voice. After he had fallen. Not a sound merely, but words that he could understand. **Why persecutest thou me?** Observe how Christ sympathizes with his persecuted followers. The blows that fall upon them, fall upon him. If Saul strikes the disciples in Damascus, Christ feels the blows in heaven.

5. Who art thou, Lord? Sure that it was a supernatural communication, though he might possibly suspect its source, he did not yet know that it came from Christ. Perhaps at times he had had misgivings that he might be wrong, but he was sincere. **I am Jesus.** It is not said, "the Christ," but Jesus, the crucified one against whom Saul was raging. Had the answer been "the Christ," or the Son of God, Saul might still have doubted whether this was Jesus. **It is hard for thee to kick, etc.** Omitted here by the Revision, but found in Acts 26:14. The idea is, that he is injuring himself, like the ox that kicks back on the goads used to urge him forward.

6. Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee, etc. The question, to which this seems to be the answer is omitted in the Revision and the oldest MSS. He must enter the church just as others. The Lord had appeared to him in order that he might be qualified for apostleship by having seen Christ, but he must learn the way of the gospel from one of its preachers. Christ never told a mortal how to be saved after he gave the Great Commission to the church.

7. And the men ... hearing a voice, but seeing no man. They were dumb with amazement, but did not see Christ, who was only revealed to Saul. They heard the sound, but the words were for Saul and only understood by him. Compare with Acts 22:9. The two passages taken together mean that they heard a sound, but no words.

8. He saw no man. His eyes were blinded by the brightness of the Lord. He who had come with such power to Damascus had to be led helpless into the city.

10. A certain disciple ... named Ananias. He is named nowhere but in connection with the conversion of Saul. As in the case of Philip sent by the angel to the eunuch, so he is sent by revelation to Saul. A revelation was needful from the fact that Saul was a terror to the church and all would avoid him.

11, 12. Go into the street which is called Straight. This street ran in a direct line from gate to gate, east and west, and was anciently 100 feet wide and celebrated for its magnificence. It is now contracted and mean. **Inquire in the house of Judas.** Nothing more is known of this Judas. **For Saul, of Tarsus.** As the name was not uncommon, he is designated by his native city, "no mean city," a place of 30,000 inhabitants, 20,000 at present, then celebrated for its schools. It was the Cilician capital. **He prayeth.** An assurance that Ananias would be favorably received. Besides, in his prayer, the vision came that Ananias would come.

13, 14. Ananias answered. In view of the terrible record of Saul the fears of Ananias were not unreasonable.

15. He is a chosen vessel unto me. On this account the Lord appeared to him. See (Acts 26:16). The Lord appeared unto him, “for this purpose to make him a minister and a *witness*.” Unless a man is called like Saul to be an apostle he need not expect such a vision. **To bear my name before the Gentiles.** His mission as the apostle to the Gentiles is pointed out. **And kings.** He not only bore witness before the Roman rulers, but before King Agrippa and the emperor Nero.

17. Ananias ... putting his hands on him. Not to convey a gift, but as a friendly act, significant of God's blessing. His sight returned immediately after. There is no proof whatever that any spiritual gifts were imparted, nor that any but apostles could confer these gifts, and Paul always asserted that he received his signs of apostleship, not of men, but of Christ. See Gal. 1:1, 11, 12. “The being filled with the Holy Spirit” took place after the baptism at the hands of Ananias.

18. He arose, and was baptized. The account is more fully given by Paul himself (Acts 22:13–16). Ananias said, “Receive thy sight, and in the same hour I looked upon him.” Then, after stating why the Lord had called him, he added: “Why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” Note (1) that “tarrying” for weeks or months before baptism was then unknown; (2) that there would be no necessity of “arising,” if water was applied in baptism, but there would be if he had to go to a place suitable for immersion; (3) that the term *wash* (Greek, “bathe”) implies more than a sprinkling or pouring; (4) that neither Ananias nor Paul (22:16) understood that his sins were remitted before baptism. Compare Acts 2:38 and 22:16.

19. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples. In worship and intercourse with them. He must learn more experimentally of the church before preaching.

20. Straightway. Following this he began to preach **Christ in the synagogues.** *Jesus* in the Revision. He preached that the Crucified Jesus is the Son of God.

21. All that heard him were amazed. They had heard of his former zeal against the church and of his being sent to Damascus, but as yet had not learned of his conversion.

22. Saul increased the more in strength. Grew continually in power to preach Christ.

23. After that many days were fulfilled. A long period, probably at least three years. Luke's narrative is very condensed. He is not writing a history of Saul, but of the founding of the church. We learn from Paul (Gal. 1:16–18) that he spent at this time a long period in Arabia, and after this returned to Damascus. It was at his return that this persecution broke out. **The Jews took counsel to kill him.** See 2 Cor. 11:32, for additional information. At this time Damascus was in the temporary possession of Aretas, an Arabian potentate. Less scrupulous than the Roman rulers, he was willing to please Saul's Jewish enemies, who were numerous and influential, by putting him to death.

24. They watched the gates. “The governor, under Aretas the king, kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me” (2 Cor. 11:32).

25. Let him down by the wall. As the gates were guarded, there was no escape that way. Houses built against or on the wall, would afford an opportunity of letting him down on the outside. “And through a window, in a basket, was I let down by the wall and escaped his hands” (2 Cor. 11:33).

26. And when Saul was come to Jerusalem. Three years had passed since he left the city, a proud, talented young Pharisee, with brilliant worldly prospects, the honored agent of the Sanhedrim, commissioned to stamp out Christianity at Damascus. He now returns a disciple of him whom he sought to destroy, his bright worldly prospects all forfeited, an outcast from his own nation, persecuted and hated. Why this change? No explanation is possible, save that given in this history

and by himself. **They were afraid of him.** Little was known in the church of the change. A great part of the three years were spent in Arabia, probably in study and preparation of his great work. They had known so much of his fury in the past that they feared him still. His appearance in the church would be much like that of Robert G. Ingersoll in a Christian convention.

27. Barnabas took him. See Acts 4:36. Barnabas was a Hellenist like Saul. When he vouched for him to the apostles, their distrust ended. Paul (Gal. 1:18) gives an account of this visit to the apostles.

29. He disputed against the Grecians. The Jews in Jerusalem who had been born in foreign countries and spoke the Greek language. See notes on Acts 6:1.

30. They brought him down to Cæsarea. The same class of Jews who had raised the persecution against Stephen now sought the death of Saul. By the aid of the brethren he was taken to the seaport of Cæsarea and sailed for his old home at Tarsus. Some think, however, from Gal. 1:21, that the journey was made by land through Syria. It is more likely that he sailed from Cæsarea to Seleucia in Syria, and from thence made his way to Tarsus. Four or five years pass before the next mention of Saul in Acts (12:25), an interval passed in preaching Christ (Gal. 1:23), and resulting in the planting of churches in Cilicia (Acts 15:23, 41).

31. Then had the churches rest. After the departure of Saul there was a cessation of persecution for several years. The reason is found in the history of the times. The Roman emperor, Caligula, had ordered his statue to be placed in the temple at Jerusalem for worship, a desecration of the temple, and the Jews were too much engaged in their efforts to prevent this to persecute the church. **Edified.** Built up. **Were multiplied.** The result, always, of “walking in the fear of the Lord and comfort of the Holy Spirit.”

32–34. As Peter passed throughout all quarters. Visiting the churches of Judea. **At Lydda.** A town in the sea-coast plain, now called Ludd, not far from Joppa. Here he healed a cripple of eight years. Observe that he ascribes the power to Christ.

35. All that dwelt at Lydda and Saron. In the plain of Sharon, a term often applied to the sea-coast plain between Joppa and Cæsarea. See Song of Solomon 2:1. The passage means, not that every soul turned, but that there was a general turning as the result of the miracle.

36. There was at Joppa. The seaport of Jerusalem from the times of David to the present day, situated in a fertile plain now celebrated for its fine oranges, of which vast quantities are shipped from the port. Here named as the home of Tabitha, or Dorcas in the Greek (meaning “gazelle”), a saintly Christian noted for her deeds of love.

37. Washed, ... laid her in an upper chamber. Prepared for burial. The place was the large upper room on the upper floor of Eastern houses, usually used as a guest chamber.

38, 39. They sent unto him two men. The fame of his miracles was so well known that they probably hoped that he might restore her to life. **The widows stood by him weeping.** They had been the objects of her benevolence.

40. Peter put them all forth. Compare 1 Kings 17:19–23; 2 Kings 4:32–36; Matt. 9:25. Perhaps that his whole soul might be fixed on the Lord in prayer. It was on his knees that he was made to feel that the Lord had given him power. In his prayer he called on the name of Christ, was answered,

and only needed to say, “Tabitha, arise,” and “she opened her eyes.” It was the first miracle in which death was overcome at the hands of an apostle.

42. Many believed in the Lord. The knowledge of the miracle worked this result.

43. Tarried many days. Perhaps a year. Joppa was a large city and a favorable field of work. Here Peter was found, at “the house of Simon the tanner,” when called to Cæsarea by the messengers of Cornelius. It was by the seaside (10:32), and a house is still pointed out, close to the sea-shore, as that of Simon, which Dean Stanley believes to be on the original site.

In the main I have followed that of Dean Howson. The dates for the period after Paul's labors began are reasonably certain, and most critics are substantially agreed. Those of the period from the Ascension to the time when Paul began his labors at Antioch are somewhat uncertain. The Ascension and the founding of the Church on Pentecost must, I think be placed as early as a.d. 30, and this gives a longer interval for the events recorded in the first eleven chapters of Acts. As modified the following are the outlines:

a.d. 30. The Resurrection, the Ascension, the Gospel first Preached on Pentecost, Holy Spirit Sent, the Church Founded, and the Events Embraced from Acts I. to Acts VI: 8.

a.d. 37. Conversion of Paul of Tarsus. Acts IX :1–19.

a.d. 38–40. Period of Paul's Retirement in Arabia.

a.d. 41–43. The Labors of Peter and the Conversion of the Gentiles Recorded in Chapter IX-XI.

a.d. 44. Martyrdom of James, and Death of Herod. Acts XII.

a.d. 45–47. Paul's First Missionary Journey. Acts XIII, XIV.

a.d. 49 or 50. Council at Jerusalem. Acts XV.

a.d. 51–53. Paul on His Second Missionary Journey. Acts XV-XVIII.

a.d. 54–56. Paul at Ephesus, nearly three Years. Acts XIX.

a.d. 57. Paul a Second Time at Corinth.

a.d. 58. Paul Goes to Jerusalem, is seized, Imprisoned. Acts XX-XXIII.

a.d. 59–60. Paul Imprisoned at Cæsarea. His Defence before Festus and Agrippa. Acts XXIII-XXVI.

a.d. 61. Paul sent to Rome. Shipwrecked. Acts XXVII-XXVIII.

a.d. 62. Imprisoned at Rome. The End of Acts.

To this I may add that there is reason to believe that Paul was acquitted and released in a.d. 63, preached in Spain, Greece and Asia, until a.d. 67 or 68, was again seized in Nicopolis in Epirus, taken to Rome a second time, and put to death in a.d. 68.

Chapter X

The Doors of the Kingdom Opened to the Gentiles

Summary—*The Centurion Cornelius. His Vision. His Messengers Sent to Joppa. Peter's Vision the Next Day. Peter Directed to Go to Cæsarea. Peter Preacheth Christ to Cornelius and His Household. The Holy Spirit Falls on the Gentiles. The Gentiles Baptized.*

1. A certain man in Cæsarea named Cornelius. Cæsarea, at this time the chief seaport of Palestine and the Roman capital, was their military headquarters. Cornelius, a Gentile, a Roman

officer, is one of three centurions named favorably in the New Testament: Julius (Acts 27:1–3), the centurion at the cross, and the centurion who built the synagogue at Capernaum (Luke 7:2). The office corresponded to the modern captain. **The Italian band.** A cohort, composed of about 600 men. Many of the conquered races served in the Roman armies, but this cohort was made up of Italians. At the residence of the Roman procurator would be placed a body of troops on which he could rely.

2. A devout man. This is stated of Gentiles in several places in Acts, and always means those who had abandoned heathenism and turned to Jehovah. They had not become Jews, but were trying to worship the One God. The greater part of the first Gentile converts were made up of this class. He was benevolent and a man of prayer.

3. He saw in a vision evidently. “Openly,” distinctly. **About the ninth hour.** Three o'clock. One of the Jewish hours of prayer (Acts 3:1).

4. What is it, Lord? Filled with awe, he inquired the meaning of the appearance. **Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial.** He was heard because he was yearning for light and using all the light he had.

5. Send men to Joppa. He is not told to go, because a soldier could not leave his post without orders, but to send. Joppa is about thirty miles south of Cæsarea.

6. Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea-side. See notes on 9:43. Tanners were required, by the ancient sanitary laws, to live outside city walls, and had to be near plenty of water (Hackett). **Tell thee what thou oughtest to do.** As the angel says that his prayer was heard, he had surely prayed that he might know what to do.

7. Two of his household servants, and a devout soldier. The first were his personal servants, the second of his military household; all, no doubt, “devout.”

9. On the morrow, as they ... drew nigh to the city. Starting in the evening, after three o'clock, they could be near Joppa, thirty miles distant, the next day, “at the sixth hour,” or about twelve o'clock. **Went up upon the housetop to pray.** To the flat roof of the house, surrounded by the usual balustrade about four feet high, a place of retirement, and often the sleeping place of the family in the warm season. Moses (Deut. 22:8) required balustrades to the roofs. See also 1 Sam. 9:25.

10. Fell into a trance. A rapt condition, when he was transported out of himself into a mental condition that fitted him to see divine things. See 2 Cor. 12:2; Rev. 1:10.

11–15. Saw heaven opened. The meaning of the vision is plain. Peter was hungry. He saw, let down from heaven, all kinds of animals, those ceremonially unclean and prohibited by the Mosaic law, as well as others, and was told to kill and eat. When he answered that he had never eaten anything *common* (as opposed to holy) *and unclean*, that is, forbidden by Moses, he was told that what God had cleansed was not common or unclean. This could only mean that the ceremonial distinctions of the law (Lev. chap. 11, and Deut. chap. 14) were abrogated. It was at this time that the messengers from a Gentile, one of a class, with which even Peter would not eat, yet for which Christ had died, presented themselves. The object of the vision was to show Peter that it was the will of the Lord that he should go.

16. This was done thrice. The voice spoke three times. See verse 15.

17–23. While Peter doubted. Doubted, not what the Lord had said, but what was the special object. It was while he was thinking over the matter that the messenger came. The Spirit told him

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their purpose and what he must do. He, therefore, called in the men, took care of them till the next day, and then returned with them. Six Jewish brethren from Joppa went with him (11:12).

24. And the morrow after. Parts of two days were employed on the journey. **Cornelius ... had called together his kinsmen and near friends,** who were like-minded with himself.

25, 26. Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet. Meeting him, as he entered, he cast himself at his feet as God's messenger. Observe Peter's conduct: Instead of receiving worship, as the popes who claim to be his successors, he forbade him, as he was "only a man." Not even an angel ought to be worshiped (Rev. 22:9), only God.

28. Ye know that it is unlawful. Contrary to Jewish customs. Moses prohibited intermarriages and religious intercourse, but the Jews carried their restrictions beyond both the letter and the spirit of the law. They would not eat with the uncircumcised (Gal. 2:12).

33. We are all here present before God to hear. It was an assembly of "devout" men who recognized the fact that Peter had a message of the Lord for them; the first Gentile audience that ever listened to a gospel sermon.

34, 35. Then Peter opened his mouth. The same preacher who, on the day of Pentecost, declared the conditions of salvation to the Jews now declares them for the first time to the Gentiles. To him Christ gave the keys (Matt. 16:19) of the kingdom, and with them he opened its doors to both Jew and Gentile. **I perceive that God is no respecter of persons.** It has just dawned on him that Jew and Gentile are on the same footing in God's sight. Those who fear the Lord in any nation, of any race, will be accepted.

36–38. The word which God sent to the children of Israel. The message of Christ. **That word ... ye know.** Have heard of, but not fully. **After the baptism which John preached.** Christ's ministry began from his baptism by John. **How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth.** At his baptism, and made him *the Anointed*. He gives a condensed summary of the ministry of Jesus. Luke has only preserved the substance of what Peter said.

39–41. We are witnesses. Not only of his life and power, but of his resurrection.

42. He commanded us to preach. In the Great Commission.

43. To him give all the prophets witness. By their testimony of the Christ, which is so prominent a feature of prophecy. See Isa. 53:11; 55:1–3; Joel 2:32. **That through his name, etc.** Three important facts are stated: (1) that remission of sins is in the name of Christ; (2) that it is only granted on condition of belief upon him; that is, trust in his name; (3) that *whosoever* believes thus, Jew or Gentile, shall receive remission of sins.

44. While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard. The kinsmen and intimate friends of Cornelius, as well as on him (verse 24).

45. They of the circumcision. The Jews who went with Peter. They were astonished that the Holy Spirit should fall on Gentiles. This miraculous outpouring was extraordinary, and the object is plain, viz: to convince Peter and his fellow Jews that God had accepted the Gentiles; the same reason for which Peter's vision had been given. This is the only instance recorded of the Spirit falling on unbaptized persons. This exception is made to convince the Jewish Christians that uncircumcised Gentiles were fit subjects of baptism. Peter had to recall this fact in order to convince the church at Jerusalem that he had done right (Acts 11:2, 3, 15). As on Pentecost the Holy Spirit fell on Jews, so now when Gentiles receive the gospel they are baptized with the Holy Spirit (11:15, 16).

47. Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized? Peter's scruples were overcome. He was now satisfied that the gospel was for Gentiles as well as Jews. God had made no difference in the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He asks his Jewish brethren if any man can give a reason why they should not be baptized. Wesley says: "How easily is the question decided if we take the word of God for our rule. Either men have received the Holy Spirit, or not. If they have not, then *Repent, saith God, and be baptized, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* If they have been baptized with the Holy Spirit, then *who can forbid water?*"

48. Commanded them to be baptized. All who heard and upon whom the Holy Spirit fell. **In the name of the Lord.** In acknowledgment of his authority. All the baptisms of Acts are *in his name*, but *into* the names of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.



Chapter XI

Peter's Defence Before the Church at Jerusalem

Summary —*Peter's Course at Cæsarea Called in Question. He Defends Himself by Relating His Vision. And the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles. The Church, Convinced, Glorify God. The Missionary Work of Those Scattered Abroad. The Conversion of Gentiles at Antioch. Barnabas Sent to Antioch by the Church. Saul Brought from Tarsus. Famine Predicted. Collections for the Relief of Jerusalem.*

1, 2. They of the circumcision contended with him. The Jewish Christians, of whom the church at Jerusalem was entirely composed. The Gentiles of Cæsarea were the first uncircumcised persons admitted, the Samaritans being a circumcised people. The apostles and church generally seemed to understand that Jesus was the world's Savior, but thought that all who came to him must accept Judaism also and be circumcised before baptism. How deep-rooted their ideas were is shown by Peter's own case. It took (1) a vision, (2) the command of the Lord, (3) the call of Cornelius, and (4) the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles, to remove his and his brethren's scruples about baptizing the Gentiles. It is, therefore, no wonder that his course was called in question.

3. Thou ... didst eat with them. This was a positive violation, not of the laws of Moses, but of the rules of the orthodox Jews. Though Peter laid aside his Jewish exclusiveness at Cæsarea, he at least once afterwards relapsed (Gal. 2:12).

4–17. But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning. Thus showing that he acted under the Divine orders. See notes in preceding chapter. **These six brethren accompanied me.** These were brethren of Joppa, but Peter had taken them to Jerusalem to confirm his words. He knew his course would be called into question. **Whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.** Note the import of these words of the angel to Cornelius: (1) Notwithstanding his prayers, alms, devotion, and justice, he was not yet saved. Only the gospel could save him. God's mercy was shown in bringing him the gospel. (2) This is the first instance named in Acts of a household baptism. Were there any infants? Who are meant is seen by reference to 10:24, "his kinsmen and near friends." These "heard" (10:44), were baptized with the Holy Spirit, and baptized in water (10:47, 48). **As on us at the beginning.** Note that Peter compares the outpouring on the Gentiles with that of the



day of Pentecost. He calls both instances “baptisms of the Holy Spirit.” Miraculous signs accompanied each instance. Have we a right to speak of a baptism of the Holy Spirit without such signs? The gift of the Holy Spirit with its fruit (Gal. 5:22, 23) is promised to every obedient believer, but the baptism of the Holy Spirit seems to have been extraordinary and special. Note also that Peter calls the Day of Pentecost *the Beginning*. The Beginning of what? Of the preaching of the New Covenant, of the Great Commission, of the conditions of the gospel under the reign of the exalted King and Savior, of the church of Christ on earth. **What was I, that I could withstand God?** All these extraordinary signs were then given in order to show Peter and the Jewish Christians that the Gentiles were also accepted.

18. They held their peace. Gave up the controversy. They were convinced by the account, and assured that “God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life;” *i. e.*, had removed the barriers in the way of the Gentiles repenting and finding life through Christ.

19. Now they which were scattered abroad. See 8:5. **Travelled as far as Phenice.** Phoenicia. A long, fertile plain between the Lebanon mountains and the sea containing the famous cities of Tyre and Sidon. These preachers, perhaps, founded churches here, as we find them existing later (Acts 21:4; 27:3). **Cyprus.** The famous island in the Mediterranean. **Antioch.** The capital of the whole province of Syria, including Palestine, situated on the Orontes a short distance from the sea, at this time next after Rome and Alexandria of the cities of the world in greatness, commerce and wealth. It was cultured, luxurious and corrupt, a Greek civilization corrupted by the wealth and luxury of Asia; a sort of oriental Rome. **Preaching ... unto the Jews only.** They departed before the Gentiles at Cæsarea were called to Christ.

20, 21. Cyrene. A great Grecian city of North Africa, with a large Jewish population. These preachers were Jews from Cyprus and Cyrene who had been converted at Jerusalem. **Spake unto the Grecians.** Greeks in the Revision. The preachers were “Grecians,” *i. e.*, Hellenistic Jews (foreign Jews), but those to whom they spoke were *Greeks*, Gentiles, not of Jewish blood at all, I suppose “devout Greeks” who had turned from idols to seek the purer worship of Jehovah. These preachers, without knowledge of the call of the Gentiles, led by the spirit of Christ, preached the gospel to these Gentile seekers for light, with the result that “a great multitude believed and turned to the Lord.”

22–24. Sent forth Barnabas. Barnabas was himself a Grecian Jew (Acts 4:36), also the friend of Saul, another Grecian Jew (Acts 9:27). He was chosen as a suitable man to go to Antioch and see whether there had been a real work of the Lord. When he had seen that it was **the grace of the Lord**, he rejoiced and gave it Godspeed, and the work grew more and more in this great metropolis. Note that this is the first church named outside the bounds of Palestine. It was to become the great missionary center for the conversion of the Gentile world.

25, 26. Departed to seek Saul. Seeing the great opening, he knew that Saul was the best man to aid him. His trip to Tarsus is supposed to have been in a.d. 43; Saul to have departed from Jerusalem in a.d. 39; hence to have spent about four years in missionary work in “Syria and Cilicia.” See notes on 9:30.] **A whole year.** a.d. 44; they continued the work with great success. **The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.** The Jews called them “Nazarenes,” or “Galileans.” They called themselves “disciples,” “brethren,” “saints.” The new term was probably bestowed by the Gentiles in the great city, in default of any other name that seemed appropriate. Here was the first great Gentile church. Outsiders could see that they were not Jews nor pagans, hence they called them after their Lord, just as the first disciples of Plato were called Platonists, and those of Epicurus,

Epicureans. The designation *Christians* occurs only twice elsewhere in the New Testament (Acts 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16), and in both places its use is ascribed to those out of the church; yet it was accepted as honoring the Lord.

27, 28. In these days. While Saul was at Antioch. **Came prophets.** See note on 2:17. **One of them named Agabus.** Also named in 21:10. He had the prophetic gift. **Should be a great dearth.** A famine. **Throughout all the world.** This expression in the Scriptures often means the Jewish world. **In the days of Claudius Cesar.** Josephus (*Antiquities*, 20: 2, 6) describes a great famine that prevailed in Palestine in the reign of Claudius Cæsar, beginning about the close of a.d. 44, and lasting three or four years. Food had to be imported by the benevolent persons from Egypt and Cyprus, yet many perished.

29, 30. Then the disciples. Those at Antioch. They were informed that the famine would be very severe in Judea. Hence they contributed, each as he could, for the relief of their Jewish brethren, and sent it by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. The love of Christ was in their hearts. We see here the dawn of that new spirit that was to revolutionize the Gentile world. The Gentiles of Antioch extend their hands to relieve the distress of the Jews of Palestine.



Chapter XII

Persecutions in Judea

Summary —*The First Apostolic Martyr. Peter Seized by Herod. The Prayers of the Church. Peter's Prison Opened by an Angel. His Appearance to the Praying Disciples. Herod Pronounced a God. His Pitiful Death.*

1. About that time. While Saul and Barnabas were at Antioch. **Herod the king.** Herod Agrippa, the grandson of Herod the Great. See notes on Matt. 2:1. In the year 41, the Emperor Claudius had added Judea and Samaria to his former dominions, so that, at this time, Herod ruled over all Palestine. While voluptuous, and exhibiting in life none of the restraints of religion, he was a strict observer of the Jewish ceremonies, and hostile to Christianity, because it was subversive to Judaism. **To vex certain of the church.** Some of its leaders.

2. He killed James the brother of John. One of the three apostles most intimate with the Savior. The first apostle to suffer martyrdom. He is the only apostle whose death is recorded in the New Testament, save Judas the betrayer. **With the sword.** He beheaded James. This James, the apostle, is to be distinguished from James, the brother of the Lord (Gal. 1:19), whose name appears after this in Acts, and who wrote the Epistle of James.

3, 4. He saw it pleased the Jews. He would rather please men than God. Hence, he seized Peter. **The days of unleavened bread.** The Passover week. See Exod. 12:15, 16. Called **Easter** in verse 4. **To four quaternions of soldiers.** Sixteen soldiers divided into four watches, so that four would be on watch all the time, two in the prison and two at the door.

5. But prayer was made without ceasing. By the whole church, in its assemblies, that God might deliver him.



6. When Herod would have brought him forth. To execution, probably on the day after the passover week ended. The Jews thought that executions during this week were a desecration. **Peter was sleeping ... bound with two chains.** The Roman method was adopted. He was chained to the soldiers who slept on each side of him, while the other two soldiers of the watch stood before the prison door. These precautions were taken for fear of a rescue.

7, 8. The angel of the Lord. Coming in answer to prayer. **Smote Peter.** To arouse him. **Gird thyself.** In other words, Dress thyself. His girdle was unfastened while sleeping, and his sandals laid off. The garment to be cast about him was a cloak. There was no haste.

9–11. Thought he saw a vision. All seemed so strange that, just aroused from sleep, he was uncertain whether it was real. **The first and second ward.** Watches. The soldiers on watch seem to have been stationed apart, one near Peter's door, the other near the gate. **The iron gate.** The outer gate of the prison. It was after it was passed, and the angel had left him in the street, that Peter was first sure that it was no vision, but that the Lord had delivered him.

12. Came to the house of Mary. This Mary was the mother of Mark, called in Acts both John and Mark. See 13:5, 13 and 15:39. She was related to Barnabas (Col. 4:10). **Many were gathered together praying.** For Peter's deliverance.

13–17. A damsel came to hear. It was in the night, and they were Christians. The knocker might be an enemy or a friend. The damsel, a maid-servant, had charge of the door. **When she knew Peter's voice.** In answer to her question who might be at the door. Instead of opening, in her gladness, she flew to tell the good news, a touch of nature. **It is his angel.** The Jews held that every one had his guardian angel, and they thought his angel had assumed Peter's voice. A mistake, and Luke does not say whether the idea on which it was based is true or not. **They were astonished.** They could hardly believe their own eyes. **Beckoning ... hold their peace.** Their joy was so tumultuous that he could not be heard. **Go shew these things to James.** Not the apostle, but the brother of the Lord, so conspicuous after this as the pastor of the church at Jerusalem. Peter's message seems to recognize the fact that he was a leading man. Perhaps the apostles had retired from the city for fear of Herod. For notices of James, see Acts 15:13; 21:18; Gal. 1:19 and 2:9, 12.

18, 19. As soon as it was day. The sleeping soldiers did not discover that the prisoner was gone until morning. They were answerable for him. **Examined the keepers.** Tried them for neglect of duty. **Commanded.** That those on guard, the four, should be executed. **Went down from Judaea to Cæsarea.** In this city by the sea, the Roman capital of Palestine, he made his abode a part of the time, though Jerusalem was his usual residence. Josephus says that he went now to Cæsarea to conduct games in honor of the Emperor Claudius.

20. Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon. The reason of this displeasure is not known. These cities were on the sea-coast, but Herod's dominions occupied the country behind them. **Having made Blastus, the king's chamberlain, their friend.** Probably by a bribe. The chamberlain guarded his bed-chamber and would be a trusted friend and adviser.

21. On a set day Herod. Josephus (Antiq. 19: 8, 2) confirms Luke's account. He states why Herod was at Cæsarea, speaks of the assembly, the royal robe, the oration, the impious shout of the people, the sudden death of Herod, and pronounces it a judgment.

22. The people gave a shout. The people of Cæsarea were, many of them at least, heathen. As we learn from Josephus, on the second day of the games, Herod, clad in robes of silver cloth, entered the theater, and standing in the sunshine, his robes reflected his splendor. Then he made an oration, and the people raised their shout: **It is the voice of a god.** It is thought that his speech was an

announcement of his decision in the matter of difficulty with Tyre and Sidon, and that the ambassadors were present.

23. The angel of the Lord smote him. Josephus says he lingered five days in great agony. This harmonizes with Luke's account. **He was eaten of worms.** Josephus says he was taken with abdominal pains; Luke explains the cause. The disease is by no means unknown. Many cases of death from the same cause are on record. Among others the Emperor Galerius, the predecessor of Constantine the Great, so died.

24. But the word of God grew. Its influence kept extending, and all these exciting events.

25. Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem. This verse is introductory to the next chapter, which introduces the era of Gentile missions. Acts 11:29, 30 explains why they had gone to Jerusalem. See note. **Took with them John, whose surname was Mark.** He was a relative of Barnabas (Col. 4:10). In the next chapter (13:5) he appears as an associate in their missionary labors.



Chapter XIII

The Era of Gentile Missions

Summary — *Fasting and Prayer at Antioch. The Holy Spirit Directs Paul and Barnabas to Be Sent Forth. Their Ordination. They Preach the Word in Cyprus. Elymas Rebuked. The Proconsul Converted. The Missionaries Sail to Perga. The Gospel Preached in Antioch of Pisidia. The Persecution Raised by the Jews. The Departure to Iconium.*

1. There were in the church at Antioch. For description of Antioch and account of the founding of the church in that city see 11:19, notes. Also 11:26. This was the mother church of Gentile Christendom. It was at this period the most important city of Asia, and the third city of the world. For description, see notes on 11:22. **Prophets and teachers.** These offices were not identical (Eph. 4:11), though the first included the last. A prophet was an inspired teacher, not necessarily one who predicted the future, but one who spoke God's message by inspiration. **Barnabas.** One of the prophets. See notes on 11:22. **Simeon called Niger.** Nothing more is known of him. As Niger means "black," some have fancied that he was an African, but Niger was as common a Roman surname as Black is now. **Lucius of Cyrene.** The men who planted the church at Antioch were "of Cyprus and Cyrene" (see note on 11:20). Lucius was probably one of these. The name occurs again in Rom. 16:21. **And Manaen.** His mother was probably the nurse of Herod when the latter was a babe. Herod Antipas, the husband of Herodias, the murderer of John the Baptist, is meant. He was now dethroned and an exile in Gaul. **And Saul.** The greatest of these men is named last. His greatness was not yet demonstrated.



2. As they ministered. These men worshiped before the Lord, fasting, and no doubt asking for guidance in the extension of Christianity. **The Holy Ghost said.** By an inspiration given to some one of these prophets. "God has spoken at sundry times and in divers manners unto the fathers by the one of these prophets." Compare 20:23. **Separate me Barnabas and Saul.** Both had been tried and shown to be worthy. They are now, by Divine direction, to be formally consecrated to the work

of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. From this time Antioch is the great missionary center. **Whereunto I have called them.** God called; men separated, or formally set apart.

3. When they had fasted and prayed. This verse shows how they were set apart. It was by fasting, prayer, and the laying on of hands. They were not thus set apart to an order or rank in the kingdom, but to a work unto which they were called. They were not made priests, or bishops, but *missionaries*. This act did not make Paul an apostle. Christ chose him, as he had Peter, John and the others. **They sent them away.** As the missionaries of the church at Antioch to the heathen. We find that they return to report to the church (Acts 14:27) after a long missionary tour.

4. So they ... departed unto Seleucia. This was the seaport of Antioch, at the mouth of the Orontes, about sixteen miles distant in a direct course. At that period it was crowded with shipping. The massive walls of its harbors are still seen, though the city is a ruin. **They sailed to Cyprus.** The large island which could be seen in clear air from the coast of Asia. It was chosen as the first field, probably because it was the old home of Barnabas (4:36). It had a large Jewish population.

5. At Salamis. The eastern seaport. A day's run would carry them from Seleucia to Salamis. The distance is only about fifty miles. **Preached ... in the synagogues.** That there was more than one shows that the Jews were very numerous. In the reign of Trajan, a half century later, they were numerous enough in Cyprus to almost exterminate the Gentile population, and were only put down after the arrival of the Roman general, Hadrian, afterwards emperor, with a great army. **They had also John.** Mark. He probably acted as baptist. He was related to Barnabas (Col. 4:10).

6. When they had gone through the isle. The island was about 130 miles long by fifty wide. Salamis being at the east and Paphos at the west extremity. **Paphos.** This was at this time the capital. It was noted for the worship of Venus. **Found a certain sorcerer.** A magician. Though the law (Deut. 18:9–22; Lev. 19:31) forbade witchcraft and magic, yet contemporaneous history shows that at this period the Jewish magicians had great influence. Marius, Pompey, Crassus, Cæsar, and Tiberius were all more or less under their sway. **A false prophet.** Falsely professing inspiration.

7. Was with the deputy. In the Revision, "Proconsul." The Roman provinces at this time were divided into senatorial and imperial. The senatorial were ruled by a proconsul. We learn from other sources that Cyprus at this time was a senatorial province ruled by a proconsul. **Sergius Paulus.** Nothing more is known of him than is here related. **A prudent man.** An inquiring man. Hence he was anxious to hear Barnabas and Saul.

8. But Elymas. Another name of Bar-Jesus, meaning, the wise man. He had probably assumed it. **Withstood them.** As a Jew he was opposed, and his interests, too, were opposed. He did not wish to lose his hold on the proconsul. Hence he sought to prevent his acceptance of the faith.

9. But Saul, who is also called Paul. From this date he is the chief figure of the Acts. Barnabas, who had hitherto been the leader, falls behind. The origin of the name Paul is unknown. It is a Roman name, that of a great Roman family, and it is likely that the great apostle had two names, one Jewish, the other Gentile, a common thing anciently. Peter, Daniel, Esther, and many others afford examples. **Filled with the Holy Ghost.** Acting under the impulse of the Holy Spirit.

10–12. Child of the devil. Under his influence. **The right ways of the Lord.** God's plan of salvation in Christ. **The hand of the Lord is upon thee.** In judgment. **Thou shalt be blind.** He was fighting against the light. Hence physical blindness for a season. **A mist and a darkness.** As though a cloud had gathered about him. **Then the deputy ... believed.** The language implies that he became a Christian. The "believers" were those who accepted Christ.

13. Now when Paul and his company. Henceforth Paul is the leader. From Paphos they sailed northward to Perga on the Asiatic mainland, an important city of Pamphylia. **John departing.** Why he left we do not know, but we know Paul did not approve of it. See 15:39. Perhaps he feared the dangers before them.

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14. They came to Antioch. They seemed to have passed at once from Perga to the Antioch that lay in the interior. It must be distinguished from the Antioch of Syria (11:22) before named. There were several Antiochs, this one being the capital of the province of Pisidia. Vast ruins still mark its site. **They went into the synagogue.** In every Gentile city where there was a Jewish synagogue the gospel was preached first to the Jews by the apostolic preachers. The course of Paul and Barnabas here is an example of their custom.

15. After the reading. In the synagogue worship the reading of the Scriptures made a very important part. As copies of the Scriptures were very rare, this reading was necessary to convey scriptural instruction to the people. They were read in course, two lessons each Sabbath, one from the five books of Moses, the other from the other books of the Old Testament. Plumptre insists that we are enabled by two curious coincidences to fix, with very little uncertainty, the precise Sabbath on which the mission work at Antioch opened. The opening words of Paul refer to Deut. 1:31, and this was the lesson for the forty-fourth Sabbath in the year, which fell in July or August; the corresponding second lesson from the prophets being Isa. 1:1–27, from which he also quotes. He starts, as was natural, from what the people had just been listening to, as the text of his discourse. **The rulers of the synagogue.** The synagogue was governed by a board of elders.

16. Then Paul stood up. Invited to speak by the usual courtesy extended to visiting brethren, he arose, according to the Greek custom. In Judea speakers sat. Among the Greeks they stood. The address that follows, the first reported address of Paul, is worthy of special study especially as an example of the character of his preaching in the synagogue. It begins with a short recapitulation of the glorious history of Israel, a theme always apt to secure the favor of a Jewish audience, and when he has ascended to David, the hero king and the pride of every Jew, he passes from him to the promised Son of David, and thus preaches Christ. Had he begun at once with the latter, the great object of his discourse, he would have aroused prejudice and perhaps closed their ears. It will be observed here before a Jewish audience, as well as at Athens before a heathen audience, he first secured a common ground with his hearers, and upon it founded his argument for the gospel. **Men of Israel, and ye that fear God.** There were two classes present, Jews and “the devout Greeks.” The latter had given up heathenism, had learned to “fear God,” and were anxious to learn more about him; hence were wont to attend the synagogue.

17–19. Destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan. For their names, see Deut. 7:1.

20. After that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years. This statement seems to conflict with 1 Kings 6:1, which assigns 480 years to the period between the coming out of Egypt and the fourth year of the reign of Solomon. This would allow only about 300 years to the period of the Judges. David's reign was forty years, Saul's the same, the period in the wilderness the same, Joshua ruled about twenty-five years, add four years for Solomon, and we have 149 years, which, taken from 480 years, leaves 331 for the time of Judges and Samuel. The apparent discrepancy between Paul and the writer of 1 Kings is removed, however, by the Revision, based on the oldest and best Greek text. It changes the place where “and after that” occurs, so that the passage reads, “When he had destroyed the seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land for an inheritance, for about four hundred and fifty years: and after these things (*i.*

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e., after the allotment of the land and all before mentioned) he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet.” The 450 years, in my judgment, includes the period from the departure out of Egypt to the reign of David, the two greatest eras in Jewish history before Christ.

21. By the space of forty years. The Old Testament does not give the length of Saul's reign, but Josephus says Saul reigned for forty years.

22. He raised up unto them David. The Lord called the young shepherd to the throne. **A man after mine own heart.** The language does not occur in this form in the Old Testament, but is implied in 1 Sam. 13:14. This does not imply that David was perfect, but that he sought to do the Lord's will, instead of showing stubborn disobedience, like Saul. He exhibited nobility of purpose, sought the welfare of the people, and aimed at a purer life.

23. Of this man's seed, ... according to his promise. For the promise of a Savior of David's seed, see 2 Sam. 7:12; Isa. 11:1; Zech. 3:8; 6:12.

24, 25. When John had first preached. John, who preached before the Savior's coming, is named because he was well known to the Jews, and most of them regarded him a prophet. See Matt. 3:1–12 and John 5:32–35.

26. Men and brethren. Having declared the coming of the Savior of the seed of David, he now shows to whom his salvation was offered, not only to “children of the stock of Abraham,” but to “whosoever among you feareth God,” Gentiles as well as Jews.

27–37. Paul now recapitulates the facts of the Gospel, viz: (1) Christ rejected by the rulers; (2) the Scriptures that they read every Sabbath fulfilled by condemning him; (3) the demand upon Pilate to slay him, when he had declared there was no cause of death; (4) the Scriptures fulfilled in his death; (5) the abundantly attested resurrection; (6) he declares that the promise made the fathers was now fulfilled to their children (see Gen. 12:3; 22:18, etc.) **Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.** See Psa. 2:7. Paul gives the thought in Rom. 1:4: “He was declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead.” **No more to return to corruption.** Never more to endure death. **I will give you the sure mercies of David.** The mercies promised to David, one of which was a descendant whose throne should be everlasting. See Isa. 55:3, and compare 2 Sam. 7:10. **Thou wilt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.** Quoted by Peter on the day of Pentecost. See Acts 2:27–31, notes.

38–41. Through this man. The risen Savior. Only through Christ does God offer pardon. See 4:12; Rom. 3:25 and 8:1–4. **By him all that believe are justified.** If you believe on Jesus as the Messiah and accept him in faith, he will do for you what the law could never do, justify you before God. The law could not bring peace. **Beware therefore.** The address closes with a warning of the danger of rejecting Christ. Verse 41 is freely quoted from Habakkuk 1:5. His words referred primarily to the invasion of the Chaldeans, but reached beyond to a greater punishment for the greater sin of rejecting Christ. Only a few years after Paul quoted this at Antioch “the despisers wondered and perished” in the awful calamity of the Jewish nation, brought on by refusing the Savior.

42, 43. When the Jews were gone out. The Revised text gives a different sense: “As they (Paul and Barnabas) went out,” they were asked to speak again the next Sabbath. **When the congregation broke up.** When the services were over, many, both Jews and proselytes, followed them to learn more, and possibly yielded to Christ. **Persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.** By trusting in and obeying him. This could not be done if they refused Christ when he was preached to them.

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44. The next sabbath came almost the whole city. The sermon of the Sabbath before, the labors of Paul and Barnabas during the week, and the talk aroused, filled the city with intense interest.

45. When the Jews saw the multitudes. The vast concourse, in large part Gentiles, anxious to hear of the “ensign to whom the Gentiles shall seek,” aroused Jewish bigotry. Nothing ever stirred the Jews of either Palestine or of Gentile countries to such hatred as the declaration that Christ is a Savior of the Gentiles as well as the Jews. See 22:21. **Contradicting and blaspheming.** Contradicting the application of the prophecies to Jesus, which Paul made in his address; blaspheming by denying and speaking contemptuously of the Son of God.

46. It was necessary. The preachers met this attitude of the Jews by boldly stating their purpose to turn from them to the Gentiles. It was God's will that the Gospel should first be offered to the chosen people. See Acts 1:8; 3:26; Rom. 1:16. While the chosen people were to have the first opportunity, yet “God had put no difference” between Jew and Greek. As soon as the Jewish audiences manifested a self-willed, contradictory spirit, instead of engaging in idle disputation, the apostles were wont to turn to the Gentiles.

47. For so hath the Lord commanded. It was not only the Lord's will that they should preach first to the Jews, but that they should then turn to the Gentiles. So the Lord had shown in their own prophets. Isaiah 49:6 is quoted, where Christ is declared to be “a light of the Gentiles,” and appointed “for salvation to the ends of the earth;” a world Savior.

48. When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad. Glad, not only that the gospel was offered to them, but that in sacred writings of the Jews, it was declared that the Gentiles should have the gospel. They, too, had always been embraced in God's plan of redemption. **As many as were ordained to eternal life.** This passage has been used as a proof text for the extreme Calvinism that makes God arbitrarily select some for salvation and reject others. Wesley, on the other hand, says: “The original word rendered *ordained* is not once used in the Scriptures to express eternal predestination of any kind. The sense is that those, and those only, now ordained, now believed. Not that God rejected the rest; it was his will that they also should be saved, but they thrust salvation from them. Nor were those who then believed *forced* to believe. Grace was offered to them and they did not thrust it away.” It is God's ordination that those of humble, teachable, honest hearts, seeking the truth and life, shall come to life when it is offered, and such accepted the gospel on this occasion. **Believed.** “Made a public profession of their faith.”—*Dean Howson*.

50. The Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women. Gentile women who had learned to revere the One God, women of high rank (see Revision). A Roman writer (Strabo) declares that the women in this part of Asia exerted a powerful influence. **And the chief men.** Probably the husbands of these women. **Raised persecution.** There was probably no appeal to the magistrates, who were Romans (Antioch of Pisidia was a Roman colony), but they excited tumultuous opposition. The missionaries retired for the time, because their work was interrupted. They were not exiled, for they returned afterward (14:21).

51. They shook off the dust of their feet. See Luke 9:5. The Master's command was obeyed. **Iconium.** In Lycaonia, about fifty miles east of the Pisidian Antioch. At a later period, Iconium became celebrated as the capital of the Turks, before Constantinople fell into their hands. The Turkish sultan was long called the Sultan of Iconium. It was only after the Turkish conquests in Europe that the capital was moved to Constantinople. It is still a place of 30,000 inhabitants, and is called Konieh.

52. The disciples were filled with joy. Those of Antioch. Even if Paul and Barnabas were driven away, they had left them a glorious inheritance.



Chapter XIV

Missionary Labors in the Cities of Asia Minor

Summary —*Paul and Barnabas at Iconium. Flight to Lystra and Derbe. The Cripple at Lystra Healed. The Heathen Seek to Worship Paul and Barnabas as Gods. A Persecution Raised by the Jews. Paul Stoned Until Supposed to Be Dead. They Return to Visit the New Churches. Elders Ordained. The Return to the Syrian Antioch. The Report of Their Labors.*

1. They went ... into the synagogue of the Jews. Just as in the island of Cyprus and at Antioch. In almost every principal place a colony of Jews and a synagogue were found. Here, among their own nation, and in accordance with the customs of the synagogue, they spoke, and first declared the gospel. The result seemed uniformly to reach some Jews, and a number of the “devout Greeks” who attended the synagogue to learn more of God. Thus was formed the nucleus of the church. At Iconium, “a great multitude both of the Jews and the Greeks believed.”

2, 3. The unbelieving Jews. Here, as elsewhere, there was division. Those who stubbornly rejected the gospel were filled with hatred and opposed in every possible way. As they could do nothing without the aid of the Gentiles in that Gentile city, they sought to prejudice them. Notwithstanding, for a long time, Paul and Barnabas, continued to preach there with great success. How long they continued at Iconium is unknown, but as the first missionary journey occupied three or four years, they probably were here several months.

5, 6. There was an assault made. Hardly an assault, so much as a movement to make one. The Greek term implies a sudden movement. The attempt was avoided by the preachers receiving information and escaping from the city. In this effort there was concert of action between the Gentiles and Jews, the rulers of the synagogue joining, and the purpose was murderous. Paul (2 Cor. 11:25) says, “Once was I stoned.” That stoning was at Lystra. There was an attempt to stone at Iconium, but not a stone was thrown. **Fled to Lystra and Derbe.** These were Lycaonian cities, not far from Iconium. Neither now exists, but the ruins of Lystra, and those of Derbe it is thought, are identical. The first is called by a name meaning “The Thousand and One Churches,” on account of the ruins of so many sacred edifices. Lystra is named frequently in early church history as a center of Christian influence.

8–10. There sat a certain man at Lystra. The account of the healing of this cripple is related, not as an unusual occurrence, but because it led to the attempt to deify Paul and Barnabas. As to the frequency of the miracles, see verse 3 above. **The same heard Paul speak.** He might have been carried by his friends to the place of speaking, some open square or thoroughfare, to gratify his curiosity, or even to ask alms. **He had faith to be healed.** Wrought by hearing the word. As



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faith is a gospel requisite that we should be healed of our sins, so it was required as a condition of miraculous healing of bodily diseases. Note that this miracle, like those of Christ, is a parable of redemption. There is (1) Hearing of the Word; (2) faith which comes by hearing (Rom. 10:17); (3) the command that calls for an exercise of faith; (4) the effort to obey in faith; (5) salvation from the infirmity by obedience. As Christ so often said, so might Paul, “Thy faith hath saved thee.”

11–13. When the people saw what Paul had done. It must be kept in mind that the people of Lystra were heathen, that they believed in many gods, that their legends taught them that the gods had often come down in the form of men and interfered in human affairs. Hence, it is not strange that when they witnessed this miracle, unlike anything ever seen before in their city, they exclaimed, “The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.” **In the speech of Lycaonia.** Paul had preached in Greek, which was understood over all the East, but the native dialect of the Lycaonians was different, and in that they confer together. **Called Barnabas, Jupiter.** The chief of the gods in the Greek and Roman Pantheon. Barnabas was no doubt a more stately man than Paul, who says that his own “bodily presence was weak and speech contemptible,” and there was also a reason why they thought Paul, **Mercurius.** Mercury was the “interpreter of the gods.” His Greek name, *Hermes*, is the origin of our word Hermeneutics. Paul, eloquent, persuasive, active, was thought to represent the part of Mercury. **Then the priest of Jupiter.** There was a temple of Jupiter before the gates of the city, with the usual priest, and carried away by their idea, they prepared to offer sacrifices to the gods whom they supposed to have visited them. **Brought oxen and garlands.** The oxen for sacrifices; the sacrifices before being offered were crowned with garlands. Floral crowns were also worn by the priest offering sacrifice.

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14–18. Which when the apostles. The term “apostles” is used in verse 4. It is applied in the New Testament a number of times to persons not of the twelve, but apostolic men (see 2 Cor. 8:23). Paul was an apostle, chosen by the Lord, and Barnabas was an apostolic missionary, sent out (apostle means “one sent”) by the Holy Spirit. **They rent their clothes.** A sign of great grief, and even of indignation and horror. See Gen. 37:29 and Matt. 26:65. **We are men.** Not gods, but human, human as you are. See in this protest the unfaltering devotion to truth of these men. No advantage to themselves would induce them to permit a deception. **Should turn from these vanities.** From this idolatry. Instead, they called them to the worship of the Living God, the Creator of all things. **Who in times past.** He had left the nations to their own conceits until it should be demonstrated that man by searching cannot find out God. The efforts of human wisdom were a failure. **Nevertheless he left not himself without witness.** Nature with many voices testified of him. See Rom. 1:18–21.

19, 20. Came thither Jews. These inveterate opposers followed from the late scenes of gospel triumphs, and found the Lystrians disappointed that they had not been allowed to adore Paul and Barnabas. From one extreme they were easily led to the other. If they were not gods, they were bad men. The fickle populace was easily stirred to riot, and, led by the Jews, they seized and stoned the great apostle until they supposed he was dead. This, the first bodily injury he suffered for Christ, of which we have record, is alluded to in 2 Cor. 11:25, where he gives some account of what he had endured. After the stoning, his enemies dragged him out of the city as they would a carcass. When Paul's enemies had gone, the disciples gathered around, and to their joy and surprise **he rose up, and came into the city.** Whether he had received a blow that rendered him unconscious and apparently dead, until he recovered from the swoon, or whether his restoration was miraculous, cannot be surely determined. As commanded by Christ, when persecuted in one city, they departed and came the next day to Derbe, to labor for a time.

21–23. They returned again to Lystra. After a season of work at Derbe. The Jews had gone, the excitement had subsided, and it was needful to revisit their fields of labor to organize the churches. It is well to remember that one of the converts was Timothy (16:1). **Confirming the souls of the disciples.** Not an outward rite, but words of cheer that strengthened their souls. **Through much tribulation.** They taught them that they must expect trials and persecutions. All have to bear the cross. See Rom. 5:3; 2 Cor. 4:17; Heb. 12:5–11. **And when they had ordained them elders.** Observe (1) that elders were not appointed as soon as the churches were planted; time must be taken so as to know what men were fitted for the office; (2) that elders were not appointed to preside over a district, but **in every church**; (3) that there was a plurality; (4) that they were set apart with fasting, prayer, and imposition of hands. It is not here stated who selected the men, but from Acts 6:6 we would infer that they were chosen by the church under the advice of the apostles.

24–28. Preached the word in Perga. Here they had landed early in this missionary journey, but did not then, from some cause, pause to preach the gospel. See 13:13, 14. **Went down into Attalia.** A seaport not far from Perga. **Thence they sailed to Antioch.** The Syrian Antioch, the first Gentile church, the mother church of Gentile missions, the church that sent them forth several years before (13:1, 3). Exactly how long a time had been occupied in this missionary tour cannot be ascertained, but it is almost certain that the visit to Jerusalem, recorded in Acts 11:29, 30 and 12:25, took place in a.d. 44, while that mentioned in 15:2 took place in a.d. 51, there being six or seven years between. This time was occupied with the missionary journey and the stay at Antioch. The first probably extended over three or four years. **They rehearsed all that God had done with them.** They very properly made a report to the church that had sent them forth. It was a very cheering report. The gospel had been planted in the great island of Cyprus, received by the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, and extended through Pamphylia, Pisidia and Lycaonia, strong churches having been planted in their principal cities. **Abode there a long time.** As near as we can learn about two years, no doubt busy all the time preaching in the great city.



Chapter XV

The Question of Circumcision

Summary —The Judaizing Teachers at Antioch. Opposed by Paul and Barnabas. The Question Referred to Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas Report to the Apostles and Elders Their Work Among the Gentiles. Pharisees Insist That These Gentiles Must Be Circumcised. Peter's Address. Paul and Barnabas Show How God Was with Them. The Judgment of James the Lord's Brother. His Views Accepted by All. The Apostolic Letter to the Gentile Christians. The Joy at Antioch When the Letter Is Read. Judas and Silas.

1. Certain men which came from Judea. This chapter records the first intimation of the great controversy that agitated the apostolic church, and of which we find traces in many of Paul's letters, the question whether Christianity was merely a development and a sort of culmination of Judaism, or was a New Dispensation that had supplanted the Old and taken its place. At first the Christians of Jerusalem and Judea remained strict Jews, still keeping the ordinances of Moses. The Samaritans

converted by Philip were a circumcised people. The idea of the apostles, at first, seems to have been that Gentiles might become Christians, but must first be circumcised. It was a matter of astonishment to Peter and the brethren that he was required to baptize the Gentile Cornelius and his friends without circumcision. Then came the formation of the Gentile church at Antioch and the successful labors of Paul and Barnabas in western Asia. The influx of the Gentiles to the church, and their acceptance on the same terms as the old covenanted people of Jehovah, stirred those Jewish brethren of the more bigoted type to bitter opposition, and they began to send their teachers abroad with the declaration, **Except ye be circumcised.... ye cannot be saved.** Thus they came to Antioch; thus, at a later period, they disturbed the churches of Galatia and called out the Galatian letter. In order to destroy their influence, it was needful at once to settle whether they spoke the sentiment of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, and hence Paul and Barnabas were sent to lay this question before the great mother church. This caused the conference described in this chapter, spoken of in church history as The Council of Jerusalem. The reader should form some idea of the importance of this question. It was none other than whether Christendom should be Jewish Christian, or delivered from the bondage of the Jewish law into the liberty of the children of God. Paul (Gal. 2:4) calls these "certain men" "false brethren."

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2. No small dissension. These men were opposed by Paul and Barnabas, but the fact that they were from Jerusalem, and probably contended that they had the authority of the apostles, gave them an influence.

3, 4. Being brought on their way by the church. A special escort of church members attended them on their journey. It was mark of honor. See 20:38 and 21:5. **Passed through Phenice.** Phoenicia. They went by the land route, visiting the churches of Phoenicia and Samaria, causing great joy by their account of so great success among the Gentiles. **Were received of the church.** Had a cordial reception, a warm greeting.

5. There rose up certain of the Pharisees. Men of that sect who, like Paul, had become Christians, but unlike him had retained their Jewish bigotry. Perhaps some of them were Paul's old friends. They seem to have sprung the controversy when the missionaries gave account of their work (verse 4).

6. The apostles and elders came together. A meeting of the apostles and the elders of Jerusalem was called. It was in the year a.d. 51, about twenty years after the ascension of Christ. One apostle had suffered martyrdom; eleven, including Matthias, remained, though some might have been in distant parts. James, the "brother of the Lord," though not one of the Twelve, was a chief man now in the Jerusalem church, and is often spoken of by historians as its pastor, or bishop. Though his sentiment decided the question this day, he has been regarded as a leader of the Judaizing Christians. See Gal. 2:12.

7–11. When there had been much disputing. One side insisted that the Gentiles must keep the law of Moses, the other that they were not under the Mosaic covenant at all. **Peter rose up.** Probably silent until this time. He arose to rehearse his own experiences which had given him new light. **A good while ago.** Nine or ten years before. For the account of Peter's conversion of the Gentiles, see chapters 10 and 11. **Put no difference between us and them.** Accepted them just as he accepted us, and gave the Holy Spirit as a proof to us that he had accepted them. **Purifying their hearts by faith.** The Jews held that Gentiles were unclean, but Peter declared that faith, the true circumcision, that of the heart, not of the body, purified them into fitness for the ordinances of Christ. Observe Peter's doctrine: not circumcision of the flesh, but the faith that leads to obedience

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cleanses from uncleanness. **To put a yoke.** To impose Jewish obligations on Gentile Christians. The law of Moses was a yoke that **neither our fathers nor we were able to bear.** So strict in its requirements that none could keep it perfectly. **Through the grace of the Lord.** This is the hope of both Jew and Gentile, not obedience to the ceremonials of Moses.

12. All the multitude kept silence. After Peter's reminder of his work among the Gentiles, Paul and Barnabas were probably called on to show whether their work, like Peter's, showed that God was with them. They therefore gave some account of the miracles that God had wrought by their hands, thereby attesting the Divine favor.

13–21. James answered, saying. For other references to James see 1 Cor. 15:7; Gal. 1:19 and 2:9, and the Epistle of James. He is also mentioned several times in the Gospels, and seems, before the death of Jesus, to have been an unbeliever. It is probable that the speech of Peter, followed by the account given by Paul and Barnabas, convinced him, and led to the views he now expresses. **Simeon.** Simon Peter. **To this agree the ... prophets.** The quotation he gives is from Amos 9:11, 12. **Build again the tabernacle of David.** Restore the splendors of his family in the reign of the Messiah, "the Son of David." **That the residue of men.** The Gentile world. This grand prophecy of the calling of the Gentiles makes no mention of circumcision. **Known unto God are all his works.** The meaning is, that this calling of the Gentiles is a part of the Divine plan known to God from the beginning. **Wherefore.** Since it is evidently God's will, "My sentence is, that we do not trouble them." **Sentence.** Decision. **That they abstain from the pollutions of idols.** Four items are mentioned, which are all embraced in the apostolic letter as things forbidden. They were four common customs of the Gentile world, and matters on which there should be a clear understanding. The first does not mean only to refrain from worshiping idols, or eating meat offered in idol sacrifice, but from all the pollutions of the system of idolatry. Licentiousness and drunkenness received a sanction from religion. See Lecky's *European Morals*, chap. V., and Conybeare and Howson's *Paul*, chap. IV. **Fornication.** Chastity was the exception instead of the rule among Gentiles at this period. **From things strangled.** Because in strangling the blood was retained in the flesh. The use of blood was prohibited by the Mosaic law, and for wise reasons this prohibition was extended to Gentiles. The Roman epicures were wont to drown fowls in wine and then use the flesh. It was a common thing to drink wine mingled with blood. The only way to strike at these savage practices was to prohibit its use. **For Moses ... hath.** There are synagogues in every city. The use of blood would shock the Jews who have membership in these.

22–29. Then pleased ... with the whole church. All acquiesced in the judgment of James. The church is not before mentioned as taking part. The decisions seem to have been submitted to its voice. **To send chosen men.** As the messengers of the church at Jerusalem. **Judas.** Little is known of him to save that he was a prophet (verse 32). **Silas.** Well known after this as the companion of Paul. See Acts 16; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:19. **They wrote letters.** A letter. Luke gives it, I suppose, verbatim. **Send greeting.** Observe that the greeting is not only from the apostles and elders, but from the church. **It seemed good unto us.** It seemed good to them to send men, but the decision made "seemed good to the Holy Spirit" (verse 28). **Men that have hazarded their lives.** This high praise is given to Paul and Barnabas. It is the tribute of the church at Jerusalem to the two men sent from the church at Antioch. **Seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us.** The decision was inspired. **That ye abstain from meats.** See note on verse 20.

30–35. They rejoiced for the consolation. When they returned and the letter was read to the church at Antioch, it caused great joy. **Judas and Silas, being prophets.** Inspired speakers. Such

speakers were necessary to the church until it had the New Testament for a guide. **They were let go in peace.** They were dismissed for Jerusalem with benedictions of peace. **It pleased Silas to abide there still.** This verse is not found in the Revision, nor in the oldest MSS. **Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch.** Probably for the greater part of a year, preaching, and assisted by many other laborers.

36–41. Paul said unto Barnabas. This is a proposal to start on a second missionary journey, in order to visit and strengthen the churches already planted, as well as to extend the work. **Barnabas determined to take with them John.** He had abandoned them on the first tour (13:13), and his reasons did not satisfy Paul; hence he declined to take him. **The contention was so sharp.** Neither would yield, so they determined to work separately. Barnabas, with Mark, went to visit the churches of Cyprus, while Paul chose Silas as his fellow laborer. He seems to have returned from Jerusalem. **Being recommended ... to the grace of God.** Evidently a meeting of the church was held to commend them to God. **Went through Syria and Cilicia.** We have no account of the founding of these churches, but we know that Paul had before this labored in these parts. See Gal. 1:21.



Chapter XVI

The Gospel Carried into Europe

Summary —Paul at Troas. The Call to Macedonia in a Vision. The Journey to Philippi. The Conversion of Lydia and Her Household. The Damsel with the Spirit of Divination Healed. The Rage of Her Masters. Paul and Silas Seized, Scourged, Placed in Prison in the Stocks. The Events at Midnight. The Jailer and Household Baptized. An Appeal to Rights of Romans.

1–3. He came to Derbe and Lystra. Compare 14:6–21. **Behold, a certain disciple was there.** A member of the church at Lystra, converted on the previous missionary tour. **Timotheus.** Born of a Jewish mother, but of a Greek father. The name is Greek and means one who fears God. Following his father, he was uncircumcised and, hence, regarded as a Greek instead of a Jew. Yet he had been taught the Scriptures from childhood (2 Tim. 3:15) by his pious mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 1:5). These, Eunice and Lois by name, were Christians also. 1 Cor. 4:17 shows that Paul converted him. Compare Gal. 4:19. **Well reported.** As an active, efficient Christian. He had evidently labored for Christ in both places, and given such proofs as to show his fitness for the missionary work. **Go forth with him.** As a traveling companion. **And circumcised him.** Not because he thought it necessary to salvation, but **because of the Jews.** Wherever Paul traveled, he first labored in the Jewish synagogues. If one of his traveling companions was a Gentile, it would arouse Jewish prejudices so as to close their ears. Hence, since “neither circumcision nor uncircumcision was anything” (1 Cor. 7:19), he complied with the principle that he states in 1 Cor. 9:19, 20. In Gal. 2:3 it is stated that when Titus, a Greek, went up to Jerusalem, he was not compelled to be circumcised. Had he been, it would have been a concession to the Judaizing Christians who insisted that circumcision was necessary to salvation. Here the case was different. No Judaizing party made such a demand, and the act was one of pure expediency, in order to reach more readily

unconverted Jews. These examples teach us to accommodate ourselves to the prejudices of others as far as we can without the sacrifice of principle. From other passages (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6), we learn that, at this time probably, Timothy was ordained by the elders, and received special gifts by the imposition of the hands of the apostle.

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4, 5. They went through the cities. Where churches were already planted. As they went, they “delivered the decrees on circumcision and the law of Moses” decided upon at Jerusalem (15:23–29).

6–10. When they had gone throughout Phrygia. This was a Roman province west of Lycaonia in Asia Minor, running down to the seacoast of the Ægean Sea. **Galatia** lay on the north of Lycaonia, and was entirely in the interior. It received its name from a settlement of Gauls, an offshoot of a Gallic invasion of Greece in the third century before Christ. It became a Roman province in a.d. 26. No record is made here of the results of this tour, but as we elsewhere learn of numerous churches in Galatia shortly after this, we are justified in the inference that they were planted at this time. **Forbidden ... to preach the word in Asia.** By Asia is meant, not the great quarter of the world so named, but the province so called by the Romans, of which Ephesus was the capital. The Spirit now had other work for them. In the same way they were kept from going into Bithynia, the province on the Black or Euxine sea, north of Galatia, and hence turned westward through Mysia to the sea-coast at Troas. This city was about four miles from the site of ancient Troy, and was a transit harbor for those who crossed from Asia to Macedonia, or Greece. **A vision appeared.** Like Peter's vision at Joppa, it was a revelation. Like Peter's, it called him to labor in fields before unentered. **A man of Macedonia.** Macedonia proper lies to the north of the Ægean Sea, within a few hours sail of Troas. This ancient kingdom, under Philip and Alexander, had first absorbed all Greece, then conquered Persia and spread the Grecian language and customs over all western Asia. In turn it had fallen before the Romans, and was now a Roman province. It had a number of large cities, but Thessalonica was the Roman capital.

10. We endeavored to go into Macedonia. Sought to find a ship to carry them across. There is no intimation that they preached at this time of Troas, but a few years later we find here a church (20:6–12). Here, first, the writer of Acts speaks of himself as one of the company and adopts the style of an eye witness. It is supposed that Luke joined the missionary band at Troas.

11, 12. We came with a straight course. Before the wind. **To Samothracia.** An island about halfway between Troas and Neapolis, the European port where they landed. **And from thence to Philippi.** Only a few miles distant. They sought it at once, because it was **the chief city of that part of Macedonia.** The apostles tried to leaven the centers of influence with the Gospel. The city had been rebuilt about 400 years before this by Philip, the father of Alexander the Great, who named it after himself. It was famous as the place of the decisive battle between Brutus and Cassius on the one hand, and Mark Antony and Octavius, afterwards Augustus Cæsar, upon the other. **A colony.** A Roman colony was a settlement of Romans in a foreign country, with all the privileges of Romans. The colony had its own senate, its own magistrates, observed all the Roman forms, and was a miniature Rome. This colony had been established by Augustus Cæsar, who settled at this place a multitude of the partisans of his rival, Mark Antony, after the death of the latter. Philippi is now a small village named Filiba.

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13–15. Went out ... by a river side. The Gangas, a small river which flows by the city. **Where prayer was wont to be made.** Where there was a praying place. There seems to have been no synagogue, but a few pious Jews, women at least in great part, met on the river banks, out of the city, for prayer. **We ... spake unto the women.** Either Jewish women, or proselytes to the Jewish

faith. **Lydia.** The name is Greek. She was probably a convert to Judaism. **A seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira.** Thyatira, afterwards one of the seven churches of Asia, was beyond the Ægean Sea, hundreds of miles away. It was on the borders of Lydia, which was famous for its purple cloths. She was at this distant place for purposes of trade. Thyatira was a Macedonian colony, and Lydia probably had acquaintances or kinsmen in Macedonia itself. **Whose heart the Lord opened.** How, it is not stated. Possibly some of his providences especially fitted her for the reception of the gospel. **And when she was baptized.** In the apostolic period baptism always at once followed acceptance of the gospel. **And her household.** Some have held that this implies the baptism of infants. It rather implies that her servants and friends also accepted the gospel. There is no ground for the inference that she was even married, or had children. Meyer (*Acts*, p. 311), himself a German Lutheran, says: "If, in the Jewish and Gentile families which were converted to Christ there were children, their baptism is to be assumed in *those* cases, when they were so far advanced *that they could and did confess their faith on Jesus as the Messiah; for this was the universal, absolutely necessary qualification for the reception of baptism.... Therefore the baptism of the children of Christians,* of which no trace is found in the New Testament is not to be held as an apostolic ordinance." Olshausen and Neander, also Pedobaptists, take the same view. Lydia's household was probably composed of women who assisted her in her business. **She constrained us.** Paul did not usually accept aid from his converts (*Acts* 20:33; *2 Cor.* 12:17), but it seems that her urgent entreaty prevailed.

16–18. As we went to prayer. To the place of prayer. **A certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination.** Literally, "The spirit of a Pythoness." This meant, among the Greeks, a prophetic spirit, Pythias being one of the names of Apollo, the god of prophecy. The account shows that the damsel was "possessed," that her strange power gave her value in that it was superhuman, that she was a slave, owned by several masters, and brought them **much gain by soothsaying.** Luke does not say that she foretold the future, but the people thought she did. She was a demoniac. See note on *Matt.* 8:29. **These men are the servants of the most high God.** For similar testimony of the evil spirits to the work and power of Christ, see *Mark* 3:12; *Luke* 4:34. The Lord silenced them, and Paul followed the example. He delayed for many days, for reasons we cannot explain, possibly on account of something connected with the afflicted damsel herself. **In the name of Jesus Christ to come out.** "In my name," said the risen Lord, "shall they cast out devils" (*Mark* 16:17).

19–24. When her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone. Nothing inflames the rage of men more than to see their hope of ill-gotten gains taken away. In our country more than one man has fallen a victim to the rage of rum-sellers who have seen their hope of gain taken away. **Caught Paul and Silas.** As the leaders of the missionary band. **Drew them into the market-place.** The forum, or open square where meetings were held and the magistrates held their courts. **To the magistrates.** Roman officers, two in number, called *duumviri*, or prætors. **These men, being Jews.** A great prejudice against Jews at this time existed in Europe. Near this time, Claudius Cæsar expelled all Jews from Rome (18:2). **Do trouble our city.** Raise disturbances. **Teach customs ... not lawful.** Roman law sternly forbade one not a Jew to be circumcised.—*Howson.* Paul and Silas did not teach this, but it was a safe charge to make, they *being Jews.* **The multitude rose ... against them.** Inflamed with prejudice. **The magistrates.** Without inquiry, influenced by the outcries of the throng. **Rent off their clothes.** They ordered them at once to be scourged. The lictors, the executioners, were at hand. The Roman custom was to lay bare the body and to beat it with the

rods borne by the lictors. Paul says (2 Cor. 11:25), “Thrice was I beaten with rods.” **Laid many stripes upon them.** Moses (Deut. 25:3) mercifully restricted the number of stripes; hence, Paul says: “Five times I received of the Jews forty stripes, save one” (2 Cor. 11:24). With the Romans there was no such restriction. **Thrust them into the inner prison.** A damp interior cell from which all light was excluded. **The stocks.** An instrument of torture as well as confinement. The feet, stretched wide apart, were thrust through holes in a wall of wood, and the prisoner was fastened there.

25–34. Prayed, and sang praises. Never before had such sounds at midnight been heard from that inner dungeon. Bound, fettered, tortured, the spirit still had liberty, could pray, and praise God. God heard them, too, for there was a **great earthquake.** See Acts 4:31. It was God's angel to loose their bonds, open the prison doors, and magnify their work. **The keeper ... drew out his sword.** He was responsible with his life for the safety of his prisoners. Fearing them gone, he determined, like a Roman, to anticipate disgrace by death. Right there at Philippi, Brutus and Cassius had each inflicted self-death. Self-murder was very common among the Romans. **We are all here.** Paul and Silas had no inclination of escape; the other prisoners were probably too much astounded. **Called for a light.** “Lights” in the Revision. All was darkness. **Fell down before Paul and Silas.** Awed, believing that they were under Divine protection. **Brought them out.** Of the inner prison, probably into the prison court. **What must I do to be saved?** Saved from suicide, no danger of death because the prisoners are there, awed by the wonderful events, aware that these men preached a new religion and salvation, he asks this question. **Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.** He was a heathen. Faith was the first essential step. To Jews, on the day of Pentecost, already believing Peter's proposition, he said, in answer to the same question, “Repent and be baptized;” but the heathen jailer was not ready for this. Faith must first be wrought, and then that faith, leading to the acceptance of Christ, would save. His faith would save, because it would be the power that would lead him to follow Christ. **And thy house.** We learn from the next verse that “his house” could listen the **word of the Lord**, hence were not infants. It was needful to *preach the word*, for this heathen knew almost nothing of the gospel. In preaching it, Paul preached baptism, for that follows in verse 33. **Washed their stripes.** They were all covered with bruises, blood and dust. His heart is now changed and filled with the spirit of mercy. Howson suggests that they were washed in the tank or reservoir within the prison court, supplied by the water from the roof. Here also all were **baptized straightway.** On the baptism of his household, see notes on verse 15 above. **Brought them into his house.** The Revision says “up;” that is, from the court below where he washed their stripes, and was baptized. They were “brought out” (verse 30), the word was preached “in his house” (verse 32), they were then “taken” to the place of baptism (verse 33), after he “brought them into his house” (verse 34). **Believing in God with all his house.** All his household were, therefore, believers.

35–40. The magistrates sent the serjeants. The lictors are meant. It is possible that the magistrates had, in some way, heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens. They wished, therefore, to quietly get rid of them. The Porcian and Valerian laws exempted all Roman citizens from stripes or torture. They had broken the law. **Let them come themselves and fetch us out.** They had been publicly scourged and tortured as evil doers, in violation of law. Paul insisted that they should be as publicly vindicated, not for their own honor, but for the sake of the church at Philippi. **Being Romans.** We learn from Acts 22:25 that Paul was born a Roman citizen. His father, or some remoter ancestor, had been admitted to Roman citizenship, a great privilege and honor. **They feared.** Had Paul insisted, the magistrates could have been severely punished. They might abuse aliens, but “to

be a Roman was greater than to be a king.” Hence, they humbled themselves, and “came, and besought them, and desired them to depart out of that city.” **When they had seen the brethren.** Who now met at the house of Lydia. The church thus planted grew and was afterwards honored with an apostolic letter. **Departed.** To another field of labor. The reader should pause to reflect that Philippi was the first place, so far as we know, where the gospel was preached in Europe, that a woman was the first convert, that the messengers of the cross were met with blows, torture, and the dungeon, but through grace and the power of God triumphed gloriously. While Paul was in his next field of labor, Thessalonica, this young church of Philippi twice sent contributions to sustain him (Phil. 4:15, 16).



Chapter XVII

Paul at Athens

Summary —*The Journey to Thessalonica. Labors in the Synagogue. A Church Planted. The Jews Stir Up Persecution. Departure to Berea. Journey to Athens. The City Full of Idols. Paul's Evangelistic Labors. Taken to the Areopagus. His Address to the Athenians. The Diverse Results: Some Mock; Some Propose to Hear Again; Some Are Converted.*

1–4. Passed through Amphipolis ... came to Thessalonica. They traveled along the great Roman military road, which passed through Macedonia and Greece to Dyrrachium on the Adriatic sea, and then beginning on the other side at Brundisium, extended to Rome. Amphipolis was about thirty miles, a day's journey, southwest of Philippi; Apollonia about the same distance farther on, and Thessalonica about twenty-eight miles west of Apollonia. Thessalonica was a rich commercial city, the seat of the Roman governor of Macedonia, and is still a city of about 70,000 population, of whom one-third are Jews. Its excellent harbor makes it a coveted object of Austrian diplomacy in the Balkan provinces. **Paul, as his manner was.** It was his custom always to begin his work in the synagogue if he found one. Here he showed from the Old Testament that the promised Messiah should die, and rise again, that Jesus complied with these conditions, and hence must be the Christ. This line of argument was continued in the synagogue for three sabbaths. This indicates how long he continued to argue in the synagogue, not how long he remained here. **Some of them believed.** Of the Jews who heard in the synagogue. Also, **of the devout Greeks a great multitude.** These were religious Gentiles who had departed from heathenism, attended the synagogue, but had not been circumcised. **Of the chief women.** Some of them, no doubt, the wives of the “devout Greeks.” Some of the converts made during Paul's stay were idolators (1 Thess. 1:9). The result of these labors was the establishment of a flourishing church, the existence of which called out the two letters to the Thessalonians.



5–9. But the Jews. As usual, a part believed and the others were filled with hatred. **Certain lewd fellows.** “Vile fellows of the rabble.” The Jews called in the worst classes to aid them. **Assaulted the house of Jason.** Paul and Silas had abode there (verse 7), but were not found, probably from having a warning. **Drew Jason ... unto the rulers of the city.** Called “politarchs” in the Greek text, and so called in an inscription of the first century still seen on an ancient arch in

the city. **These that have turned the world upside down.** A strong tribute to the revolutionizing power of the new Faith. It did change the world. **These all do contrary to the decrees of Cesar.** A false charge, but the one most likely to secure the attention of the magistrates. **Saying that there is another king.** The Romans never called their ruler *a king*, but he was so called by subject nations. The Jews said to Pilate, "We will have no king but Cæsar." The only ground for the charge against Paul was that he preached the kingdom of Christ. **They troubled ... the rulers.** Troubled, because it was a charge of disloyalty to the Roman Cæsar, and of an attempt to have another king. They were utterly ignorant of the nature of Christ's kingdom. **9. When they had taken security.** Of those asserted. They received some kind of a guarantee that there would be nothing done contrary to the laws of the empire.

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10–12. Sent away Paul and Silas by night. By night so as to leave without a fresh disturbance. **Unto Berea.** Howson places Berea sixty, Hackett forty-five, miles west of Thessalonica. The first states that it now has 18,000 population, and is called Verria. **Many of them believed.** This would be the natural result. As elsewhere, the converts were Jews and devout Greeks, both men and women. **Honourable.** Of high rank.

13–15. They came thither. The inveterate hatred of the Jews of Thessalonica pursued him. When they began to stir up a disturbance at Berea, as Paul was the chief object of hatred, it was thought best for him to leave, but Silas and Timothy were left to continue the work. **To go as it were to the sea.** He started as though to embark on the sea, Berea not being a seaport. Whether he did, or went to Athens by land, is not stated. The journey by land was about 250 miles. The sea voyage would be much the quicker route. **They that conducted Paul.** Some of the Berean brethren. When they returned they took a message to Silas and Timothy to join him at once. From 1 Thess. 3:1, 2, we learn that Timothy was at once sent to Thessalonica.

16–18. While Paul waited. At first he seems to have intended to await the arrival of Timothy and Silas before he opened his work, but his spirit was too much stirred. **Wholly given to idolatry.** "Full of idols" in the Revision. This is confirmed by the Greek writers. The Greek historian Pausanias says that there were more idols in Athens than in all the rest of Greece combined. Many other writers bear the same testimony. Paul would see them wherever he turned his eyes. **Disputed ... in the market.** There was in Athens one great "market place," or public square. The porches around it were favorite places for discussion. **Epicureans and Stoics.** Two of the philosophical schools then prevalent in Athens. The first held that the gods were careless about human affairs, and that a man's best course was to get as much pleasure out of life as possible. With them pleasure was the chief good. The Stoics were fatalists, believers in a sort of pantheism, and insisted on self-righteousness. Epicurus was the founder of the first sect; Zeno, of the second. **What will this babblers say?** A contemptuous expression. **A setter forth of strange gods.** He spoke of God and the risen Jesus. Some have thought that they mistook *Anastasis*, the Greek for *resurrection*, for the name of a goddess.

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19–21. Brought him unto the Areopagus. The Greek term for Mars' hill (verse 22). The hill was a place of assembly. There the supreme court of Athens met. There the courts that sat concerning religious matters convened. The associations had something to do, probably, with Paul being taken here to speak, though the meeting was informal and not official. The hill is about fifty feet high, and was then surrounded by the most glorious works of art in Athens. **To tell or hear some new thing.** Demosthenes himself speaks of this propensity of the Athenians (Philipp. 1:43). It was in

harmony with the spirit of the city that he should be called on to speak to gratify the curiosity of the populace.

22–31. Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill. In the Areopagus. Let the reader keep in mind that this address was spoken in the literary capital of the ancient world, the most cultured city of the earth to which every Roman who sought a finished education resorted to complete his studies, the home of the philosophers, orators, sculptors, painters and poets, and the great university where many thousands of strangers were gathered for study. This ancient city of so glorious history is the modern capital of Greece, and has about 100,000 inhabitants. **Ye men of Athens.** The introduction of Paul has always been regarded as a masterpiece of skill. He does not say, “In all things ye are too superstitious” (see Revision in the margin), or ye are “more religious than others.” His remark is a compliment, and he confirms it by a statement that he had found an altar to the **unknown God**. Besides thousands of altars and statues of deities whom they named, this altar was dedicated to the “Unknown,” as if to some deity whose presence they felt, but whom they did not comprehend. This Unknown, he announces, **I declare unto you**. Ancient writers speak of altars at Athens to the unknown God, or gods. Such an introduction was well calculated to fix the attention of his critical audience. **God that made the world.** He now declares the attributes of that unknown God: (1) The God that made the world; (2) Lord of heaven and earth; (3) dwelleth not in temples; (4) not worshiped by human hands; (5) giveth life to all that lives; (6) made of one blood all nations; (7) appointed that men should seek the Lord; (8) we are his offspring; (9) hence, the Godhead is not like any idol made by human hands. It dishonors so glorious a being to liken him to man's device. Then comes the application. **The times of this ignorance.** The times when there was no revelation in to those in darkness. **God winked at.** Overlooked. **Now commandeth.** The gospel is world-embracing. (1) All men, (2) everywhere, are command to repent. This call to repentance is urged because God **hath appointed a day**; the day of coming judgment, when the world will be judged through Christ. Of this the resurrection of Christ is an assurance. **Appointed times** (verse 26). Athens had had her day. She was once the mistress of the seas. The same fact is true of every nation. **Certain of your poets.** Aratus, who wrote about 200 years before. Also Cleanthes, in his Hymn to Jupiter. **Raised him from the dead** (verse 31). If Jesus was raised, all men will be raised; hence, the assurance of a general judgment after death.

32–34. When they heard of the resurrection. The Epicureans were materialists like the Sadducees. They no doubt mocked at the idea of a resurrection. The Stoics probably wished to **hear again of this matter**. There was a division of sentiment. **So Paul departed.** He regarded the field less fruitful than others. **Certain men ... believed.** His labors were not without results. One of the judges of the court of the Areopagus, the judges which were chosen from the noblest men of the city, **Dionysius**, was converted, along with others. A church does not seem to have been founded at this time; at least it is not elsewhere mentioned in the New Testament. Even as late as the time of Constantine the Great, Athens was a rallying point of the dying Paganism.

Chapter XVIII

Paul at Corinth

Summary —*Paul Leaves Athens for Corinth. Works with Aquila and Priscilla. Preaches in the Synagogue. Departs to the Gentiles. Many Hear, Believe, and Are Baptized. The Lord Encourages Paul in a Vision. The Seizure of Paul by the Jews. Before the Judgment Seat of Gallio. The Accusers Driven Away. Paul Sails to Ephesus, Antioch and Jerusalem. Starts on His Third Missionary Tour. Apollos Taught by Aquila and Priscilla, and Preaches in Corinth.*

1. Came to Corinth. The distance between Athens and Corinth is forty-five miles by sea. The Acropolis of one city can be plainly discerned from the other. From the most remote times Corinth had been an important commercial center. Situated on the narrow isthmus between Greece proper and the Peloponesus, it had harbors on both the Ægean and Adriatic seas. The old city was destroyed by the Roman Consul Mummius, but it was rebuilt by Julius Caesar, made a Roman *colony*, (see notes on 16:12), and was, at the time of Paul's visit, a city of great splendor. Of its morals one fact will speak; one temple, that of Venus Pandemos, had a thousand courtesans attached.

2. Found a certain Jew named Aquila. We have no account of the conversion of these two Christians, so famous in connection with Paul's labors. The fact that he describes Aquila as a Jew seems to imply that he was not yet a Christian. I am of the opinion that they were converted at Corinth. For other notices of them, see verses 18 and 26 below; Rom. 16:3, 4; 2 Tim. 4:19, and other passages in the Epistles. **Born in Pontus.** A great province southeast of the Euxine Sea. **Lately come from Italy.** They had been driven out of Italy by a decree of the Emperor Claudius banishing all Jews from Rome. The Roman historian Suetonius, who lived about fifty years later, alludes to this decree, but states that the Jews made disturbances at the instigation of one *Chrestus*, a form the ancients often used for spelling *Christus*; a mistake of the historian, showing that they did not comprehend the spiritual nature of Christ's reign.

3. He abode with them. He did this **because they were of the same craft.** This is the first mention of the handicraft by which so often during his toilsome life Paul earned his daily bread. Every Jewish boy was taught a trade, and Paul no doubt learned his in Tarsus. Compare 20:34; 1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8; 1 Cor. 4:12.

4. He reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath. While toiling six days in the week in this strange city, on the Sabbath, according to his custom, he preached.

5. When Silas and Timotheus were come. When Paul left Berea for Athens they remained (17:14), but he sent for them to come to him. 1 Thess. 3:1 seems to imply that Timothy was sent back from Athens to Thessalonica. Some think, however, that they did not join him at all until he was in Corinth. **Was pressed in the spirit.** The Revision reads, "Was constrained by the word," that is, by the gospel message. When they came, probably freed from the need of daily labor, and encouraged by their presence, he began the work in earnest.

6. When they ... blasphemed. Against Jesus Christ. The opposition became malignant. **He shook his raiment.** See note on 13:51. **Your blood be upon your own heads.** "I have done my duty. The responsibility is now yours."

7–11. He departed thence. Left the synagogue and taught no more there, but secured a place of teaching in the house of Justus, near by. The Revision reads, "Titus Justus." Some have supposed this man to be the Titus to whom the epistle was afterwards written. **Crispus, the chief ruler.** Though the synagogue opposed, its president became a Christian with all his family. Paul baptized

him with his own hands (1 Cor. 1:14). **Many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.** This describes the gospel process of conversion. The word is preached, faith comes by hearing (Rom. 10:17), confession (Rom. 10:10) and baptism follow belief. This is the invariable order in the New Testament. **Spake the Lord to Paul.** In some way he manifested his presence and cheered him in his work, by the assurance of great success. We know that the result was not only a flourishing church in Corinth, to which two epistles were written, but churches through Achaia, the province of which Corinth was the capital (2 Cor. 1:1.) **He continued there a year and six months.** While here, besides his other labors, he wrote the two epistles to the Thessalonians, the first of that grand series of letters which form so precious a feature of the New Testament.

12–17. When Gallio was the deputy of Achaia. Proconsul, in the Revision, as it should be. The province of Achaia had been transferred by Claudius to the government of the senate, and the governors of senatorial provinces were proconsuls, which is the meaning of the term rendered deputy. Gallio was the brother of Seneca, the philosopher and tutor of Nero. He is often mentioned in the literature of that day as a cultivated, polished man of the world. Seneca speaks of his brother's residence in Achaia. **The Jews made insurrection.** Rose up against Paul, no doubt enraged at the success of his work. His sleepless enemies always found some occasion to stir up strife. **Brought him to the judgment seat.** The court of Gallio. **This man persuadeth ... contrary to the law.** Their charge was that Paul sought to persuade men to worship contrary to the Roman law; that is, he preached a new and unlawful religion. Besides the state religion, Rome recognized various others, among them Judaism. These Jews attempted to show that Paul's gospel was not Judaism. **Gallio said unto the Jews.** Without suffering Paul to reply, he at once rebuked the Jews, who were evidently not in his favor. His rebuke shows that he ignorantly regarded Christianity as a kind of Judaism, and thought that the enmity of the Jews was due to the rivalry of sects. To him it was a question of "words and names, and of the Jewish law." **He drave them.** Ordered his lictors to clear the court of the Jews. **The Greeks took Sosthenes.** He had evidently succeeded Crispus as chief ruler of the synagogue, and was probably foremost among the accusers. The populace laid violent hands on him. **Gallio cared for none of those things.** The great Romans were usually utterly indifferent to religion at this period. Nor did Gallio care to see some violence inflicted on the leading Jews.

18–23. After this. After the affair before Gallio. How long Paul remained, whether weeks or months, is not stated. The object is to show that this occurrence did not cause his departure. **Sailed thence into Syria.** Antioch, the mother Gentile church from whence he started, was his destination. **Having shorn his head in Cenchrea.** Cenchrea was the eastern harbor of Corinth, and received the commerce of Asia. A church was planted here (Rom. 16:1). **For he had a vow.** We know that the Jews were wont to make personal vows (Gen. 28:20; Lev. 27:2; 1 Sam. 1:11; 2 Sam. 15:7, etc.) Paul complied with this custom of his race for some reason not explained. Why he took the vow, for how long, and what the shaving of the head had to do with it, are matters of conjecture. Nazarite vows required the shaving of the head in Jerusalem, and the hair cut off was offered in the temple. This could not have been a Nazarite vow. It is probable that he complied with some Jewish custom to aid him in reaching his own people with the gospel. **Came to Ephesus.** The great commercial metropolis of Asia Minor. **Left them there.** Priscilla and Aquila. **Entered the synagogue.** The Jews seem to have given him a favorable hearing, but he could not now tarry. **Keep this feast.** There are reasons for believing the feast to be Pentecost. **I will return to you.** He kept the promise. See 19:1. **Landed at Cæsarea.** He sailed from Ephesus to Cæsarea, and went up from thence,

about seventy miles, to Jerusalem. **Saluted the church.** We have no other account of the incidents of the visit. **Went down to Antioch.** The headquarters of Gentile missions, the terminus of his second missionary tour. It had occupied at least three years. **Spent some time there.** He did not remain a great while, but departed to visit the churches he had planted on his last tour in Galatia and Phrygia, This is the beginning of his third missionary journey.

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24–28. A certain Jew named Apollos. A native of Alexandria, a city where there were tens of thousands of Jews. He was an eloquent rabbi, learned in the Scriptures, a disciple of John the Baptist, but had not yet learned fully the gospel of Christ. **He spake diligently the things of the Lord.** That is, all that John understood. He believed that Jesus was the one coming after John, but he had learned only the gospel of the Lord's first commission (Matt. chap. 10). He was ignorant of the gospel of the second commission (Matt. 28:19), and of Pentecost. In my opinion his position was about that of the disciples of the Lord before the Great Commission was given. He had the gospel in part, but needed to be shown **the way of God more perfectly.** Aquila and Priscilla supplied this need, and equipped him for gospel work. **When he was disposed to pass into Achaia.** Greece, the province of which Corinth was the Roman capital. **The brethren wrote.** This is the first instance of church letters. This was written to show the brethren at Corinth that the bearer was worthy of their confidence. They no doubt testified to his soundness in the faith and Christian character. Paul alludes to such letters in 2 Cor. 3:1. **He helped them much.** The believers at Corinth. Apollos was God's instrument to help them. **Through grace.** Through the Divine favor. **For he mightily convinced the Jews.** That he was a man of God of great power is shown by Paul's allusions to him. See 1 Cor. 1:12; 3:4–6.

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Chapter XIX

Paul at Ephesus

Summary —Twelve of John's Disciples Rebaptized. Paul Teaches in the School of Tyrannus. God's Presence with Paul in Power. Sceva and His Sons. The Books of Magic Burned. Timothy and Erastus Sent into Macedonia. The Tumult Raised by Demetrius and the Craftsmen. The Wise Advice of the City Recorder.

1. Paul having passed through the upper coasts. The mountain highlands of the interior of Asia Minor (see 18:23). Ephesus, on the coast, was near sea level. **Finding certain disciples.** These disciples had only been baptized with John's baptism (verse 3), and had but an imperfect knowledge of Christ. Their case presents some difficulties hard to explain, unless we had more of the facts. They had evidently been baptized by some of John's disciples, possibly in Asia, after the Great Commission was given, and were no doubt Jews. Some think that they were baptized by Apollos before he was "instructed in the way of the Lord more perfectly" (18:25, 26).

2. Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? This question is asked in order to lead their way to a knowledge of their imperfect obedience. For their reply, see the Revision. They had heard of the Holy Spirit; John always spoke of Christ as one who should bestow it, but they had heard nothing of the scenes of Pentecost and the descent of the Spirit. It must not be forgotten that

they lived nearly a thousand miles from Jerusalem, in an age when each part of the world knew little of what transpired elsewhere.

3. Unto what then were ye baptized? This question implies that the possession of the Holy Spirit is closely connected with a right baptism (compare 2:38). The only case in which the Spirit was received before baptism was that of Cornelius. For the reasons of this exception to the rule, see notes on 10:44–47. The fact that these disciples “know nothing of the Holy Spirit being given,” showed that there was something wrong about their baptism. **Unto John's baptism.** While John's baptism differed from that commanded in Christ's commission, the apostles, the one hundred and twenty, and the “five hundred brethren” (1 Cor. 15:6), as far as we know, received no other. We are to infer, therefore, that it was valid until Christ's baptism took its place. Why, then, were these disciples re-baptized? The only explanation is that their baptism took place after John's baptism had been superseded by that of Christ, or after the Savior had been crucified.

4. John verily baptized. His baptism was (1) of Repentance; (2) of Faith in a coming Savior. Christian baptism is (1) of Repentance; (2) of Faith in a Savior that has come, died, risen, and been exalted to the heavens; (3) is into the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit; (4) enjoys not only the promise of remission of sins, but of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

5. When they heard this. Paul's explanation of the difference between Christ's and John's baptism, to which we have only an allusion. The example of these men shows that if a baptism is imperfect, from an ignorance of Christ's will, it is not wrong to correct the defect by a more perfect obedience.

6. When Paul had laid his hands on them. It seemed proper that these men should enjoy, not only the ordinary influence of the Spirit, but that some spiritual gifts should be imparted, such as were given by the laying on of apostolic hands. Compare 8:17; Rom. 1:11. **Spake with tongues.** Of this ancient gift we learn (1) it edified only the speaker (1 Cor. 14:4); (2) to benefit others an interpreter was needed (1 Cor. 14:5–27); (3) God could understand (1 Cor. 14:2). This gift disappeared at an early date from the church.

7. The men were about twelve. Thus these men appear in this episode and then disappear from our knowledge. They were now endowed for usefulness, and perhaps did great service in the religious revolution that soon transformed all that part of Asia.

8. He went into the synagogue. Once before he had spoken in it, on his former missionary journey (18:19, 20). Now for three months of the three years spent in Ephesus he occupies the same pulpit. These three years were comparatively quiet, but among the most successful of Paul's missionary career. About seventeen years of busy toil had now passed since his conversion.

9. When divers were hardened. As soon as they began to raise scenes of strife in the synagogue, he ceased to teach there. He removed the disciples from the synagogue, forming a separate body, and taught **daily in the school of one Tyrannus.** Either a place where lectures were given on Greek philosophy, or, as some have supposed, a rabbinical school. One Greek New Testament manuscript says he taught “from the sixth to the tenth hour,” specifying the hours that he had the use of the building.

10. Continued for two years. That is, for two years he used this building. His whole stay in Ephesus was three years (20:31). **So that all they which dwelt in Asia.** The Roman province of Asia of which Ephesus was the capital. It embraced only a part of Asia Minor. We know that Paul's preaching had a powerful effect (1) from the results upon those who practiced magic; (2) from the

alarm of Demetrius (verse 24); (3) from the statement of Pliny, about forty years later, in his celebrated letter to Trajan, that Christianity had caused the temples of the gods to be deserted.

11, 12. God wrought special miracles. If miracles are wrought, it is always God's work, and he can work them as he wills. In this case, in order to magnify the name of his preacher, he let his power go with articles that were carried from Paul to the sick. The Lord, in his wisdom, can make use of any instrument he chooses.

13–16. Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists. Our Lord refers to these Jewish exorcists in Matt. 12:27. Josephus (Antiq. 8:2, 5) declares that certain Jews claimed to expel demons. He says that their knowledge of the art was derived from Solomon. These, witnessing the wonderful power of the name of Christ, thinking it a sort of incantation, took it upon themselves to use it instead of their usual formula. **Seven sons of one Sceva.** He is said to be “chief of the priests.” Some think he was a chief ruler of the synagogue, but it is far more probable that he was a head of one of the twenty-four courses of priests (these heads were called “chief priests”) who had been deposed for some cause and had wandered away from Palestine. **15, 16. And the evil spirit answered.** The evil spirit spoke and acted by means of the man possessed. It is possible that in this instance the spirit was overruled so as to magnify the gospel preached by Paul. On this question of demoniacal possession, See notes on Matt. 8:29.

17–20. This was known to all the Jews and Greeks. Ephesus was a great seat of magical arts. This event would have a powerful effect on those who dealt in charms, incantations, and magic, and of course would exalt the name of Christ. **Many that believed came.** They had not been freed before from their old superstitions. If we are disposed to wonder at this, let us remember that there are Christians still who wear charms, watch signs, or go to fortune tellers. **Which used curious arts.** Magical arts. **Brought their books together, and burned them.** There was real repentance, and they brought forth its fruits. These *books*, alluded to by ancient writers, were manuscript volumes of charms, incantations, recipes for love philtres, and other things of similar character. **They counted the price of them.** If the “piece of silver” is the Attic drachma or Roman denarius, as is probable (about sixteen cents), the whole value would be about \$8,000. These “books” had considerable money value on account of their rarity. **So mightily grew the word of God.** About this time the apostle wrote from Ephesus in the First Epistle to the Corinthians: “For a great and effectual door is opened unto me” (1 Cor. 16:9).

21, 22. After these things were ended. What has just been recorded. **Paul purposed in the spirit.** Had determined, after a journey into Macedonia and Greece, to visit the churches planted in his former tour, to return to Jerusalem, and then to **see Rome.** This was all carried out, but in a way that at this time he did not foresee. **Sent into Macedonia.** A band of missionaries always attended him and were sent where there seemed to be need. See 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10. **Erastus.** Not before named, but mentioned also in Rom. 16:23, as “the chamberlain of Corinth.”

23–34. No small stir about that way. Thus far his labors at Ephesus had been without violent opposition. We now have given the account of the events that led to his departure. **A certain man named Demetrius, ... made silver shrines.** The temple of Diana at Ephesus was counted one of the wonders of the world. It was at this time (this was the third temple which had been built in succession) of white marble, 425 feet long by 220 wide, with 127 columns, and of surpassing wealth and splendor. It contained an image said to have fallen from heaven (verse 35). It was visited by thousands of pilgrims, and a great industry grew up in making miniature representations of the temple, of wood, gold, or silver. This was the work of Demetrius and his fellow-workers. After

paganism fell, much of the material of this temple was transported to Constantinople, and was used in the construction of the church of St. Sophia. **Sirs.** Observe the argument of Demetrius: (1) By this craft we have our wealth; (2) Paul teaches that these are not gods that are made with hands; (3) therefore our craft is in danger; (4) the great goddess Diana is despised; (5) great is Diana of the Ephesians! The prime incentive of his religious zeal is that his craft is in danger. Many are like him still. **The whole city was filled with confusion.** Nothing would more quickly arouse a mob than the belief that both their business and religion were assailed. **Having caught Gaius.** A Macedonian. **Aristarchus.** Of Thessalonica. **They rushed with one accord into the theatre.** The remains of the theatre are still to be seen. It was of vast extent, and would seat, as its remains show, from 20,000 to 30,000 persons. It was the custom to use the theatre, not only for amusements, but for public assemblies. **The disciples suffered him not.** Paul's intrepidity and zeal would have led him to appear in person to reply to the charges, but the Ephesian disciples thought that he would be sacrificed to the rage of the mob. **The chief of Asia.** The chief officials of the province. These men, called Asiarchs, were ten in number, and were chosen annually from the chief towns of the province called Asia to preside over games and festivals. The president of their body always lived in Ephesus. These men were his **friends.** Possibly in sympathy with the gospel. We have many instances in the life of Paul in which the great Roman officials treat him with not only respect, but sympathy. **They drew Alexander out of the multitude.** A Jew, evidently of great prominence, and put forward by the Jews, in order to disavow Paul, and to turn the tumult to their advantage. They wished to shift all blame on the Christians. The Gentile aversion to Jews was, however, too great to allow him a hearing.

35–40. And when the townclerk had appeased the people. Stopped their foolish outcry so that he could be heard. This town clerk, or recorder, was an officer of great influence in the Grecian cities of Asia. He stood next in rank to the officer that we now call the mayor, and in the absence of the latter acted for him. His address was a very judicious one. **The image which fell down from Jupiter.** It was a common superstition that some hideous image worshiped in a heathen temple had fallen from heaven. Some of them were meteoric stones, of others the origin was unknown, and the delusion was in part due to the deception of the priests. The Palladium of Troy, the Diana of Tauris, and the Pallas of Athena were all said to have fallen. **37. These men.** Gaius and Aristarchus (see verse 29), men against whom there was no charge. They were neither **robbers of temples** (see the Revision) nor blasphemers of Diana. **If Demetrius.** If they have anything to charge there are courts of justice. **Deputies.** Proconsuls. **We are in danger.** The Roman law made it a capital offence to incite a riot, nor did the Roman officials wink at any disturbance in the provinces. Ephesus was what was called “a free city;” that is, it governed itself in local matters. It might have its liberties taken away for just such occurrences as those of this day.

Chapter XX

The Second Visit to Europe and Return

Summary —*Paul Departs to Macedonia. And to Greece. Paul at Troas. The Meeting on the First Day of the Week to Break Bread. The Meeting with the Elders of the Church at Ephesus. Paul's Affectionate Warnings. The Sorrowful Farewell.*

1–6. After the uproar was ceased. It had been his purpose to go into Macedonia (19:21), but to remain at Ephesus until after Pentecost (1 Cor. 16:8), and that time (about the middle of May, a.d. 57 or 58) had probably come. Hence, having *exhorted* the disciples (Revision), he departed. It was on his way to Greece that the Second Epistle to the Corinthians was written. He speaks in 2 Cor. 12:14 and 13:1, of coming “the third time” to Corinth. Hence, Hackett supposes that during the three years at Ephesus he made a flying visit to Corinth by sea to correct disorders in the church there. **When he had gone over those parts.** Visited Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea at least, and possibly other Macedonian churches. **He came into Greece.** To Corinth. During the three months that he remained in Corinth, he wrote the greatest of all his letters, the Epistle to the Romans. **The Jews laid in wait.** We have no further details, but it was, no doubt, a murderous plot. To prevent it, his plans were changed, and instead of sailing to Syria, he again took the route to Macedonia. **There accompanied him to Asia, Sopater.** The Revision, based on the oldest MSS, calls him “the son of Pyrrhus.” He is otherwise unknown. **Aristarchus.** See 19:29. **Secundus** is not named elsewhere. **Gaius of Derbe.** So named to distinguish him from another Gaius (19:29). Derbe was in Lycaonia. See 14:6. **Timotheus.** This celebrated disciple was of Lystra near Derbe. See notes on 16:1–4. **Tychicus.** Supposed to be an Ephesian. See Col. 4:7, 8; Eph. 6:21; 2 Tim. 4:12. **Trophimus.** He attended Paul all the way to Jerusalem. See Acts 21:29 and 2 Tim. 4:20. **These going before.** Paul evidently tarried with the church at Philippi, while they went on to Troas. **Us.** Luke was now a companion. When Paul first passed into Europe, six or seven years before, he was with him (16:12), but there are reasons for thinking that he had remained and labored in Philippi until this time. Henceforth he attends the great apostle. **Came to Troas in five days.** The winds must have been contrary. Formerly (16:11) the voyage was made in two days. For Troas, see note on 16:8.

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7–12. On the first day of the week when, etc. The language shows that it was the custom to meet on the first day of the week, and shows the leading object of that meeting. This was not a farewell meeting for Paul, for then the day of the week would not have been mentioned, but the regular weekly assemblage of the saints. They came together, primarily, **to break bread**, *i. e.*, to observe the Lord's Supper. Dean Howson says: “We have here an unmistakable allusion to the practice, which began evidently immediately after the resurrection of our Lord, of assembling on the first day of the week for religious purposes.” He also shows that the Lord arose on the first day of the week, showed himself to the apostles a second time one week later on the first day of the week, that the church was founded and the Holy Spirit shed forth on Pentecost, which was on the first day of the week. On the same day the disciples at Troas meet to break bread, the Corinthians meet, take collections (1 Cor. 16:2) and eat the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:20), and the Lord on Patmos reveals himself to John (Rev. 1:10). In addition to this, the early church writers from Barnabas, Justin Martyr, Irenæus, to Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Cyprian, all with one consent, declare that the church observed the first day of the week. They are equally agreed that the Lord's Supper was observed weekly, on the first day of the week. **Paul preached.** Though it was the special object of this weekly meeting *to break bread*, preaching was a part of the worship. **Continued his speech until midnight.** About to depart, probably never to see them more, all were anxious to hear the great apostle, and he had much to say. **There were many lights.** This is

mentioned to show how they could meet at night. In those time public meetings and even the games of the theatre were by daylight. Means of lighting were very imperfect. **Eutychus.** Sitting in the window, and at last overcome by drowsiness, he fell to the earth, three stories below. The language implies that he was killed by the fall, and restored by the Divine power, exercised through Paul. The history is plain, simple, and easy to understand. Compare 2 Kings 4:34. **When he ... had broken bread and eaten.** Opinions are divided whether the Lord's Supper had been celebrated before his long discourse and this was a common meal just before his departure in the early morning, or whether these words allude to the celebration of the Lord's Supper. I incline to the last opinion. The fact that the same phraseology is used in both places shows that they refer to the same thing. Some, however, insist that if this be true, the Lord's Supper was celebrated on Monday morning before day. This does not necessarily follow. The Jews began their day at sunset. Sunday began at sunset of what he call Saturday. The early churches, composed in large part of Jews at first, often followed the Jewish custom. It is probable that this meeting at Troas began at the close of the Sabbath, in the evening, was continued through the night, the Lord's Supper being celebrated in the latter part of the night, before dawn of Sunday, and that at daybreak Paul departed. He had remained over a week to have the privilege of observing the Lord's Supper with them. So, too, he remained a week with the disciples at Tyre (21:4) and with the brethren at Puteoli (28:14).

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13–16. Sailed unto Assos. The distance from Troas to Assos by sea, round Cape Lectum, was about forty miles, while across by land it was only half as far. Paul, probably attended by a number of brethren, chose to walk across. Vast ruins now mark the site of the seaport of Assos. **Mitylene.** The next stopping place, about thirty miles from Assos, still the capital of the island of Lesbos. It is now called Castro. **Sailed to Chios.** A populous island near the Asiatic coast, famed for its wine. In 1822, the Turks almost exterminated the inhabitants in a frightful massacre. **Samos.** All these islands are celebrated in Greek history. Samos is separated from the coast only by a narrow channel. **Trogyllium.** A promontory not far from Ephesus. **Came to Miletus.** A city famous from the time of Homer, but at this period sinking in importance on account of the prosperity of Ephesus, only thirty miles away. A swamp and a few ruins now mark its site. **Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus.** If he stopped at this scene of three years' labor, he felt that he could not tear himself away without a considerable stay. But it was his plan to be in Jerusalem at Pentecost, now not far off. Hence, instead of stopping at Ephesus, he sent for the elders to visit him at Miletus.

17–27. Called the elders of the church. No mention has been made before of their appointment, but it was Paul's custom to "ordain elders in every church" (14:23). These elders were also called "bishops" (see verse 28, Revision). In apostolic days there was a plurality of elders in every church; these elders were "bishops," or *overseers*. There was no distinct episcopal order. This is admitted even by the advocates of an episcopate. Dean Howson, of the Church of England, declares (Acts, p. 475) that no special order of bishops was created in the lifetime of Paul, or the apostles, but he dates their origin about the close of the first or beginning of the second century. Prof. Rothe, of Heidelberg (quoted by Lightfoot on Philippians), supposes that after the martyrdom of Paul, Peter and James the necessity was felt for a general supervision, and that this gave rise to the appointment of diocesan bishops. By the admission of all scholars, the episcopal order is *post*-apostolic. **Ye know.** This is a pastoral address, worthy of the closest study by all pastors and elders. First, the apostle calls attention to his own example. Every elder ought to be an example. **Taught you publicly.** Three months in the synagogue at Ephesus; two years in the school of Tyrannus, besides his teaching in the church assemblies. **Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord.**

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These items embrace the sum of Christian doctrine. Repentance of our sins against our Creator, the resolve to turn from them; then faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior, by trust in his grace and obedience to his will. **Now I go bound in the spirit.** Urged by a sense of duty, yet knowing from the premonitions of the Holy Spirit that bonds and afflictions awaited him at Jerusalem. **Ye shall see my face no more.** Paul does not state this as a revelation, but as his conviction. He then thought it not improbable that he would soon die for Christ. Many think that he was released from his first imprisonment in Rome. Dean Howson says: "It is *almost* certain that Paul, after his liberation from the imprisonment spoken of in Acts XXVIII., did revisit the Asian churches (see notices and greetings and directions in 2 Tim. IV. and in Tit. 1:5, especially the words, 'Trophimus I have left at Miletum sick')." **Pure from the blood of all men.** Not responsible, if they are lost, for he had declared "the whole counsel of God."

28–31. Take heed. Here begin the special admonitions to the elders. **To yourselves.** Their own lives must be the first subject of watchfulness. No man can be so exalted that he does not need to watch and pray. **The flock.** The church, the fold of the Good Shepherd, of whom they were under-shepherds, or *pastors*. **To feed the church.** "On the sincere milk of the word, that it may grow thereby." **Grievous wolves.** The figure of the flock is still kept up. The "grievous wolves" were false teachers, and the special reference is to the Judaizing teachers, who taught that the Gentile Christians must keep the Jewish law. Paul's ministry was a long battle with the schismatics. See 1 Tim. 1:3, 4, 20; 2 Tim. 1:15; 2:17; also 1. By turning to these references the names of some six of these "grievous wolves" will be found. Also in Rev. 2:6 we learn that there were false teachers at Ephesus.

32–35. I commend you to God. In their weighty responsibility he commends them to God. **And to the word of his grace.** The word will be a guide in all their difficulties and **is able to build them up and give them an inheritance among the sanctified.** If it is followed, they cannot stray. **Sanctified.** All Christians are spoken of as sanctified. See 1 Cor. 1:2; 6:9–11. **I have coveted no man's silver.** No motives of self-interest could induce him to labor in the work to which he was called. It offered no earthly emoluments. We have found that at Corinth he worked with his own hands for support. We here learn that he did the same thing at Ephesus. See 18:3; 2 Thess. 3:10–12; 1 Cor. 4:11, 12. He also warns Timothy to flee from the love of money as hurtful, an admonition that should never be forgotten. **It is more blessed to give than to receive.** These words, quoted by Paul, as well known are not found in any one of the four Gospels, but are none the less genuine. They only preserve a fragment of the sayings and doings of our Lord (John 21:25). Giving, even here, secures more real happiness than receiving, and besides, is Godlike and blesses forever.

36–38. He kneeled down, and prayed. This was the most appropriate parting for these ancient men of God. **Fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him.** An Eastern custom of exhibiting great affection. **That they should see his face no more.** This thought caused their greatest sorrow, but we have seen that it is probable that they did see him again. It was not, however, until after Acts was written. See note on verse 25.

Chapter XXI

Paul Seized in the Temple

Summary —*The Voyage to Tyre. The Prayer-Meeting on the Seashore. Abiding with Philip the Evangelist in Cæsarea. The Prophecy of Agabus. The Impertunity of the Disciples That Paul Should Not Go to Jerusalem. The Meeting of Paul with James and the Elders at Jerusalem. Their Request That He Should Disarm Prejudice by a Nazarite Vow. The Attempt to Kill Him in the Temple. The Rescue by the Chief Captain.*

1–6. After we were gotten from them. Chrysostom, himself, a Greek, says the Greek word means “had torn away.” **Came to ... Coos.** A small island, famous for its wines, forty miles south of Miletus. Hippocrates, the great physician, and Apelles, the painter, were born here. **The day following to Rhodes.** Fifty miles further south, one of the most famous islands of the world, noted for its beauty, its Colossus, its defence by the Knights of St. John against the Turks, and for giving its name to one of the American states. **Thence to Patara.** On the coast of Lydia. Here he took another ship, this probably being the destination of the first. **Finding a ship sailing over to Phoenicia.** Tyre, where he landed, was a Phoenician city. **When we had discovered Cyprus.** Sailed in sight of Cyprus. This would arouse the memories of Paul's first missionary labors here about fourteen years before (see 13:4–13). **Sailed into Syria.** Syria embraced Phoenicia, Palestine and Antioch, in the Roman use of the term. **Landed at Tyre.** Still a considerable city, though its ancient glories had faded on account of the growth of Alexandria and Antioch, which had become the commercial centers of the East. “Its most important ruins now lie beneath the sea and can be seen through its waters.” **Finding disciples.** In chapter 11:19, we find that preachers of the word came to Phoenicia, of which Tyre was the capital, and probably planted the church **Tarried seven days.** As this statement is made three times where Paul found brethren (20:6; 28:14), it evidently implies that he tarried at each place to have one solemn meeting on the first day of the week, as at Troas, and to celebrate the Lord's Supper with the church. **Said to Paul through the Spirit.** Predicted the sufferings that would befall him, and endeavored to dissuade him. **We kneeled down on the shore and prayed.** This was an affecting sight. The whole church, men, women and children, gathered around the great apostle and his companions, and the voice of prayer arose above the ceaseless roar of the waves.

7–14. Came to Ptolemais. Here the journey by sea ended. This city, now called Acre, and having 15,000 population, is one of the oldest cities in the world, and called Accho in Judges 1:31, from which term its modern name is derived. It had the name Ptolemais for a few centuries from Ptolemy Soter, an Egyptian king who rebuilt it. **Came to Cæsarea.** By land, a distance of thirty to forty miles. Paul had been here twice before (9:30; 18:22). The place is memorable for the conversion of the first Gentiles. **Entered into the house of Philip.** The evangelist of whose work we have an account in chapter 8, nearly a quarter of a century before. The last account of him (8:40) shows him preaching in the cities of the sea-coast. In one of these we now find him settled. **Had four daughters ... which did prophesy.** Compare Acts 2:17. The prophetic spirit in either the Old or New Testament is not confined to a single sex. Deborah and Huldah are Old Testament examples, and in the New Testament, Elisabeth, Mary, Anna, and the daughters of Philip are instances. **A certain prophet named Agabus.** He is named in 11:28 as a prophet. He had probably come down to meet Paul. **Took Paul's girdle.** The belt or sash that bound the loose, flowing robe worn. In the style of the Old Testament prophets he impressed his lesson in a dramatic manner. Compare 1

Kings 22:11; Isa. 20:2, 3; Jer. 13:4–9; Ezek. 4:1, 2, 3. **When we heard these things.** The striking manner of Agabus, and perhaps his statements of the dark plots among the Jews against Paul, had such an effect that all sought, more earnestly than ever before, to dissuade him from going on. Why should the apostle, with these certain dangers revealed, press on right into the stronghold of enemies thirsting for his blood, infuriated by the accounts that came up from Asia and Europe of his success in converting Jews to Christ? Had not a deep sense of duty impelled him, we may be certain that he would have done this. *There can be no doubt that he braved the danger in order to prevent a schism that threatened the church.* False reports were circulated at Jerusalem concerning his teaching to Jewish Christians; the church there was filled with prejudice against him; from thence Judaizing teachers went forth to interfere with his work. Hence, in a loving spirit, filled with that charity that suffers all things, and carrying large offerings gathered in the Gentile churches for the poor at Jerusalem, he came to disarm prejudice and show the falsehood of the stories alleged about his teachings. There are times when duty calls the man of God to face the danger; so went the Lord to Jerusalem in spite of the protests of his disciples; so went Luther to Worms, though warned of his danger; so went Paul to Jerusalem.



15–17. Took up our carriages. Our baggage. See Revision. “Carriages” once meant the things carried. **Went with us certain disciples of Cæsarea.** Paul was often thus attended. They seem to have gone in order to find a place for him with an old disciple, a native of Cyprus, now dwelling in Jerusalem, named Mnason. **Come to Jerusalem.** This is the fifth time Paul entered the Holy City since his departure on that memorable journey to Damascus about twenty-two years before. The present probable date is near Pentecost (the latter part of May), a.d. 58.

18–27. Paul went in with us unto James. For the identification and position of James see note on 15:13. This James was not one of the twelve, but was “the brother of the Lord,” a witness of the risen Savior (1 Cor. 15:7). “James the brother of John” had been slain (12:2); of James the son of Alphæus, little is known, but James “the brother of the Lord” (Gal. 1:19) was now the leader of the church at Jerusalem. No mention is made of any one of the twelve, and it is probable that those still living in a.d. 58, were in other fields of labor. The “elders” are mentioned, but not the apostles, a proof that none of the latter were present. **When they heard it.** Paul's report of the wonderful success of the gospel. They evidently approved of and sympathized with his work. **Thou seest, brother, now many thousands ... believe.** The Greek reads: “How many tens thousands.” There were not only many thousands of Christians in the Jerusalem church, but many thousands of Jewish Christians who had come up to the feast of Pentecost. Twenty-seven years before there were five thousand men who believed in Jerusalem (4:4). **They are all zealous for the law.** “Zealots” for the law in the Greek. They believed upon Christ as the Messiah, but did not understand that the Old Covenant had passed away to give place to the New (Heb. 8:13). Hence, while they observed the Christian rites, they still kept up the forms of Judaism. It took a direct interposition of the Spirit to teach that Gentiles were entitled to baptism without circumcision. It required a council in Jerusalem to settle the question that Gentile Christians were not to keep the Jewish law. God taught the church, lesson by lesson, but up to this time that at Jerusalem had not yet learned that they were freed from the obligation to keep the law of Moses. Paul, in advance of the rest, had learned that the Jewish forms were not to be imposed upon Gentiles, were not an obligation upon Jewish Christians, but he still observed them, at least in part, himself, and so far from bidding Jewish brethren to forsake Moses, he circumcised Timothy, and said, “Let every man abide in the same calling (whether Jew or Gentile) in which he is called.” (Read the whole connection of 1 Cor. 7:18–20). He had not,

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therefore, taught **Jews to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. Do therefore this.** This counsel is given that the multitude of Jewish Christians may see that Paul still kept the Jewish customs. As he did keep them, not as a matter of obligation, but as a Jew, in order that he might reach his own race, it involved no sacrifice of principle. **We have four men which have a vow.** These were Jewish Christians. The vow was a Nazaritish vow (see Num. 6:14–18 for a description). This vow involved living an ascetic life for a certain period, sometimes thirty days, and was terminated by shaving the head, burning the hair as an offering, and offering a sacrifice. The advice to Paul is to associate himself in this vow, **and be at charges with them** for the necessary expenses, and thus show that he kept the time-honored customs of the Jewish race. **As touching the Gentiles.** The duties of the Gentiles had been settled in the council described in @chap. 15. The advice of James was no doubt given from the best of motives. His position was a difficult one. The fanaticism of the Jewish nation, which broke out in war a few years later, was growing intense. The national feeling in the church had to be handled with great care. It would not do for the church to believe that Paul had become a renegade from their race. Paul, aware of all these difficulties, generously complied for the sake of peace and unity. We cannot be certain that the advice was just right, or that Paul did just right to comply, but these grand men acted according to their knowledge, and the record of Acts portrays both the shortcomings and the perfection of its great worthies. **Entered into the temple.** Purifying himself, he entered the temple, gave notice that the sacrifices would be offered at a definite time, and the period of the vows be closed. **When the seven days were almost ended.** Seven days was an ordinary period of purification (Exod. 29:37; Lev. 12:2; 13:6; Num. 12:14, etc.).

Concerning this advice of James and compliance of Paul, Pres. Milligan says: “Three different views have been taken: (1) That Paul in this case acted ignorantly, not being aware of the fact that the law of Moses was no longer binding; (2) that, like Peter (Gal. 2:11), he acted from fear of the Jewish brethren; (3) that he acted in conformity with the law of Christian benevolence which requires us to respect even the weaknesses and prejudices of our brethren, so far as this can be done without in any way neglecting the requirements of the Gospel.” The third hypothesis is the best, but some explanations are needful. The Jewish Christians were slowly emancipated from Judaism, and they did not reach the clear conviction, until after the temple was destroyed, that its sacrifices were obsolete. Gentiles were forbidden to sacrifice to idols, but there was no such prohibition with regard to the altar of Jehovah. Even Paul evidently at this time thought of the sacrifices as, like circumcision, a matter of indifference. It was left for the next generation to learn that the inspired writings of Paul himself lead to the conclusion that all the sacrifices of the temple altar pointed to the Lamb of God, and that, from the time he was offered, they became obsolete.

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27–40. The Jews ... of Asia. From the Roman province called Asia, of which Ephesus was the capital. As Paul had spent three years in that city, they knew him well. These Jews were watching Paul, had seen him in company with Trophimus, an Ephesian Greek, and when they saw Paul in the temple keeping the Nazarite vow, seized him and raised an outcry. **Hath polluted this holy place.** They not only charge him with teaching against Judaism, but with bringing Greeks into the part of the temple where all Gentiles were forbidden to come. The Palestine Exploration Society found in their excavations an inscription that must have been over the passage between the court of the Gentiles and the interior court, where the chambers for Nazarites were, forbidding aliens to pass the balustrade on the penalty of death. Nothing could arouse a greater outburst of fanaticism than the belief that Paul had taken Gentiles within the sacred precincts. **They took Paul, and drew**

him out of the temple. He was, no doubt, within the inner courts, and was hurried without, and the gates shut, to prevent the pollution of the sacred courts by the shedding of blood. They proposed to slay him when they had dragged him where it could be done without profanation. They were willing to murder, but not to profane the temple. **They went about to kill him.** Had Trophimus been within, their customs might have permitted them to kill him, but to slay Paul could only be a murder. **Tidings came unto the chief captain.** The commander of the garrison in the castle of Antonia, overlooking the temple. The watch could see the uproar from their elevated outlook, and the soldiers in a moment would rush down the staircase that led into the temple area, and appear upon the scene. The fortress joined the temple wall and had two flights of stairs leading into the temple courts. **Took him, and commanded him to be bound.** The first thought of the commander was that the man seized was some great criminal. From verse 38 we learn that he supposed Paul was an Egyptian rebel. Hence he ordered him bound. **Canst thou speak Greek?** When Paul reached the head of the stairs, as he was carried by the soldiers into the fortress, he addressed the officer in Greek. Surprised that he should use that language, the chief captain asked if he was not **that Egyptian.** Josephus twice mentions this notorious Egyptian, a pretended prophet, and leader of the *Sicarii*, or "Assassins." This "Egyptian" brigand was probably illiterate and did not speak Greek. **I am a Jew of Tarsus.** As Tarsus was "no mean city," a free city, he was entitled to some consideration. **When he had given him license.** To address the people. He stood at the head of the stairs, with the vast throng in the court below. Beckoning with the hand to call attention, he addressed them in their beloved Hebrew tongue. There is no excitement, no resentment, but an earnest purpose to benefit them by preaching Christ.

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Chapter XXII

Paul's Address to the Jews in the Temple

Summary —Paul Speaks in Hebrew to the People. His Jewish Birth at Tarsus. His Education at the Feet of Gamaliel. His Persecution of the Church. The Appearance of Christ to Him on the Way to Damascus. His Baptism. The Vision of the Lord in the Temple. Sent to the Gentiles. The Interruption of the Mob. Appeals to His Rights as a Roman.

1–3. Spake in the Hebrew tongue. The tongue called the Hebrew, a dialect of the ancient Hebrew, and distinguished from it by the name *Aramaic*. It was the common language of Judea in the time of Christ. It would be understood by all Paul's Jewish hearers, while many could not understand Greek. **I am a Jew.** In order to refute their charge that he taught against Moses, he calls attention to his Jewish birth, and his education under their venerated doctor of the law, Gamaliel. For the character of this teacher, See notes on 5:34. **Was zealous toward God.** His zeal was like theirs, honest, and ardent. Observe how he associates himself with his hearers. It was the first opportunity he had ever had to explain to the people of Jerusalem the reason why he had become a Christian.

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4, 5. I persecuted this way. He did this from his zeal towards God, whom he thought he thus served. **Unto the death.** This seems to imply that Stephen was not the only martyr in whose death

he was an accomplice. **The high priest doth bear me witness.** The high priest in a.d. 37, the time Saul of Tarsus was sent to Damascus, was not now high priest, having been deposed by the Romans, but was probably a member of the Sanhedrim at this time. It is also probable that the present high priest personally knew about all facts. There were many present who knew that he had been a commissioned persecutor.

6–11. Nigh unto Damascus about noon. See notes on 9:3–10, where the account of Paul's conversion is given. There the time of day is not mentioned. The light appeared when the sun was at its brightest, and was brighter than the sun (26:13). **Saul, Saul.** The Voice spoke in the Hebrew tongue (26:14). **Why persecutest thou me?** By persecuting those for whom Christ died. **Heard not the voice.** Some have insisted that there is a contradiction between this statement and that of 9:7, but the word *hear* is often used in the sense of “understand.” Once the writer heard Abraham Lincoln address a great audience. Some, at a distance, cried out, “We cannot hear.” They meant *understand*, for they could hear the sound of his voice. **I could not see for the glory of that light.** In chapter 9 we are told that he was blinded, but not the cause.

12–16. One Ananias, a devout man. In the account of 9:10 we are told he was a disciple. Though a disciple, he kept the law strictly. **The God of our fathers.** Of the Jews. **See that Just One.** The Lord Jesus Christ. It was necessary that Paul should see the Lord in order to become a witness. He refers more than once to the fact that he had seen the risen Christ (1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8). **Arise, and be baptized.** Dean Howson (*Acts*, p. 501) says that the verb “baptize” in the Greek is in the middle voice, and that a more accurate rendering would be, “Have thyself baptized.” **Wash away thy sins.** This language shows that Ananias thought that the penitent sinner was to be baptized for the remission of sins (2:38), and that Paul held the same view. Compare Titus 3:5. Hackett says: “This clause states the result of baptism in language derived from the nature of the ordinance. It answers to *eis aphasin hamartion* (2:38), *i. e.*, submit to the rite in order to be forgiven.... There can be no question of the mode of baptism in this case, for if it be held that *be baptized* is uncertain in its meaning, *wash away* is a definition that removes the doubt.” As the final act of conversion, baptism symbolically, is said to wash away sins.

17–21. When I was come again to Jerusalem. This was three years after his conversion (Gal. 1:17, 18). He shows in what follows that it was by Divine direction that he had devoted his life to the conversion of the Gentiles, that he would have labored with his own race, but that, while in the temple praying, he had a second vision of the Lord who, a second time, assured him that his work was with the Gentiles. **In a trance.** Greek, “An ecstasy,” a state of mind when the spirit was, as it were, lifted out of the bodily conditions and enabled to discern things unseen. Compare 10:10. Some have held that this trance in the temple is described in 2 Cor. 12:2, 3, but this is uncertain. **They will not receive thy testimony.** His own countrymen are meant. They regarded him as an apostate. **Lord, they know.** He recalls the very words of his prayer to show his anxiety to labor with his own race. **When the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed.** See 7:58 and 8:1. **Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.** Thus by the command of his Lord his life-work was placed beyond the pale of Israel.

22, 23. They gave him audience unto this word. To the statement that the Lord sent him to the Gentiles. This at once filled them with fury. Amid their long sufferings from foreign oppressors, the Jew took comfort in the thought that when his Messiah came the Gentile would be abased and the Jew would put his feet upon his neck. Hence, nothing so stirred their passions as an intimation that Christ would be a Savior to the Gentiles. In his own synagogue of Nazareth, when the Lord

declared the salvation of the Gentiles, his own townsmen sought to put him to death. We have seen the struggle in the infant church before it would receive Gentiles without circumcision. At this time, the smothered fires of the great Jewish war, that broke out a few years later, were burning in Jewish hearts. Hence, the statement that Paul's Christ was a Savior of the Gentiles, and had commanded him to pass by the Jews and offer salvation to the Gentiles, at once produced an explosion of frantic rage. **Cast off their clothes, and threw dust.** Manifestations of an uncontrolled fury that hardly knew what it did.

24–30. Bade that he be examined by scourging. Probably ignorant of the Hebrew tongue, unable to understand what had caused the fury of the people, thinking that it might be due to the commission of some horrible crime by the speaker, the chief captain, drawing him into the castle, ordered that he be put to the torture to compel him to make a confession. Until recent times, it was common to torture prisoners under the belief that thus they could be compelled to speak the truth. Scourging was the usual method of torture among the Romans. The prisoner's back was bared, he was bound, and the rods borne by the lictors were usually employed. **Paul said to the centurion.** Who was seeing that the chief captain's orders were carried out. **Is it lawful to scourge a Roman?** Once before at Philippi (16:37) he had appealed to his rights as a Roman, but this was after the scourging. The name *Roman* acted like magic in each case. The centurion at once pauses, tell his commander to beware; no officer dared to lay a hand in violence on a Roman citizen without trial. The claim was at once allowed, for it was a capital offense to make a false claim of citizenship, and none dared attempt it. "He who falsely pretended to Roman citizenship was beheaded on the Esquiline hill."—*Suetonius*. A constant traveler like Paul would be likely to carry papers that would prove his claims. **Art thou a Roman?** The commander comes at once to inquire for himself. The officer states that he had bought citizenship himself. He was not of Roman birth, an alien, but by a heavy bribe had obtained Roman rights. This was not uncommon in the corrupt period of Roman government that had come. **But I was free born.** His father before had been a Roman citizen. Whether he inherited it also, or had in some way secured the right, is unknown. If any wonder how a Jew could be a Roman, let them look around and see Jews, Germans, Irish, etc., who are American citizens. **The chief captain was afraid.** Because he had bound Paul for the torture, and had thus violated the privileges of Roman citizenship. **On the morrow.** Perplexed concerning the animosity of his countrymen to Paul, anxious to know whether he was a malefactor, he ordered a meeting of the Sanhedrim that it might investigate the charges against him.

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Chapter XXIII

Paul's Defence Before the Sanhedrim

Summary —*The Insult of the High Priest. Paul's Rebuke. His Appeal to the Pharisees. Their Favor. The Dissension. Paul Removed. The Vision of the Lord in the Night. The Plot of the Sicarii. Revealed to the Chief Captain by Paul's Nephew. Paul Sent Under an Escort of Soldiers to Cæsarea. The Letter of Claudius Lysias to Felix.*

1. Paul, earnestly beholding. Attentively studying his audience, and no doubt seeking whether there were old acquaintances among the members of the Sanhedrim. He probably knew at least a part of the body. Many years before he had been its trusted agent, to execute its orders against Christians; now he is on trial before it for being one of that body which it formerly employed him to destroy. They regarded him a renegade, much as our countrymen regard Benedict Arnold, and their hate was so vindictive that they were utterly unable to listen calmly to his defence. Hence, as soon as he began by declaring that he had acted **in all good conscience until this day**, the high priest ordered that he be smitten in the mouth.

2–5. To smite him on the mouth. The high priest flamed up in an instant at the statement of Paul that he had acted in good conscience. “How could such a renegade from Judaism be conscientious?” It is common in the despotic East to order the mouths that are supposed to have spoken falsely to be smitten. Ananias was high priest at this time, but was removed on a charge brought by King Agrippa (25:13) in a.d. 59. He was at last assassinated. **God shall smite thee, thou whited wall.** These words, spoken by the prisoner, indignant at the mockery of justice, were rather a prediction than an imprecation. I have just stated that this violent man came to an untimely death. The insult to Paul reminds us of a similar one to his Master before the same body (John 18:22). By *whited wall* Paul means a hypocrite. See note on Matt. 23:27. **I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest.** It was contrary to the law of Moses (Exod. 22:28) to revile one in high authority. Paul's reply to the charge that he had violated the law has been variously explained. Howson gives what appears to me the most probable view: “I did not take thought, at the moment, in my indignation over the command to smite a defenceless prisoner on trial, that he was the high priest. I am well aware that it is said, ‘Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.’” His words were an apology for his hasty speech. *I wist not* is used in the sense of “I did not bear in mind.”

6–10. Perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees. When the Savior was condemned, the Sanhedrim was composed of both parties, and now, nearly thirty years later, we find it the same. The chief priests, as a rule, were Sadducees, while the scribes were mainly of the Pharisees. It was the doctrine of the resurrection that especially inflamed the Sadducees against the gospel (see Acts 4:2). This was the ground of battle between the two sects, and Paul, himself once a Pharisee, now preaching a gospel of which the great fact is the resurrection, not only avails himself of the opportunity to proclaim the fundamental truth of Christianity, but in so doing divides his enemies. Alford, says, concerning his declaration, **I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question**, that, “All prospect for a fair trial was hopeless. Paul well knew from experience that personal odium would bias his judges, and violence prevail over justice. He therefore uses in the cause of truth the maxim so often perverted to the use of falsehood, *Divide and conquer*.” **There arose a dissension.** The Pharisees were at once reminded that Paul was with them in their great ground of contention with the Sadducees. His appeal to them makes them at once his champions against the rival sect. **8. The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection.** See notes on Matt. 22:23 for the doctrinal view of the Sadducees. The statement here is fully confirmed by Josephus. See *Wars of the Jews*, 2:8, 14. **The scribes ... arose.** These were mostly Pharisees, and were a learned class. **We find no evil in this man.** There was more to them in common with him than with the materialistic Sadducees. **If a spirit or an angel.** See the Revision. They throw this out as a defiance to the Sadducees who denied both angel and spirit. The clause “Let us not fight, etc.,” is not found in the best MSS. **There arose a great**

dissension. One party took Paul's side, the other opposed; one sought to lay hands on him, the other to defend him. The chief captain interposed and removed Paul to the castle.

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11. The night following. Paul's conditions seemed most forlorn. He was even suspected by the church in Jerusalem. He was a prisoner to the Romans. His own nation was thirsting for his life. He had twice, within two days, narrowly escaped death. He needed comfort, and hence **the Lord stood by him**, cheered him, and gave him encouragement concerning his future work. It not doubt was like a ray of light, as he passed a sleepless night in his prison cell, to learn that the dear Lord still had work for him.

12–24. Certain of the Jews banded together. Perhaps these Jews were of the bitter enemies from Asia who had laid hands on him in the temple. They may have belonged to a wild fanatical association of Jewish assassins, who, a few years later, played a prominent part, called *Sicarii*. The Talmud says that those who took such a vow were released from it, if it was impossible to carry it out. Their purpose was to induce **the chief priests**, who were Sadducees, to have Paul appear before the Sanhedrim the next day, and then they would murder him. **Paul's sister's son heard.** This is the only mention in Acts of any of Paul's relations. It is possible that this nephew was studying in Jerusalem, as Paul had done many years before, and heard of the plot from those who did not know that he was in any way related to Paul. Whether he was a Christian or not, he took pains to inform his uncle. There was no difficulty of access, for Paul was a Roman, and would be treated with courtesy. Paul, at once, sent him to the chief captain with his information. **19. Took him by the hand.** To show how carefully he was listening to the story. **Called unto him two centurions.** These were told to prepare four hundred and seventy soldiers for an escort, a large force, but the country was in a disturbed condition, and all the occurrences connected with Paul confused and alarmed the commander. **Bring him safe unto Felix.** Of this man, then governor, we will hear more. He was originally a slave, but had risen by base arts to a high position. His brother Pallas was the emperor's favorite, and secured the important post of governor for Felix in a.d. 52. In a.d. 60 he was removed.

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25–30. He wrote a letter. Roman law required that when a prisoner was sent by a lower official to a higher for trial, a letter should be sent stating the charges. That of Lysias states his understanding of the case. **I rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman.** Like many modern officials, he prevaricates. He found out he was a Roman after he rescued him. **I sent him straightway to thee.** "Though I held him to be innocent, hearing of the plot against his life, I thought it best to send him to thee." Had he released Paul in Jerusalem, the conspirators would have murdered him.

31–35. Brought him by night to Antipatris. They departed by night so that the Jews would know nothing of Paul's departure until the next day. Antipatris was about thirty-eight miles from Jerusalem. The march was not probably made by night, but begun at night and was completed the next day. **On the morrow.** The morrow after they reached Antipatris, all returned but the horsemen. Cæsarea was now only twenty-six miles distant, and the danger was over. **He asked of what province he was.** Felix was governor of Judea under the proconsul of Syria. Had he found the prisoner to be of some other province under the proconsul, he would probably have turned him over to its governor (compare Luke 23:6, 7), but when he found he was of Cilicia, a distant part of

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the empire, he retained him. **Kept in Herod's judgment hall.** The palace built by Herod the Great in Cæsarea for his own residence, but now occupied by Felix.



Chapter XXIV

Paul's Defence Before Felix

Summary —*The High Priest and Elders Come Down to Accuse Paul. The Speech of Tertullus, Their Lawyer. Paul's Reply. Declares His Manner of Life, That He is a Christian, Why He Came to Jerusalem, How He Acted. Felix Defers a Decision for Further Inquiry. Paul Preaches Before Felix and Drusilla.*

1–9. After five days. Five days after Paul departed from Jerusalem. The Roman usage was to investigate a case promptly. The deep animosity of the Jews is shown by the fact that the high priest himself came down to prosecute, attended by a delegation from the Sanhedrim (elders). **A certain orator named Tertullus.** A lawyer acquainted with the forms of Roman courts. Some have supposed that he was not a Jew, from his name, but it is probable that he was a Jew who had been educated in Roman law, perhaps at Rome. The name signifies nothing. That of Paul (Paulus) was itself Roman. The first three verses of the address of Tertullus are compliments to Felix, intended to secure a favorable hearing. In fifth verse the charges begin, the first one of which is false. **A ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.** This was *the* offence of Paul. All their hatred was due to the fact that he was the great Christian leader. The reason why this urged was to show that Paul preached a religion not authorized by Roman law. See notes on 18:13. *Nazarenes* was for hundreds of years the term was applied to Christians by the Jews. This is the only instance, however, in the New Testament where it so applied. The Mohammedans still use it. **Hath gone about to profane the temple.** This false charge is repeated, because this was the cry when Paul was seized (21:28). Note that there are three charges: (1) That Paul was the author of sedition; (2) preached an unlawful religion; (3) profaned the temple. The penalty of the last by Jewish law was death, and the Romans usually permitted it to be enforced. **Whom we took, and would have judged.** This part of the sixth verse, all of the seventh, and the first clause of the eighth, are not found in the Revision, or the best MSS. *Whom* (verse 8) in the Common Version becomes *him* in the Revision and refers to Paul. **And the Jews joined in the charge.** Those who had come down from Jerusalem affirmed that Tertullus had spoken in the facts.



10–21. Paul answered. He had the right to reply to his accusers. The Roman law condemned no one unheard. **Thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation.** For six or seven years Felix had been governor and was therefore familiar with the state of affairs in Judea. Upon this fact Paul courteously congratulates himself. **It is not more than twelve days.** It would be easy for Felix to ascertain the facts, for only twelve days had passed since he returned to Judea, after many years absence. Of these twelve, the first is the day Paul meets James and the elders, the second he enters upon his vow, the seventh he is seized in the temple, the eighth tried before the Sanhedrim, the eleventh day he is delivered to Felix, and the thirteenth appears before his court. Verse 12 is in answer to the first charge, that of sedition. He had been perfectly quiet in Jerusalem. **But this**

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I confess. Verses 14, 15 and 16 are in answer to the second charge, that he is of the *sect* of Nazarenes." He confesses that he worships God **after that way they call a sect** (see Revision). Yet he is a true Jew, **believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets.** In becoming a Christian, he had not, therefore, as they asserted, apostatized from the faith of his fathers. **And have hope toward God.** This hope of the resurrection, the great doctrine of Christianity, was one that the law and the prophets foreshadow, and **which they themselves also allow.** The Jews held this same hope. Apart from the Sadducees, a small minority, the Jews believed in a future life and judgment. Hence, even in this matter, he was not preaching a new, unknown and illegal doctrine, for Judaism was acknowledged by Roman law. Josephus says, "The Sadducees were able to persuade none but the rich. The Pharisees had the multitude on their side." **Herein do I exercise myself.** In this belief of a resurrection. His belief was not a theory, but a life, and hence he sought to keep his conscience pure in the sight of God and man. **Now after many years I came.** Here he begins his reply to the third charge, that of profaning the temple. He came to Jerusalem with the most benevolent motives, **to bring alms to my own nation.** These were the sums of money gathered in the Gentile churches for the poor in Jerusalem. See Rom. 15:25–31; 1 Cor. 16:1–4; 2 Cor. 8:9. **Offerings.** Such as were customary at the temple. It was while engaged in the preparations for a Nazarite offering that he was seized. He thus accounts for his presence in the temple. **Certain Jews from Asia found me.** He states how these Jews who raised the outcry found him engaged. He was engaged in a Jewish rite. **Who ought to have been here.** These foreign Jews were the legal accusers. The Sanhedrim was a court of trial, and its members present were not the accusers. The Roman custom required the accusers to face the accused. **Let these same here say.** Let those present testify if they know one thing against me, save that I declared before the Sanhedrim that **Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question.** This was the real offence in the eyes of the high priest and his fellow Sadducees.

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22, 23. Felix heard these things. The speeches on each side. **Having more perfect knowledge.** Understanding the real animus of the charges. He was well acquainted with the Jewish hatred of Christians, and understood something of *that way*, the Christian doctrine. **He commanded a centurion to keep Paul.** Two reasons caused him to keep a prisoner that had done no wrong: (1) He did not like to offend the Jews; (2) he hoped to be bribed by the Christians to let Paul go. Paul was not put in confinement, but under the charge of an officer who was responsible for him. Usually in this kind of imprisonment the prisoner was bound to a soldier.

24–27. Felix came with his wife Drusilla. This woman, a Jewess, was the daughter of the Herod who died miserably at Cæsarea (12:23), and the sister of King Agrippa and Bernice (25:23). She was very beautiful and very profligate, had been the wife of Azizus, the king of Emesa, but had left him and married Felix. Perhaps the interest she felt in Paul was due to the fact that her father had been a persecutor of the Christians, had died a singular death, and this had been pronounced a judgment. **As he reasoned.** They, no doubt, expected that he would speak of doctrine, but instead he spoke of the life that ought to be lived, with special reference to those who sat before him in such state and glory. When he spoke of **righteousness**, he spoke of justice to a judge who held this office only for the sake of gain and who took bribes. When he spoke of **temperance**, he rebuked the unbridled sway of the passions and of lust. When he spoke of **judgment**, he pictured the judgment scene when the unjust and impure of earth shall be called to account. With such power he spoke that the stern Roman trembled before the poor prisoner in his power. **Go thy way.** Felix does not resent; he is too powerfully moved, but he puts off. Thus thousands destroy their souls.

He hoped that money. Almost every Roman governor took a province in order to enrich himself, and hence would welcome bribery and every species of corruption. Felix was no worse than the average official of his time. **But after two years.** It was in the autumn of a.d. 60 that Felix was removed. **Porcius Festus came in Felix' room.** This officer was more upright, according to Josephus, than most Roman governors, but died in the second year of his office. **Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure.** He was recalled, because grave accusations were made against him. Had he released Paul, it would have intensified the enmity of the Jews, and hence he was turned over as a prisoner to his successor.

The question has been asked how Paul spent these two years of confinement. Dean Howson urges that at this time of the Gospel of Luke was written under the supervision of Paul. He and Luke were in Judea, where the facts could be gathered. Philip lived at Cæsarea. Paul more than once in his writings speaks of "My Gospel." *Irenæus*, who had heard those preach who had heard the apostles, tells us that Paul was accustomed to speak of the Gospel of Luke as written by him, and Origen and Jerome assert the same fact. We know Paul could not have been idle. Hence, for these reasons, Howson suggests that at this period his chief work was the Third Gospel, the "Gospel for the Gentiles."



Chapter XXV

The Appeal to Cæsar

Summary—*The Jewish Leaders Accuse Paul to Festus. Trial Before Festus at Cæsarea. Rather Than Be Sent to Jerusalem, Paul Appeals to Cæsar. King Agrippa and Bernice Visit Festus. They Ask to See and Hear Paul. On the Morrow a Meeting in Great State. King Agrippa Requested to Examine Paul That Festus May Know What to Report to Rome.*

1–6. When Festus was come into the province. Had become governor of Judea. The whole province of which Judea was a part was called Syria, and was ruled by a *proconsul*. The divisions of one of the great proconsulships were ruled by *procurators*, translated "governors." Pontius Pilate, Felix and Festus are examples of the latter. **Then the high priest ... informed him against Paul.** Immediately after entering upon his government, Festus went from the Roman capital of Judea to its Jewish capital. The rulers did not lose this opportunity to prosecute Paul. Their aim was to have him transferred from Cæsarea to Jerusalem, and thus exposed to their murderous designs. **To kill him.** This was the real object of their request. Those who will read the account of these times given by Josephus, a Jew of this period, will see that such a murderous purpose is not improbable. Their purpose was for the time baffled by the decision of Festus that the case must be tried before his court in Cæsarea instead of before the Sanhedrim. **Those who are able.** Those possessing official power.

7–12. When he was come. When Festus had returned to Cæsarea. **The Jews ... laid many and grievous complaints against Paul.** From the substance of Paul's reply (verse 8), it is easy to determine that these charges were about the same as before Felix, viz: (1) Teaching a new and illegal religion; (2) profaning the temple; (3) sedition, or offending against Cæsar, charges that they

could not sustain. It is evident from verse 19 that particular stress was laid upon the fact that he was a “ring-leader of the Nazarenes.” **9. Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure.** He desired to avoid a difficulty with them at the very beginning of his government. He therefore proposed to Paul to go to Jerusalem for trial. This was the request of the Jews. The charges were in great part concerning a violation of the Jewish law, and the Sanhedrim claimed jurisdiction in that case. But Paul was a Roman, hence Festus could not, without his consent, send him up to the stronghold of his enemies. He perhaps thought that Paul would appeal to his rights as a citizen, and that would prevent the necessity of a refusal to comply with the wishes of the Jews. **I stand at Cæsar's judgment seat.** Before a Roman tribunal. The governor was the representative of Cæsar. To be delivered over to the Sanhedrim was to be sent to certain death. Hence, he falls back on the right of every Roman citizen to appeal to Cæsar himself, or to the imperial tribunal in Rome, a right granted by law to all Romans in the provinces, an essential for protection against unjust governors. **When he had conferred with the council.** His own counsellors, men called “assessors,” whose duty it was to advise the governor. He then announces the decision, I suppose, in the legal language used in such cases, **Hast thou appealed unto Cæsar? unto Cæsar thou shalt go.**

13–27. Agrippa and Bernice came. King Agrippa II., the son of Herod Agrippa, whose death is told in 12:23. Drusilla and Bernice were his sisters. He was the last of the Herodian kings, and was at this time king of Calchis. Bernice, his beautiful sister, was one of the fairest and most dissolute women of her time. She was married several times, had been twice married before Paul saw her, and is discreditably associated with both Vespasian and Titus. The latter took her to Rome, and would have married her had it not been for the storm of public disapproval. **To salute Festus.** To pay their respects to the new Roman official. **Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king.** He did this for advice. He was really perplexed. He had just come into the province of Judea, and was not acquainted with Jewish customs. He could see nothing wrong in Paul, but the Jewish rulers accused him so vehemently that he was not sure that he understood the case. King Agrippa was a Jew by birth, would understand the real difference between Paul and the Sanhedrim, and could aid Festus to formulate the charges that must be sent to Rome when Paul was sent to appear before Cæsar's tribunal. **Their own superstition.** The Jewish religion. **Unto the hearing of Augustus.** One of the titles of the Roman emperor. He was styled *Cæsar*, *Augustus*, and *Imperator*, from whence the word emperor. **On the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp.** The account reads like that of an eye-witness, as it doubtless is. The gathering of a king, a princess, a great Roman representative of Cæsar, with their splendid retinues, heralds, lictors, and men at arms, as well as the great officers of the Roman army and chief men of Cæsarea, was a sight well calculated to leave a profound impression. Then **Paul was brought forth** before this splendid array of royalty and power. **Festus said.** He introduces the cause by a short explanation: (1) Ye see this man; (2) the Jews declare that he ought not to live; (3) I have found in him nothing worthy of death; (4) he had appealed to Augustus; (5) I have nothing certain to write in the way of charges; (6) perhaps thou, O King Agrippa, canst help me out of this difficulty. **My lord.** The emperor. This great occasion gave Paul a great opportunity. Instead of using it to defend himself, he preached the gospel to that great audience. His address, as given in the next chapter, is a masterpiece.

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Chapter XXVI

Paul's Address Before King Agrippa

Summary —*Agrippa's Knowledge of the Law and the Jews. Paul's Early Career and Hatred of Christ. The Great Doctrine of the Resurrection. The Manifestation of the Risen Lord to Paul Near Damascus. Paul's Preaching of the Suffering Christ. The Interruption of Festus and the Reply. Paul's Personal Appeal to Agrippa. The Decision That Paul Had Done Nothing Worthy of Bonds.*

1. Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Not Agrippa, but Festus had the authority in the province, but this meeting was arranged in order that Agrippa might investigate the case and assist Festus in formulating the charges (see 25:26, 27); hence the king calls upon Paul to speak.

2, 3. I think myself happy, king Agrippa. Agrippa had been brought up in the Jewish religion, professed to be a steadfast Jew, was the legal guardian of the temple, and hence was well versed in all the Jewish customs. He was therefore competent to be a judge of an accusation of treason to the religion and law of their forefathers. Paul felt it a privilege to defend himself before one who was prepared to decide whether his preaching was contrary to Moses and the prophets, or, on the other hand, a fulfillment of them.

4–8. My manner of life from my youth. He appeals to his life to show that it had been consistent with the law. The Jews all knew that he had been educated and had lived a Pharisee, the strictest of Jewish sects. It was not because of a departure from the faith of his fathers that he was accused, but he was **judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto the fathers.** That glorious promise, running through all the Jewish Scriptures, was that the Messiah should come. For examples of the promise, see Gen. 22:18; 49:10; Deut. 18:15–19; Isa. 9:6, 7. Paul not only believed in Moses and the prophets, but believed that the promise God made to them was fulfilled. **Unto which promise.** This promise was the hope of Israel. The twelve tribes, in their constant, never-ceasing service of God, were simulated by the hope that they would enjoy the fulfillment of the promise. **Our twelve tribes.** Paul, like James (Jas. 1:1), speaks of the twelve tribes as having the same glorious hope. Since the Captivity, the tribal existence of the ten northern tribes had not been preserved, but descendants of all the tribes were mingled in the Jewish nation. Paul was of the tribe of Benjamin, John the Baptist of Levi, Joseph and Mary of Judah, Anna (Luke 2:36) of the tribe of Asher. **Why should it be thought incredible with you?** This hope of Israel involved the resurrection of Christ. This Moses and the prophets taught. His countrymen accepted Moses and the prophets, but denied the resurrection as a thing incredible. It was for this hope's sake, of a risen Redeemer, that he was called in question. There was no doubt much said which our record does not preserve, as we have only the outlines of addresses.

9–11. I verily thought with myself. Next, in order to show his zeal for Judaism, he describes his course as a persecutor. He was thoroughly conscientious then in opposing Christ. For his course as a persecutor, see 7:58; 9:1, 2; 22:4. **I gave my voice against them.** “Vote,” in the Revision. This has been held to indicate that he was a member of the Sanhedrim. This would hardly be doubted were it not that tradition declares that the members of the Sanhedrim had to be married and fathers of a family. Hence, some have held that Paul was a member of some lesser court appointed by the Sanhedrim to try the Christians. **I punished them oft in every synagogue.** “All the synagogues”

(Revision). Scourging was a not uncommon punishment in the synagogue (Matt. 10:17; 23:34). **Compelled them to blaspheme.** Terrified them into denying Jesus. **Even unto strange cities.** Of these Damascus was one. That he was a terrible persecutor, “exceedingly mad,” raging, even fanatical cannot be doubted from his own account.

12–18. As I went to Damascus. Compare 9:1–9. This is the third account of Paul's conversion, the first being in chapter 9, and the second in 22:4–16. There are a few new details given here: (1) The over-powering glory of the Lord is specially dwelt upon here; (2) we are here told that the voice heard was in the **Hebrew tongue** (he was now speaking Greek to King Agrippa). This fact that he here states is remarkable. Bengel says: “The Hebrew tongue, Christ's language when on earth; his language, too, when he spoke from heaven.” It was in the Aramaic, a Hebrew dialect, that the Savior taught when on earth, and it is a significant circumstance that Paul heard his voice in the same tongue to which Peter, James and John had listened. Not only is this true, but critics hold that the Hebraisms are so prominent in the Book of Revelation as to indicate that the revelations there recorded were made in Hebrew, and afterward translated by John into Greek. See Howson on *Acts*, p. 546. The proverb, **It is hard for thee to kick against the goad**, is here added. The mission of Paul to the Gentiles is described as being a part of the Lord's communication. **I have appeared for this purpose.** In order that he might be a minister and a witness. It was needful that the apostle of the Gentiles should see Christ. He must be a witness that the Lord had risen. He was chosen for this work before conversion, because he was honest, deeply conscientious, and possessed the great qualities that were needful to fit him for the most important work ever assigned to man.

19–20. I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision. He could still have disobeyed. His will was free, but he could only act in good conscience by obeying Christ. He not only was baptized by Ananias in Damascus, but, after some preparation, he began to preach, **first in Damascus** (9:27), and then **at Jerusalem**, where he disputed against the Grecians (9:28, 29). Just when he preached **throughout the coasts of Judea** we are not informed. Hackett thinks it was when he came up with help at the time of the famine (11:30). **That they should repent.** He preached more than a theory; he preached a new life.

21–23. For these causes the Jews caught me. Because he obeyed and preached Christ. **I continue to this day.** By the divine help. That had protected him, because he was doing God's work, and he was enabled to witness to all ranks. **Both to small and great.** What he witnessed was only what Moses and the prophets had said should come, viz.: **That Christ should suffer, rise, shew light to the people, and to the Gentiles.** In these things he had the support of Moses and the prophets, and for these things he was accused. He was not at variance with Moses and the law, but preached their meaning.

24–26. Paul, thou art beside thyself. The earnestness and fervor of Paul were so strange to Festus, his doctrine of the resurrection so novel, his manner so sincere, and his testimony so startling, that the Roman could only explain it by a mental delusion. The display of such vast knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures to Agrippa convinced him that intense study resulted in derangement. It must not be forgotten that Festus had just come into his position, and knew little of Paul. **I am not mad, most noble Festus.** The courteous answer shows the mistake of Festus, a mistake due to his ignorance of the subject. **The king knoweth.** The facts that he had cited in his discourse were well known to the king, viz., the predictions of the prophets, the hope of a Messiah, the death of Jesus, and the spread of the congregations of those who believed that he was a risen Lord.

27–30. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? The king professed to believe them. Yet those very prophets, as Paul had shown, testified to all the facts of the career of Jesus of Nazareth and his claims to Messiahship. This personal appeal deeply moved the king, as his reply shows. **Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.** The Revision changes the translation somewhat, but I have little doubt but that the Common Version gives the idea. The king, like Felix (24:25), was deeply moved; the fact that he and Festus decided (verse 32) that Paul was not a transgressors show that they were favorably impressed; it was no occasion for an ironical answer, and Paul took the remark as in earnest, and added still another appeal. Chrysostom, Luther, Beza, Bengel and Howson take this view. **Paul said, I would to God, etc.** His reply is courteous, but of intense earnestness, a last effort to save souls that were deeply stirred. He would that king and governor, all, Jew and Gentile, shared his hope of a glorious inheritance, and were, like himself, at peace with God;—such as he, **save these bonds.** It is probable that his chains were then hanging upon his arms, and that he indicated them by a gesture.

31, 32. When they had gone aside. Retired for private conference. Their decision was that Paul had done nothing justifying his imprisonment. The accusations of the Jews were groundless. **This man might have been set at liberty.** His innocence was clear, but after the appeal to Cæsar, the case belonged to the higher courts, and Festus had no more power to clear than to condemn. It was God's will that Paul should be carried to Rome. There was work for him to do in the capital of the world (see 23:11).

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Chapter XXVII

The Sea Voyage to Rome

Summary —*The Centurion in Charge of Paul Embarks with Him for Rome. At Myra Take an Alexandrian Corn Ship. The Weather Tempestuous Paul Advises the Centurion to Go into Harbor for the Winter. Caught by the Euroclydon and Driven. After Fourteen Days of Drifting Paul Assures Them That All Will Escape. The Ship Runs Ashore on the Island of Malta and Is Destroyed. The Men All Saved.*

1. When it was determined. When all was settled that Paul should go to Italy, and the time appointed had come. **Delivered Paul and certain other prisoners.** No information is given concerning these companions in bonds. **To a centurion named Julius.** All we learn of this Roman officer is favorable. It is remarkable how uniformly Paul commanded the respect of the Roman officials with whom he came in contact. Sergius Paulus, Gallio, Felix, Festus and Julius are examples of this. **Of the Augustan band.** Rather, “cohort.” Josephus says that this period one of the cohorts stationed at Cæsarea took the name of Augustus (Wars, 2:12, 7 and 2:12, 5).

2. A ship of Adramyttium. This city was on the Asiatic coast of the Ægean Sea. In those days there were no regular lines of passenger ships, and in making a voyage from Judea to Rome several ships might be necessary to complete the voyage. Paul took three before he reached Rome. **Aristarchus, a Macedonian.** He is named in 19:29 and in 20:4. Luke and Aristarchus are the only

fellow-Christians who attended Paul on the journey, as far as we know. In Col. 4:10, written while a prisoner at Rome, Paul calls Aristarchus his fellow-prisoner.

3. The next day we touched at Sidon. The next after sailing. Sidon was about sixty-seven miles north of Cæsarea. Here the centurion suffered Paul to go ashore to see his **friends**, the disciples in Sidon.

4, 5. Sailed under Cyprus. Near the eastern coast, where, by keeping near the shore, the contrary winds would be less felt, being broken by the highlands of the great island. The wind must have been from the northwest. The geographical details of this voyage are so accurate that they must have been written by an eye-witness. **Myra, a city of Lycia.** Reached by sailing over the seas of Cilicia and Pamphylia. Myra was a well-known port of that period.

6–8. Found a ship of Alexandria. The object was to meet a vessel on a voyage to Italy. Here was found such a ship, one of the great grain ships that sailed from Egypt. These were often large, of from 500 to 1,000 tons burden. **Sailed slowly.** On account of contrary winds. From Myra to Cnidus was only 137 miles, yet it required “many days.” The language seems to imply that the ship was not able to come into the port of Cnidus, a good harbor, fit for wintering, on the Carian coast. **We sailed under Crete.** From Cnidus, they ought to have sailed west, but the headwinds compelled them to direct their course to the south, where they took shelter under the lee of Crete. The winds were still evidently from the northwest. **With difficulty** they reached a place called **Fair Havens.** On the south coast of Crete. It retains the same name to this day. It is a roadstead, near **the city of Lasea.** It was supposed that all trace of this city was lost until recently, but it is now known that the natives apply this name to the ruins of an ancient town about five miles from Fair Havens.

9–13. When much time was spent. How long a time had passed since the embarkation cannot be told, but so long that **sailing was now dangerous.** On account of the season of year. In the winter, not only the storms, but the clouds and darkness, interfered with navigation. Mariners, in the absence of the compass, needed the sun and stars to direct their course. **Because the fast was ... past.** That of the Atonement, which came in October. **Sirs, I perceive.** Paul's experience taught him the danger of proceeding. It was the stormy and tempestuous season. He therefore volunteered his advice. **Centurion gave more heed.** The master, or captain, and the owner, were both aboard, and it was but natural that their wishes would prevail with the centurion. The chief argument for proceeding was that Fair Havens was not a good harbor, and they hoped to reach a better one. **Phenice.** This place, Phoenix in the Revision, was never reached, but would have been a good place for wintering, for the excellent harbor there remains to this day. **When the south wind blew.** When this wind arose, they supposed they could attain their purpose, and sailed along the southern shore of Crete to reach, if possible, Phoenix.

14–20. Rose a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon. “Euraquilo” in the Revision; a terrible northeast gale. The word and the description imply a hurricane. **When the ship was caught.** Seized by the wind and hurled out of her course. All that could be done was to drift before it. The ship was powerless. **Running under a certain island.** Getting in the shelter of it. Here they tried to put the ship in better shape for the storm. **Called Clauda.** Now named Gozo. It lies a little south of Crete. **Come by the boat.** Drew it up on deck. It had been in tow when they set out with the gentle wind. **Used helps.** The hull showed signs of giving way, and was **undergirded**, by ropes or chains, that were dropped so as to pass under the hull, and then were tightened with levers. The process is still common in wooden vessels in times of great peril. The British call it “frapping.” **Should fall into the quicksands.** The Syrtis, or quicksands, on the African coast to the southwest

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of Crete, were greatly feared by ancient sailors. The fact that they expected to be driven there shows that the storm, at first, came from the northeast. **Strake sail.** Nautical men say that this language implies that most of their sails were furled, only a small sail remaining set. The ship was “laid to,” endeavoring to ride out the storm. **So were driven.** A ship “laid to” will drift. “Laid to,” she would not drift directly before the wind, but if the wind was from the northeast, and her bow laid to the north, she would drift to the west. Their aim was to keep from being driven into the quicksands (the Great Syrtis). **Next day they lightened the ship.** Cast heavy things overboard, in order that it might ride the waves better. **The third day.** On this, the third day of the storm, the Christians aided to cast off the tackling, the spars, etc. It is evident that the situation was dangerous. **Neither sun nor stars in many days appeared.** Hence they could neither tell where they were nor direct their course. No such thing as the compass was then known. **All hope.** All hope of saving the ship or cargo was gone, and the mariners despaired of their own safety.

21–26. After long abstinence. Anxiety and necessity would enforce abstinence. The fires were all put out, the provisions watersoaked, the men constantly employed, their fear too great to prepare regular meals. If there was eating at all, it would be by snatches. **Paul stood forth.** He chose some place on deck where all could hear him. **Ye should have hearkened.** He reminds them of his advice, not to taunt, but to secure confidence for what he shall now say. The vessel and cargo shall be lost, but no man's life. **An angel.** He gives the grounds of his hope. An angel of God, the God he served, Jehovah, stood by him and declared it. **Whose I am, and whom I serve.** This short sentence is a sermon. It is the key-note of all Paul's ministry. **Fear not.** They were in the midst of terrible peril, in a ruined ship, on an unknown sea, tossed by the storm, surrounded by angry waves beneath, and angry heavens above. But God had not forgotten his servant. **God hath given thee all, etc.** Paul had then prayed for his fellow-voyagers. **Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.** Their safety and wreck on a certain island were assured; the details were not yet revealed.

27–32. Driven up and down in Adria. The central basin of the Mediterranean, between Sicily on the west and Greece on the east, was called by the old geographers “Adria,” or the Adriatic Sea. The name is now confined to the Gulf of Venice. **The shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country.** They probably heard the awful roar of the breakers. **Sounded, and found it twenty fathoms.** One hundred and twenty feet. The shallowness showed that they approached a coast, especially as it grew shallower every time the lead was cast. **Fearing ... rocks.** It was night, and they could hear the sound of the breakers. By day they might avoid the rocks. Hence they *cast anchor*, and “wished for day.” **Four anchors.** Because so many were needed to hold the ship. **As the shipmen were about to flee.** The sailors were about to take the boat, under false pretence, and abandon the ship. For the safety of all it was needful that they remain, in order to manage the ship when it was run ashore. Hence the centurion, at Paul's request, cut off the boat and let it drift away.

33–38. Paul besought them all to take meat. At dawn of day. He seems to have really had charge in this hour of peril. They needed the strength of the food for the work before them. **Having taken nothing.** The thought is, that for fourteen days they had had no regular meals. **This is for your health.** Essential to your welfare and safety. **There shall not a hair, etc.** A promise of absolute safety. **He took bread and gave thanks.** As Paul was wont to do before eating; as Christ himself did (Matt. 14:19; John 6:11). **Began to eat.** To encourage them by his example. It had its effect, for “they were all of good cheer, and they also took meat.” **We were ... two hundred threescore**

and sixteen souls. It can be seen from this fact that merchant vessels of that period were of large size. **They lightened the ship.** It was needful to beach it in just as shallow water as possible, and hence the cargo was thrown overboard. As might be expected in an Alexandrian ship, the cargo was wheat. Egypt was then the granary of Rome.

39–44. They discovered a certain creek with a shore. Rather, “A certain bay with a beach,” as in the Revision; a sloping beach. Into this they determined to try to thrust the ship, because here the force of the waves would be broken, the water shallow, and the beach favorable for the men's lives. **Taken up the anchors** (see verse 29). The Revision says, “Cast off their anchors.” Cut the ropes and let them go. **Loosed the rudder bands.** When anchored by the stern (verse 29), the rudder was lifted up out of the water by rudder bands to keep it out of the way of the anchor cables. Now it was let down again in order to steer the vessel. **A place where two seas met.** Where two bodies of water joined. This was due to a small island on the coast of the larger, Salmonetta on the coast of Malta. When they moved into the bay, they did not see the inlet coming in on the other side of Salmonetta, but when they saw it, they saw that “two seas met.” **Ran the ship aground.** This was what they purposed, but the violence of the waves was such as to break the stern in pieces. **The soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners.** We have here an illustration of the extreme brutality of the rank and file of the Roman army. They would rather kill the prisoners than to run the risk of their escape. **The centurion.** The interference of the centurion was in harmony with all we have stated of him. **Commanded.** The centurion took command. Those that could swim, cast themselves into the sea. Others floated on any buoyant object that could be secured, and thus all came to shore. This was not Paul's first shipwreck. Compare 2 Cor. 11:25, which was written at an earlier period of his life.

Luke's description of the management of the ship in the storm and shipwreck is pronounced by scholars the best description of ancient nautical methods extant.

Chapter XXVIII

Paul at Rome

Summary —Thrown on the Island of Malta. The Kindness of the People. A Viper Fastens on Paul's Hand, but Hurts Him Not. Paul Heals the Father of Publius. After Three Months Leave in the Castor and Pollux. Land and Meet Brethren at Puteoli. Met at Apii Forum by Brethren from Rome. Paul Suffered to Dwell by Himself Under Charge of a Soldier. Preaches to the Jews of Rome. Preaches with Full Liberty for Two Years in His Own Hired House.

1–6. The island was called Melita. They had no idea where they were cast until they were ashore, but were told by the inhabitants. It is conceded by scholars that it is the island so well known in our time as Malta. It is sixty miles from the southern point of Sicily, 200 miles from Africa, and is about sixty miles in circumference. **The barbarians.** So called because they were neither Greeks nor Romans. The word did not anciently mean uncivilized. The island was governed by the Romans, but the people were of African and Asiatic stock. The modern Maltese speak Arabic, mixed with Italian and English. **Kindled a fire.** It was winter, stormy, and the shipwrecked strangers were

drenched. The fire was what a considerate kindness would suggest. **Paul had gathered ... sticks.** Instead of looking on, he helped. So while on the ship he helped to throw out the tackling. **A viper came out of the heat.** In the bundle of driftwood or brush the serpent lay, chilled with the cold, but as soon as it was carried to the fire it was awakened to activity by the heat and struck its fangs into the hand that was disposing of the sticks. **This man is a murderer.** The people pronounced it a judgment. Though he had escaped the sea, divine justice would not let him escape. They waited to see his hand swell, and him to fall dead, but when he shook it off in the fire and experienced no harm they changed their minds and in their superstition called him *a god*. We are hear reminded of the sudden revulsion of feeling among the Lycaonians (14:18, 19). It is said that there are now no venomous serpents in Malta, but this is due to the enormous increase of the population and their extinction. The same fact has occurred in many places.

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7–10. The chief man of the island. His name, Publius, is Roman, and he was doubtless the Roman governor of the island. It would be simply his duty to take care of the Roman officer Julius and his company. Hence, he “lodged them courteously” for three days until they could provide for themselves. **Lay sick of a fever, etc.** Dysentery was the disease. Paul, by prayer and laying on of hands, healed him. This miracle naturally was followed by others, and it is not strange that Paul was honored, and that the people “laded them with all things necessary” for their further voyage.

11–14. After three months. They remained here most of the winter. As soon as the weather would justify they would go forward. It was probably February or March when they departed. **A ship of Alexandria.** So was the one shipwrecked. This, no doubt, was also laden with wheat. It had put into Malta, driven by bad weather, and wintered there in the excellent harbor. **Castor and Pollux.** Two favorite sea gods of the Greeks and Romans. Their figures were carried on the prow, and probably gave name to the vessel. “The great twin brothers” were famous in Roman legend. **Landing at Syracuse.** Then the leading city of the great island of Sicily, about eighty miles north of Malta. **Three days.** Probably waiting for a fair wind. **Fetches a compass.** Did not sail a straight course. **To Rhegium.** On the Italian side of the straits of Messina, opposite Messina on the Sicilian side. At this place they waited one day and then **the south wind blew**, just the wind they wanted, as their course lay north. **Came the next day to Puteoli.** About 180 miles north of Rhegium, on the bay of Naples, near the city of Naples. It is now called Pozzuoli. Ostia, near Rome, and Puteoli were the two ports where the Egyptian corn ships landed with their cargoes. In one of Seneca's letters (he was then living) he describes the crowds that would gather at the wharf of Puteoli when a great corn ship came in. **Where we found brethren.** We know from the Epistle to the Romans that there was a church at Rome that Paul was anxious to visit, and that the brethren were numerous (see chap. 16). Here we find also a church at a great seaport on the route from Palestine to Rome. **Were desired to tarry with them seven days.** Compare also 20:6, 7 and 21:4. In all these cases the object must have been to pass a Lord's day and to celebrate the Lord's Supper. The courteous Julius consenting, there was no difficulty in Paul's delay here.

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15, 16. After the week they started toward Rome. Their route was along one of the great roads for which the Romans were so famous, the Consular Way to Capua, and the along the celebrated Appian Way to Rome. **When the brethren heard of us.** The church in Rome. They determined to meet the great apostle on the way. They had already received from him the Epistles to the Romans. No doubt some of his Asiatic or European converts were in the church. Aquila and Priscilla had returned to their old home (Rom. 16:3) in the Imperial city, and perhaps were of those who met him on the way. **As far as Appii Forum.** Some met them at Appii Forum, which is forty-three

miles from Rome, and another band met them at the **Three Taverns**, which is ten miles nearer the great city. Both these places are mentioned by Horace and Cicero (*Hor. Sat.* 1:5, 4; *Cic. Letters to Atticus* 2:12). **Thanked God.** As the apostle traveled as a prisoner amid these strange scenes, along the crowded Appian Way, with so many evidences of colossal power on every hand, and of such luxury and corruption, it was a glad sight to meet a welcome from loving brethren, already numerous in Rome. See Rom. chap. 16. It seemed a cheering omen that the church of the capital of the world should meet and greet him. The distance traveled by land from Puteoli to Rome as about 135 miles. **Delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard.** The commander of what was called the Prætorian Guard, the Prætorian Prefect; at this time this great officer was named Burrhus. The Prætorian camp was the permanent garrison of Rome. **But Paul was suffered to dwell by himself.** Sometimes state prisoners, sent from the provinces, awaiting trial, were thrown into a prison adjoining the Prætorian camp, and sometimes were allowed to choose their own residence under the guard of a soldier. Paul was permitted the latter course, no doubt on account of the kindly reports sent from Cæsarea by Festus and King Agrippa to Rome. The soldier was fastened to the prisoner by a chain. See verse 20.

17–22. After three days. We see indicated his restless activity. In three days after his arrival as a prisoner he begins his work. The first three days had probably been devoted to the brethren. **Called the chief of the Jews.** The leading Jews. Josephus says that fifty years earlier there were 8,000 Jews in Rome. A quarter of the city north of the Tiber was given up to them. In a.d. 49, they had been banished by decree of the Emperor Claudius, but shortly after were allowed to return. At this time they enjoyed favor, Poppæa, the wife of Nero, being a proselyte to the Jewish faith. These chiefs would include the rulers of the synagogues, the scribes, and the heads of the leading families. **Men, brethren.** In a short speech, of which we have only an abstract, he told them how he came to be there as a prisoner. No doubt he fully explained the ground of enmity and his appeal; so fully that when he said, **For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.** They knew that it was the hope of Christ and the resurrection. *This chain* is a reference to the one that bound him to the soldier. **We neither received letters, etc.** They mean official letters from the authorities at Jerusalem. They have no official tidings warning them against him. They must have known of him, and of the charges made against him. His fame was such that they **desire to hear** what he thinks, or holds; to hear him explain the gospel. **For as concerning this sect, we know that it is every where spoken against.** Everywhere the Jews “spoke against” the Christians with malignant hatred. Paul's treatment illustrates this. The Jews of Rome had known but little of the Christians, but they knew the odium of the church elsewhere. The Pagans also were beginning to regard the Christian religion as “a detestable superstition” (Tacitus), and matters were shaping for the bitter persecution of Nero, which came a few years later.

23–29. When they had appointed him a day. On the appointed day “many” came. The whole day was spent **persuading them concerning Christ.** Arguing from Moses and the prophets, that Jesus was he of whom the law and the prophets spoke. **Some believed, ... and some believed not.** As usual, some accepted and some rejected, and this difference of opinion was openly expressed among themselves. Probably the majority expressed themselves with extreme bitterness. Paul's **one word** seems to imply this. **Well spake ... Esaias the prophet.** The passage quoted is found in Isa. 6:9, 10. It is quoted six times: in the Gospels, here in Acts, and in Romans. No other Old Testament passage is so often quoted in the New Testament, and it is always applied to Jewish unbelief. The terrible prediction of the stubborn, willful unbelief of the nation was fulfilled in

Isaiah's time, in the time of Christ, in that of his apostles, and eighteen centuries of Jewish history illustrate the same fact to our times. For notes on the passage, see Matt. 13:14–17. These are the *one* final word of Paul to the Jews before beginning his work among the Gentiles in Rome. After the **Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves**, we can hope that the result was that they believed and consorted with Paul and the church.

30, 31. Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house. His expense was met during this period by the church in Rome and elsewhere. See Phil. 4:18, where the Philippian contributions are acknowledged. Here he was permitted to see and preach freely to all who came unto him. Here he wrote four of his epistles; the letters to the Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and the short letter to Philemon. Here, from notices in these epistles, we know that Luke, Timothy, Epaphros, Mark, Aristarchus and Tychius were with him at least part of the time. Nor is there doubt but these two years produced great results in Rome. It was at a later period, when Nero fell under the influence of the cruel Tigellinus, that he became a persecutor, and Paul had at this time full liberty. A few years after, at the time of the Neronian persecutor, the church embraced vast numbers in the city of Rome. The Roman historian, Tacitus says: “An immense multitude” were converted and put to death.

Acts comes to an end with these two years, and was almost certainly completed during this time. Why it paused here is unknown. We cannot repress a regret that it was not continued to the end of the career of its great missionary hero. His subsequent life and work can only be learned from incidental allusions in his later epistles and from tradition. The testimony of the primitive church affirms that he was acquitted when his appeal, after long delay, came to trial, probably in a.d. 63; that for several years he labored earnestly in other lands, visiting the old scene of his labors in Asia Minor once more. Prior to this visit he is supposed to have gone west to Spain, and crossed from thence into North Africa, then one of the most flourishing parts of the empire. Somewhere about a.d. 65–67 he visited once more the Greek and Asiatic churches he had founded, and from Macedonia wrote the First Epistle to Timothy, then at Ephesus, and also to Titus at Crete. The incidental allusions in these epistles confirm the view that he had been acquitted, and was at work for Christ. At Nicopolis, in Epirus, he was again arrested and taken to Rome. See Tit. 3:12. While in prison awaiting trial, he wrote Second Timothy, his last words, solemn with the shadow of death. From hence he was sent to the scaffold by Nero in a.d. 67 or 68, and entered his eternal rest. While we cannot be certain of the facts of this *Post-Actian* outline, they are so probable that they may be reasonably accepted as the outline of the last years of the greatest hero of the faith that ever fought the good fight and won the crown.