

Some of the characteristics of the gospel according to John are: 1) its simplicity of style; 2) its method of treating each step in the narrative as if isolated and separate from all the rest rather than merging it into the complete whole; 3) it frequently repeats the same thought within the same verse [e.g. "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God." "The light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not." "I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd giveth life."; et al.]; 4) it frequently contains parallelisms or statements expressing the same or similar truths; 5) the gospel according to John is a gospel of contrasts [e.g. light and darkness, truth and falsehood, good and evil, life and death, God and Satan, et al.]; 6) John's record makes frequent mention of the feasts [e.g. the Feast of the Passover, First Passover, a Feast of the Jews (Purim-?), Passover (a Feast of the Jews-Second Passover), Feast of the Tabernacles, Feast of the Dedication, Passover (third Passover), et al.]; 7) John's gospel is a gospel of testimony [e.g. testimony is given of John the Baptist, certain other individuals, Jesus' work, Jesus himself, the testimony of the Father, and the testimony of the Holy Spirit]; 8) John's gospel is a gospel of belief, its very purpose is to instill belief (Jn.20:30-31); 8) John's gospel is a spiritual gospel; 9) it is a gospel of symbolism [e.g. the use of numbers (3 and 7), the Good Shepherd, the sheepfold, the bread of life, living water, the vine and the branches, and the names of Jesus (the Word, the Way, the Light, the Truth, the Life, etc.)]; 10) the gospel of John is the gospel of the incarnation. "Matthew explains his Messianic function; Mark his active work; and Luke his character as Savior." John magnifies his person and everywhere makes us see "the word made flesh." God is at no great distance from us. He has become flesh. The word has come as the Incarnate Man. Jesus, this Incarnate Man, is God and as such fills the whole book, but He, nevertheless, hungers, thirsts, and knows human experience. God has come down to man that man may be enabled to ascend to God; to enable him to rise up to God." [Tidwell, p.178]; 11) the miracles in John's account are called signs; 12) John alone contains the "I am" sayings of the Christ, 13) John emphasizes the work of Christ in Judea rather than in Galilee; 14) the spiritual aspect of many things is emphasized [e.g. in conversion (ch.3), concerning the nature of God (ch.4), et al.]. The gospel of John, therefore, is a universal gospel, written and designed to convert all men, regardless of their background.

ACTS

The book of Acts begins something entirely different in the New Testament. The first four books of the New Testament constituted biographies of the life and teachings of Jesus the Christ. This book deals with the history of the kingdom which Jesus spoke about during his life. The title which appears in many Bibles, "THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES", is somewhat of a misnomer. Only a few of the acts of some of the apostles are mentioned. The greatest part of the actions of the remaining disciples is not mentioned in the very least way. Acts, therefore, is a history of the church from its beginning until the closing years of the life of Paul. It covers a period of approximately 30-40 years.

CHAPTER ONE

1. The writer of this book is Luke, the writer of the gospel by the same name. He writes to the same person/s as the previous effort.
2. The opening section of this narrative takes up with the closing verses of the gospel of Luke. Jesus had not yet ascended to his heavenly Father. He was still continuing his ministry upon the earth even after his death, burial, and resurrection. An extremely important point needs to be emphasized concerning the first 11 verses of this chapter. Note that in verse 3 the text says: "To whom [i.e. the apostles, jla] also he showed himself alive after his passion [i.e. his death upon the cross, jla] by many infallible proofs [i.e. his resurrection and his appearances to many, jla], being seen of them forty days, and SPEAKING OF THE THINGS PERTAINING TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD:..." Even after his death and burial and resurrection, Jesus was speaking about the kingdom of God, but the question arises: "was the kingdom then in existence?" The answer can be seen in the following verses. During his life Jesus mentioned several things concerning the coming kingdom: 1) he would build it, 2) it would not be ultimately defeated by the forces of hell, 3) the apostles were to be given

- the keys of the kingdom, 4) the kingdom would come during the lives of some of those followers of Christ, 5) the kingdom was not of the world, 6) the kingdom was within men, 7) Jesus would send a Comforter (the Holy Spirit) when the kingdom came. Note that in the following verses, Jesus refers to the coming power of the Holy Spirit. He did not say that it already came (which would mean that the kingdom was already in existence) or that it would come before he ascended to heaven, but rather that it would come "not many days hence". Those who were with him still had a false concept of the kingdom, for they said: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" They seemed to still think that the kingdom would be a physical kingdom which would rival that of David and Solomon. Jesus answered in such a way as to indicate that the coming kingdom would be spiritual, for it would spread upon the face of all the earth. The physical kingdom that the Jews imagined would never have been so vast, but the spiritual kingdom which was soon to be inaugurated would be that large. The beginning of the new kingdom (i.e. the church) in the New Testament is of vital importance. If we cannot know when the kingdom began, then we can not maintain the truth about Bible salvation. If the kingdom started prior to the time of Christ, during the days of John the Baptist, during the days of Christ's ministry on earth, during the days following his resurrection but preceding his ascension, or any other time other than the day of Pentecost immediately following his ascension, then we can not support the Bible's teaching concerning the plan of salvation as the apostles taught it later. The beginning of the kingdom is, therefore, very crucial to understand. In religious discussions with those who believe that the church started at some other time, the issue becomes very vital in its importance. We can know that the church started on the day of Pentecost by examining the following prophecies and their fulfillments: 1) Isaiah 2:1-4, 2) Micah 4:1-2; 3) Joel 2:28-32, 4) Daniel 2:44, 5) Matthew 3:1-2, 4:17, 16:18-19, 6) Mark 9:1, 7) Luke 24:44ff, 8) Acts 1:1-8 and 9) the entire second chapter of Acts. By studying these prophecies we will note that the Old Testament and New Testament prophecies speak of HOW, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY, and WHO. All of these six questions are answered in the prophecies and they are fulfilled in Acts 2. By examining them closely, we can know that the church which Christ claimed to build was established on the day of Pentecost of Acts 2.
3. The remainder of the first chapter of Acts (vs.12-26) records the apostle's journey back to the city of Jerusalem, and the selection of the man to replace Judas who betrayed the Lord. The man selected was Matthias. Note the criteria set forth concerning the selection of the replacement in vs.21ff.

CHAPTER TWO

1. The entire second chapter of Acts details the beginning of the Lord's church. The first 13 verses of the chapter record the miraculous powers which came upon the twelve apostles via the Holy Spirit. Though it is assumed by some that the power of the Holy Spirit came upon the 120 that were in the upper room (ch.1), a careful study of the chapter will indicate that the power fell exclusively upon the twelve apostles. Every reference to the power of the Spirit and the apostles in this chapter is exclusive. When Peter stood up to speak he did so with "the eleven" and not with the remaining 120. When those who believed were added to "them" they continued steadfastly in the teaching of the apostles and not in the teaching of the 120.
2. Another extremely important facet of this miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit is the method of speech employed by the apostles. Modern-day "tongue speakers" pervert the Bible when they claim to speak in "unknown" tongues which no man anywhere can understand. The languages spoke by the apostles on this day were of such a nature that they could be understood by the members of the audience. Note that verse 8 says: "And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?" Those present were able to understand the speaking of the apostles because the languages were common to the audience. The miracle was that the apostles never learned these languages. They were all Galileans (vs.7) and would not have spoken the languages of the people gathered together. Modern day tongue speakers pervert the Bible's teaching when they affirm the existence of "unknown" tongues.

3. When Peter stood up with the rest of the apostles (vs. 11ff), he gave the first sermon under the new dispensation, the age of the church. His speech as it is recorded in this chapter constituted proof that the events of that day were in fulfillment of prophecy. He: 1) affirmed that the passage in Joel (2:28ff) was fulfilled on that day, 2) he affirmed that Jesus was approved (proven, confirmed) by God by the works which he performed in this life, 3) he affirmed that Jesus was raised up from the grave by the power of God, 4) he affirmed that David, whose body still remained in the tomb, prophesied of the resurrection of Christ, 5) he affirmed that he and others were eyewitness of the resurrection of the Christ, 6) he affirmed that the Holy Spirit bore witness of the truthfulness of his teaching through the miracles that accompanied the apostles on that day, 7) he affirmed that Jesus was both Lord and Christ.
4. When the Jews heard these words, they were convicted of sin and their part in the crucifixion of Christ. They inquired of Peter and the rest of the apostles, "What shall we do?" Peter informed them that they needed to "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."
4. The last section of the chapter informs us that about 3000 people were added that day to the kingdom of God. They continued to abide with the apostles and they adhered closely to their teachings. The unity of faith and fellowship that they exemplified should be the model of the church today. Note that the last verse of this chapter teaches that the Lord added them to the church. No man can join the Lord's church, he must be added by the Lord!

CHAPTER THREE

1. The remainder of the book of Acts chronicles the teachings and the activities of the apostles (and other Christians) as they endeavor to spread the borders of the kingdom of God.
2. In this chapter, we witness a miracle performed by Peter and John. The lame man which sat at the temple gate sought to obtain money from the apostles, but he received something of much greater value. He now was able to walk! The purpose of spiritual gifts as they were initially given to the apostles, and later to those whom they laid their hands upon, was to confirm the word of Christ. The miraculous gifts were never intended to be used in any vain way. They were not intended to be used as a badge of one's discipleship. They were given for the purpose of confirming the truth. The kingdom of Christ (i.e. the church) was something that was new. It is true that it was part of God's plan of redemption, but not many people were fully aware of that plan. The apostles, therefore, were miraculous gifts as a "tool" of sorts. They used it to prove that the teachings of the kingdom, regardless of how "new" or "different" they may have sounded to their hearers, were indeed the words of Christ and the will of God.
3. Following this miracle performed near the temple, many Jews gathered together to wonder at the apostles. Peter and John used this opportunity to teach those gathered about the Holy One and Just (i.e. Christ). Note their method of teaching as it is distinctive from modern day "miracle workers". When was the last time that you witnessed some modern day "miracle worker" perform an obvious miracle and then use that occasion to teach the truth of the gospel. You never saw it because it can't be done! Again, those who claim to have the miraculous powers of the Holy Spirit must be able to demonstrate (prove beyond the shadow of a doubt) their abilities. If they have them, then they should be willing to perform them on the streets and sidewalks of cities all around the world. I guarantee that if they perform any bona-fide miracle they will have crowds gather that they can preach to! No modern day "miracle worker" does this! Yet, they claim to have the same miraculous powers as did the Christians in the New Testament! That is easier said than shown!
4. Peter's address to these Jews parallels that of Acts 2. He convicted them of the murder of the Christ and called upon them to repent and be converted (cf. Acts 2:38).
7. His line of reasoning, though not exactly the same as Acts 2, is similar in that he cites several Old Testament references to the coming Christ; 1) Moses, 2) Samuel

and the prophets, etc.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. Because of the teaching of the apostles, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them (i.e. the apostles) and placed them in bonds. All of this occurred because the apostles preached the resurrection of the dead through Jesus the Christ. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection (cf. Mt.22) and were, therefore, upset when the apostles taught the truth.
2. On the following day, Peter and John were brought before the council and questioned concerning the previous days activities. They did not shrink from their responsibilities, but rather boldly stood for the truth (cf. Mt.10:19ff). They affirmed that the miracle was done through the power of the Christ, whom they crucified, but whom God raised from the dead. They rejected the Christ, but he (i.e. the Christ) was the foundation upon which the church was built. Only in the name (i.e. the power and authority) of Christ was their salvation.
3. The Jews realized that these two men were ignorant and unlearned; they were not formally educated, but they also realized that they had been with Jesus. Because the man that was healed was standing there in their presence, the Jews could say nothing. They realized, however, that if the apostles were allowed to continue their teaching, all of Jerusalem would believe them. The miracle which they already performed was one that could not be denied. Their solution was to command the apostles to refrain from preaching in the name of Jesus. Peter and John responded saying that it was better to listen to God than to men. They were going to continue to speak and teach the things which they had seen and heard. The Jews threatened them further and then released them.
4. When they returned to their own company, there was a report of the previous days happenings and their appearance before the council. When the rest of the followers heard of these events there was praise and prayer among all.
5. The closing part of the chapter (vs.31ff) details how all of the disciples shared with one another their physical possessions in order that all might be cared for. Many sold their houses and land in order that others might have according to their need. The closing verses (vs.36-37) specifically mention the money given to the apostles by a man named Barnabas.

CHAPTER FIVE

1. The first 11 verses record the story of Ananias and Sapphira. The story is familiar to most, but the principles behind it are often forgotten: 1) it is wrong to lie, 2) lying is sin, 3) their lie was not just to another man, but was against the Holy Spirit, 4) they lied because their heart was filled with Satan (evil), 5) lying is deserving of punishment, 6) their lie centered around what seemed to be a selfishness for money, 7) the Lord expects us to be honest in our giving to the church, et al.
2. In spite of the tragic events which occurred in the church (the death of Ananias and Sapphira), the church continued to grow (vs.14).
3. Once again the Jewish rulers became upset over the teachings of the apostles, and once again the apostles were committed to prison. No sooner were they in prison, then did the angel of the Lord release them that night. They returned to speak in the temple the words of Christ. The officers found the prisons secure, but empty of prisoners, for they were preaching in the temple. When the Jews brought the apostles before them once again they questioned them about teaching in the name of Christ. Peter and the other apostles stated: "We ought to obey God rather than men." The Jews were even more angry at the apostles for their words, but Gamaliel, a Jew of great renown, encouraged the Jews to leave the apostles alone. The rest of the Jews agreed to his words, and when they had beaten the apostles and threatened them concerning their preaching in the name of Christ, they let them go.

CHAPTER SIX

1. The first section of this chapter (vs.1-7) informs us of the dispute which erupted concerning the care of the Grecians and the Hebrews concerning the widows. The

apostles saw to it that men were appointed to take care of this matter. During this time "the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplies in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." "Obedient to the faith" (cf. Rom.1:5; 16:25ff) entails obedience which leads one to become a Christian. The obedience would require faith, repentance, and baptism into the name of the Christ for the remission of sins. The phrase "obedient to the faith" though it does not detail all the aspects of obedience stands in the place of the steps toward salvation.

2. The closing section of chapter six depicts the arrest of Stephen, one of the men chosen to care for the widows (cf. vs. 5). Because of Stephen's teaching, several Jews of the synagogues disputed with him. They caused others to accuse him of blasphemy against Moses (i.e. the law of Moses) and against God. Because of the commotion they caused, Stephen was brought before the council. At that time false witnesses testified against him saying that he (Stephen) said that Christ would destroy the temple (i.e. the temple which Herod rebuilt).

CHAPTER SEVEN

1. The bulk of this chapter details much of the defense which Stephen gave in the presence of the council. A great portion of his speech was a truncated history of the development of the Jewish nation from Abraham. He briefly mentions: 1) Abraham's promise from God, 2) Isaac's circumcision on the eighth day, 3) the sale of Joseph into slavery by his brothers, 4) the famine in the world during the days of Joseph, 5) the move of the family of Jacob into Israel, 6) the enslavement of the Israelites by the Egyptians, 7) the release of Israel during the leadership period of Moses, 8) the wandering in the wilderness, 9) the sins of Israel, 10) the building of the temple by Solomon. Toward the conclusion of his address, Stephen accused the council of being "stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears" for they did "always resist the Holy Ghost." He accused them of being responsible for the death of the Just One (Christ) and of violating the law of Moses themselves.
2. When the council heard these things they were angry and moved to stone Stephen. Stephen was the first Christian that the Bible says was slain because of his faith. His forgiving attitude and concern for those who slew him is made manifest in much the same way Christ showed the same spirit when he was upon the cross (vs.60).

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. At this time in the history of the church a great persecution arose. The church began to scatter throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, but the apostles remained in Jerusalem.
2. Saul, the man who is mentioned as holding the clothes of those who stoned Stephen, seemed to be instrumental in this persecution. The third verse of this chapter indicates that he made havoc of the church and worked hard to see Christian men and women committed to prison. As a result of this intense persecution, the church grew even faster. Verse four informs us that: "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word." Jesus had told the apostles that they would be witnesses of him in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. Now the church began to spread rapidly.
3. Part of that growth is recorded here in the eighth chapter of the book of Acts. Beginning with vs.5ff note that the gospel began to be proclaimed in Samaria. The Samaritans were the traditional enemies of the Jews (cf. Jn.4 and Luke 10), but Philip went to the city of Samaria. There he preached the word of God and performed miracles. We note that Philip was one of those men appointed by the church in Jerusalem to watch over the dispute between the Grecians and the Hebrews concerning the affairs of widows. He received the laying on of hands from the apostles, and was, therefore, able to perform miracles. We note once again, that the miracles which were performed in the midst of these people were of such a nature that it caused them to believe the teachings of Philip. Note especially that these people saw the miracles, believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God (i.e. the church), and were baptized.

4. Another important thing to note in this chapter occurs in the following verses. There happened to be a man in the area where Philip was preaching that was considered to be a magician of some sort. When he saw the works which Philip performed, he too was baptized. When the apostles learned that the Samaritans received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John. They came for the purpose of laying hands upon these new Christians that they might have the miraculous powers of the Holy Spirit. This is important because: 1) there are people today who claim to have the power of the Holy Spirit in a miraculous measure, and 2) those same people often claim to be able to transmit that power to others via the laying on of hands. Concerning this teaching, the following must be noted: 1) there is no indication in the New Testament of anyone other than the apostles having the capability of laying on of hands. Note that the apostles came to the area of Samaria for the purpose of laying their hands upon these new Christians. 2) No person who received the laying on of hand from the apostles and the subsequent miraculous gifts from them, had the power to transmit that to someone else. Note that Philip receive the laying on of hands from the apostles in Acts 6. That he was enabled to work miracles and wonders is evident from even a casual reading of this section of Acts 8. Yet, when the transmission of the miraculous gifts came, it came not through the means of Philip, but rather through the laying on of hands of Peter and John. These principles can therefore be concluded from the following: 1) only the apostles could transmit miraculous powers, 2) those who received miraculous powers could NOT transmit them, 3) when the apostles died, there was, therefore, no means of transmission of miraculous gifts, 4) when those who received miraculous gifts from the apostles died, there existed no miraculous gifts at all. It is, therefore, evident that the age of miracles ceased long ago. No many alive today had the power to transmit miraculous gifts or miraculous gifts themselves.
5. Simon, the sorcerer, was rebuked for selfishly desiring the powers of the apostles. He was rebuked and admonished to pray that the thought of his heart might be forgiven him. This does not, as some seek to affirm, indicate that Simon was never really a Christian, but it does indicate that he did sin subsequent to becoming a Christian. Such is a difficult passage indeed for those who seek to affirm that it is ABSOLUTELY IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE SOUL TO SIN ONCE IT IS CONVERTED TO CHRIST!
6. In the remainder of the chapter we note that Philip was directed to a man who was studying the Old Testament book of Isaiah. That Philip was directed by an angel of the Lord and by the Holy Spirit, is immensely significant. There are those who maintain that they were "saved" because an angel appeared unto them or because the Holy Spirit of God told them to do such and such. This is not Bible teaching! In no passage do we see salvation come due to the influence of angels and the Holy Spirit. In each case human agency is involved. That does not mean that man's salvation is directly dependent upon another man, as some seek to accuse. It simply means the man is the agent, but not the active ingredient. The word is that which saves men (cf. Acts 11:14; I Pet. 1:22), and the word is spoken through the agency of men. If men can become Christians through angels and the Holy Spirit's direct intervention, then why did not such occur if the conversion of this Ethiopian eunuch? Why was Philip directed to this man if angels could have converted him? Quite simply, man is not converted in this manner (cf. Gal. 1:6-10). Note again that the eunuch was not able to fully understand the gist of the passage he was reading. He needed help. Such is true of people today. There are always people interested in studying God's word, but who never fully understand it because no one helps them. It is our purpose and duty as Christians to help those people to understand the truth of the gospel of Christ. Note that Philip preached unto the eunuch Jesus, the central figure and theme of the gospel. In the process of his teaching he must have mentioned much more than just the name of Jesus, for as they continued their journey, the eunuch saw water and was ready to be baptized into Christ. Upon his baptism, which entailed going down into the water and coming up out of the water (complete submersion), the eunuch rejoiced.

CHAPTER NINE

1. This chapter resumes a discussion of the man Saul, that man who became greatly involved

in the persecution of the church. In this chapter we note the extent to which he was willing to go in order to persecute Christians. He was willing to travel to the city of Damascus in order to bring Christians back to Jerusalem for punishment and imprisonment. His stature among the Jews is indicated in that he seemed to have an open door with the high priest that enabled him (i.e. Paul) to freely work in his efforts against the Christians. As Saul journeyed to Damascus, he was blinded by a bright light. He also heard the voice of the Lord who said: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Saul was guilty of persecuting the Lord because of his antagonism against the Lord's church. To work against Christians is to work against the church, and to work against the church is to work against the Lord. Note also that Saul said: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" He realized that something needed to be DONE. In response to this query the Lord said "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." Note that Saul realized something needed to be done, and that the Lord told him that he (i.e. Saul) would be informed what he MUST DO! The passage does not, I REPEAT, DOES NOT, indicate that Saul was saved simply by being blinded from the light. The Lord did not miraculously save Saul in such a fashion. Saul became a Christian through obedience to the words which were spoken to him by Ananias. When Saul went into the city of Damascus he remained for three days until he was told by Ananias what he MUST DO! Verse 18 of this chapter informs us that Saul was baptized. (cf. Acts 22:16)

2. Following his conversion to Christ, Saul became actively involved in the work of the Lord. His actions show that he was truly converted. He was vehemently opposed to the church, now he was enthusiastically in support of the church. Such a dramatic and drastic change alarmed the Christians in Damascus. His conversion took some getting used to. Saul went into the synagogues and preached Christ that he was the Son of God and confounded the Jews proving that this is the Christ.
3. As a result of his conversion, others moved against him. Such is the same when people become Christians today. Those who are truly converted to Christ will inspire the wrath of their friends and relatives. They will turn away from the new convert, and in some cases actively work against him. In the case of Saul, his renewed life resulted in great opposition and oppression from the Jews. Their hatred grew so intense that they planned to slay him, but he fled the city and went to Jerusalem. When he came to the city of Jerusalem, he was befriended by Barnabas who took him and brought him to the apostles. As a result of his work there the Grecians sought to kill him. Once again, Paul had to flee for his life.
4. The last section of chapter nine details the healing of Aeneas and Dorcas (vs.32ff). Note that in this chapter many were becoming Christians (vs.31,35, 42).

CHAPTER TEN

1. The conversion of Cornelius and his household is also fraught with confusion. This conversion is unique in that Cornelius was a Gentile. Up until this time the gospel was preached almost exclusively to the Jews. With the work of Philip in the city of Samaria, the gospel began to go to people other than the Jews. The conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch (perhaps a proselyte Jew) moved that much closer to the teaching of those people who were exclusively non-Jewish. Because of his Gentile status, Cornelius presents us with a very different account. He did, however, become a Christian as all others become Christians, but the circumstances surrounding his conversion are most unique.
2. First, we note that Cornelius, though he was a devout man, was informed in a vision that Peter would come to speak to him and tell him "what thou oughtest to do." Second, we note that Peter, the one who was to come and do the speaking, had to be prepared. Peter, one of the apostles and a Jew, beheld a vision in which all manner of beasts were presented to him for eating. Being a Jew Peter refused them, but the Lord responded saying: "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." The vision signified that the Gentiles were candidates for Christianity as were the Jews. When Peter spoke to the Jews on the day of Pentecost he included a statement

which would have affected the Gentiles: "For the promise (of salvation, jla) is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." The last portion of that verse (Acts 2:39) would have encompassed the Gentiles. Jesus told the apostles prior to his ascension that they would be "witnesses" "unto the uttermost part of the earth." The Bible plainly teaches in the Old and New Testaments, that it was God's intent for the gospel to bring together all into the body of Christ (cf. Eph.2 and 3). Peter, though he spoke those words on the day of Pentecost, did not fully understand them. It must be remembered that the apostles on the day of Pentecost spoke as the Spirit of God gave them utterance (Acts 2:5; Mt.10:19). There were some things spoken which they might not have fully understood, but this is not such an unusual feature. In I Peter 1:10ff we are informed about the search of the prophets concerning the things whereof they prophesied. They spoke of things which they did not fully understand. Peter, therefore, was being prepared by the Lord to be willing to preach the gospel of Christ to the Gentiles.

3. Toward the end of the chapter we note that the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the Gentiles. This did not, as some have suggested, prove that the family of Cornelius was already saved, but rather proved that they were fit subjects for baptism. Note the response of Peter: "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." That Cornelius and his family were saved in the usual way is evident by a careful consideration of chapter ten. Note the following comments in this chapter: 1) In vs. 6 Cornelius was told that Peter would "tell thee what thou oughtest to do." The passage does not say that the miraculous power of the Spirit would convert them. If such were the case, what was necessary about Peter's role in the matter. 2) When the messengers of Cornelius came to Peter they told him that Cornelius sent "to hear words of thee." Peter's role, therefore, was to preach unto them, as is later made abundantly clear. 3) In vs. 32, when Cornelius explained to Peter concerning his vision (i.e. Cornelius' vision), he said that he was told that Peter would come to "speak unto thee." 4) In vs. 34 and following we witness the beginning of what Peter said unto Cornelius and his household. Note within this passage the usage of such words as "opened his mouth", "the word", "preaching", "that word", "I say", "we are witnesses", "he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify", et al. These phrases and words emphasize that Peter spoke to Cornelius and his household.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

1. When news of the conversion of these Gentiles reached Judea, many of the Jews were concerned. Why was it that Peter, a Jew, went in unto men who were uncircumcised and did eat with them? Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and "expounded it by order unto them." He then included the details of the previous chapter. Note specifically that Peter said: "And he (Cornelius) showed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; WHO SHALL TELL THEE WORDS, WHEREBY THOU AND ALL THY HOUSE SHALL BE SAVED." The passage quite clearly teaches that the words of Peter (the gospel) saved Cornelius and his family. When the Jews properly understood the conversion, they glorified God. Note the phrase "repentance unto life" in vs. 18 of this section. This does not mean that repentance automatically gives one eternal life, it does not say "repentance into life", but rather "unto life". Faith, repentance, and confession are all described as being "unto" life, that is they are in the direction of eternal life. (cf. Rom.10:9-10, Acts 11:18) The act of baptism, however, is not unto salvation, but "into" salvation (cf. Gal.3:26f, Rom. 6:1-4).
2. The remainder of the chapter (vs.19-30) records the establishment of the church in Antioch. Verse 21 states that a great number believed and turned unto the Lord. For a whole year Paul and Barnabas labored in the city working with the Christians there. Verse 26 states that the disciples "were called Christians first in Antioch."

When the disciples learned of the famine that was to come upon the world in the days of Claudius Caesar (note that Luke ties the inspired record to historical facts), they determined to help those in Judea. Notice that every man "according to his ability, determined to send relief."

CHAPTER TWELVE

1. In the first few verses of this chapter we learn of the wickedness of Herod the king. He began to trouble the church and slew the brother of John (James) with the sword. When he noted that such actions pleased the Jews, he proceeded to imprison Peter. Because it was the time of the Passover, he was going to wait until after the feast to deliver Peter to the people (perhaps as Christ was delivered up to be crucified). Note that the word "Easter" in verse 4 is used. This is most unfortunate. The celebration of "Easter" as it is currently known in the world today was completely foreign during the days of the apostles and the early church. The word from which the word comes is translated elsewhere (in every instance except this one) by the word Passover. The word "Easter" was inserted by the King James Version translators because the celebration of "Easter" as a religious observance was practiced at that time (i.e. the time of the translation). We need to realize that men translated the Bible, and that their efforts in translating are not divinely inspired as were the original writers.
2. The following section of the chapter (vs.5-19) relates for us the miraculous release of Peter from prison by the angel of the Lord. Note that when Herod realized that Peter had escaped, he commanded the keepers of the jail to be put to death. Such was the penalty for soldiers who neglected their duty. It did not, however, enter into the consideration of the Jews who paid off the Roman soldiers that guarded the tomb of the Christ. They did not sleep, for if they really slept they should have received the same punishment as did these soldiers.
3. The last section of the chapter informs us that Herod died, because he gave not God the glory. When he made an oration, the people praise him as a god, but because of his lack of respect to the one true God and for the persecution which he inflicted upon the saints, he lost his life.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

1. The last verse of the previous chapter informs us that Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem (cf. Acts 11:30) with John Mark. Here, in the opening verses of chapter thirteen we note that Barnabas and Saul were sent unto another work by the leaders of the church in Antioch.
2. The following section of the chapter informs us of the work of Saul and Barnabas in Cyprus (vs.4-13). Here they labored preaching the word of God to the Jews of the synagogues. When they left there they went to Paphos where they sought to teach Sergius Paulus, a man who is described as desiring to hear the word of God. Their attempts, however, were constantly interrupted by a false prophet by the name of Barjesus. In the midst of their efforts Paul temporarily blinded the man so that he might be able to continue to teach Sergius Paulus. Note in this section that the phrases "word of God", "the faith", "the right ways of the Lord", and "the doctrine of the Lord" are used synonymously. [NOTE: Here is another example of what those who had miraculous powers in the New Testament church could do. Is it possible for modern day "miracle workers" to strike a man blind that they might be able to teach the word of the Lord?]
3. In the next section of the chapter (vs.14-43) Paul and Barnabas departed unto Antioch of Pisidia (not the same Antioch in ch.11). There they went into the synagogue of the Jews and sat down. After a reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue invited them to speak. Paul took that advantageous opportunity and preached unto the Jews. His lesson is similar to that of Stephen in Acts 7 in that he presented a brief history of the Jews to his audience. He emphasized the seed of David which was promised to Israel, which referred to Jesus. Note also that he referred to his teaching as "the word of salvation" (vs.26).

In teaching these Jews Paul affirmed: 1) Christ was innocent, 2) yet he was crucified, 3) God raised him from the dead, 4) Christ was seen by many different people after his resurrection, 5) through Christ was the forgiveness of sins, 6) through Christ is the justification from all things. Following his address to the synagogue, the Gentiles sought for that they might hear these words preached to them the next sabbath.

4. When the next sabbath day came, almost the entire city gathered together to hear the word of God. The Jews, when they saw the multitudes, became filled with envy and began to speak against those things which were spoken by Paul. Paul and Barnabas became that much bolder and said: "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it off from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." The Gentiles rejoiced in these words, and as a result of the preaching of Paul and Barnabas many of the Gentiles believed. The Jews, still angry, stirred up devout and honorable women and the chief men of the city and expelled them (Paul and Barnabas) from their coasts.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

1. After leaving Antioch of Pisidia, they came to Iconium, where they again went to the synagogue of the Jews. There preaching resulted in the belief of many Jews and Greeks. The unbelieving Jews, however, stirred up the Gentiles and affected them against Paul and Barnabas. Later, due to an assault made in an attempt to stone them, Paul and Barnabas fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Derbe and Lystra. There they preached the gospel. [NOTE: How many Christians today would take such diligent steps to continue to proclaim the gospel, even in view of threats and attempts on their lives?]
2. At the city of Lystra they encountered a man who was a cripple since birth. Paul healed the man (NOTE: Verse 9 specifically states that "he (the cripple) had faith to be healed."). When the people of the city became aware of this, they considered Paul and Barnabas to be "gods" and were even preparing to worship them by offering sacrifices. When the apostles heard of this, they rent their clothes and exhorted the people in an effort to stop this action. In the following discourse the following was affirmed by the men: 1) we are men just like you, 2) you need to turn from these vanities to the living God, 3) this God made heaven and earth, 4) he allowed in the times past for nations to walk in their own ways, 5) but he did not leave himself without witness, 6) because he did good, and gave rain from heaven and fruitful seasons. With these words they were barely able to stop the people from their actions of offering sacrifice unto them (i.e. Paul and Barnabas). At that time some of the Jews from Antioch (ch.13:45) and Iconium (ch.14:1ff) came and persuaded the people to stone Paul. When Paul recovered, he went into the city and departed the next day to Derbe where they preached the gospel and taught many people. After that they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch to strengthen the souls of the disciples and to exhort them to continue in the faith.
3. In the last section we note that they returned to Antioch (cf. Acts 11). En route to Antioch they preached the word of God in Perga. In the last verse of the chapter we note: "and when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them." This attitude is important. They realized that they were the instruments of God in their work.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

1. A great portion of the fifteenth chapter of the book of Acts centers around the Judaizing teachers which were becoming prevalent in the church. These teachers were Christians who came out of the law of Moses (they were Jews), but who still clung to the law of Moses in some aspect. Some may have denied that the Gentiles had any right to the gospel of Christ. Others may have affirmed the right of Gentiles to the gospel, but only pending their conversion to Judaism. Yet others may have contended that all Gentile males must be circumcised before becoming a Christian. Though they may have differed in their specific approach, all of them were insistent upon some aspect of the law to be integrated in the gospel of Christ.

2. Many religious people have misunderstood the manner in which this problem was resolved. Some have the idea that a "church wide" convention was necessary in order to establish the truth of the matter. Still others maintain that the issue was put to the vote of the church in Jerusalem. The truth is that neither of these two methods were employed in the meeting that is described in Acts 15. Note the following:

"Some like to use the "Jerusalem Conference" (Acts 15:1-29) as an example of a decision reached by the "whole church," but careful reading proves otherwise. Paul and Barnabas were sent primarily to the "apostles and elders" to settle the question of circumcision (Acts 15:2). They first reported on their work to the whole church (Acts 15:4), but when the legalists raised the issue of circumcision, Luke states, the "apostles and elders were gathered together to consider of this matter" (Acts 15: 5-6). This was a separate meeting from that of verse 4. Paul's record supports this conclusion (Gal.2:2,9). Later, "the multitude" again listened to Paul and Barnabas as well as James (Acts 15:12-13) and expressed their agreement with the letter that was to be circulated to Gentile brethren (Acts 15:22). Luke describes the letter as "ordained of the apostles and elders" (Acts 16:4). Clearly, there was a separate, private meeting involving both elders and apostles in which this matter was decided rather than leaving it to a congregational vote." ["The Authority of Elders", by Dub McClish in the Nov.1981 issue of THE RESTORER]

The Judaizing teachers and the problem of over-zealous legalism, therefore, was not settled by anything other than a meeting of the apostles and elders. Today there exists no apostles, but elders do exist. Congregational matters are, therefore, in the hands of the elders of each local congregation.

3. We learn from this chapter that a letter was written for the purpose of distribution among the Christians who ere formerly Gentiles. The letter contained the following information: 1) the Judaizing teachers did not have the approval of the elders and the apostles in Jerusalem, 2) the Gentiles were to abstain from meats offered to idols, 3) the Gentiles were to abstain from blood and from things strangled, and 4) they were to refrain from fornication. This letter was taken by Paul, Barnabas, Judas, and Silas and delivered to the churches in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia.
4. In the last section of this chapter (vs.36-41) we learn of the division that occurred between Paul and Barnabas. The contention developed over John Mark. Barnabas wanted him to be included on the trip, but Paul dissented. The text tells us that "the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God." Exactly what the issue involved is not clear. It has been suggested that John Mark forsook them in the midst of their work on an earlier trip (cf. Acts 13:13), but the word of God does not specify his reason for leaving. Whatever the cause was, we do know that Paul later seemingly straightened out whatever the difference was (cf. II Tim.4:11).

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

1. In the first section of this chapter (vs.1-10) we learn of the introduction of Timothy to Paul and Silas. He was a man of worthy reputation by the brethren in Lystra and Iconium. Verse 4 indicates that these men "went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem." This is in harmony with the teaching of Acts 15. Twice this company was forbidden by the Holy Spirit to go into Asia and Bithynia. Exactly how this prohibition was enjoined upon the men is not specified, but it may have been in a vision. [A vision was the means of directing them into the land of Macedonia. There is no reason to doubt that the same method of communication MAY have been used to prohibit as well as to direct.]
2. Note vs. 10: "And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them." The vision which they beheld was one which really directed them. The Lord often used visions to inform and direct his people, but such is not the means of direction or information today. Today we have the full word of God.

3. The following section of this chapter informs us of the conversion of Lydia and her household (vs.11-18). Many have contended that this example provides us with the authority to baptize children. This assumption is made upon thinking that Lydia's household would have necessarily involved children. There is no scriptural truth to this idea and it is, therefore, sheer speculation. A careful examination of the passage indicates that the people to whom Paul and Silas spoke were all women. This would have been indicative that none of the women were married, and if not married, they would not have had any children. This, however, is just as speculative as the opinion that children were present. From other Bible passages we learn that only those who are guilty of sin, are able to believe, repent, and confess the Lord are fit subjects for baptism. A child would not be able for such.
4. In this same context, we learn of a demon-possessed woman who was being used by others for gain. When Paul commanded the demon to depart in the name of Jesus Christ, it did so. When her masters realized that their source of money was gone, they caused an uproar and had Paul and Silas beaten and cast into prison. These events set the stage for the conversion of the Philippian jailer.
5. The last section of this chapter (vs.25-40) relates the account of that conversion. At midnight Paul and Silas were singing praises to God. This indicates the faith and the fortitude which were characteristics of these men. Such an example is worthy of our imitation today. As a result of a great earthquake which occurred, all of the prisoners were freed. When the keeper of the prison awoke and learned of this situation, he was about to kill himself. Roman soldiers were responsible for the prisoners that they had under guard. If anything happened to his prisoners, he could stand to suffer physical punishment and death as a consequence. Such is evidenced by those soldiers who were guarding Peter (cf. Acts 12:19). Many people misunderstand, misinterpret, and misread this account of conversion. As proof of that statement, consider the following remarks about this passage:

"Then there was the jailer in the city of Philippi where Paul was imprisoned. An earthquake came and the jailer panicked as he realized his prisoners could escape. He thought the only way out of his crisis was to kill himself. Just as he was drawing his sword he heard the Apostle Paul say, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here!" (Acts 16:28)

The jailer couldn't believe what he heard! Why hadn't the prisoners escaped? He was shaking from head to foot, and called for a light. He took one look at Paul and Silas, his prisoners, and fell down at their feet, crying, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul told him to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and he would be saved, and he was converted right there, in the rubble of the prison." [from the book: HOW TO BE BORN AGAIN, by Billy Graham, p.198-9]

You will note that Mr. Graham, true to his Baptist creed, did not even mention the remainder of the text. True, Paul told him the belief was necessary, but the text does not say that he was converted right then and there. The remaining verses state: "And they SPAKE unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house." Like all who became Christians, the Philippian jailer needed to hear the word of the Lord. It is likely that he did not even know who Jesus the Christ was. How, then, would it be possible for him to believe in/on someone whom he did not know? Such is the height of absurdity! Paul not only spoke to him, he also spoke to his family. Do you think that the family of the jailer lived in the jail? If not, how is it possible that Mr. Graham said that he was converted "right there, in the rubble of the prison." The following verses say: "And he TOOK them..." This indicates that they went somewhere, but for what purpose is not mentioned until we read further: "...the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was BAPTIZED, he and all his, straightway." Mr. Graham never once mentioned this in discussing the conversion of the jailer. WHY? Because it doesn't fit with his preconceived Baptist doctrine! If the jailer became a Christian in the jail, why did he not rejoice then and there? Why is it that the Bible states that he rejoiced after he was baptized? The reason is, of course, abundantly clear. He was not saved until after he was

baptized. The eunuch in Acts 8 acted in the same manner; he went on his way rejoicing subsequent to his baptism. When studying about any Bible subject, it is imperative that all of the Bible's teaching be considered before teaching one passage as the totality of the Bible's teaching on any given subject.

6. The last part of this passage (vs.35ff) indicates the disturbance caused when the magistrates realized that Paul was a Roman. They punished him openly, but were only willing to let them go privately.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

1. In the first section of this chapter (vs.1-9), we note the travels of Paul and his company to the city of Thessalonica. They ran into trouble due to the evil influence of some unbelieving Jews in the city and were subsequently cast out of that place. We do know, however, that many people believed as a result of their teaching (vs.4).
2. After they were in Thessalonica, Paul and Silas passed on to the city of Berea. The character of the Bereans, generally speaking, was much more considerate than that of the Thessalonians. The text states that they were "more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Their actions are, to say the least, commendable. They should be duplicated by all who seek to know and obey the truth. A proper understanding begins initially with a will and desire to learn. Those who are hardened in heart and in outward actions will not take the time to study the word of God. A certain "readiness of mind" has to be demonstrated. This does not indicate that the Bereans were gullible, willing to believe anything that they heard. No, such is not the case. They were willing to listen, and more importantly, they were willing to dig in and study for themselves to ascertain the truthfulness of Paul and Silas's remarks. This does not mean that it was an "every man for himself" situation in determining truth. Though each man had to study for himself, it was not within his right to set his OWN standard for truth. Trouble came when the Thessalonians learned that Paul and Silas were in Berea. They sent a contingent of Jews to cause problems there for them. This shows you the extent to which some people will go to give Christians a hard time. Even in the midst of these adverse conditions, people still believed (vs.12).
3. The greatest amount of space in this chapter is devoted to a record of Paul's visit to the city of Athens. Athens was the center of Hellenistic culture (Greek culture). It was a haven for philosophers and people with strange ideas. Paul was shocked to learn that the city was "wholly given to idolatry." The extent to which the Greeks were involved in idolatry is portrayed in Paul's address to these Jews. He noted that they had idols established to all sorts of "deities", even one set up with the inscription "to the unknown god." While in the city, he took opportunity to preach the gospel of Christ. Such preaching raised a few eyebrows and many more questions. The philosophers of Epicurus (a philosophy centered around pursuits of pleasure and happiness from a subjective standpoint) and the Stoics (philosophers who generally exhibited an attitude of indifference to pleasure and pain) were prevalent in the city of Athens. They desired to listen to Paul, not so much to respond through obedience to the commands of God, as to just hear "some new thing."
4. Given this opportunity to address these people, Paul emphasized the following points: 1) God is the creator. As opposed to the numerous gods of Greek and Roman mythology, Paul set forth the truth concerning the existence, power, and munificence of the one true God. 2) Man is the CREATION of God. That makes man less than God. To the Greeks and Romans the idea of gods simply involved attributing men's characteristics to some mythical being. They did not view any one of these gods as infinite in his attributes. All of them had tragic flaws. 3) Paul then called the Greeks to CORRECT THINKING. Being made in the image of God, all men, therefore, were equal. They needed to think differently. 4) Paul then called for that thinking to be made manifest in CORRECT ACTIVITY. They needed to seek the Lord, repent of their sins, and be obedient unto the will of the one true God. 5) Last, Paul spoke of the CLIMAX of history, the judgment when all would be measured according to the standards

which God established. Though many of the Greeks mocked Paul when he spoke of the resurrection of the dead, there were certain of the Greeks who believed in his teachings.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

1. This chapter informs us of the beginning of the Lord's church in the city of Corinth. It was here that Paul met Aquila and Priscilla. Note the historical reference in vs.2: "because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome". Claudius was one of the emperors of Rome. It was during his rule that Jews were banished from the city of Rome. Aquila and Priscilla came, therefore, to the city of Corinth. Here Paul spoke to the synagogue and "testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ." When the Jews turned away from the teachings of Paul, he (i.e. Paul) began to work among the Gentiles. The context teaches us that many of the Corinthians were obedient unto the Lord (vs.8), and in a vision, Paul was informed by the Lord that there were many in the city who would follow him (i.e. the Lord).
2. Paul then went to the city of Ephesus, but he did not remain there long. Instead, he travelled to the city of Jerusalem during the time of one of the Jewish feasts.
3. The last section of this chapter informs us of Apollos, a disciple of the Lord who knew only of the baptism of John. This man was taken aside by Priscilla and Aquila and taught the way of the Lord more perfectly. He was a mighty speaker and convinced many of the Jews by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

1. In this chapter we learn of Paul's return trip to the city of Ephesus. Once there he encountered some who were disciples, but like Apollos, they knew only of the baptism of John. It must be noted that there was nothing wrong with the baptism of John per se, but that the baptism of John was only preparatory for the coming kingdom of Christ. Both the baptism of John and the baptism of the great commission involved: 1) faith, 2) repentance, 3) the remission of sins. The baptism of John, however, was only for a short period of time, as was the ministry of John the Baptist. When the baptism of the great commission went into effect (Acts 2), the baptism of John was no longer necessary. Those baptized of John's baptism prior to that date were fine, it was those who were baptized of the baptism of John subsequent to that date that become the focal point in this account. When Paul promptly and properly informed them of the correct relationship between the baptism of John and the baptism of the great commission, these disciples were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.
2. Following this account, we are made aware of Paul's continued teaching in the city of Ephesus. While he was there he taught in the school of one Tyrannus. This continued for about 2 years, during which time "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks."
3. During Paul's stay in Ephesus he was able to perform many great works in the midst of the people. On one occasion some of the Jews attempted to cast out evil spirits by the name of Christ, but that attempt backfired when the spirits said that they knew Paul and Jesus, but they did not know these men. When the spirits came and leaped upon these impostors, they (i.e. the impostors) fled. When this was known throughout Ephesus, the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. In addition to these things, many of the people brought their books which dealt with "black magic" and burned them before all men.
4. The last section of chapter nineteen (vs.24-41) informs us of the trouble which began in Ephesus because of the preaching of the apostle Paul. Verse 23 states: "And the same time there arose no small stir about that way." Paul taught the truth when he taught that there was one true God, but this teaching upset the silversmiths who made images to be sold to the pagan people. They cause an uproar among the people about the matter and two of the companions of Paul were taken up by the crowd. No harm was done, however, because the townclerk settled the crowd and encouraged them to go about matters in a legal way. Most of the crowd, by the way, did not even know why they were gathered together. Such is the nature of mass confusion!

CHAPTER TWENTY

1. The first few verses of this chapter (vs.1-5) chronicle more of the journeys of Paul. Note the number of times that the record indicates he returned to churches already established for the purpose of strengthening them. (vs.2)
2. In the second section of the chapter (vs.6-12) we note that Paul has come to Troas. In this section we note the oft quoted verse: "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight." This indicates that the disciples regularly met upon the first day of the week for the purpose of breaking bread, that is worshiping the Lord in spirit and in truth. This account also informs us of the young man Eutychus who was brought back to life after having fallen asleep and falling from the third loft.
3. The remainder of the chapter depicts Paul's travels to Miletus, where he called for the elders of the church in Ephesus to come meet him.(vs.13-38) Remember, Paul met some disciples in Ephesus (ch.19) that had only heard of the baptism of John. After he taught them of the baptism of Christ, they were baptized in the name of the Lord. He remained there with them for several years, three to be exact (ch.20:31). In such a period of time he became quite close to several people in the church, not the least of which were the elders in the church. Notice some of the things that Paul told the elders when they met on this occasion: 1) Paul taught them publicly and privately (the elders, the church, and the community); 2) Paul kept back nothing that was profitable for them; 3) Paul was planning to go to Jerusalem; 4) Paul declared unto them all the counsel of God; 5) Paul admonished them to take care of the flock (i.e. the church in Ephesus) over which the Holy Spirit made them overseers; 6) Paul told them that the church was purchased with the blood of Christ; 7) Paul warned them of dangers that would come from within the church; 8) Paul warned them of dangers that would come from within the eldership; 9) Paul told them to continue in the grace of the Lord's word, which was able to build up Christians; 10) Paul encouraged them to support the weak, remembering that "It is more blessed to give than to receive." When Paul left these men, it was a very tearful departure.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

1. The bulk of this chapter records Paul's travels from Miletus toward the city of Jerusalem. He stopped at several different places along the way and met with various disciples in those places, but he was still heading in the direction of the city of Jerusalem. At one point those who were travelling with Paul left him and went into the city of Caesarea, where they stayed with Philip the evangelist, one of the seven men separated by the church in Jerusalem to watch over the concerns of the Grecian and Hebrew widows. While they were there, a man by the name of Agabus came and predicted that Paul would be taken captive by the Jews. Paul, objecting to the restraints of those around him, informed them: "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." Paul, time and time again, emphasized his devotion to the cause of the Lord's kingdom. His own life was not counted as so precious to himself that he was overly concerned about it, but rather he said: "...neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." (Acts 20:24).
2. When Paul finally went into the city of Jerusalem, he met with James and all the elders. They warned Paul of the trouble that might come, and as we continue reading in the chapter we note that Paul was seized of the Jews (vs.27ff) as he was in the temple area. The text informs us that the presence of Paul caused quite an uproar, so much so that the news of this event came to the chief captain in the city. He came with soldiers and centurions and prevented the people from continuing to beat Paul. All of these things started because: 1) the Jews thought that Paul brought a Greek into the temple, and 2) they thought that Paul taught against the law, the temple, and against Judaism in general.
3. In the closing verses of the chapter we note that Paul received permission of the chief captain to address the people. The chief captain expressed surprise when he heard Paul

speak in the Greek language. According to the text, the chief captain seemed to think that Paul was some Egyptian trouble-maker that escaped into the wilderness with 4000 murderers. Paul correctly informed him of his identity and again asked for permission to speak to the people. Finally, after he received the permission of the chief captain, Paul beckoned with his hand to silence the people.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

1. When Paul began to speak he spoke in the Hebrew (Aramaic) tongue. When the people heard this, they were that much more silent. As he spoke to them he emphasized how he was once in their place. He was a Jew, born in Tarsus, and brought up in the city of Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel, a respected teacher among the Jews. Paul was taught according to the perfect manner of the law, was zealous toward God as were members of his audience, and Paul was guilty of formerly persecuting this way (i.e. the way of the Lord, the church). Paul went so far as to inform these Jews of the liberties that he had from the high priest to bring people (Christians) to Jerusalem for punishment and imprisonment.
2. As he continued his address to the Jews on this day, Paul began to relate unto them the account of his conversion. The text is basically the same as that given in Acts 9. Note, however, the sixteenth verse of this chapter: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Many people have contended that Paul was saved by "praying through" to the Lord. This, however, is in contradiction to the belief (i.e. FALSE belief) that Paul was immediately saved when he was blinded by the bright light. Both of these views are false. The phrase "calling on the name of the Lord" (cf. Acts 2:21) does not mean that a person has only to pray in order to obtain salvation. The arrangement of this verse indicates that Paul's baptism, his remission of sins, and his calling on the name of the Lord were all simultaneous elements in his conversion. Calling on the name of the Lord requires complete obedience to all that the Lord's requires. Such includes, of course, faith, repentance, and baptism. It was only after this (i.e. baptism) that Paul was saved.
3. Paul began to inform his audience of his mission to the Gentiles. It was at this point that another uproar began. The chief captain brought him to the castle, intending to have Paul beaten so that he (i.e. the chief captain) might find out why the crowd was so much against Paul. As one of the centurions was in the process of tying Paul for the scourging, Paul asked: "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?" The centurion sent word to the chief captain, who came and inquired of Paul concerning this matter. Paul informed the captain that he (i.e. Paul) was a free born Roman. The chief captain grew fearful, for he had already bound a man that was a citizen of Rome, and almost had him beaten. Paul was kept to appear to the council of the Jews on the following day.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

1. When Paul was brought before the council, he informed those present of his status concerning the charges against him. He informed them that he had "lived in all good conscience before God until this day." Though he had in the past persecuted the church, now he stood in strong defense of it. When the high priest heard the words of Paul, he commanded that he should be smitten. Paul rebuke him, calling him a "whited wall" (i.e. a hypocrite) for having him (i.e. Paul) smitten contrary to the teaching of the law. When he was informed of the man's identity, he said that he did not know that he was the high priest, else he would not have acted as he did. When Paul realized that some present were Pharisees (as he once was) and some were Sadducees, he boldly proclaimed: "I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection fo the dead I am called in question." Because the Pharisees believe in the resurrection of the dead and the Sadducees did not, a great turmoil developed following Paul's remarks. When this occurred, the chief captain put him in hold. That night the Lord informed Paul that he would bear witness of him (i.e. the Lord) in Rome.
2. In the following section of this chapter we learn that the Jews plotted against

Paul, that they might slay him. They planned to send to the chief captain, informing him to bring Paul the next day so that they might question him further. At that time some of those who had vowed to slay Paul would take every attempt to do so. The plan was foiled, however, when a nephew of Paul's went unto Paul and informed him of this plot. When the chief captain was informed of the matter, he immediately prepared to take Paul to Caesarea, where Felix was governor.

3. The last section of the chapter (vs.23-35) records the journey from Jerusalem to Caesarea and the contents of the letter sent by the chief captain in Jerusalem to Felix the governor. When they arrived in the city of Caesarea, Paul was placed in Herod's judgment hall until the accusers came to testify against him.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

1. Five days later, the Jews came from Jerusalem to bear witness against Paul. Paul was accused of being "a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes:..." In addition to that, he was accused of profaning the temple and violating the law of Moses.
2. When Paul was allowed to speak he informed the Jews that he went to the temple, but that he did not dispute with any man, nor did he cause any problem in the synagogue or anywhere in the city of Jerusalem. He admitted that he followed "after the way which they call heresy" and worshipped God according to all the things which were written in the law and the prophets concerning this way. He affirmed his belief in the resurrection. He came to his nation and visited the temple, but caused no such disturbance as he was accused of doing. He stated: "Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult. Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had aught against me. Or else let these same here say, if they have found any evil doing in me while I stood before the council,..."
3. When Felix heard these things he determined to send for Lysias, the chief captain in the city of Jerusalem who brought Paul to Caesarea. In the meantime, Paul was given liberty to have his friends come to visit him. During this interval Felix came several times to hear Paul speak of faith in the Christ. Paul taught him of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come", but the text does not indicate anything more than "Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." The passage indicates that Felix hoped that Paul would give him money to buy his release from prison. For that reason he sent for him frequently, but Paul never obliged.
4. After a period of about two years, Festus took the office which was formerly held by Felix. Felix, "willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound." Politics is the same way today. People will do things, knowing that they only do them to please others.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

1. After Festus came into office, he travelled to the city of Jerusalem. While there the chief priest informed him against Paul and requested that Paul be sent to the city of Jerusalem. He entertained hopes that Paul might still be slain by the Jews. Festus, however, informed him (the chief priest) that he was soon to travel to Caesarea. If they wanted to charge Paul with something, they could come there to do so. When they all finally went to the city of Caesarea "the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove." Paul, in answering for himself, denied that he had spoken against the temple or Caesar. When Festus, who was willing to do the Jews a pleasure, asked Paul if he was willing to go to Jerusalem to be judged of these matters, Paul said: "I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest."
2. Note the following verse: "For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar." In stating these words, Paul admitted that one who was worthy of death, could indeed, be slain

for such offenses. Such is in opposition to those today who hold that capital punishment is contrary to the Bible's teaching.

3. In the following section of the chapter we note that king Agrippa and his wife came to visit Festus in Caesarea. While they were there, Festus informed Agrippa of Paul and the charges against him. The rest of the chapter (vs.13-27) is a brief summary in Festus' words about the matter. Note especially vs. 25: "But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him." Though he freely admitted that Paul was not guilty of any of the charges levelled against him, he still did not free Paul from his imprisonment. Agrippa informed Festus that he wanted to hear more from Paul himself. That account begins in the closing verses of this chapter, but is continued in the following chapter.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

1. In the first eleven verses of this chapter Paul begins to give his defense before Agrippa. He informs him of his past convictions in Judaism, and also informs him of the extent to which he endeavored to persecute the church of the Lord. He shut up many in prison, received authority from the priests to do so, voiced approval when they were sentenced to death, punished them frequently in the synagogues, and persecuted them even in foreign cities.
2. Beginning with verse twelve, however, Paul begins to testify of his conversion to Christianity. Much of the information given in this account is similar to that found in Acts 9 and Acts 22. Notice that the words of Christ are more extensive than in these previous accounts. Here, Paul is commissioned to work among the Gentiles for the cause of the Christ. Paul, in continuing his speech before Agrippa, informed him that he was obedient unto the commands of the Lord and therefore carried the gospel to the Gentiles in many different places. It was for this reason that the Jews sought to do Paul harm. Paul, however, continued to preach of those things which the prophets and Moses did say should come. He spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, and as he continued to speak, Festus accused him of being mad. Paul informed him: "I am not made, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king (i.e. Agrippa, jla) knoweth of these things, before whom I also speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner." Paul openly and deliberately pressed his point; the truths which he spoke were open to all for examination, and Agrippa was well aware of these things.
3. As he continued, he asked if Agrippa believed the prophets, and then answered in the affirmative for him. Agrippa told Paul: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Paul informed him that he hoped that Agrippa would become a Christian just as Paul was, with the exception of his imprisonment. When Agrippa arose and went to the side, he remarked that Paul had done nothing worthy of death or of imprisonment. He mentioned that Paul should have gone free, except that he had appealed unto Caesar. Many have thought that this was a grievous error on Paul's part, but we must remember that had he not taken privilege of such an appeal, Festus would have released him to the Jews to go to Jerusalem to stand trial. Under those circumstances, Paul most assuredly would have fallen prey to those Jews who diligently sought to kill him.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

1. The entire chapter is devoted to the journey from Caesarea to Rome by ship. En route to Rome, Paul informed the men that there was a danger of hurt, both to the ship and its contents as well as to the men themselves. Paul's warning was disregarded and they continued without any further consideration of the matter.
2. As they continued their journey, they passed by several places to stop for the winter due to the fact that some of them were not the most spacious accommodations. As they went further, they encountered strong winds which tossed the ship about upon the waters of the sea. Paul informed them that no one would be lost, if they

would only listen to him. He did, however, tell them that the ship and its contents would be damaged.

3. As they continued further they detected that they were coming close to land. Many prepared to abandon the ship, but Paul warned that safety would be theirs if they remained in the ship. After they had eaten and cast much of the cargo overboard, daylight came and they ran the ship aground. Due to the violence of the sea, the aft section of the ship was wrecked.
4. Many of the soldiers were of the opinion that the prisoners should be slain in order to prevent them from escaping. The centurion, in an effort to save the life of Paul, did not allow them to fulfill their intentions in this matter. The text informs us that all of the passengers and crew were enabled to reach the land safely.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

1. The first section of this chapter (vs.1-15) records the events which took place on the island of Melita, the island where the ship wrecked. While they remained they were given the provisions that were needed by the people of the island. Paul, while gathering a bundle of sticks for the fire, was bitten by a snake. The islanders assumed that this was in reward for his past evil life, but when Paul did not take ill nor die, they began to think of him as a god.
2. While they remained on the island, Paul healed many people of their diseases and infirmities. Three months later they departed toward Rome. While en route to Rome, the ship stopped at a few places where Christians met with Paul.
3. When Paul finally came to the city of Rome he was placed in prison. He was, however, allowed to have visitors, and in accordance with his previous actions, Paul called the chief of the Jews of the city of Rome together to address them. He told them of his plight, and how he had been accused of wrong doing by the Jews in Jerusalem. These Jews did not know of any such accusations against Paul, but they were willing to hear of "this sect" (i.e. the church), for they knew "that every where it is spoken against." When a day was set for them to come, they departed. When that day arrived, Paul began to teach them. "...he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening." Some of the Jew believed the words of Paul, and some did not. When they did not agree among themselves, Paul quoted from Isaiah 6:9ff. He informed them that the gospel was sent unto the Gentiles, and they (i.e. the Gentiles) were willing to hear it.
4. When the Jews heard this they left, but their dissension continued. Paul continued to teach the kingdom of God and those things which concern the Christ with all confidence for about two years in the prison in Rome.

ACTS: A REVIEW

It is difficult to capsulize the book of Acts in a very brief yet efficient manner. If an attempt is made, perhaps the easiest way would be to describe Acts as 1) the history of the establishment of the church, and 2) the history of the growth and work of the church. Some of the many facets which contribute to this brief analysis are: 1) Acts details the last few days of the Christ prior to his ascension, 2) Acts specifically pinpoints the exact date of the establishment of the Lord's church, 3) Acts records the Lord's plan for the promulgation of the gospel; a) in Jerusalem, b) in Judea, c) in Samaria, and d) to the uttermost parts of the world; 4) the book of Acts records the role of the Holy Spirit in the early mission of the church; 5) Acts informs us of the importance of Old Testament prophecy as it relates to the church [NOTE: THERE ARE MANY ASPECTS OF THE ROLE OF O.T. PROPHECY THAT ARE TOO NUMEROUS TO MENTION: e.g. prophecies concerning the establishment of the church, its purpose, its character, its relationship to the Gentiles, et al.]; 6) Acts informs us of the true saving power of the word of God. A tremendous amount of emphasis is placed upon those who were converted by the word of the Lord.; 7) the book of Acts chronicles the actual way in which many became Christians; 8) Acts shows us the unity that is possible and is expected within the Lord's church; 8) Acts shows us the necessity of conviction that Christians must have in their service to the Lord; 9) Acts speaks of the persecution

which comes upon those who stand for the truth; 10) the book of Acts speaks about the importance of elders in the Lord's church; 11) the book of Acts speaks about the importance of preaching the pure and plain gospel of Christ; 12) Acts informs us of the purpose and nature of miraculous gifts in the early church; 13) Acts records the different modes of response that were given to the gospel by its hearers: some obeyed, some rebelled, others appeared indifferent; 14) Acts informs us of the martyrdom suffered by those who refused to refrain from Christian living and preaching Christ; 15) Acts depicts the zeal with which some will persecute the church; 16) Acts depicts the attempts of some to tamper with the gospel; 17) Acts depicts the gospel before all kinds of people: rich, poor, those in power, the educated of the day, those who were unlearned, et al.; 17) Acts informs us of the relationship of John's teaching and his baptism to that of Jesus the Christ; 18) Acts informs us of the providence of the Lord for those who seek to serve him faithfully; and 19) the book of Acts informs us of the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

ROMANS

The book of Romans deals with a very important subject; that of the relationship between the gospel of Christ and the law of Moses, the relationship of Gentile and Jew. In this regard it is one of three books which have the same emphasis; Galatians and Hebrews being the remaining two. The extent to which the problem was discussed and dealt with is some indication of the gravity of "Judaising" teachers in the church of our Lord. This epistle was written to the church at Rome by Paul. At this time (i.e. the time of the writing of this letter), Paul had not yet been to the city of Rome (ch.1:8ff).

CHAPTER ONE

1. In the first few verses of this chapter (vs.1-7) Paul salutes the Christians at Rome and introduces himself. [NOTE the use of the term "obedience to the faith" in vs. 5.]
2. In the following section of the chapter (vs.8-15), Paul explains his appreciation for the church at Rome and makes reference to his hopes of visiting them in the future. He emphasizes that he is a debtor to the Greeks and the Barbarian, to the wise and the unwise. He is, therefore, willing to preach the gospel to all, even to them which are at Rome.
3. In what light did Paul view the gospel? He sets forth his classic understanding of this important facet of truth when he stated: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jews first, and also to the Greek." The word power in this verse is the same Greek word that the English word "dynamite" comes from. The theme of the book of Romans is summed up in this verse. The salvation which came through the gospel of Christ was for all men; both Jew and Gentile were included. Paul was a minister of that gospel. He was not ashamed of it. He willingly and lovingly proclaimed it unto all men. All those who were seeking to be righteous in the sight of God were justified by the gospel by faith.
4. The remainder of the first chapter of the book of Romans depicts the depths of depravity to which the Gentile world had fallen. The wrath of God was being revealed against them, and would be revealed against them, because they turned away from the Lord. Paul quite succinctly states that these Gentiles were without excuse in the sight of the Lord. They were given evidence through that which was manifest in them and through the witness of the things which are made. Rather than following after the ways of the Lord, they changed several things. They changed their concept of God from that which was/is incorruptible into the corruptible image of birds and beasts. They change the truth of God into a lie. They changed their own nature by involving themselves in wicked and perverted sexual relationships. Because of their iniquity, Paul says that God gave them up. They became "Godless" through their actions. Their sins are enumerated in the closing verses of the chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

1. The first section of this chapter (vs.1-9) speaks very directly to those who may have