

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

1:1 *What is the “former treatise” to which Luke refers and who is Theophilus?*

The former treatise Luke refers to here (KJV) is his account of the gospel which he also addressed to Theophilus (CP Lu 1:3-4). This book of the Acts of the Apostles continues the record Luke started in his gospel. It is generally supposed that Theophilus was a Roman official (see also comments on Lu 1:3-4).

1:5 *See comments on Lu 24:49, Ac 1:8.*

1:8 *What does Jesus mean by what He says here?*

Jesus means that when the disciples have been baptized in the Spirit, which He had spoken of many times previously, they would be endued with power to be witnesses to His saving grace, not only in Jerusalem and the surrounding regions, but throughout the whole earth (CP 1:4-5 with Lu 24:49; Jn 7:37-39). The disciples were already regenerated by the Spirit, but not yet baptized in the Spirit (CP Jn 14:15-17). Soon they would receive the baptism in the Spirit and a new dimension of power to witness for Christ (CP Ac 2:1-4; Eph 2:10; 3:16,20). See also comments on Jn 14:15-17 and Ac 2:1-4.

1:10-11 *Is this the first resurrection, or Jesus’ second coming the angels are referring to here?*

This is the second coming of Jesus the angels are referring to here – when He returns to earth at the end of the Great Tribulation for the Battle of Armageddon, prior to setting up His millennial kingdom on earth. His descent to earth then will be the same as His ascent to heaven here – He will literally come back to the Mount of Olives in the same bodily form as He left, and will be visible for all to see (CP Dan 7:13-14; Zech 14:1-5; Mt 24:29-30; 2Th 1:7-10; Rev 1:7; 14:14; 19:11-21). In this His second coming, Jesus comes back to earth **with** His saints. In the first resurrection He comes back in the air **for** His saints, to take them back to Heaven with Him (CP Jn 14:1-3; 1Cor 15:51-58; 1Th 4:13-18; Rev 20:6). See also comments on Lu 24:36-43; 1Cor 15:51-58; 1Th 4:13-18.

1:12 *What is a Sabbath day’s journey?*

A Sabbath day’s journey is equal to the distance between Mount Olivet – the Mount of Olives – and Jerusalem: approximately 3/4 mile or 1200 metres (ref. Full Life Study Bible – Map 9: Jesus’ Ministry).

1:15-17 *What do we learn from what Peter said here about Judas?*

We learn from what Peter said here that Judas was once saved. He was not always of the devil as some teach (CP also V25). Judas was a bishop in the New Testament church, but lost his bishoprick (his ministry), when he betrayed Jesus (CP Ps 69:22-28; 109:6-20; Ac 1:15-20). See also comments on Mt 26:14-16.

2:1-4 *(A) What was the significance of the “cloven tongues like as of fire” resting on the disciples here?*

The “cloven tongues like as of fire” accompanied the Holy Spirit – the “sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind” in V2, which moved upon the disciples, baptizing them with the “rivers of living water” Jesus promises believers in Jn 7:37; and the “power from on high” to be His witnesses in Lu 24:49 and Ac 1:8 (CP Jn 7:37-39; Lu 24:49; Ac 1:8). The cloven tongues like as of fire sitting upon each of the disciples signified that they had all been baptized with the Holy Spirit (CP V2-4). Previously the Holy Spirit dwelt with the disciples, now He dwelt in them (CP Jn 14:16-17 with 1Cor 2:12; 3:16; 6:19; 2Cor 5:5; 6:16; Ga 3:2, 13-14; Eph 1:12-13; 1Jn 3:24; 4:13). The baptism with the Holy Spirit and empowering from on high also fulfilled John the Baptist’s predictions that Jesus would baptize His disciples with the Holy Ghost and with fire (CP Mt 3:1-2, 11; Mk 1:6-8; Lu 3:15-16; Jn 1:29-33). Many in the church believe that the fire John predicted in those scriptures was fulfilled in the cloven tongues like as of fire that rested on the disciples in Ac 2:3, but as is plainly evident here that is not correct. Jesus did not baptize the disciples with literal fire, but with power. The fire John speaks of is the power of almighty God outworking through the disciples (CP Mk 16:17-20; Lu 12:49; Jn 14:12-14; Ac 4:29-31; 6:8; 8:5-8; Ro 15:18-19; 1Cor 2:4-5; Eph 3:20; 1Th 1:5; 2Cor 12:12). See comments also on Mt 3:11; Lu 12:49; Jn 14:12-14.

(B) Are tongues still valid for today or were they only for the first century church, as many teach?

It is ludicrous to suggest that tongues are not valid for today and yet declare the baptism with the Holy Spirit still is. They go together – one cannot be had without the other. If one is still valid so is the other. Tongues attest to the validity of the baptism with the Holy Spirit, and therefore are an integral part of God’s redemptive plan, which is ongoing and centred around the baptism of believers with the Holy Spirit. God’s redemptive plan did not cease with the first century church, and neither did baptism with the Holy Spirit or tongues (CP V14-18). Peter quoted Joel’s prophecy from the Old Testament here (CP Joel 2:28-29) to show the Jews that speaking in tongues was the outward manifestation of the baptism with the Spirit which the disciples had just received in accord with the prophecy (CP Isa 28:11-12 with 1Cor 14:21-22). Paul quoted Isa 28:11-12 in 1Cor 14:21, which also proves that tongues are an integral part of God’s ongoing redemption plan (CP Mk 16:17; Jn 14:12-14; Ac 2:36-39; 5:32). *Them that believe* in Mk 16:17, *He that believeth on me* in Jn 14:12-14, *all that are afar off* in Ac 2:36-39, and *them that obey* in 5:32 all refer to every believer in Christ from the day of Pentecost until God’s redemptive plan is fulfilled in the very last repentant sinner saved and baptized with the Holy Spirit. This spans the whole period of time from the day of Pentecost onward. It includes us today and all who will believe in Christ in the future. Jesus qualifies

the life-span of what Mk 16:17, Ac 2:36-39 and 5:32 teaches with His statement in Mt 28:20 "...and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (CP Mt 28:19-20). That clearly refutes any teaching that something integral to God's redemptive plan was only a temporary activity that would cease with the first century church. Christ was not only talking to His disciples of that era but to His disciples throughout the whole of the church age. Furthermore, neither Isaiah nor Joel's prophecies have been fulfilled yet, and they cannot be while ever there are repentant sinners to be saved and baptized with the Holy Spirit. Paul teaches in 1Cor 14:22 that the main purpose of tongues is for a sign to unbelievers of the supernatural presence of God among His people (CP Ac 8:14-21; 10:44-47 (also 11:5-17); 19:6). The word *matter* in Ac 8:21 is from the Greek word **Logos**, which means something said, utterance, word, speech, divine expression. Simon wanted to buy the power of the Holy Spirit because he heard those believers speak in tongues when Peter and John laid hands on them.

Tongues will cease one day, as also will prophecies and knowledge, when "that which is perfect is come," but that time is not yet (CP 1Cor 13:8-12). Most Bible commentators agree that when "that which is perfect is come" refers to the end of this present age and Jesus comes for the church. When we see Him face to face in the eternal state there will be no longer any need for tongues, or prophecies, or knowledge. Some commentators however claim that 1Cor 13:8-12 teaches that tongues ceased with the first century church, but there is no indication whatever in 1Cor 13:8-12 or anywhere else in scripture that validates their claim. Until that which is perfect has come, tongues will not only continue to attest to believers being baptized with the Spirit, they will also continue to be the doorway to a deeper life in the Spirit for believers (CP Ro 8:26-27). Here we see that when we pray in tongues the Holy Spirit helps us to pray the way that God would have us pray over that situation (CP Jude 20). Constantly praying in tongues builds up our faith in God as the source of all supply – as our all-sufficiency. Tongues can also be a prophetic gift of the Spirit (CP 1Cor 12:1-11). Though all who are baptized in the Spirit talk in tongues, not all have the gift of tongues. The Holy Spirit only gives this gift according to His will (CP V11 with V27-30). The gift of tongues is only for specific occasions and must always be interpreted if spoken in public meetings. They are no profit to the public unless interpreted (CP 1Cor 14:1-6). See also comments on Mk 16:17-18, Ro 8:26-27, 1Cor 12:1-11, 13:8-12, 14:1-5, Jude 20.

2:19-21 *What do we learn from this part of Joel's prophecy?*

This part of Joel's prophecy refers to the future Tribulation which comes upon the earth prior to the second advent of Christ (CP Joel 2:28-31). The signs of Ac 2:19-20 all take place during the Tribulation (CP Rev 6:12-14; 8:5-12). "That great and notable day of the Lord" refers to Christ's defeat of Antichrist and his army at the Battle of Armageddon (CP Mt 24:29-31; Rev 19:11-21). We learn from the part of

Joel's prophecy Peter quoted in Ac 2:19-21 that the Holy Spirit will not be taken out of the world during the Tribulation period contrary to what many in the church believe, because there will be multitudes saved and baptized with the Spirit throughout this time (CP Zech 12:10-13:9; Rev 6:9-11; 7:13-14). The Holy Spirit has to remain in the world during the Tribulation because no one can get saved without Him (CP Jn 16:7-11; 1Cor 12:3). See also comments on 2Th 2:7.

2:22-23 *What does "him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" mean?*

Foreknowledge means that God knows the end from the beginning in all things, He has a clear and full knowledge of events before they come to pass. He saw ahead that He would have to send a Saviour to redeem mankind from Adam's fall and He predetermined a plan for mankind's redemption involving the sacrificial death of His only Son, Jesus (CP Gen 3:14-15; Isa 53:1-12; Mt 26:24 (also Lu 22:22); Jn 19:11; Ac 3:17-18; 4:26-28; 13:27-29; Rev 13:8). God predetermined that Jesus would die an atoning death for the sins of everyone who ever lived as part of His pre-ordained plan of salvation. (Atoning means reconciling; being restored to divine favour through conversion). In His atoning death Jesus reconciled repentant sinners to God (CP Jn 3:16; Ro 3:21-26; 5:10-11; 2Cor 5:17-21; He 2:9-17). The sign that God had permitted Jesus' death was His raising Him up from the dead (CP Ac 2:22-36). See also comments on Mt 27:24-25; Lu 13:25, Jn 19:11; 1Th 2:14-15.

2:29-36 *How are we to understand what Peter says here?*

In V 34 Peter quotes from Kings David's prophecy in Psa 110:1 concerning the Lord being exalted at God's right hand in heaven. Peter explains that David was not speaking of himself here because he was both dead and buried, and his grave still existed at that time. Peter told the Jews that the Lord, of whose exaltation David prophesied, was "*this same Jesus, whom ye have crucified*" (CP Psa 110:1). The Jews had crucified God's anointed one, and the coming of the Holy Spirit in Ac 2, which the Jews were now witnessing outworking in the disciples, was the evidence of Jesus' exaltation (CP Ac 2:1-14, 33). The Jews present were so convicted by the Holy Spirit of their rejection and crucifixion of Jesus, that three thousand of them were saved that day (CP V41). See also comments on Ac 2:37-38 and 2:41.

2:37-38 *What does "repent and be baptized" involve?*

(CP Mt 3:1-2; 4:17; 11:20; Mk 1:14-15; Lu 13:2-5; Ac 3:19; 17:30). *Repent* means to sorrow over unbelief and sin and turn away from them to God (CP Mt 5:3-6). Confessing one's spiritual helplessness; sorrow for sin; meekness, and a hunger and thirst for righteousness, as Jesus sets out in the first four beatitudes here, are all characteristics of the

repentant sinner (CP Lu 18:10-14). We see here in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican that no external acts can take the place of an internal sorrow for sin. The Pharisee came into the temple a sinner, and left the same way. He was self-righteous and not conscious of his own sinful nature. He considered himself righteous because of his acts of piety and outward goodness. As a result he excluded himself from God's redeeming grace. In contrast, the publican went home justified before God because he acknowledged his need for God's mercy, and God acquitted him (CP Lu 15:11-24). This is the parable of the lost son, or the prodigal son. It is the perfect picture of a truly repentant sinner. The father's compassion toward his repentant son in the parable portrays God's infinite love and forgiveness toward every sinner who repents. As the father joyfully celebrated his son's return and restored him to his position of sonship in the family, so too God rejoices over every sinner who repents, and restores them to sonship with Him (CP Jn 1:12). See also comments on Mt 11:28-30, 13:10-11, 20:16; Jn 3:14-15, 3:36, 6:37, 12:37-40, Ac 2:37-38, 13:48.

The second part of Peter's command to the Jews in Ac 2:38 *...and be baptized...for the remission of sins*, refers to water baptism. This is not teaching that salvation depends on being baptized, as many in the contemporary church believe. Peter is simply commanding the Jews to be baptized in obedience to Christ's command to the church (CP Mt 28:19-20). Christ's command here is directed to every believer in the New Testament church – not only to those in public ministry. It is incumbent upon each and every one of us to get sinners saved, to baptize them, and to teach them the way of God. Obeying Christ's command to be baptized is the repentant sinners' first act of obedience toward God's word, and it should not be delayed wherever water is available and the repentant sinner is physically capable of being baptized. Being baptized is their pledge of a good conscience toward God – a conscience reconciled to God by the repentant sinner's new-found faith in the resurrected Christ and the salvation benefits He has purchased for them with His blood (CP 1Pe 3:18-21). "For the remission of sins" in Ac 2:38, means because your sins have been forgiven. When sinners repent and turn to God their sins are immediately forgiven and their baptism then is also their testimony to the world that they have repented and turned to Christ as their Saviour (see also comments on Mt 28:19-20 and 1Pe 3:18-21).

2:39 See comments on Ac 2:1-4.

2:41 (A) *When were these three thousand odd repentant sinners baptized?*

The word *then* here indicates that they were baptized on the day of Pentecost, immediately after Peter finished preaching the gospel to them in V40 (CP V36-40). The importance of baptism in God's redemptive plan was not lost on the first century church as it is today. Commencing with Peter, the church back then stressed baptism as an integral part of their gospel message, and baptized repentant sinners immediately they confessed their faith in

Jesus (CP Ac 8:12, 36-38; 9:17-18; 10:44-48; 16:14:15, 30-34; 18:8; 19:1-5). On the basis of what happened in all those scriptures it is reasonable to believe that the three thousand odd repentant sinners in Ac 2:41 were also baptized the day they were saved. And their numbers were added to the original one hundred and twenty disciples from the upper room who had all been baptized with the Holy Spirit, as the foundation members of the New Testament church (CP Ac 2:41-42). See also comments on Mt 28:19-20 (B).

(B) Did these repentant sinners get baptized with the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues also?

Although scripture is silent in this regard it is reasonable to assume that they did receive the Spirit baptism simply because it was their expectation as part of Peter's gospel message "...repent and be baptized...and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (CP V36-39). This promise is for every repentant sinner from the day of Pentecost onward until God's redemptive plan is fulfilled in the very last repentant sinner saved. We cannot just assume because scripture does not say that they too spoke in tongues as the one hundred and twenty from the upper room did, that they did not receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit. See also comments on Ac 2:1-4 (B).

2:44-45 *Is not this a form of communism?*

No (CP also 4:32). What the early Christians did in the first century church had nothing in common with today's communism. The church had a spiritual basis, not materialistic. Its adherents were believers, not atheists. Its purpose was to glorify God, not to deny Him, and its giving was voluntary, not compulsory (CP 4:34-37; 5:1-4). The community of goods in the early church in Jerusalem was only temporary during the great spiritual awakening that was taking place among the Jews. Thousands were being saved and added to the church on a daily basis (CP 2:47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7). The community idea was not carried on after the persecution of the church in Jerusalem and its subsequent dispersal in Ac 8 (CP Ac 8:1). After this, special collections for poor Christians were organised (CP 1Cor 16:1-4; 2Cor 8:1 - 9:15). It should be noted here that notwithstanding there is no longer community of goods in the New Testament church as there was in Ac 2:44-45, the message of Ac 2:44-45 still holds today. No one should gather to themselves an abundance of possessions while others in the Christian community have needs to be met. God is clear on this (CP Lu 16:19-31). This is called the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. It does not teach that the rich man went to hell because he was rich and that Lazarus went to Abraham's bosom because he was poor. Neither affluence nor poverty determines our eternal state but the life we live on earth. The rich man went to hell because his life was filled with self-centred living, not caring about others of God's children worse off than himself (CP Pr 21:13; Jas 2:13-17; 1Jn 3:16-19).

2:46-47

Is this teaching as some claim that God determines who should be saved?

No, this is simply teaching that as a result of the expression of love and community spirit among the new Christian converts, and the miracles that were being preformed in their midst, every day more people were won to Christ and added to the church (CP 2:43-47; 5:12-14). Christ places great importance upon Christians expressing their love for each other like this – it ensures their place in God’s eternal kingdom (CP Jn 13:34-35, 15:12; Jas 2:14-17, 26; 1Jn 3:10-24, 4:7-21). Christ also places great importance on the working of miracles by Christians as a sign to awaken others to a consciousness of the presence and the power of God, and to raise their faith in Jesus for salvation (CP Jn 10:37-38; Mk 16:15-20). Over five thousand got saved as a result of one man being healed in Ac 3 (CP Ac 3:1-16; 4:1-4). See also comments on Jn 13:1-5, 13:34-35, Ac 3:1-16, 4:4, 1 Jn 3:10-13, 3:15, 3:16-18, 3:19-22, 4:7-21.

It should be noted here that at this early stage of the New Testament church, the only converts were Jews who did not immediately cut their ties with Judaism or the temple, even though they also met in homes to partake of the Lord’s supper and listen to the apostle’s doctrine. Even Peter and John at that time still observed the Old Testament prayer times in the temple (CP Ac 2:42, 46 with 3:1).

3:1-16 *Whose faith got this man healed?*

It was Peter and John’s faith that got this man healed. It had nothing to do with the man himself (CP V6-8 with V11-16). The man’s faith was not an issue – he was a beggar who expected Peter and John to give him money. He was not looking to be healed, as V5 clearly proves. Many in the contemporary church teach that it is sheer audacity for Christians today to think that they could just walk up to somebody in the same predicament as the beggar, and get them healed like Peter and John did here. Yet Peter and John did no more than what Jesus has given every baptized with the Spirit believer in the New Testament church the mandate – the authority – to do in His name (CP Mt 21:18-22 (also Mk 11:12-14, 19-24); Mk 16:15-18; Jn 14:12-14; 16:7, 23-24). There is a clear teaching for the church in what Peter and John did with the beggar. They did not ask him if he wanted to be healed – they just exercised their faith in God to perform His word like Jesus promised He would. The man got healed and God was glorified (CP Jn 15:7-8 with Ac 3:8-10). The disciples had the mandate to do what they did, and we have too (CP Lu 24:49; Ac 1:1-8). To be God’s witnesses in the world includes not only preaching His word, but also demonstrating the outworking of His power in us (CP Ac 8:4-8; 1Cor 2:4-5; 2Cor 12:12; 1Th 1:5). Over five thousand souls got saved as a result of the beggar being healed in Ac 3 (CP Ac 4:1-4). New Testament believers should never sit under any teaching in the church that may suppress their faith to believe that they have the same mandate to do what Peter and John did. We should never be afraid to exercise our faith anywhere,

anytime, in the name of Jesus, for God’s glory (CP 2Cor 1:19-20).

We also learn from what Peter and John did with the beggar in Ac 3 never to just leave people to their own devices after praying for their healing (CP V7-8). We must challenge them to act out their healing in faith. Peter did not wait for the man to rise up of his own volition – he pulled him up and made his mind up for him. Jesus also gave us a good example of how to challenge someone to act out their healing in faith (CP Mk 8:22-25). When complete healing for the blind man did not manifest itself immediately here Jesus kept challenging him until it did. Scriptures say He asked the blind man in V23 if he saw anything. The literal English rendering is that Jesus kept asking him, “...do you, possibly, see anything?” and laid hands on him again, and made him look up until his eyesight was completely restored. This is the only record in scripture of Jesus healing someone in two stages, and it should encourage us to also persevere as He did if complete healing does not manifest itself immediately for whomever we are believing it. (See also comments on Mk 8:22-26 and Ac 4:4).

3:19-21 *What does the “restitution of all things” mean?*

The “restitution of all things” means that in the millennium – the thousand years reign of Christ on earth after His second coming and the battle of Armageddon – all things will be completely restored to what God intended them to be before Adam fell. There will be no more sin or sickness; the curse will be lifted from the earth (CP Isa 33:24; 35:3-6; 53:5; 1Cor 15:56-57; 1Pe 2:24; Rev 22:1-5). The righteous will no longer die; all crying will cease and all tears wiped away; there will be no more sorrow and pain (CP Isa 25:8; 35:10; 65:19-20; Mt 5:4; 1Cor 15:52-57; Rev 7:17; 21:4). There will be no more poverty or famine; fruitful seasons will be without interruption; material blessings will fill the earth; prosperity will be for all (CP Isa 30:23-25; 32:15; 55:13; 60:5-18; 62:8-9; 65:21-24; Eze 34:23-24, 26-27, 29-31; Joel 2:18-27; 3:18; Mic 4:4; Zech 3:10; Rev 7:16-17). The waste places on earth will be restored to usefulness; deserts will blossom again (CP Isa 35:1-7; 41:17-19; 49:9-10, 19; 51:3; 55:12-13; 61:4-5; Eze 36:8-12, 29-30, 33-38; 47:1-12; Amos 9:11-15; Zech 14:8). Also, wild animals will be tame, and children will be able to play with once poisonous snakes (CP Isa 11:6-10; 65:25; Eze 34:25, 28). We learn from Isa 65:20 that death will continue in the millennium, but only for those who commit sins worthy of death (CP Isa 65:20). No longer will babies die when only a few days old; no longer will one hundred year old men be considered old – only sinners will die that young (CP V22). Human life will be prolonged so that men will live as long as trees, and for the entire one thousand years if they do not commit a sin carrying the death penalty (CP Isa 11:2-5). V4 here refers to those humans in the millennium who Jesus judges worthy of death, the humans in the millennium who do not rebel with Satan at the end of the thousand years, and have accepted Jesus as their Saviour, will continue to live

eternally with Jesus after the millennium (CP Mt 25:46; 1Cor 15:24-28; Eph 1:10; 2:7; Rev 20:7-15). See also comments on Ro 8:19-21, Rev 20:4-6.

3:22-23 *What significant truth underlies Moses' prophecy here?*

The significant truth underlying Moses' prophecy here is that salvation is a free-will choice. Individuals choose for themselves whether or not they want to be saved. God has not already determined it. If they choose to hear and obey Jesus they will be saved. If they choose not to hear and obey Him they condemn themselves to hell (CP Jn 3:16-18, 36). See also comments on Jn 3:36.

4:4 *What do we learn from the fact that many believed and were saved here?*

We learn from this how crucial signs and wonders are for God's purpose to be accomplished in the earth. Over five thousand souls got saved here as a result of the crippled beggar being healed in Ac 3 (CP Ac 3:1-8). Healing is not only about restoring health to the one afflicted. It is also a sign to awaken others to a consciousness of the presence and the power of God, and to raise their faith in Jesus for salvation. It is one of the signs that Jesus said would follow believers as the evidence to a lost world that He is alive. The signs show that He confirms the ministries of those who do the work of His word. It should be noted here that it was not the cripple's faith that got him healed. He was expecting money and he had no expectation of healing, so his faith was not an issue. He got healed because Peter and John exercised their faith in Jesus to heal him (CP Mk 16:15-20). The more signs that are wrought through believers, the more souls will be won to Jesus. Jesus placed great importance on the signs that followed His ministry. They proved who He was in God. We should place great importance on them too. They prove who we are in Jesus (CP Jn 10:36-38; 14:8-11 with 12-14). The first century believers showed no fear in exercising their authority in Jesus for the world to see, and neither should we (CP Ac 4:29-33; 5:12-14; 6:8; 8:4-8; 14:8-10; 20:7-11; 28:3-9; Ro 15:18-21; 1Cor 2:1-5; 4:20). See also comments on Jn 14:12-14 and Ac 3:1-16.

4:8 *What is significant about Peter here?*

Peter was speaking under the direct influence of the Holy Spirit, fulfilling Jesus' prophecy that the Holy Spirit would give the disciples the words to speak whenever they were arrested for His sake and brought before the authorities (CP Mt 10:16-20; Mk 13:9-11; Lu 21:12-15).

4:10-12 (A) *What does the salvation that is in Jesus include?*

The salvation that Jesus purchased with His blood is all-inclusive, gathering to itself all the redemptive acts and processes of God, both present and future (CP De 28:1-14; Josh 1:8; Psa 1:1-3; 91; Pr 4:20-22; Isa 53:4-5; Mt 8:16-17; 18:18-20; Mk 16:17-18; Lu 10:19; Jn 14:12-14; Ac 3:6-8; 9:32-34; Php 4:19; 1Th 5:9; He 1:14; Jas 5:14-16; 1Pe 2:22-24). Salvation is

not just limited to the forgiveness of sins and deliverance from future punishment as many in the church believe. It also includes bodily healing and health, prosperity, deliverance from physical danger, victory over circumstances in life that beset us, victory over the powers of darkness, preservation of physical life, deliverance from sin, etc., as every one of those scriptures clearly attest (CP Jn 10:10; Ro 5:17; Ga 3:13-14, 26-29). The abundant life Jesus promises believers in Jn 10:10 applies to this life, not the next, as many believe. God wants us to reign as kings with Christ in this life, now, because there will not be any sickness or disease, or adversities in life, or works of the devil for Christians to contend with in the next life (CP Isa 25:7-8; Rev 7:16-17; 21:4).

(B) *If Jesus is the only way of salvation what happens to all those who have never heard about Him?*

Scriptures clearly teach that those who have never heard of Jesus will be judged according to the light they have received. They will be judged on the basis of their deeds, not knowledge; according to the standards they know, not the standards they do not know (CP Ro 2:1-16). In V14-15 here we see that even though the gentiles had never received the Old Testament law, the knowledge of the principles of the law was written in their hearts. We learn from this that within every human heart there is a rudimentary but undeniable moral sense. This proves that God has not left anyone without light sufficient to justify or condemn them in the judgement. Everyone will be judged on their obedience to what they know (CP Ac 17:30-31). Jesus will treat everyone impartially and will punish sin wherever it is found, regardless of whether the sinner has ever heard of Him or not. There will be no excuse for anyone because deep in their hearts, everyone knows right from wrong (CP Ro 1:19-21; 2:5).

The question of what happens to all those who have never heard of Jesus is one of the most thought provoking issues in Christendom, and there are many differing views on the subject. However, one thing is certain - there are no second chances for anyone to find out about Jesus or to hear the gospel after they die, contrary to what some believe. Scriptures are clear on this point (CP He 9:27-28; Rev 22:11-12). Knowing this should impress upon Christians the urgency for sharing the good news of Christ with as many as we possibly can while there is still time (CP Jn 9:4). See also comments on Mt 18:3, 19:13-15 and Ro 1:19-21.

4:11 *See comments on Mt 21:42-45.*

4:13-20 *What do we learn from what Peter and John said here?*

(CP also 5:17-29). We learn from what Peter and John said here that although Christians are to obey their governments, it can only be when government laws do not contravene God's law (CP Lu 20:21-25; Ro 13:1-7; 1Ti 2:1-2; 1Pe 2:13-17 with Ex 1:15-20; Dan 6:4-10). Christians are commanded to preach

the gospel, and they are obligated to do so regardless of how it conflicts with the laws of the land (CP Mt 28:19-20; Ac 10:42-43 with Mk 8:34-38; Ac 5:40-42). The cross in Mk 8:34 is a symbol of suffering, ridicule, self-denial and rejection, and Christians must be prepared to suffer the reproach, hatred, and ridicule of the world for the sake of the gospel, exactly as Jesus Himself suffered (CP He 13:11-14; 1Pe 4:12-19). See also comments on Mt 10:37-38 and 10:39.

4:31 *What is the significance of this infilling of the Holy Spirit - the disciples were already baptized with the Spirit?*

(CP V23-33). The disciples were already baptized with the Holy Spirit and empowered for service, but they were given an even greater empowering here than they already had for a witness to Christ in the face of ever-increasing opposition and hostility from the Jews (CP V29-30). We learn from this that God will always empower believers for service with a fresh anointing of the Spirit when the need arises as here (CP Eph 3:20). Believers must have fresh infillings of the Spirit to maintain the fullness of God in their ministries (CP Ro 12:1-2; Eph 3:14-19; 5:18; Php 1:19; Tit 3:5). It should be noted here that the disciples did not pray to the Holy Spirit for empowering in Ac 4, but to God. Nowhere in scripture are we taught to direct our prayers to the Holy Spirit. We are to direct them to God and He will replenish our spiritual needs (CP Jn 14:13-14; 15:16; 16:23-24). This is said in no way to denigrate the Holy Spirit, but to admonish us to always conform to scripture in all that we do. There is much confusion in the contemporary church between “spiritual experiences” and the work of the Holy Spirit. Some Christians place more importance on having a spiritual experience than being empowered for service by the Holy Spirit.

4:32-37 *See comments on Ac 2:44-45.*

4:36 *What does the term “son of consolation” mean?*

The term “son of consolation” refers to Barnabas’ prophetic gift of teaching, admonishing and consoling, or exhorting, encouraging and comforting others. Barnabas stood up for Paul when Paul first came to Jerusalem as a believer (CP Ac 9:26-28). Barnabas later became a co-worker with Paul in the gospel, first as a prophet and teacher, and then as an apostle (CP Ac 11:22-26; 12:25; 13:1-5, 50-14:4).

5:1-6 *How did Peter know that Ananias was lying?*

Peter was operating in two of the gifts of the Holy Spirit here: the word of knowledge and the discerning of spirits (CP 1Cor 12:4-11 with Ac 5:3-11; 8:18-23; 16:16-18).

5:1-10 *Why did Ananias and Sapphira have to die without a chance to repent and be forgiven?*

We err if we dismiss lightly the conspiracy between Ananias and Sapphira here to lie to the Holy Spirit. They had allowed Satan to lead them in an attempt to deceive the Holy Spirit about the money they were giving to the church – the proceeds of the sale of some land. They agreed between themselves to give only part of the proceeds of the sale to the church, while at the same time claiming it was the full amount (CP V1-3). The issue was not that they gave only part of the money, but that they had lied about it. This is made clear in V4 (CP V4). They were not lying to men but to God. They were testing the Holy Spirit’s ability to know the truth (CP V9). This could not go unpunished in the infant church, and they were judged accordingly. Their death stands as an example to the church that God is a God of holiness and those who will not treat Him as holy will face the consequences (CP Psa 76:7-8; He 10:29-31). Others have also died in the first century church for not treating God as Holy (CP 1Cor 11:27-30). Ananias and Sapphira showed no fear of the Lord, which is an essential element of the Christian faith, the need for which is taught right throughout scripture (CP De 6:1-2; Psa 85:8-9; Pr 2:1-5; Lu 1:50; Ac 9:31).

Without a proper fear of the Lord God’s people will soon return to the ungodly ways of the world. As a result of what happened to Ananias and Sapphira in Ac 5 the church and all the people who heard about it revered and feared God more, and many more were added to the church (CP V11-14). The penalty Ananias and Sapphira received may seem harsh to some for such a seemingly small offence, but it was necessary in order to establish apostolic authority in the early church and to safeguard the church’s purity. This is the first sin recorded in the New Testament church.

5:3-4 *What central truth of the Christian faith underlies what Peter says here?*

The central truth underlying what Peter says here is the deity of the Holy Spirit; that He is an equal member of the Godhead, with both the Father and the Son (CP Isa 6:8 with Ac 28:25-26; 2 Cor 3:17-18; 1 Jn 5:6-7). See also comments on Mt 3:16-17.

5:14-18 *Why did the religious leaders arrest the apostles here?*

The key to understanding why the religious leaders arrested the apostles here is in the word *indignation* in V17. In this context it means envy, jealousy, anger (CP Ac 13:45). The religious leaders were jealous and angry at how many people were turning to Christ because of the signs and wonders being wrought by the apostles (CP V12-14). See also comments on Ac 4:4.

5:34-39 *Is what Gamaliel says here necessarily true?*

No! There are many highly successful false religions in the world today despite the fact that they are not of God. Jesus warned of them in His parable of the mustard seed (CP Mt 13:31-32). The parable of the mustard seed illustrates the abnormal growth of the kingdom of Heaven in its earthly aspect from a small beginning to a vast sphere of operation for demon powers. The birds, or fowls of the air, which lodge in the branches of the tree, are a figure of the emissaries of Satan hiding behind the cloak of Christianity, disguised as apostles of Christ and ministers of righteousness (CP Mt 24:5; 2Cor 11:13-15). Gamaliel used to be Paul's teacher of the Old Testament law (CP Ac 22:3). See also comments on Mt 13:31-32.

6:1-6 *Were these seven men the first designated deacons in the New Testament church?*

No, although many Christians believe they were because they "served tables", which is similar to the mundane tasks performed by deacons in the contemporary church. However, nowhere in scripture are they referred to as deacons. In fact, Philip, one of the seven, is distinctively identified in scripture as Philip the evangelist, not Philip the deacon (CP 8:4-8 with 21:8). For a detailed study on the office of deacon in the New Testament church see comments on 1Ti 3:8-13.

7:8 *Who are the twelve patriarchs?*

The twelve patriarchs are the sons of Jacob who became the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel – Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph and Benjamin (CP Gen 29:31-30:13, 17-20, 22-24; 35:16-18).

7:30 *Who is the Angel of the Lord to whom Stephen refers here?*

(CP V29-35). The Angel of Lord to whom Stephen refers in V30 is the pre-incarnate Jesus who spoke to Moses out of the burning bush on Mt Horeb. The pre-incarnate Jesus is referred to many times in the Old Testament as the Angel of the Lord (CP Gen 16:7-13 with 21:17-18, 18:1-5, 9-22 with 19:24, 32:24-30 with Hos 12:2-5; Ex 3:1-14 with Lu 20:37; Ex 13:21-22 with 14:19, 24, 31; Nu 22:22-35, 38; Josh 5:13-6:5; Judg 6:11-24; Dan 3:8-28; Zech 1:7-17). In all those scriptures the Angel of the Lord (Jehovah) is regarded as deity yet is distinguished from Jehovah, which proves He was an equal member of the Godhead (CP Zech 13:7). "The man that is my fellow" here is referring to the Angel of the Lord in 12:8-10 (CP 12:8-10 with 13:6-9). This is a clear reference to the One we now know as Jesus (CP Mt 26:31). See also comments on Mt 1:18-21, 3:16-17; Lu 1:35 (B); Jn 1:1, 5:16-23, 12:41; Ac 13:33, 20:28, Php 2:5-8; 1Ti 3:16; He 1:5, 5:5; 1Jn 5:6-9; Rev 1:8.

7:51-53 *What does stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ear mean?*

This is the climax of Stephen's sermon commencing in Ac 6:8, wherein he accuses the Jewish leaders of resisting the Holy Spirit and rejecting Jesus in the same way that their forefathers rejected God in the Old Testament (CP Ex 32:7-10; 33:3-5; Deu 9:6-7; 11-13; Isa 63:8-10; Jer 6:10; 9:25-26; Zech 7:8-14). "Stiff-necked" means obstinate, arrogant, self-pleasing. "Uncircumcised in heart and ears" describes the Jewish leaders as being callous and perverse so that they do not listen or obey God's word, even though it was delivered to them by angels (CP De 33:2; Ga 3:19; He 2:1-3).

7:54 *What is meant by "they gnashed on him with their teeth"?*

The Jewish leaders had such a fit of violent rage and anger against Stephen for accusing them of not keeping the law and having murdered Jesus, that they ground their teeth at him (CP V51-53). To gnash the teeth means to grind or crunch them together to make a grating sound. In Bible times it applied to mad dogs and lions.

7:60 *What does it mean that Stephen "fell asleep"?*

This is the characteristic New Testament expression for the death of believers (CP Mt 27:51-52; Ac 13:36; 1Cor 11:30; 15:6, 18, 20, 51; 1Th 4:14-15; 5:20; 2Pe 3:4). The word *sleep*, when applied to death in scripture denotes that while the body may be lifeless, the spirit and the soul of the person who died lives forever (CP Gen 3:19; Eccl 3:19-21; Jas 2:26). Where the spirit and the soul live though is entirely up to the individual. The saved go to be with Jesus (CP Eccl 12:7; Mt 25:37-46; Ac 7:59; 2Cor 5:1, 6-9; Php 1:21-24; He 12:22-23; Rev 6:9-11). The unsaved are cast down into hell (CP Psa 9:17; 55:15; Isa 66:24; Mt 5:21-22, 29-30; 25:41-46; Mk 9:43-48; Lu 16:19-31; Rev 20:11-15). By his death Stephen became the first Christian martyr. (See also comments on Mt 9:23-24 and Jn 11:33).

8:1 *Does consenting to Stephen's death here prove Paul (Saul) was a member of the Sanhedrin?*

No! Scriptures do not teach that Paul (Saul) was a member of the Sanhedrin, but simply that he was taught the Jewish law by Gamaliel (CP 22:1-3). Gamaliel was a renowned teacher of the law and a high-ranking member of the Sanhedrin (CP 5:34). Paul was a superior pupil who easily surpassed those of his own age in his knowledge of the law (CP Ga 1:14). Paul never claimed to be a member of the Sanhedrin, only that he was a zealous Pharisee, even when arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin (CP Ac 23:1-6; Php 3:3-6). As a zealous Pharisee Paul was given official authority by the chief priests to persecute Christians (CP Ac 7:58; 8:3; 9:1-2; 22:4-5; 26:10; 1Cor 15:9; Ga 1:13). Paul voted for, or consented to Christians being put to death, but that

does not prove that he was a member of the Sanhedrin (see also comments on Ac 22:3-5).

8:14-17 *Does this mean that the Holy Spirit baptism can only be received by the laying on of hands?*

No! The one hundred and twenty from the upper room were baptized with the Holy Spirit without the laying on of hands on the day of Pentecost (CP 2:1-4). So too was Cornelius and his household (CP 10:30-45). It is pointless speculating why the believers in Samaria who Philip evangelised were not baptized with the Spirit until Peter and John prayed and laid hands on them. This still happens today - not everyone is baptized with the Spirit immediately they come to Christ. Also, although it was the apostles who laid hands on these believers to receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit, that does not mean that only church leaders can administer this baptism.

8:18-23 *What was it Simon saw that made him want to buy the power of the Holy Spirit?*

Simon saw believers talk in tongues as the evidence of receiving the Spirit baptism when Peter and John laid hands on them. We learn this from V21 (CP V21). The word *matter* here is from the Greek word **Logos**, which means something said, utterance, word, speech, divine expression. Simon was amazed at the power of the Holy Spirit he had already seen in the many signs and miracles wrought by Philip (CP V5-13). But now he saw the sure evidence of the transfer of that power by the laying on of hands – the believer spoke in tongues – and he thought he could buy that power with money. Because of this many Bible commentators believe that Simon was not truly saved, yet V13 clearly teaches that he was. But he had to repent of his wickedness in wanting to buy the power of the Holy Spirit, and pray for forgiveness to remain saved. Whether he did this or not is not known. It is hardly likely that Peter would have prayed in his stead as Simon requested in V24 (CP V24). Simon had to be responsible for his own restoration here.

8:26-33 *What does V33 mean?*

The Ethiopian eunuch was reading Isa 53:7-8 (CP Isa 53:7-8). Isa 53 is a messianic prophecy – it foretells what was going to happen to Jesus. These particular verses speak of Jesus as the servant suffering for others, but in the end reaping his reward (CP V9-12). God's set purpose for Jesus in His redemptive plan was that He had to die, and Jesus accepted the suffering leading up to His death completely submitted to God's will for Him (CP Lu 22:37-42 with 1Pe 2:21-23). The servant in Isa 53 was to assume the figurative role of a sacrificial lamb led to the slaughter, and Jesus fulfilled this figurative role literally (CP Jn 1:29; 1Pe 1:18-20; Rev 5:6-10). Jesus' trial was a mockery. He had no one to speak for Him and was denied natural justice. Utterly humiliated, He had His life taken from Him, and there was no one to declare the wickedness of those who took His life. Starting at this passage Philip told the Ethiopian eunuch that it was Jesus Isaiah was talking

about, and he then went on to tell the eunuch all about Jesus (CP Ac 8:34-35).

8:36-38 *What do we learn from what happened here?*

We learn from V36 here that Philip emphasized the importance of baptism as part of his gospel message to the eunuch, because as soon as he saw the water the eunuch asked to be baptized (CP V26-38). Philip did not have to ask him if he wanted to be baptized – the eunuch already knew that it was an integral part of the gospel message, and as soon as he confessed his new-found faith in Jesus, Philip baptized him. Sadly, contemporary Christians do not always stress this aspect of the gospel and many new converts have to wait months, and sometimes years to be baptized. Yet Jesus placed it second in importance in the divine order of God's redemptive plan (CP Mt 28:18-20 with Ac 2:37-42). Ac 8:36-38 also teaches that baptism does not have to be a public ceremony to be valid in God's eyes. New converts do not have to be taken to church to get baptized. They can be baptized immediately they confess their new-found faith in Christ wherever water is available and they are physically able to be baptized (see also comments on Mt 28:19-20).

8:39-40 *What does it mean here that Philip was "caught away" by the Holy Spirit?*

Being *caught away* by the Holy Spirit means that Philip was supernaturally transported – translated bodily – by the Holy Spirit from where he had just baptized the Ethiopian eunuch in the water beside the Gaza Road, to a town approximately 25 miles away, called Azotus. Being translated bodily here is typical of what will happen to the saints who are still living when Jesus comes back for them at the first resurrection – they will all be bodily translated to Heaven (CP Jn 14:1-3; 1Th 4:13-18). See also comments on Jn 14:1-3 and 1Th 4:13-18.

9:1-2 *What is meant by the term "this way" in V2?*

This way refers to the Christian way, the Christian religion (CP 18:25-26; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). Paul was violently opposed to Christians. He had sought and was given permission by the chief priests in Jerusalem to apprehend Christians in Damascus and bring them back to Jerusalem bound, to be thrown into prison (see also comments on Ac 8:1).

9:17-18 *What baptism did Paul undergo here?*

Paul was baptized both with the Holy Spirit and in water here, and while it is not specifically stated that Paul was baptized with the Holy Spirit, that is implicit in the fact that Ananias laid hands on him solely for the purpose "...that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost". Paul received his sight, which implies that he had also been baptized with the Holy Spirit. He was then baptized in water (CP Ac 22:16). When used on its

own in scripture the word *baptized* always refers to water baptism (CP Mt 3:6, 13-16; Mk 1:4-5, 9; 16:16; Lu 3:7, 12, 21; 7:30; Jn 3:22-23; 4:1-2; Ac 2:38, 41; 8:12-13, 36-38; 10:47-48; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:3-5; 22:16; 1Cor 1:13-17). Conversely, whenever anyone was baptized with the Holy Spirit in scripture it is qualified as such (CP Mt 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lu 3:16; Jn 1:33; Ac 1:4-5; 11:16). The evidence that one is baptized with the Holy Spirit is that they will talk in tongues (CP Ac 2:1-4, 14-18), and this Paul did more than them all (CP 1Cor 14:18). See also comments on Ac 22:16.

9:23-28 *How long was it after he was saved that Paul went back to Jerusalem?*

It was three years after he was saved that Paul went back to Jerusalem (CP Ga 1:15-19). For a little time – certain days – straight after he was saved, Paul preached in the synagogues in Damascus (CP Ac 9:19-20). Paul then went into Arabia – obviously alone, to learn from God direct (CP Ga 1:16-17). Scriptures are silent on how long Paul spent in Arabia, but it was there that he received the full revelation of the gospel message which he then took back and preached in Damascus (CP Ac 9:22). The Jews in Damascus took offence at Paul's preaching and conspired to kill him, but Paul escaped over the city wall in a basket (CP V23-25 with 2Cor 11:32-33). Paul then went to Jerusalem where he met Barnabas who introduced him to Peter, with whom he abode fifteen days (CP Ac 9:26-28 with Ga 1:18-19).

9:31 *What does it mean that the churches had rest?*

For some reason or other at this time the Jews stopped persecuting the churches throughout Judea, Gallilee and Samaria. Many Christians believe it was because of Paul's conversion to Christianity, but this is not correct because Paul himself had to flee Jerusalem, which was in Judea, to escape being killed by the Jews (CP V26-30). The Grecians – or Hellenists – were foreign born, Greek speaking Jews. Scriptures are silent on why the persecution of the churches stopped, but during this time the churches were being built up in the faith and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, and were multiplied in number. Walking in the fear of the Lord means regarding God with holy awe and reverence as the creator and maker of all things, and the one who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell (CP Jn 1:1-3 with Lu 12:4-5; He 12:28-29). Those who fear the Lord say no to sin and live a life of strict obedience to His commandments (CP Psa 112:1; 119:63; Ecc 12:13; Mt 19:17). The fear of the Lord produces in believers a confident hope and trust in Him, and results in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, such as the believers in Ac 9:31 experienced. This means that those who fear the Lord have a deep experience of spiritual security and the assurance that God will deliver their soul from death (CP Psa 33:18-21; 2Cor 1:9-10; He 2:13-15).

9:36-42 *What do we learn here?*

We learn here how important the working of miracles are by Christians in God's purpose as a sign to awaken others to a consciousness of the presence and the power of God in their midst. They prove who we are in Christ (CP Jn 10:37-38; 14:8-14 with Mk 16:17-20; Ac 2:43-47; 3:1-16 and 4:1-4). See also comments on Mk 16:17-18, Ac 2:47, 3:1-16, 4:1-4.

10:1-48 *What was significant about Cornelius' conversion?*

Cornelius was selected of God to become the first gentile convert to Christianity. His conversion marked the beginning of the church's missionary activity among the gentiles. Prior to this the gospel had only been preached to the Jews - it was not yet the gentile's time (CP Mt 10:5-6; 15:22-24; Ac 11:19). But God foreknew that the Jews would reject the gospel and now He wanted to take it to the gentiles (CP Isa 65:1-5; Hos 2:23; Ac 13:44-49; Ro 9:22-26). We should note here that even though Cornelius was a moral man who feared God, was generous to the poor and faithful in prayer, he was not saved before his conversion to Christ (CP Ac 11:13-14). There is a lesson for the church here. It teaches that while someone may be externally religious it does not necessarily mean that they are completely surrendered to the authority of Christ, and have put their trust in Him for their salvation. They may need to be shown what Acts 10 teaches. It should also be noted here that God has not already determined who will and who will not be saved, as many in the church believe (CP V34-43). These verses clearly teach that everyone who wants to be saved can be, simply by choosing to obey Jesus.

10:38 *What deep truth do we learn from what Peter says here?*

We learn from what Peter says here that all sickness is of the devil (see comments on Lu 4:38-39 and 13:10-16).

10:42 *What does it mean that Jesus will judge both the living and the dead?*

This simply teaches that Jesus will be the ultimate judge of everyone who ever lived and every activity they were ever involved in during their earthly life (CP Ac 17:30-31; 1Cor 4:5; 2Cor 5:10; 2Ti 4:1). The first judgement is for believers, and every believer will have to stand before the Judgement Seat of Christ (CP Ro 14:10-12; 1Cor 3:11-15). The Judgement Seat of Christ for believers is not a judgement for punishment but for rewards, or loss of them. At the second judgement Jesus will judge the living nations (CP Mt 25:31-46). This judgement takes place at Jesus' second advent, after He defeats Antichrist and his armies at the battle of Armageddon. This judgement is to determine who of the living nations which survive the Great Tribulation will go into the millennium with Jesus because they extended mercy to the Jews during the Tribulation (CP V34-40 with 41-46). The sheep in V32 and 33 represents those who will go into the millennium, and the goats those who will be cast

down to hell. Finally, Jesus will judge the unrighteous at the Great White Throne Judgement at the end of His millennial - one thousand years - reign (CP Rev 20:4-15; 21:7-8). See also comments on Mt 25:31-46.

10:42-43 See comments on Mt 28:19-20.

11:1-3 *Who were those “of the circumcision” that contended with Peter here?*

These were Jewish Christians who were still bound to their old way of thinking that it was wrong for Jews to enter into Gentile’s houses and eat with them. Prior to God sending him to Cornelius, Peter thought like this too (CP Ac 10:9-20, 28-29). Ac 11:1-3 is further proof that Peter had no supremacy over anyone else in the New Testament church (See also comments on Mt 16:13-18, 16:19, Ga 2:11-17).

11:19-21 *What is the significance of what is said here?*

The significance of this is that these believers who founded the Gentile church in Antioch, did not hold any position of power in the church. They were leaderless, unordained, unnamed, ordinary, everyday church simply fulfilling their Christian calling – winning souls to Christ – in spite of great persecution (CP Ac 8:1-4; 9:1-2).

11:22-26 *What was significant about Antioch in the early history of Christianity?*

Apart from Jerusalem itself, no other city played a more important part in the early history of Christianity than Antioch – the first gentile church was founded there and the followers of Christ were first called Christians. After Barnabas came to Antioch many new converts were added to the church and it soon became apparent that he needed help to disciple them. So he went to Tarsus and brought Paul back to Antioch to help him (CP V25-26). The church at Antioch became Paul and Barnabas' home-church and the springboard for their future apostolic missions into the Roman empire (CP 13:1-6, 13-14, 42-52; 14:1-7, 21, 23-28). The Antioch in Pisidia referred to in 13:14 and 14:21 is in Asia Minor, whereas the Antioch subject of this study is in Syria. Other apostolic missions by Paul and Barnabas from Antioch are recorded in Ac 15:35-18:22 and 18:23-21:15. The church at Antioch also provided relief for the saints in Jerusalem during the great famine predicted by Agabus the prophet (CP 11:27-30). It also submitted the question of gentile circumcision through Paul and Barnabas to the mother church in Jerusalem, winning for the church at large a resounding victory over the narrowness of the Judean Christians who tried to enforce circumcision upon the gentile Christians (CP 15:1-35).

11:27 *Are prophets still in the church today?*

Prophets, from the Greek word **Prophetes** means "a proclaimer of divine truth". Prophets are placed

second in the order of ministry gifts Christ gave to the church to prepare and equip it for service (CP Eph 4:11-12; 1Cor 12:28). Yet there are many who teach that together with apostles the ministry gift of prophet no longer exists; that it ceased with the first century church. But as scriptures clearly show, that is not correct (CP Mt 24:14; Jn 17:18-21; Eph 3:1-12; 4:7-16; 5:25-27). Scriptures clearly teach that Christ has given the ministry gifts of Eph 4:11 to the church and ordained them all to remain there while ever the church exists. They are all vitally necessary – "for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry" (CP Eph 4:11-12). *Perfecting* in V12 means "to make fully ready", which defines the completed process outlined in V13-16 (CP Eph 4:13-16). All the ministry gifts Christ gave to the church will remain there until God's purpose for the church is accomplished, which can only ever be when it has fulfilled its mission on earth and is taken up to heaven to be with Jesus (CP Eph 2:19-20). This further emphasizes the continuing importance of apostles and prophets in God's purpose for the church and underlines the reason why they are placed first and second in the order of ministry gifts Christ gave to the church. God includes them with Jesus as the foundation of the church. *Foundation* in this context is used metaphorically of the ministry of the gospel and the doctrines of faith - the church is built upon the teachings of the apostles and prophets. It is their responsibility to bring clarification and illumination concerning God's word to the church and to those they are establishing in the faith. They are both teachers and preachers.

Those who teach that the ministry gift of prophet ceased with the first century church equate the prophet's function in the contemporary church to the "pastor's" sermons and preaching. Nowhere in scripture however is the term "pastor" ever used to define rank, authority or title of anyone in the New Testament church, yet there are many men designated prophets: Paul (or Saul as he was known then), Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene and Manaen (CP Ac 13:1); Agabus (CP Ac 11:27-28; 21:10-11); Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas (CP Ac 15:22, 27, 32). Barnabas, whose name actually means prophet, was so named by the apostles (CP Ac 4:36-37). Remember that Paul, Barnabas and Silas were also apostles as well as prophets, and we will find that they were evangelists and teachers as well. They functioned in all the ministry gifts, as also did Timothy and others. The function of prophet as one of the ministry gifts of Eph 4:11 in the New Testament church is not to be confused with the gift of prophecy, one of the nine gifts, or manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the church (CP 1Cor 12:7-11). These are not ministry gifts but manifestations of the Spirit which only operate at certain times when the need arises and according to the earnest desire of the believer (CP 1Cor 14:1-4). The gift of prophecy here is potentially available to every believer baptized in the Holy Spirit but it is only for specific occasions, whereas the ministry gift of prophet is a permanent ministry. Furthermore, every prophet has the gift of prophecy but not everyone with the gift of prophecy is a prophet (CP Ac 21:7-9). Philip's daughters

prophesied, but they are not designated prophets in scripture as Agabus is who prophesied over Paul in their house (CP Ac 21:10-11). Also, as with all the ministry gifts of Eph 4:11, every prophet is a qualified elder in the New Testament church, but not everyone with the gift of prophecy is a qualified elder.

There is more teaching on the gift of prophecy as a manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament than what there is on the ministry gift of prophet (CP 1Cor 12:1-11). These are all manifestations or gifts of the Spirit which includes the gift of prophecy in V10 (CP 1Cor 14:1-9, 15-19, 22-25, 29-33, 37). It is generally agreed that all these scriptures refer to the gift of prophecy not to a prophet, although V29-33 and 37 can refer to both. By their very definition prophets speak by inspiration and divine revelation, whether as one of the manifestations of the Spirit or the office of prophet. But they are not infallible and their utterances must be subject to evaluation by other prophets, the church and the infallible word of God (CP Ac 17:10-11, 1Cor 14:29-33; 2Pe 1:16-19). See also comments on Ac 13:1-4, 20:17, Ro 11:13, and Eph 4:11-12, 1Tim 3:1-7, 1Pet 5:1-3.

11:30 *To whom does the term "elders" apply here?*

Here we see for the first time in scripture the term *elders*. It refers to those to whom God has given charge of the New Testament church (CP 14:23; 20:17-21, 28; 1Ti 5:17; Jas 5:14; 1Pe 5:1-3). For a detailed study on elders in the New Testament church see comments on Ac 20:17; Eph 4:11-12; 1Ti 3:1-7; 1Pe 5:1-3.

12:4 *The term "Easter", not "Passover", is used in the KJV here - is this correct?*

No (CP V4 KJV). Why the translators of the KJV did this makes no sense at all because they correctly translated the Greek root word **Pascha** as *Passover* everywhere else in the KJV. The term *Easter* originated in paganism - it has nothing to do with Christ or Christianity. It had to do with the worship of "Ishtar", "Ashtoreth", and "Astarte", etc, names given to the pagan Babylonian goddess of the Canaanites known as the "Queen of Heaven", which the Israelites also worshipped when they were away from God (CP Judg 2:11-13; 1Sam 7:3-4; 1Ki 11:1-11; Jer 7:18). Solomon lost his kingdom, and his salvation, for worshipping Ashtoreth. According to Mosheim's **History of the Church 1**, p370, the term *Easter* was introduced into Christendom in 519 A.D. It was adapted by the church to denote the anniversary of the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, although there is no warrant in scripture for a special annual observance by Christians of the resurrection. Scripture teaches that Christians celebrate the Lord's death and resurrection every time they partake of communion - there is no one special day of commemoration mandated in scripture (CP Lu 22:19-20 with 1Cor 11:23-26). Paul received this revelation of the Lord's supper from

Jesus Himself. The word *shew* (KJV), means to celebrate, proclaim "...the Lord's death until He comes" means Jesus' total victory over the cross, which includes His death, burial and resurrection. The early church celebrated the Lord's death and resurrection every day (CP Ac 2:46).

This leads us now to the question of "Good Friday", another holy day, which Christians commemorate as the day on which our Lord died and was buried. Again, there is no warrant in scripture for Christians to observe a special annual day commemorating the death and burial of our Lord when this too is celebrated by Christians every time they partake of communion. Furthermore, our Lord could not have been crucified and buried on Good Friday as is taught, or these scriptures are meaningless (CP Jonah 1:17 with Mt 12:40; 27:63; Mk 8:31, 9:31, 10:34; 1Cor 15:3-4). Jesus said He would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth before He would be raised up again. A day totals twelve hours (CP Jn 11:9). Therefore a day and a night totals twenty-four hours, and three days and three nights total seventy-two hours. We should note here that in God's order of time night precedes day (CP Gen 1:3-5; Lev 23:32). The Jewish day commenced at 6.00pm in the evening and continued until 6.00pm the next evening. On that basis if Jesus had been buried on the evening of "Good Friday" He would not have risen until Monday evening, yet He had already risen when the women got to the tomb before daybreak on Sunday (CP Mt 28:1-7; Mk 16:1-9; Lu 24:1-7; Jn 20:1-10). In accordance with Gen 1:3-5 and Lev 23:32 this means that Jesus was buried on Wednesday evening and rose again on Saturday evening after the conclusion of the weekly Sabbath. Jesus was not buried on "Good Friday" before the commencement of the weekly Sabbath, as so many in the church believe, but on Wednesday, before the next day's - Thursday - Sabbath, which was a special "high day" Sabbath (CP Jn 19:31-32, 38-42). A *high day* Sabbath is a special Sabbath, a day of great, solemn celebration, such as the day of the great feast in Jn 7:37 (CP Jn 7:37). This Sabbath is completely different from the normal weekly (Saturday) Sabbath.

Clearly, we learn from all this that there is no authority in scripture for Christians to observe either "Good Friday" or "Easter" as "holy days". Rather, Christians are forbidden in scripture to be bound by any particular day (CP Ro 14:1-8; Ga 4:9-11; Col 2:13-17). It should be noted in closing here that at least the days referred to in those three scriptures were divinely designated holy days under the Old Covenant, whereas "Good Friday" and "Easter" are days introduced into the church and adapted to Christianity by men, not God, centuries after our Lord and Saviour died. See also comments on Mt 27:50; Mk 16:1; Ga 4:9.

12:12 *Who is the "John" referred to here whose surname was Mark?*

This is Mark who wrote the gospel that bears his name. Mark was Barnabas' cousin (CP Col 4:10). *Sister's son* (KJV) here means cousin. Mark

accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first apostolic mission (CP Ac 12:25-13:5). But he left Paul and Barnabas in Perga under a cloud and returned to Jerusalem (CP 13:13 with 15:36-41). After that Mark accompanied Barnabas on his journeys for a time but later on we learn that he twice ministered the gospel with Paul while Paul was imprisoned in Rome (CP Col 4:10; Phm 24; 2Ti 4:11). Peter called Mark his son - not his real son, but his son in the faith - the same way that Timothy and Titus were sons of Paul (CP 1Ti 1:2; Tit 1:4 with 1Pe 5:13); some Bible commentators think that Mark was referring to himself as the young man who fled naked when Jesus was arrested, but that is pure speculation and we cannot teach it (CP Mk 14:50-52). It is interesting to note that even though Paul and Barnabas were involved in a very angry dispute with each other concerning Mark in Ac 15, they were reconciled again later on (CP Ac 15:39-40 with 1 Cor 9:6).

13:1-4 *What is the significance of what is recorded here?*

Here we see Paul and Barnabas being set apart by God to take the gospel to the gentiles, as well as the Jews. Until now they ministered in the church at Antioch as prophets and teachers (V1). But after this they were designated apostles - the highest ministry office in the New Testament church (CP 1Cor 12:28). See also comments on Ac 11:27, 20:17; Ro 11:13; Eph 4:11-12; 1Ti 3:1-7; 1Pe 5:1-3.

13:5 *Who is this John?*

This is still John Mark, Barnabas' cousin, who wrote the gospel of Mark. Paul and Barnabas took him back to Antioch with them after they finished taking the relief money to Jerusalem (CP 11:27-30). Mark accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first apostolic mission in 13:5, but left them soon after, in Perga (CP 12:25-13:5, 13). See also comments on Ac 12:12.

13:6-12 *What authority did Paul have to make Elymas blind?*

Paul had the backing of God (CP Mt 16:16-19; 18:18; Jn 20:23). What happened to Elymas was a miracle of judgement that, no less than the miracles of healing, was a sign that the gospel of Jesus Christ which Paul preached was true. Paul's purpose was to punish Elymas for a time for resisting the gospel, and what happened demonstrated the power of the gospel, and that God confirms what is preached with signs following (CP Mk 16:20). God's anger against Ananias and Sapphira in the infant church in Ac 5 was also a miracle of judgement, against sin in the church (CP Ac 5:1-10). See comments on Ac 5:1-10.

13:13 *See comments on Ac 12:12*

13:33 *Does this teach that Jesus was begotten as God's Son by His resurrection, as some believe?*

No! Jesus became God's Son at His incarnation – when He took on human form – not His resurrection, as some believe (CP Psa 2:7). When Paul quoted Psa 2:7 in Ac 13:33 he was simply illustrating for the Jews that by Christ's resurrection God was formally showing Him to be His Son. The resurrection fulfilled King David's Old Testament prophecy (CP Ac 13:34-37; 2:22-28 with Psa 16:8-11). See also comments on Mt 1:18-21, 3:16-27; Lu 1:35(B); Jn 1:1, 5:16-23, 12:41; Ac 20:28; Php 2:5-8; Col 2:9; 1Ti 3:16; He 1:5, 5:5, 1 Jn 5:6-9; Rev 1:8.

13:40-41 *Does the work of God that the prophet predicts here refer to a spiritual revival in Israel, as some believe?*

No! Paul is warning the Jews against rejecting Christ here, and makes His point by quoting the Old Testament prophet Habbakuk, who predicted destruction, not revival (CP Hab 1:5-10). Paul applied V5 in Ac 13:41 to the work of wonders and miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians in the name of Jesus (CP Ac 13:38-39). Paul is warning the Jews against rejecting Christ and the benefits of His propitiatory death, lest the judgement of God come upon them as it came upon their forefathers after Habbakuk's prophecy. Then, Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jews were taken into captivity by the Babylonians. God's judgement of the New Testament Jews which Paul alluded to if they rejected Jesus was the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersal of the Jews by the Romans, which history records happened in 70 AD. This has nothing whatever to do with a future spiritual revival in Israel, as some believe.

13:48 *Does this not prove that only those whom God has specially chosen for salvation are ordained to eternal life?*

No, although it is used by some in the church to teach that, even though it contradicts the clear teaching in V46 that salvation is a free-will choice (CP V46-47). The Jews had rejected the gospel of Jesus and chose for themselves not to accept the salvation benefits God had ordained for mankind through Christ, so God then took the gospel to the gentiles, who received it gladly and were saved. The gentiles were disposed to eternal life, and believed, thus they were saved. God has not sovereignly decided for or against any man's salvation. It is solely the choice of the individual, as scriptures clearly teach. (See also comments on Mt 11:28-30, 13:10-11, 20:16; Jn 3:15-16, 3:36, 6:37, 12:37-40, Ac 2:37-38, 28:23-29, Ro 3:24-26(A), 8:28-30, 9:7, 9:10-13, 9:14-18, 9:19-21, 10:14-17, 11:2 11:4, Eph 1:3-6, 1:11-14, 2:8-10, 1Th 1:4; 2Ti 1:8-9; 1Pe 1:2, 1Jn 1:10.)

14:8-18 *Why were Paul and Barnabas so affected by what happened here?*

When the people saw Paul and Barnabas heal the crippled man in V8-10 their superstitious imaginations ran riot. They treated Paul and

Barnabas like they were Gods in the flesh, and tried to offer up sacrifices to them. This was idolatry and Paul and Barnabas would have no part in it. They exhorted the people to turn away from gods who never lived, to the living God who created all things, and does good things for His people. But the crowd would not listen and soon the Jews from Antioch and Iconium won them over and they turned against Paul and stoned him and dragged him out of the city thinking that he was dead (CP V19-20). Many in the church believe that Paul actually died here and was restored to life by the prayers of the disciples who gathered around him (See also comments on Ga 4:13-16).

14:23 *See comments on Ac 20:17.*

14:26-27 *What is the significance of this passage?*

Here we see the return of Paul and Barnabas to Antioch in Syria at the completion of their first apostolic mission journey, which began in Ac 13:1 (CP Ac 13:1-4). This apostolic mission journey, taking approximately three years to complete, took Paul and Barnabas first to the island of Cyprus, then across to Asia Minor where they founded churches at Antioch in Pisidia, and Iconium, Lystra and Derbe in Galatia (CP 13:14-16, 43-48; 14:1-7, 19-23). It was at Lystra that a young man named Timothy became one of Paul's converts. Paul became Timothy's mentor, teaching and encouraging him in many areas of ministry until God called him to be an apostle also (CP 16:1-5; 1Ti 1:1-2, 18 with 1Th 1:1, 2:1-6).

15:1-29 *What vital foundational doctrine of the Christian faith was resolved here?*

That salvation is by grace through faith alone. It is not of works, as the Jewish Christians were trying to teach (CP Eph 2:8-9). This is a milestone in the history of Christianity. Until the question of gentile circumcision was settled here many Jewish Christians believed that gentile converts had to be circumcised like them and keep the law of Moses, as well as believe in Jesus, to be saved (CP Ac 15:1,5). Peter reminded them that when God first visited the gentiles through him some years before, the gentiles were saved solely on the basis of their faith in Jesus, and God confirmed their salvation by baptizing them with the Holy Spirit while Peter was still preaching to them. They were not required to be circumcised, nor meet any other requirement of the Old Testament law (CP Ac 10:34-46 and 11:17-18). Peter then mildly reproved the Jewish Christians for trying to impose requirements of the law upon the gentile Christians when the Jews themselves could not even conform to them (CP 15:7-11). After Paul and Barnabas recounted the miracles God had wrought among the gentiles through them, James summed up in the light of Old Testament prophecy now being fulfilled in the salvation of the gentiles, that they should not be burdened with any requirements of the law. He did recommend however that they should be required to abstain from food offered to idols, to keep themselves from sexual immorality, not to eat the meat of

animals that had been strangled, and not to eat blood. These decrees were necessary so that weak Jewish Christians would not be exposed to temptation, and although they may have been Old Testament law, they are also commanded in the New Testament under grace (CP Gen 9:3-4 with Lev 17:10-11; Ro 14:13-22; 1Cor 8:4-13; 1Th 4:3-7). We should note here that Gen 9:3-4 was commanded by God long before the Levitical law. God always regarded blood as sacred, because it carries the life of the flesh. Everyone in the Jerusalem church agreed with James' recommendations and authorized two of their leaders, Judas Barsabas and Silas, to return with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch, to report on the church's findings (CP Ac 15:13-31). The rebuilding and restoration of the tabernacle of David in V15 refers to the building of the church, composed of both Jews and gentiles.

15:36-41 *How great was the contention between Paul and Barnabas here?*

Some Bible commentators argue that the "sharp contention" between Paul and Barnabas here did not necessarily imply anger or ill-will toward each other; that they simply agreed to disagree and go their separate ways. Others claim that there was a violent confrontation between them, while still others suggest that Paul was in error because he changed his mind later and arranged for Timothy to bring John Mark to Rome with him to help Paul in the ministry (CP 2Ti 4:11). It is clear from a study of the Greek construction of Ac 15:36-42 that there was a sharp disagreement between Paul and Barnabas over John Mark's defection during their first apostolic mission, and their parting was certainly not amicable. But more important is the fact that they all became reconciled again (CP 1Cor 9:6; Col 4:10; Phm 24). The fact that they all became reconciled again proves that there was no bitterness between them. Christians can fall out with each other in some instances as is quite obvious from the record of this incident, but they must never harbour a grudge toward each other or allow bitterness to come between them. They must always be willing to be reconciled with each other (CP Eph 4:26, 31-32; He 12:15). Ac 15:36-41 signified the commencement of Paul's second apostolic mission which was completed in Ac 18:22 (see comments on Ac 18:22).

16:1-3 *Why did Paul circumcise Timothy here yet he opposed circumcision for Christians in Ch 15?*

(CP 15:1-4). Here the Jewish Christians were trying to impose circumcision, which only applied to covenanted Jews under the law of Moses, upon gentile Christians (CP Gen 17:9-14; Lev 12:3). Furthermore the law of Moses had been abolished and done away with at the cross of Christ, and it no longer applied even to the Jewish Christians (CP 2Cor 3:15-17; Ga 2:11-21; 4:21-5:6; Eph 2:13-19; Col 2:8-17; He 7:12, 18-19; 8:6-13; 10:9). Paul opposed circumcision in Ac 15 because there was a principle at stake, but in Ac 16:1-3 there is no principle involved. He simply circumcised Timothy

as a matter of expediency to enable him to minister to the Jews of that region. Although Timothy's father was a gentile his mother was a Jew, and that made Timothy a Jew too. Paul knew that in God's eternal purpose circumcision meant nothing and uncircumcision meant nothing (CP 1Cor 7:18-19; Ga 5:6; 6:15). But so that the Jews would not reject the gospel being proclaimed by Timothy as an uncircumcised gentile, he circumcised him. Paul was not compromising the gospel of grace here – he was simply doing everything possible so the gospel would not be hindered. An uncircumcised son of a mixed marriage between a Jewish mother and a Greek father would be a stumbling block to winning Jews to Christ (CP 1Cor 9:19-23). Paul did not circumcise Titus, who had no Jewish blood, when they went up to Jerusalem in Ga 2 (CP Ga 2:1-5). See also comments on Ac 15:1-29.

16:6-7 ***How did the Holy Spirit prevent Paul and His party preaching the gospel in Asia and Bithynia?***

Scriptures do not tell us how the Holy Spirit conveyed His will to Paul in this regard. He may have done it through prophecy or some inner conviction. However, scriptures do tell us the reason why (CP V9-10). Macedonia was the northern part of Greece – the doorway to Europe. The Holy Spirit was closing doors in Asia for that particular time and opening them in Greece for the gospel to be taken into Europe. It was on this, Paul's second apostolic mission, that the churches were founded in Troas (CP Ac 20:5-12); Philippi (CP Php 1:1-7); Thessalonica (CP Ac 17:1-4); Berea (CP Ac 17:10-12); Athens (CP Ac 17:16-18, 32-34); Corinth (CP Ac 18:1-4, 7-8; 1 Cor 1:1-3) and Cenchrea (CP Ac 18:18; Ro 16:1). The complete record of Paul's second apostolic mission is found in Ac 15:40 – 18:22 (see also comments on Ac 16:10, 16:13-15, 16:27, 17:11, 17:18-22, 18:18 and 18:22).

16:10 ***What does the word "we" indicate here?***

The change from the third person pronoun (they), to the second person (we), indicates that Luke, the author of this book, was now a participant with Paul, Silas and Timothy on this apostolic mission and was giving a first hand report on the events taking place. The general consensus among Bible commentators is that Luke joined the others at Troas (CP V6-11).

16:13-15 ***What does it mean that the Lord had opened Lydia's heart to receive the gospel?***

This does not teach that God had predestined Lydia for salvation, as some claim. Lydia was already committed to the way of God, so "whose heart the Lord opened" simply means, "whose heart was open to the Lord". Because Lydia already worshipped God, the way had been prepared in her to receive the gospel the same as Cornelius and his household received it in Ac 10 (CP 10:1-6, 21-27, 34-48). See also comments on Ac 13:48.

16:16-18 ***What was Paul's purpose in casting the demon out of this girl - scriptures do not teach that she got saved as a result?***

Paul did not want his ministry to be endorsed by a demon possessed fortune-teller. Every word the girl spoke about Paul and the others was true, but it was said mockingly. Satan's purpose, through the girl, was to discount the gospel and discredit Paul and the others by making it appear that they were working with the girl. Everyone there knew the girl had an evil spirit, and Paul had to show them that he and the others were not working with the girl by casting out the evil spirit (CP V18). This proved that they were of God. The girl lost her power to foretell the future, and her masters had Paul and Silas arrested and thrown into jail as a result (CP V19-24).

16:25-26 ***What do we learn from Paul and Silas praying and singing praises to God here?***

This teaches that the believer's joy is within - it is not conditioned by outward circumstances. Although Paul and Silas had been severely beaten and cast into a dungeon deep in the prison, with their feet fastened in stocks so they could not move, instead of bemoaning their situation, they prayed and sang praises unto God. They lifted God up in prayer and song in the midst of their circumstances. God heard them and set them free, and He will hear us and set us free too if we would but lift Him up and sing His praises in the midst of our circumstances. This is for our example (CP Psa 146-150).

16:27 ***Why was the keeper of the prison prepared to kill himself?***

Because he thought that Paul and Silas may have escaped. In those days jailers were responsible for their prisoners, and he knew that if Paul and Silas had escaped he would be executed. King Herod had the jailers executed when the Angel of the Lord set Peter free in Ac 12 (CP 12:1-11, 18-19). The Philippian jailer was prepared to kill himself rather than face execution if Paul and Silas had escaped. Instead of dying though he received everlasting life (CP 16:28-34). It should be noted here that it was not the Philippian jailer's faith that got his household saved. Those who comprised his household also believed for their salvation as V34 clearly teaches. This also teaches that immediately they believed they were baptized (CP V32-34).

17:11 ***What does the word "noble" (KJV) mean here?***

Noble here means well born (CP Lu 19:12; 1Cor 1:26). The Berean Jews were more courteous, of a better disposition, better educated, and more polished than the Thessalonian Jews. They received the gospel with all readiness of mind, but were not gullible. They searched the scriptures daily to see that what Paul and Silas taught was correct. We learn from this that no Christian should passively accept all that is taught in their assembly.

Everything should be tested in the light of scripture (CP 1Th 5:21; 1Jn 4:1). Any teaching that cannot be proved from scripture must be rejected (CP 2Pe 1:16-19). Paul's and Silas' teaching was acceptable because it conformed to scripture.

17:18-22 *Who were the Epicureans and Stoics, and what do the words Areopagus and Mars Hill refer to?*

Epicureans were materialists who taught that man's chief happiness lay in pleasure or bodily ease. They did not deny the existence of God, but they believed that He was totally unconcerned with mortals. They believed that the soul dies with the body - there is no future retribution. Stoics held to the view that sin was simply an error of judgement easily rectified by a change of opinion. They did not think in terms of obedience to a personal God. They taught that the goal in life was to reach a place of indifference to pleasure or pain. Areopagus and Mars Hill both refer to the same place - an elevated open space in Athens where the

Great council of the Athenians sat. In Bible times it was the supreme tribunal of justice. "In the midst of Mars Hill" in V22 simply means that Paul stood in the midst of the judges in court there. He was not on trial, only being asked to explain his doctrine. Paul made full use of this opportunity to proclaim the living God in contrast to all the lifeless pagan deities the Athenians worshipped, and how he purposed his plan of salvation for mankind through His son, Jesus. Paul's teaching flatly contradicted the doctrine of the epicureans and stoics, and some believed on him (CP V22-34).

17:30 *Does this mean that there will be no future retribution for sinners in past ages?*

No, otherwise these scriptures are meaningless (CP Ex 32:32-33; De 30:15-20; 2Chr 15:2; Pr 21:16; Eze 18:20-30; 33:10-20). Ac 17:30 simply means that God bore with sinners in past ages without intervening by way of punishment then and there, because they did not have the revelation of Christ's death for sin and His resurrection for the future judgement (CP Ac 17:31 with Ro 3:25). The resurrection of Jesus guarantees the future resurrection and judgement of all men - Old Testament and New Testament alike (CP Dan 12:1-2; Jn 5:28-29; 14:19; 1Cor 15:1-24; Rev 20:4-6, 11-15). See also comments on Ro 3:25.

18:6 *To what is Paul alluding here in saying that the Jews' blood was upon their own heads?*

(CP V4-6). Paul is alluding here to God's warning in the Old Testament to the watchman - Ezekiel - to warn sinners of their eternal damnation if they do not forsake their sins and turn to God. If the watchman does not warn them and they die in their sins, God will require their blood of the watchman. But if he does warn them and they die in their sins, their blood is on their own head (CP Eze 3:16-21; 33:1-9). Paul also alluded to these scriptures in Ac 20 as a figure of

his spiritual responsibility to declare the full counsel of God to the Ephesians (CP 20:17-27). Paul had discharged his duty to proclaim the gospel of salvation to the Jews who blasphemed and rejected it in Ac 18, and to declare the full counsel of God to the Ephesians in Ac 20. So he could not be held responsible for the blood of any man. God's warning to Ezekiel in Ezek 3 and 33 is a warning for New Testament Christians too. We have all been assigned the responsibility to proclaim the gospel of salvation to the lost, and it is incumbent upon every one of us to do so (CP Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-16; Ac 10:42-43; 2Cor 5:18-20). Paul knew that he had to do what God expected of him, and the same applies to us too. It is folly to think that we will spend eternity with Jesus if we do not do what He has commanded us to do in this life (CP Mt 12:30; 25:14-30; Lu 19:11-27).

18:18 *(A) What is the vow referred to here?*

Paul's vow here was a special pledge of separation and devotion to God. The shaving of his head was based upon the Old Testament Nazarite's vow. Nazarites in the Old Testament separated themselves from others by total consecration to God with a special vow of penitence and devotion (CP Nu 6:1-5, 13-21). Scriptures do not tell us why Paul made a vow, but most Bible commentators believe he did it in a spirit of thanksgiving for all that God had done among the gentiles through him, and that the vow would be fulfilled when he returned to Jerusalem (CP Ac 18:19-21).

(B) By being named first here does that mean as some claim that Priscilla was more prominent in the early church than Aquila?

No, but those who argue for women leaders in the church curiously interpret the fact that three times in scripture Priscilla's name is used before her husband, Aquila, as proof that she was more prominent in the first century church than he was (CP Ac 18:18; Ro 16:3-4; 2 Ti 4:19). It is hard to understand the logic behind their reasoning in these scriptures in view of the fact that the other three times Priscilla and Aquila are mentioned in scripture, Aquila is named first (CP Ac 18:2, 26; 1 Cor 16:19). Rather than interpret scriptures to suit our agendas, we should accept what they teach at face value: Priscilla simply assisted both Aquila and Paul in their ministries. This accords with what other scriptures teach against women being leaders over men in the church (CP 1 Ti 2:8-15; 3:1-7; 3:8-13). See also comments on Ro 16:1-2, 1 Cor 14:34-35, 1 Ti 2:8-15, 3:1-7 and 3:8-13.

18:22 *What does this verse signify?*

This verse signifies the completion of Paul's second apostolic mission which commenced with Silas in Ac 15:40 after Paul and Barnabas separated over John Mark, approximately four years earlier (CP 15:39-41). Paul and Silas had travelled from Antioch confirming and strengthening the churches

already established in Syria and Cilicia, and those which Paul and Barnabas had previously set up at Derbe, Lystra (where Timothy joined them), Iconium, and Antioch in Pisidia. They then founded new churches at Troas in Mysia (where Luke joined them); Philippi, Amphipolis, Thessalonica, and Berea in Macedonia (northern Greece); Athens, Corinth (where Aquila and Priscilla also joined them), and Cenchrea in Achaia (Southern Greece), and then Ephesus, back in Asia Minor, before returning home via Caesarea and Jerusalem. The complete journey is recorded in Ac 15:40-18:22.

18:23 *What does this verse signify?*

Paul's departure from Antioch here signified the commencement of his third apostolic mission which culminated in his return to Jerusalem in Ac 21:17. It is generally agreed among Bible scholars that this mission took approximately five years (CP 18:23 - 21:17).

18:24-25 *What is meant by Apollos only knowing the baptism of John?*

Apollos knew the Old Testament spiritual and moral standards God required for salvation right up until the time of John the Baptist, but he knew nothing of that of which John's baptism was simply the precursor: the gospel of salvation, or the Christian faith which centred around Christ's death and resurrection, the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the church as God's witness in the earth, until Aquila and Priscilla had fully explained it to him (CP V26-28).

19:1-2 *What is the significance of Paul's question here concerning the Holy Spirit?*

We learn from this that Paul made no provision in his interpretation of the gospel for believers not receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit after they come to believe on Jesus. These men had been disciples of John the Baptist – the same as Apollos – twenty years or so before, and did not know that John was simply the precursor of Jesus. Like Apollos they knew nothing of the Christian faith that centred around the death and resurrection of Jesus and the ministry of the Holy Spirit (CP V1-4). These men had only been baptized with the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins by John (CP Mt 3:1-6, 11-12; Mk 1:1-8; Lu 3:1-6, 15-17; Jn 1:6-9; 15-16, 19-27). Because John's baptism had only been a preparatory rite in anticipation of the coming of Jesus, Paul baptized the men anew in the name of Jesus (CP Mt 28:19 with Ac 19:5). We should note here that although Jesus commanded that repentant sinners be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit in Mt 28:19, Paul was perfectly in order baptizing these men in the name of the Lord Jesus only in Ac 19:5, because the fullness of the Godhead – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – dwells in Jesus bodily (CP Col 2:9). After the men were baptized in water Paul laid hands on them and they received the baptism in the Holy Spirit, the evidence of which was that they spoke in tongues (CP Ac 19:6-7).

19:11-12 *Can these miracles still be duplicated today?*

Yes, although there are many who teach that these miracle working powers were only conferred on Christ's disciples in the first century church in order to establish the church in the earth. But that is not correct, as scriptures clearly teach (CP Mk 16:17-18; Jn 14:12-14; Ac 2:36-39; 5:32). *Them that believe in Mk 16:17-18, he that believeth on me in Jn 14:12-14, all that are a far off in Ac 2:36-39 and them that obey in Ac 5:32* all refer to every believer in Christ in every age, from the day of Pentecost until God's redemptive plan is fulfilled in the very last sinner saved and filled with the Holy Spirit prior to Christ's return. It includes us today, and all who will come to believe on Christ in the future (CP Mt 28:19-20). Here Jesus qualifies the life-span of what Mk 16:17-18, Jn 14:12-14, Ac 2:36-39 and 5:32 all teach with His declaration in V20 ... *and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age*. Christ was not only talking to His disciples of that era, but to His disciples throughout the whole of the church age. Miracles were not limited to the first century church any more than preaching the gospel and baptizing repentant sinners were, and to teach otherwise ignores the plain fact of scripture and violates what Jesus Himself teaches (CP Jn 14:12-16). In V12-14 here Jesus is in essence saying that because His earthly ministry was ended and He had to go to the Father, every one of His disciples would receive the same empowering He had, to enable them to carry on His work in the earth building His church. This empowering comes from the Holy Spirit, who, Jesus said in V16, would remain with His disciples forever – not just for the first century. This clearly refutes any teaching that something so integral to God's redemptive plan was only a temporary activity that would cease with the first century church.

The church Christ is building is not yet complete, and until it is, every believer has access to the same empowering of the Holy Spirit that the first century believers had. All they have to do is act on God's word and ask for it (CP Lu 11:9-13). This empowering of the Holy Spirit is called the baptism in the Spirit (CP Jn 7:37-39). This is the same baptism in the Holy Spirit that empowered the first century disciples (CP Lu 24:49; Ac 1:6-8; 2:38). The sure evidence that believers are baptized in the Spirit is that they speak in tongues (CP Isa 28:11-12; Joel 2:28-29 and Mk 16:17 with Ac 2:1-11, 14-18; 8:9-21; 10:44-46; 19:6). Everyone in those scriptures who were baptized in the Spirit spoke in tongues. This proves that tongues attest to the validity of the baptism in the Spirit. In Ac 2:16 Peter declared that speaking in tongues was the outward manifestation of the baptism in the Spirit which Joel prophesied in the Old Testament (CP Ac 2:16). Paul quoted Isa 28:11-12 in 1Cor 14:21 to prove that tongues were for a sign to unbelievers of the supernatural presence of God among His people (CP 1Cor 14:21-22). The word *matter* in ac 8:21 is from the Greek word **logos**, which means something said, utterance, word, speech, divine expression. Simon wanted to buy the power of the Holy Spirit because he heard those believers speak in tongues as they

were baptized in the Spirit, when Peter and John laid hands on them (CP Ac 8:18-21).

Sadly, those who teach that God only conferred miracle working powers upon the first century church, and not the contemporary church, also reject the validity of tongues in the contemporary church. Yet they declare the baptism in the Spirit is still valid. It is ludicrous to suggest that tongues are not valid for today, and yet declare the baptism with the Holy Spirit still is. They go together – one cannot be had without the other, as scriptures clearly teach. If one is still valid so is the other. Tongues attest to the validity of the baptism in the Spirit, and therefore are an integral part of God's redemptive plan, which is ongoing and centred around the baptism of believers in the Holy Spirit. God's redemptive plan did not cease with the first century church, and neither did the baptism in the Spirit, or tongues.

Those who teach against miracles and tongues in the contemporary church need to redefine their definition of baptism in the Spirit. They think that the baptism in the Spirit is received contemporaneously with receiving Christ as Saviour. But that is not correct as scriptures clearly teach. At that time they are born again by the Spirit, and the Spirit baptizes them into Christ's body, the church. This is how the church is constituted (CP Jn 3:3, 5, 8 with Ro 6:3-5; 1Cor 12:12-14; Ga 3:26-27). While being baptized by the Holy Spirit into the church is a spiritual baptism – it is the only baptism that saves – it is not the baptism in the Spirit however, which is the empowering of believers for service. It is Jesus who does this baptizing. We need to look again at the scriptures which teach this (CP Mt 3:1-3, 11; Mk 1:6-8; Lu 3:15-16; 24:49; Jn 7:37-39; 16:7; Ac 1:6-8; 2:38).

The baptism in the Spirit is a separate and distinct operation or ministry of the Holy Spirit altogether to that of being born again by the Spirit. Jesus Himself distinguishes between them (CP Jn 14:15-17). Jesus is referring to the baptism in the Holy Spirit here, which the disciples were soon to receive. They were already born again by the Spirit – He dwelt *with* them – but they were not yet baptized in the Spirit, when He would dwell *in* them. The Holy Spirit dwells with repentant sinners when they commit themselves to Christ, and He dwells in them when they are baptized in the Spirit (CP Ac 8:4-17; Ro 8:9-11, 15; 1Cor 2:12; 3:16; 6:19; 2Cor 5:5; 6:16; Ga 3:2; Eph 1:12-13; 2:22; 5:18; 1Th 4:8; 1Jn 3:24; 4:13). Being born again by the Spirit and being baptized in the Spirit were two separate and distinct operations of the Spirit in the first century, and they are two separate and distinct operations today.

Those who believe they have been baptized in the Spirit but do not speak in tongues need to know this, because being biblically baptized in the Spirit means that they can operate in the same sphere of empowering as the first century church did. All they have to do is ask, as Jesus said in Lu 11 (CP Lu 11:9-13). The devil does not want believers to be biblically baptized and empowered for service. He does not want to have to contend with a powerful, witnessing church today, operating in the

demonstration of the Spirit and of power, like he had to contend with the first century church. The more Christians reject the biblical empowering of the Holy Spirit, the less effective they will be in accomplishing God's purpose in the earth. This is what the devil wants – an ineffective church.

Following is a suggested prayer for the baptism in the Spirit:

Heavenly Father, I come to you in Jesus Name believing with all my heart that I only have to ask, and you will give me, as your word promises, the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

I ask you now dear Lord to baptize me and fill me with your Holy Spirit.

I believe that I have now received the baptism in the Spirit and I thank you for it Lord. I now expect to speak in tongues in accordance with your word as the Holy Spirit gives me the utterance.

Believers who prayed this prayer now need to put their vocal cords into operation and mouth the words as the Holy Spirit gives them utterance. Do it aloud and do not be concerned with what you say, or how it sounds. Just keep speaking out the words. You will soon become fluent in your new language (see also comments on Mt 3:11, Mk 16:17-18, Lu 24:49, Jn 3:3, 3:5, 3:8, 7:37-39, 14:12-14, 14:15-17, 20:22; Ac 1:8, 2:1-4 (A), 2:1-4 (B), Ro 6:3-5, 8:26-27, 1Cor 12:1-11(A), 12:1-11 (B), 13:8-12).

19:13-16 *Why could these exorcists not cast the demons out of this man even though they used Jesus' name?*

Because Jesus only delegated the authority to use His name to Christians (CP Mt 10:8; Mk 16:17; Jn 14:12). Believers have unlimited authority over demons using Jesus' name, but even then it is more important that their names are written in the Book of Life than to have demons subject to them (CP Lu 10:17-20). The demon-possessed man in Ac 19:13-16 knew the sons of Sceva were not believers exercising their authority in Jesus, and after challenging their authority he attacked them and beat them up. He could not do that to even one believer acting on the authority of Jesus (CP 1Jn 4:4). There is an interesting aftermath to Ac 19:13-16 which needs to be highlighted here (CP V17-20). These are Christians referred to here. They were still involved in sorcery and black magic, even though they had been saved. It was only after they heard what happened to the sons of Sceva they realized that the name of Jesus could not be used for magic purposes, and the fear of God came upon them. They confessed to their evil deeds, and those who had them, burnt all their books on magic. We should note this carefully because it is for our admonition also, as many contemporary Christians are still involved in these forbidden practices (CP Lev 19:26; De 18:10; 2Ki 21:1-2, 6; Isa 47:1, 13; Jer 10:1-2). These practices, forbidden in those scriptures, still

go on today and sadly, many Christians are still involved in them. They are just called by other names: astrology, signs of the zodiac, horoscopes, fortune telling, etc. Christians who continue to be involved in them will forfeit their place in God's eternal kingdom. This warning also applies to those who have not yet destroyed the idols they worshipped before becoming Christians. They must be destroyed too, or those Christians will also forfeit their place in God's eternal kingdom. Linked with the command in scripture not to worship idols, was also the command to destroy them (CP Ex 23:24; 34:12-13; De 7:4-6, 25-26; 12:1-3).

19:23-27 *What do we learn from what Demetrius says here?*

Paul's ministry in Asia was so powerful – multitudes were being saved and a great spiritual awakening was taking place – that it caused a recession among the idol-makers. Demetrius and the other silver-smiths were so angry they undoubtedly would have killed Paul had they been able to lay hold of him (CP V28-31).

20:17 *Who were the elders in scripture and what was their ministry?*

Firstly, we must distinguish between those designated elders in scripture and those designated elders in the contemporary church. Those designated elders in the contemporary church are not the recognized leaders of the local church, whereas the elders in scripture are. They are God's appointed shepherds/pastors of the local New Testament church. They constitute the presbytery, the ruling body in the New Testament church (CP V28). Paul's admonition to the elders here to collectively heed their responsibility to feed the church of God over which the Holy Spirit had made them overseers, teaches that God has committed the direction and government of the local New Testament church to the plurality of elders co-equally. *Feed* is from the Greek word **Poimaino**, which means to pastor or shepherd. It is the plurality of elders' responsibility co-equally to pastor God's people who comprise the local church. It is not a one-man ministry which is the norm in most contemporary churches.

Overseers is from the Greek word **Episkopos**, which means bishop (CP Ac 1:15-20). We learn from this that apostles are also bishops. Judas Iscariot forfeited his bishopric - the office, charge, or duty of an overseer in the New Testament church - when he betrayed Jesus. He also forfeited his apostleship and eldership at the same time. *Bishop* is simply another name for elder. **Episkopos** is equal to **Presbuteros** the Greek word for elder or presbyter. The terms bishop/overseer, elder/presbyter and pastor/shepherd all refer to one and the same person. However, although they all refer to one and the same person, the terms are not synonymous - they do not all mean the same: *elder/presbyter* refers to the man, *bishop/overseer* refers to the office, and *pastor/shepherd* refers to the work he does (CP 1Ti 3:1-7; Tit 1:4-9). These scriptures not only confirm that it is the elders to whom God has committed the

direction and government of the local New Testament church, but they also teach that the elders are men. The Greek words **Episkopos** for bishop, and **Presbuteros** for elder, both only refer to a male, thus signifying that men only are ordained of God as elders in the New Testament church. Also, the fact that anyone aspiring to the office of a bishop or elder must be the husband of one wife if married, is further confirmation that elders can only ever be men, not women as well. Contrary to what a great many Christians in the contemporary church believe there is no provision in scripture for the ordination of women to public ministry in the New Testament church. Scripture does not teach that a bishop or elder can be the wife of one husband.

There is just as much confusion concerning elders in the contemporary church as there is concerning apostles and prophets. Sadly, not many Christians know who the elders really are in the divine order for the church. They simply see them as having been a long-time member of the church, but that is only a part of what qualifies them as elders (CP Eph 4:7-16). This clearly spells out for us that the men who function in the ministry gifts of V11 are the ones God has designated as the ruling elders in the New Testament church. Christ gave these men to the church and ordained them to remain there while ever the church exists and we do not have to look for any one else in scripture beyond them as the elders to whom God has committed the direction and government of His church. The ruling body of elders in the church consists of apostle/elders, prophet/elders, evangelist/elders and teacher/elders who collectively and co-equally pastor the church (CP 1Pe 5:1-4). Peter highlights the co-equality of the ruling body of elders in his statement here "...who am also an elder." This *elder* is not **Presbuteros** but **Sumpresbuteros**, which means literally *one on the same level with*. Peter was a fellow elder, or co-presbyter with them. This is further confirmation that the divine order of government in the local New Testament church involves a plurality of elders co-equally. Peter is addressing a plurality of elders from each of the local churches at Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia in this letter (CP 1Pe 1:1). Some who are opposed to the concept of a plurality of elders co-equally ruling the New Testament church teach that in 1Pe 5:1 Peter is identifying with the elders as an apostle and with the people as an elder, but that begs the question, why? He had already identified himself as an apostle to the elders and people alike in 1:1, and in 5:1 he simply asserts to the elders among them that he and they are co-equals in the divine order of government in the church. We should accept that assertion at face value, not look for hidden agendas behind it (CP Ac 14:21-23).

Here for the first time in scripture we see elders being appointed in the local church. They were already presiding over the church at Judaea when Paul and Barnabas took the relief money there from Antioch (CP Ac 11:29-30). They were also already presiding with the apostles over the Jerusalem church when Paul and Barnabas went there to settle the question of gentile circumcision at Antioch (CP

Ac 15:1-6). In Ac 14:21-23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in the churches they had previously pioneered on their first apostolic mission journey in Ac 13 (CP 1Ti 1:1-4; Tit 1:4-5). We learn in 1Ti 1:1-4 that elders who had already been appointed in the local church at Ephesus were teaching error so Paul left Timothy there in the foundation ministry of apostle to straighten them out. Tit 1:4-5 teaches that Paul likewise left Titus in the foundation ministry of apostle in Crete to appoint elders in the local churches there. We see in all these scriptures a definite biblical pattern whereby elders are appointed after local churches have been established by apostles. The elders collectively then become the presbytery, responsible for the direction and government of the church. This is not teaching that elders are appointed by men, but that those functioning in the ministry gifts of Eph 4:11 are acknowledged and ordained to ministry in the church by the apostle or the ruling body of elders in accordance with the divine will (CP 1Ti 4:14; 2Ti 1:6; 4:5). The word "presbytery" in 1Ti 4:14 is referring to the ruling body of elders who prophesied over Timothy and laid hands on him to bring forth his ministry gift of apostle (CP 1Ti 3:1-7). The term "desire" in VI means to stretch oneself out in order to grasp or touch something. It includes the idea of reaching after or seeking. However believers desiring the office of bishop/overseer/elder/presbyter must have the desire first confirmed by the word of God as outlined in V2-7, and also by the church as outlined in V10 (CP V10).

This means that nobody can be ordained an elder based solely on desire, burden, vision, administrative ability, business acumen, the call of God some may feel they have on their life, or even Bible College training. The requirements for ordination are stipulated by God and stand as absolutes in God's order for church government. Moral issues are not all that is involved. Spiritual maturity and faithfulness in service are just as important. Men must first prove their faithfulness in lesser areas of ministry before seeking promotion to the highest office in the local New Testament church (CP 1Ti 3:8-13). V13 here teaches that those who serve faithfully as deacons obtain for themselves a position of trust and influence in the church. This is a definite promise of promotion for those faithful in the lesser things first. There are still more scriptures proving the plurality of elders as the ruling body co-equally in the local church which we need to examine (CP Php 1:1). "Bishops" here are the ruling elders or presbyters (CP 1Ti 5:17). "The elders that rule well" are those who preside over the local church (CP He 13:7,17,24). "Them who are to be obeyed" again are the ruling elders. *Obey* here means to assent to; follow (CP Jas 5:14). James also teaches a plurality of elders ruling the church co-equally here. He does not refer to any one man but to the plurality of elders co-equally.

The number of elders in any church will depend entirely upon the size of the congregation. The apostle who pioneers the church may be the only one to start with, but others should be appointed as quickly as they are seen to be functioning in any of the ministry gifts of Eph 4:11, and can satisfy the requirements God has laid down for their ordination

in 1Ti 3:1-7 and Tit 1:4-9. They then become co-leaders in the church with the apostle (CP Ac 15:1-29; 21:17-25). These scriptures clearly confirm all that the foregoing scriptures teach - that the direction and government of the local New Testament church is not vested in the ministry of one man alone as it is in the contemporary church, but in the plurality of elders co-equally. James alone did not decide on what action to take concerning the question of gentile circumcision in Ac 15 as some teach. The Greek construction of the phrase "wherefore my sentence is ..." in V19 according to Kenneth Wuest's "Expanded Translation of the Greek New Testament" is "...wherefore as for myself, my judgement is ..." James is simply putting forward his opinion on the issue the same as Peter did in V7-11, only he was more explicit than Peter by also proposing what action they should take. The fact that they all agreed to the action proposed as Chapter 15 clearly emphasizes, proves the co-equality in the plurality of elders involved.

There were a number of apostles present with the elders in Ac 15 but only James was present when Paul returned to Jerusalem in Ac 21. On both occasions though the elders were co-equal with the apostles in receiving Paul and his companions and in the decision making process which ensued. There is nothing in any of these scriptures to indicate that James, who appears to be resident apostle in the Jerusalem church in Ac 21, outranked the elders who presided over the church with him. However, the mantle of spokesman for the apostles and elders falls upon the apostle as the one set first in the church in the foundation ministry. In the absence of the apostle the next in line is the prophet, and after him the teacher. This is the divine order (CP 1Cor 12:28). There is no need to look beyond what scriptures teach about government in the New Testament church (see also comments on Ac 11:27, 13:1-4, Ro 11:13, Eph 4:11-12, 1Th 5:12-13; 1Ti 3:1-7, 1Pe 5:1-3.)

20:22 *What does it mean here that Paul was going to Jerusalem bound in the spirit?*

This means that Paul felt himself divinely compelled to go to Jerusalem despite the threat of danger and hardship which the Holy Spirit had been testifying awaited him (CP V23-25). Paul did not know the details of the danger though until he heard Agabus' prophecy in Ac 21 (CP 21:10-11). Some Bible commentators believe that being bound in the spirit refers to the Holy Spirit; others believe it is Paul's own spirit. It does not matter who is right or wrong, because Paul felt himself divinely compelled to go anyway (CP also 19:21; 20:16). See also comments on Ac 21:4 and 21:10-11.

20:26-27 *See comments on Ac 18:6.*

20:28 *What do we learn from Paul's statement here that God has purchased the church with his own blood?*

This is another proof of the deity of Jesus: that Jesus is God. Jesus has not eternally been the Son of God as many in the church suppose. He has been an equal member of the Godhead from all eternity. He became the Son at His incarnation - when He took on human form (CP Nu 21:4-9 with 1Cor 10:9). In 1Cor 10:9 (KJV) we learn that the Lord who sent the fiery serpents among the Israelites in the wilderness when they murmured and complained against Him in Nu 21:4-9 is Christos/Christ (CP Psa 45:6-7 also He 1:8-12). Psa 45:6-7 is a prophetic Messianic Psalm referring to Messiah/Jesus' deity in V6, and His sonship in V7, proving again that Jesus has always existed as God, and that He only became the Son at His incarnation (CP Isa 6:1-12 with Jn 12:37-41). Here we also learn that the Lord who Isaiah saw sitting upon the throne, high and lifted up, whose train filled the temple in Isa 6:1-12 was Jesus. In V1,8 and 11, He is called Adonay, meaning ruler or master. In V3, 5 and 12 He is called Jehovah or Yahweh, denoting God in the Old Testament. These names all refer to the one person in these passages, and as it was Jesus' glory John said Isaiah saw, then the names refer to the pre-incarnate Jesus. This again is clear proof of Jesus' deity and is further evidence that Jesus was not eternally the Son of God, but that He became the Son at his incarnation (CP Mic 5:2; Mt 1:18-23; Jn 1:1-2, 14; 3:13; 8:56-58; 17:5; Php 2:5-8; Col 2:8-10; 1Ti 3:16; Tit 2:13; 2Pe 1:1-2 - not KJV or NKJV). According to Kenneth Wuest's **Word Studies in the Greek New Testament**, 2Pe 1:2 should read, "Grace to you, and peace, be multiplied in the sphere of and by the full knowledge of our God, even Jesus, the Lord" (CP 1Jn 1:1-2; 3:16; Rev 1:8, 11, 17-18; 3:14; 21:5-7; 22:13, 16). Every one of the scriptures we have studied here clearly teach that Jesus is the Christian's God, yet there are still many professing Christians who deny it. They teach that Jesus is not God, only Jehovah or God the Father is, and that Christians should not pray to Jesus or worship Him. We need to be thoroughly familiar with these scriptures so we can share them with those who do not know them (see also comments on Mt 1:18-21, 3:16-17; Lu 1:35(B), Jn 1:1, 5:16-23, 12:41, Ac 13:33, 1Ti 3:16, Php 2:5-8; Col 2:9; He 1:5, 5:5, 1Jn 5:6-9, Rev 1:8).

20:32 *What is the "word of His grace" to which Paul commended the Ephesian elders here?*

The word of grace to which Paul commended the Ephesian elders are the scriptures (CP Lu 4:3-4; 1Th 2:13; 2Ti 3:15-17). The scriptures are the record of God's gracious dealings with mankind and the source of spiritual growth for all Christians. Though Paul is speaking to the church leaders here - they are subject to the authority of scripture just as the congregation is - he means it for us too. Scriptures are able to build us all up to maturity in Christ and bring us to the place where God would have us to be in Him, in order to inherit the eternal kingdom (CP Ro 8:16-17; Eph 1:3, 11-14; 1Pe 1:3-5). *Them which are sanctified* refers to Christians generally (CP Ac 26:18; 1Cor 1:2; Jude 1:1).

20:35 *Where in scripture did Jesus say this?*

This saying by Jesus is not recorded in scripture, but He undoubtedly said it for Paul to directly quote Him. The Bible does not record everything Jesus said or did during His earthly ministry (CP Jn 21:25). Paul used the words of Jesus in Ac 20:35 to back up the point he was making in V33-35 that Christians are under a divine necessity to work hard in the interest of helping others in need (CP V33-35 with Eph 4:28).

21:4 *By going to Jerusalem did Paul disobey the Holy Spirit's direction here not to go?*

It is not the Holy Spirit directing Paul here not to go to Jerusalem. *Through the Spirit* means *on account of what the Spirit said*. It was the local disciples who knew of the sufferings he would encounter who were urging Paul not to go, not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit had testified - through prophets - in all the cities that Paul had recently visited, of the danger and hardship that awaited him in Jerusalem, but had never once directed him not to go there (CP 20:22-24). No verse in scripture states that it was the Holy Spirit Himself directing Paul not to go to Jerusalem. What the Holy Spirit testified about the danger and hardship that awaited Paul in Jerusalem was intended to prepare Paul for what lay ahead, not to warn him off. Paul was not indifferent to the pleas and the tears of those who tried to dissuade him from going, but he was resolute in his purpose to go, believing that this was the will of God (CP 21:10-15). See also comments on Ac 20:22 and 21:10-11.

21:9 *What does it mean that Philip's daughters prophesied?*

This means that Philip's daughters had the gift of prophecy, one of the nine manifestations of the Spirit, which the Holy Spirit gives to individual believers to profit the whole body of believers (CP Joel 2:28; 1Cor 12:4-11). Philip's daughters were not designated prophets like Agabus (CP Ac 11:27-28; 21:10-11). Agabus held the office of prophet, one of the ministry gifts Christ gave to the church (CP Eph 4:11-12). The office of prophet is a permanent ministry, whereas the gift of prophecy only operates at certain times when the need arises. Its purpose is to build up, motivate, and encourage the local church - edify, exhort and comfort (CP 1Cor 14:1-4).

21:10-11 *What does Agabus mean by saying here that the Jews will deliver Paul into the hands of the gentiles?*

This refers to Paul being imprisoned by the Romans and his eventual death at their hands (CP V26-36 and 28:16-20 with 2Ti 1:16-17; 2:9; 4:6-8). While the Jews may not have delivered Paul literally into the hands of the Romans, Agabus' prophecy was nonetheless fulfilled in what they did do to him (CP Ac 21:37-40 with 22:22-24). Tradition has it that

Paul was executed by beheading at Rome in late AD 66 or early AD 67.

21:17 *See comments on Ac 18:23.*

21:26 *If the law of Moses did not apply to Christians why did Paul take part in Jewish rites under the law and offer sacrifice in the temple?*

(CP V17-26). Just as early Christianity did not require gentiles to adopt a Jewish lifestyle, it did not require Jewish believers to adopt a gentile lifestyle. Paul as a Jew had a perfect right to adopt a Jewish lifestyle when among Jews, and a gentile way of life when among gentiles (CP 1Cor 9:19-23; 10:32-33). But when a conflict arose between adopting the culture and following basic Christian truths, Paul refused to compromise (CP Ga 2:3-5, 11-21; 5:1-6). Paul took part in these Jewish rites under the law and offered sacrifice in the temple to prove to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem that he did not disapprove of their customs and therefore was not turning Jewish Christians away from them, as his detractors claimed. James and the elders in the Jerusalem church persuaded Paul to do it in order to avoid any upheaval in the church between the Jewish and gentile Christians. However, before the purification rites were even completed, Paul's detractors attacked him, bodily removed him from the temple, and set about to kill him. But the chief captain of the Roman guard intervened and saved him (CP Ac 21:27-40; 22:22). What happened to Paul here fulfilled Agabus' prophecy in 21:10-11 (see comments on Ac 21:10-11).

22:3-5 *Does this teach that Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin and therefore married, as some claim?*

No! This is not teaching that at all. Paul was neither a member of the Sanhedrin - the Jewish council of elders - nor was he married. In fact Paul himself clearly teaches that he was never married. Paul simply states here that he was taught the Jewish law by Gamaliel, a renowned teacher of the law, who was also a high-ranking member of the Sanhedrin (CP 5:34). Paul was a superior pupil, surpassing his equals - those of his own age - in his knowledge of the law (CP Ga 1:14). Paul never claimed to be a member of the Sanhedrin, only that he was a zealous Pharisee (CP Ac 23:1-6; Php 3:4-6). As the young man "Saul" - before God changed his name to Paul (CP Ac 13:9) - Paul was given official authority by the chief priests to persecute Christians and imprison them (CP Ac 7:58; 8:1-3; 26:9-12; 1Cor 15:9; Ga 1:13-14). Paul voted for Christians being put to death, but that does not prove he was a member of the Sanhedrin. There is no warrant in scripture to teach that Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin and therefore married (one had to be married to be a Sanhedrin member). But Paul himself taught that not only was he not married, but also that he had never been married (CP 1Cor 7:7-9). In V7 Paul is alluding to a gift of God he had. He was not referring to his unmarried state, but to his sexual control, which led in turn to his being able to remain unmarried - a state

of being he chose for himself. We learn this from the phrase, "...it is good for them if they abide even as I," in V8, which refers to a state or condition; to remain one's own in his power. *Abide* (KJV) is a verb in what is known as the **Aorist tense** in the Greek construction of the sentence, which means indefinite, expressing simple past time, e.g., "as I always have", "as I do", i.e. the gift of celibacy. Thus we learn that Paul was always unmarried. The Aorist tense suggests a permanent and final decision: *as I always have been and always will be* (see also comments on Ac 8:1).

22:16 *Are we to understand from this that baptism cleanses one from sin?*

No, although many in the professing church teach that it does. But when one remembers that Paul was already saved, healed, and filled with the Holy Spirit when Ananias told him to "arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord," as Ac 9:17-18 clearly teaches, then we can see the fallacy of that teaching (CP Ac 9:17-18). Ac 22:16 does not teach that one's sins are remitted by the waters of baptism, but by calling on the name of the Lord (CP Lu 13:3; Ac 2:21; Ro 10:9-10; 1Pe 3:18-21; 1Jn 1:9). "Calling on the name of the Lord" simply means confessing Christ as Saviour (see comments also on Mt 28:19-20(B) and Mk 16:16).

22:25-29 *Why does Paul call himself a Roman here but a Jew in V3?*

Paul was born with both Roman and Jewish citizenship rights. It evidently had something to do with Tarsus, his birthplace (CP V1-3; 16:36-39).

23:2-3 *Was Paul wrong in the way he reacted to the High Priest here?*

Yes. Paul had right on his side, for it was an offence for one Jew to order another to be struck in this way, and even though he did not know Ananias was the High Priest it was wrong to react as he did, and he acknowledged that in V5 (CP V4-5). Some Bible commentators paint Paul in a bad light here, but Paul was only human, and he reacted as he did because he could not understand why someone would order that he be struck in the mouth, which was against the law, when he was not guilty of any offence. These commentators contrast Paul's angry reaction here to Jesus' passive acceptance of his arrest, overlooking the fact that Jesus was the only sinless person who ever lived (CP 1Pe 2:19-23).

23:11 *What did Jesus mean by what He said here?*

Here the Lord praised Paul for his faithful ministry in Jerusalem, and promised him that he would also be His witness in Rome. This was confirmation that Paul would not be sent back to Jerusalem where he would be killed before he could stand trial (CP V12-15; 25:1-3).

23:12-15 *What happened to these Jews who vowed to kill Paul?*

They either broke their vow or died of hunger or thirst. Either way, they brought divine judgement upon themselves because they bound themselves under a curse (CP Mt 12:36-37). They could have repented and been forgiven, but they didn't repent because they were still conspiring to kill Paul two years later (CP Ac 24:27 with 25:1-3).

24:25 *Why did Felix tremble?*

The word "trembled" here means afraid or affrighted, terrified, alarmed (CP Lu 24:5, 37; Ac 10:4; 22:9; Rev 11:13). Felix was under such severe conviction of sin as Paul spoke of righteousness and self-control, that when he went on to speak of the judgement upon the unrighteous, Felix became afraid and immediately brought the interview to a close. (History records that Felix seduced Drusilla and lured her away from her husband to marry him. Drusilla was the sister of King Agrippa, and the wife of the King of Emesa.)

25:9-12 *Why did Paul appeal to Caesar?*

Paul knew that if he went to Jerusalem he would be killed before he could face his accusers (CP 25:1-3). Paul wanted to go to Rome to preach the gospel, which Christ promised he would (CP 23:11). God's purpose for Paul had to be fulfilled in Rome, not Jerusalem (see also comments on Ac 27:42-44 and 28:16).

26:9-12 *See comments on 22:3-5.*

27:42-44 *Why did the centurion stop the soldiers from killing Paul and the others?*

God was in control. His purpose for Paul to be His witness in Rome as he was in Jerusalem could not be fulfilled if Paul had drowned, or been killed by the soldiers (CP V20-26 with 23:11). Paul's vision in both these instances also brought confirmation of his own conviction and desire that he should see Rome (CP 19:21 with Ro 1:10-11).

28:3-6 *What do we learn from Paul surviving the viper's bite here?*

Paul surviving the viper's bite confirms what Christ has promised in scripture to every believer (CP Mk 16:17-18; Lu 10:19). The viper's bite was of little concern to Paul. He knew he was a partaker of all Christ's promises and simply shook the viper off himself into the fire, and then went about his business. This is not teaching that Christians can play around with snakes just to prove their faith, but if they are accidentally bitten like Paul, it will not hurt them. The same applies with poison. If anyone inadvertently drinks poison, or is deliberately poisoned by someone else, it will not harm them either (CP 2Ki 4:38-41). Neither shall any plague affect them (CP Psa 91:9-10).

28:16 *Why was Paul allowed to live in his own house with only one soldier to guard him?*

God was still in charge - His purpose for Paul to be His witness in Rome had yet to be fulfilled (CP 23:11). God's purpose for Paul to be His witness in Rome could not be fulfilled if Paul had been handed over to the captain of the guard with the other prisoners (CP 28:30-31).

28:17-20 *What is the hope of Israel for which Paul was bound here?*

The hope of Israel for which Paul was bound here is the future resurrection of the dead (CP Job 19:25-27; Isa 26:19; Dan 12:2; Ac 23:6; 24:13-15, 21; 26:6-8). The hope of Israel is also the coming of Messiah and the future eternal kingdom (CP Gen 3:15; Isa 7:14; 9:6-7; Dan 7:14; Mic 5:2-8; Ac 13:33-34; 15:13-17), and the future salvation of Israel (CP Isa 11:10-12, 16; Jer 23:3-6; 31:7-9; Joel 2:32; Mic 2:12; Zeph 3:13-20; Zech 8:6-12; Ac 13:38-39; 21:6-7, 18; Ro 9-11).

28:23-29 *What clear teaching is revealed here?*

This clearly refutes the claim by some in the church that Isaiah's prophecy, which Paul quoted in V26-27, means that God sovereignly hardened the hearts of the Jews to prevent them believing in Jesus because He had already determined not to save them. The word *therefore* in V28 looks back on V26-27 and proves that it was not God who prevented the Jews from believing because He had already determined not to save them, but that the Jews themselves deliberately refused to believe. They rejected the gospel of their own volition, and it was for this reason alone - *therefore* - that God rejected them and gave the gospel to the gentiles (CP Ac 13:44-49; Ro 9:30-33; 10:19-21; 11:1, 7-10, 13-24). This truth is found also in the parables Jesus told of the marriage feast in Mt 22 and the great supper in Lu 14 (CP Mt 22:2-14; Lu 14:16-24). See also comments on Mt 11:28-30, 13:10-11, 20:16; Jn 3:15-16, 3:36, 6:37, 12:37-40, Ac 2:37-38, 13:48; Ro 3:24-26(A), 8:28-30, 9:7, 9:10-13, 9:14-18, 9:19-21, 10:14-17, 11:2 11:4, Eph 1:3-6, 1:11-14, 2:8-10, 1Th 1:4; 2Ti 1:8-9; 1Pe 1:2, 1Jn 1:10.

28:30-31 (A) *Why does this book end so abruptly?*

It is thought that the abrupt ending here is due to Luke completing his work on the Acts of the Apostles while Paul was still under house-arrest in Rome awaiting his trial before Caesar, because there is no record of the trial or its outcome.

(B) *What epistles did Paul write during the time of his house-arrest here?*

Bible commentators are generally agreed that it was during the time of his house-arrest here that Paul wrote his epistles to the churches at Colossae (CP Col 4:3, 10, 18); Ephesus (CP Eph 3:1; 4:1; 6:20-21) and Phillipi (CP Php 1:7, 12-16; 4:22), and also his epistle to Philemon (CP Phm 1:1, 9-10, 23). Not everyone in the contemporary church however

agrees that these epistles were all written from Rome, but whether they were or not is inconsequential to salvation, and we should not argue the point over it.

(C) What happened to Paul after this?

Nothing certain is known what happened to Paul after this but it is generally thought that he was released

soon after and then spent the next few years preaching in various places. During this time he wrote his first epistle to Timothy, and his epistle to Titus. He was then re-arrested and taken back to Rome where he wrote his second epistle to Timothy (CP 2Ti 1:16-17; 2:9). Tradition says that it was some time after writing this epistle Paul was martyred under the Emperor Nero, by beheading.