Acts Facts – Part 4

A study in the Book of Acts. We go through Acts from chapter 16 verse 16, to chapter 28 verse 31. We take our study verse by verse.

This e-book is the fourth part of our study, completing our verse by verse lessons in the book of Acts.

This e-book combines into one volume, several pages from www.simplybible.com

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Verse by Verse Studies in Acts
—Author’s Preface


I have spent hundreds of hours putting together a complete verse by verse study of Acts. In this preface I explain some of the aims and attitudes behind this work, and how you might make the best use of it.

1 The Paraphrase

The text of Acts appearing in these studies is my own paraphrase. My main aims were to present Luke’s text in a straightforward manner, keeping the language simple. I've done such things as (1) broken up long sentences into shorter ones; (2) replaced many pronouns with the nouns they refer to; (3) eliminated most instances of And where it starts or joins sentences; (4) Eliminated phrases such as "it happened that" which are stylistic but contain no information; (5) replaced some of Luke’s terms with more understandable ones such as commander instead of his chiliarch.

Beyond these measures, I have frequently not reproduced the exact sentence structure and phraseology of Luke, but rather used my own words to express what he meant. That's what a paraphrase is. I realise that some translators will even take these liberties, but I have not attempted a translation. The paraphrase, is intended to be expository —to explain and bring out the meaning of the original text.

The symbol ¶ appears before each section of my paraphrase, to remind the student that I am not quoting from any translation but using my own words.

The paraphrase appears in discrete sections, but is also repeated in fragments with the comments. Sometimes the paraphrase will differ slightly in the fragment compared to the sectional reading. This is intentional.

My paraphrase loses much of the elegant style of Luke's penmanship. That's the sacrifice made for the sake of presenting Luke’s narrative in a modern style that has a familiar feel to many readers and may be clearer to them. But my purpose is not to replace the many translations that do convey Luke’s manner of story telling. Even Luke himself would consider that understanding and believing the story itself is more important than appreciating the skill and culture of the story teller. Of course, these are not mutually exclusive, but my purpose is to help primarily with understanding and belief.

Chapters and Verses

The paraphrase is presented in natural sections and logical paragraphs. The traditional “chapters and verses” are sometimes arbitrary and clumsy divisions that inappropriately break the flow of the narrative. They weren't part of the original scripture. Nevertheless I have included “chapters and verses” in the natural sections to provide customary reference. However I have made the verse numbers unobtrusive so they don't interfere with the natural flow and structure.
The Notes

Between the sections of the paraphrase, various notes appear. I've not attempted to deal with every matter that might arise. If a detail is merely academic and not necessary to a good understanding of the passage, then the note on that detail will be brief if it occurs at all. In other cases the notes will be thorough because the matter is important. The notes, like the paraphrase, are intended to be expository — to explain and bring out the meaning of the original text.

The Maps

I have some years ago prepared simple maps of the area covered in Acts. The appropriate maps are placed on each lesson so that the student does not have to go looking for them. There is a maps page with all the maps together, but it seemed good to me to place the maps on the lesson pages as well.

My Reservations

I have some reservations about presenting these expository or verse by verse studies. Paraphrasing scripture, and inserting one's own comments between the verses, could be viewed as a great impertinence: adding one's own words to the scripture. However expository teaching, if done honestly and carefully, is a very direct and powerful means of helping people understand, appreciate, and apply the scriptures for themselves. I urge all students to have their own Bibles at hand, and to read the whole passage for themselves, then turn to my paraphrase and notes as distinct from the scripture. I have taken much care with this work, and continue to check and edit it. It is by this care that I justify using the expository method.

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Acts 16:16-40

—Verse by verse

This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 16:16-40. These verses describe Paul's experiences and work with Silas in Philippi, including the conversion of the Philippian jailer.

Adventures in Philippi.

Acts 16:16-40

¶“16 As we were going to prayer, it happened that a certain slave girl met us. She was possessed by a spirit of divination. This girl had brought her masters much gain by fortune telling. 17 She followed Paul and us, crying out, 'These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us a way of salvation!' 18 She continued doing this for several days. Paul, becoming greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, 'I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!' The demon came out that very hour. 19 Now when her masters saw that the hope of their gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas, and dragged them to the marketplace to face the rulers.” (Acts 16:16-19).

¶“20 When the slave girl’s masters had brought Paul and Silas to the magistrates, they said, ‘These men, who are Jews, are confusing our city, proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us Romans to accept or to observe’. 21 The crowd rose up together against them, and the magistrates tore the clothes off Paul and Silas, and commanded them to be beaten with rods. 22 When they had laid many blows on Paul and Silas, they threw them into prison. They charged the jailer to keep them safely. 24 Having received such a command, the jailer threw Paul and Silas into the inner prison, and secured their feet in the stocks.” (Acts 16:20-24).

¶“25 About midnight Paul and Silas, in jail, were praying and singing hymns to God. The other prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly there was a great earthquake which shook the prison to its foundations. Immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone’s bonds were loosed. 27 The jailer, roused out of sleep, saw the prison doors open. He drew his sword and was about to kill himself, assuming that the prisoners had escaped. 28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, 'Don't harm yourself: we are all here!' ” (Acts 16:25-28).

¶“29 The jailer called for lights and rushed in to the prison. He fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 Then he brought them out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' 31 They answered, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.' 32 They spoke the word of the Lord to him, and to all who were in his house. 33 He took them the same hour of the night, and washed their wounds, and was immediately baptized, he and all his household. 34 The jailer then brought Paul and Silas up into his house, and set food before them. The jailer rejoiced greatly, with all his household, having believed in God.” (Acts 16:29-34).
When it was day, the magistrates sent the police with this message: 'Release those men!' The jailer reported these words to Paul: 'The magistrates have sent a message for your release; therefore come out now, and go in peace.' But Paul replied with this message for the magistrates: 'They have flogged us publicly, without a trial, men who are Romans, and have cast us into prison. Do they now release us secretly? Most certainly not! Let them come themselves and release us.' (Acts 16:35-37).

The sergeants reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans. So the magistrates came begging to Paul and Silas. When they had brought them out of the prison, they continued pleading with them to leave the city. So Paul and Silas went out of the prison, and entered into Lydia’s house to see and encourage the brethren; then Paul and Silas departed.” (Acts 16:38-40).

Verse 16-19

"As we were going to prayer, it happened that a certain slave girl met us. She was possessed by a spirit of divination. This girl had brought her masters much gain by fortune telling. She followed Paul and us, crying out, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us a way of salvation!” She continued doing this for several days. Paul, becoming greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!” The demon came out that very hour. Now when her masters saw that the hope of their gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas, and dragged them to the marketplace to face the rulers.” (Acts 16:16-19).

- **Going to prayer.** Paul and his companions were probably going back to the riverside where people met for prayer and where Lydia was converted.

- **A spirit of divination.** Paul and his companions were approached by a slave girl. She was possessed by a demon who gave her the power to know and tell things that by her own senses and experiences she would not know. Her masters (those who had purchased her and owned her) were able to turn this supernatural “gift” to profit. One can't help feeling compassion for this girl. Not only is she a slave of unscrupulous men, but her body and mind has been invaded by a filthy spirit.

- **She followed us crying out.** What this evil spirit divined, and caused the girl to cry out, was absolutely true. As James says, "The demons believe and tremble" (James 2:19). So the spirit, through the girl, was bearing witness to the credentials of Paul and his companions, and to their message. However Paul did not want his ministry and his message to be associated in the public mind with the powers of darkness. Paul allowed this testimony to continue for several days, then made a public confirmation of the word of Christ by casting out the demon (Mark 16:15-16). This proved to the populace that the Jesus, whom Paul preached, had no fellowship with demons, and was more powerful than the demons.

- **Dragged them to the marketplace.** Paul knew that when he cast the demon out there would be trouble. That's one likely reason why he didn't cast out
the spirit sooner. So Paul and Silas (but not Luke and Timothy) were hauled to the forum for a case to be made against them before the magistrates.

2 Paul and Silas in Prison

Verses 20-24

¶ "When the slave girl’s masters had brought Paul and Silas to the magistrates, they said, “These men, who are Jews, are confusing our city, proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us Romans to accept or to observe. The crowd rose up together against them, and the magistrates tore the clothes off Paul and Silas, and commanded them to be beaten with rods. When they had laid many blows on Paul and Silas, they threw them into prison. They charged the jailer to keep them safely. Having received such a command, the jailer threw Paul and Silas into the inner prison, and secured their feet in the stocks." (Acts 16:20-24).

- **The charge against Paul and Silas.** The slave girl’s masters concealed from the magistrates the real complaint they had against Paul and Silas. Public sympathy was probably with the slave girl. Instead they played upon public hatred of Jews and made out that these men were Jewish trouble makers preaching against Rome and the Roman ways. That got the crowds in this Roman colony shouting. And that outcry moved the magistrates to forget any kind of proper trial or enquiry. So Paul and Silas were flogged to appease the crowd and thrown into prison and secured until the commotion settled down.

Verses 25-28

¶ "About midnight Paul and Silas, in jail, were praying and singing hymns to God. The other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake which shook the prison to its foundations. Immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone’s bonds were loosed. The jailer, roused out of sleep, saw the prison doors open. He drew his sword and was about to kill himself, assuming that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, “Don't harm yourself: we are all here!” (Acts 16:25-28).

- **Praying and singing.** Paul and Silas would be suffering severe pain from their flogging. Having their feet fastened in the stocks meant that they couldn't sit or lie down comfortably, and couldn't walk a few steps to ease the cramps. It was midnight, pitch dark in the cell, but sleep was impossible. At least Paul and Silas weren't gagged, so they could bravely sing and pray to encourage each other. Whilst Paul and Silas would intend God to be their audience, other prisoners were listening. We are left to wonder what effect this had on those prisoners.

- **A great earthquake.** We are not surprised that the earthquake shook the prison to its foundations. But this quake also opened all the doors and loosed every prisoner’s chains. What’s more, nobody got hurt. The jailer awoke. As soon as he saw the open doors he was about to fall on his sword to avoid an uglier punishment. But he didn't need to kill himself; his prisoners had not fled. That was a bigger shock.
Verses 29-34

¶ "The jailer called for lights and rushed in to the prison. He fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They answered, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” They spoke the word of the Lord to him, and to all who were in his house. He took them the same hour of the night, and washed their wounds, and was immediately baptized, he and all his household. The jailer then brought Paul and Silas up into his house, and set food before them. The jailer rejoiced greatly, with all his household, having believed in God.” (Acts 16:29-34).

What must I do to be saved? The jailer evidently had made it his business to find out, from his own sources, who Paul and Silas were and what they'd been doing. He now realised that the message these men preached must be true. This intelligence included the fact that the slave-girl had cried out, "These men are... proclaiming to us a way of salvation" (Acts 16:17). The jailer realised that he must take this way of salvation seriously. So he begs to be told what he must do to have that salvation.

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Jailer asked, “What must I do?” He was told to believe. Believing is something we do. It is an act of obedience to the message of Christ. When you hear the gospel of Christ, what must you do? You must believe. So why all this talk that separates faith from deeds? Faith itself is a deed, a “work”. It is the work on which all other works must be predicated. That's why this was the first act the jailer was told to do. It was not the only act he was told to do. The next verses says that they spoke the word of God to him, with the result that he was baptized immediately (Acts 16:31-34). So the faith by which he was saved, and in which he rejoiced with all his household, was not faith alone but faith that was obedient.

Verses 35-37

¶ "When it was day, the magistrates sent the police with this message: “Release those men!” The jailer reported these words to Paul: “The magistrates have sent a message for your release; therefore come out now, and go in peace.” But Paul replied with this message for the magistrates: “They have flogged us publicly, without a trial, men who are Romans, and have cast us into prison. Do they now release us secretly? Most certainly not! Let them come themselves and release us.” " (Acts 16:35-37).

Come out now. It is not clear whether Paul and Silas were still at the jailer’s house when the directive for their release was brought by the police. They might have thought it prudent to go back to the prison so that the jailer would not have any explaining to do. The authorities had apparently realized that the slave girl’s masters had trumped up their charges and there was no case against Paul and Silas.

Certainly not! Paul had very good reasons for standing on his dignity and forcing the magistrates to come to him personally. He would be leaving behind a little church which would need to be respected and justly treated by the authorities. Furthermore, Paul would want to come back to Philippi recognized as a Roman not
as a Jew. So he lets the magistrates know by return message that they have flogged Romans, an offense punishable by death.

Verses 38-40

¶ "The sergeants reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans. So the magistrates came begging to Paul and Silas. When they had brought them out of the prison, they continued pleading with them to leave the city. So Paul and Silas went out of the prison, and entered into Lydia’s house to see and encourage the brethren; then Paul and Silas departed." (Acts 16:38-40).

• **Pleading with them to leave the city.** Now the magistrates were as worried as the jailor had been. They feared for their necks. But when they came begging to Paul, he treated them decently and agreed to leave Philippi. But he would leave with them forever in his debt. Paul didn't leave Philippi immediately, but first visited Lydia and the other new Christians to encourage them and to say goodbye. So Paul and Silas departed from Philippi and headed for Thessalonica. It appears that they took Timothy with them but Luke remained behind in Philippi.
Acts 17:1-15
—Verse by verse

This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 17:1-15. These verses describe Paul’s experiences and work in Thessalonica and Berea during his second missionary journey.

Paul’s experiences and work in Thessalonica.

Acts 17:1-15

¶“1When Paul and Silas had travelled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica. There was a Jewish synagogue in Thessalonica. 2So Paul, according to his custom, went in to those assembled and reasoned with them from the Scriptures. He did this on three Sabbath days. 3Paul explained and proved that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead. Paul said, ‘This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.’” (Acts 17:1-3).

¶“4Some of the Jews in the synagogue at Thessalonica were persuaded by Paul and joined him and Silas. So did a great many of the devout Greeks and quite a few of the important women. 5But other Jews grew jealous. They took along some wicked men from the marketplace, got a mob together, and set the city in an uproar. Storming the house of Jason, they intended to bring Paul and Silas out to face the people. 6When they didn't find them, they dragged Jason and certain brothers before the rulers of the city and shouted, ‘Those men who have turned the world upside down have come here also. 7Jason has welcomed them. These men and their followers all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar. They say that there is another king, Jesus!’” (Acts 17:4-7).

¶“8The populace and the rulers of the city were troubled when they heard these things. 9They released Jason and the others, but only on bail. 10The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When Paul and Silas arrived, they went into the Jewish synagogue.” (Acts 17:8-10).

¶“11Now these at Berea were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of the mind. They examined the Scriptures daily to see whether the things that Paul and Silas preached were so. 12Consequently, many of them believed. So did many of the prominent Greek women, and quite a few men.” (Acts 17:11-12).

¶“13The Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also. So they came there stirring up the crowds as they'd done in Thessalonica. 14Then the brethren at Berea immediately sent Paul out of the city and all the way to the sea. Silas and Timothy remained in Berea. 15Paul’s escorts brought him as far as Athens. Paul gave the escorts an order for Silas and Timothy to come to him very quickly. So the escorts departed.” (Acts 17:13-15).
Paul and Silas in Thessalonica

Verses 1-3

¶ "When Paul and Silas had travelled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica. There was a Jewish synagogue in Thessalonica. So Paul, according to his custom, went in to those assembled and reasoned with them from the Scriptures. He did this on three Sabbath days. Paul explained and proved that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead. Paul said, “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.” " (Acts 17:1-3).

1. **The synagogue.** Jews were now living all over the world. They had meeting places called synagogues where their local congregations met and were administered. The temple in Jerusalem was a place for festivals and pilgrimages, but the synagogue was the center of grass-roots religion and worship each Sabbath. It became Paul’s practice, when he came to preach in a city, to first go to the synagogues. There he would hope to preach the gospel to the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles who worshipped God with the Jews.

2. **The scriptures.** The scriptures from which Paul reasoned were that part of the Bible we call “The Old Testament”. These scriptures were read in the synagogue. These scriptures taught about Christ. Paul was able, from these scriptures, to show that Jesus is the Christ. (cf 1Peter 1:10-12, John 5:39).

3. **The Christ.** The word Christ is the Greek word for Messiah. The Jews were looking for a coming Messiah, the king who would sit on David’s throne and restore Israel. In Jerusalem, Peter had proclaimed, "Let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Now in Thessalonica, and wherever he went, Paul was proclaiming the same.

Verses 4-7

¶ "Some of the Jews in the synagogue at Thessalonica were persuaded by Paul and joined him and Silas. So did a great many of the devout Greeks and quite a few of the important women. But other Jews grew jealous. They took along some wicked men
from the marketplace, got a mob together, and set the city in an uproar. Storming the	house of Jason, they intended to bring Paul and Silas out to face the people. When they didn't find them, they dragged Jason and certain brothers before the rulers of the city and shouted, “Those men who have turned the world upside down have come here also. Jason has welcomed them. These men and their followers all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar. They say that there is another king, Jesus!” (Acts 17:4-7).

- **Some persuaded, others grew jealous.** Paul’s message divided the synagogue. Paul won some for Jesus to add to his church. However Paul at the same time added to his enemies. Sometimes, in our efforts to turn people into followers of Jesus, we inadvertently, and unavoidably, stir up opposition to the word.

- **Storming and shouting.** The opposition to Paul and Silas was indecent. Decent people don't stir up a mob and create an uproar. This is not the mark of genuine and sincere opposition.

- **There is another king.** The dishonesty of the half truth is evident here. Yes, Jesus is another king, but he himself made it plain that he was not usurping Caesar. "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my disciples rise up and fight" (John 18:36).

- **NOTE:** Paul discusses his feelings and experiences at this time in 1Thessalonians 1-3

### 2 Paul and Silas in Berea

Paul’s experiences and work in Berea.

**Verses 8-10**

¶ "The populace and the rulers of the city were troubled when they heard these things. They released Jason and the others, but only on bail. The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When Paul and Silas arrived, they went into the Jewish synagogue." (Acts 17:8-10).

- **Rulers troubled.** The rulers of the city were rightly concerned, because any disturbance of the peace would be frowned upon by the Romans, and the city officials would be held responsible. They seem to have treated the Christians fairly well. They did not keep Jason and the others in custody, nor did they apparently attempt to find and arrest Paul and Silas, who were able to get away from the city.

- **The synagogue.** [See earlier note on verse 2.] Paul and Silas don't change their strategy. They do the same in Berea as they did in Thessalonica. They go into the synagogue, taking the risk that trouble will come upon them again.

- **Thank God for Jasons.** This Jason, who stood with Paul, is nowhere else mentioned in scripture (except perhaps Romans 16:21). His is no “big name” in the Bible, but how important are people like him: people who, in their small corner, stand for the gospel of Christ and fearlessly help its preachers in adversity.
Verses 11-12

¶ "Now these at Berea were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of the mind. They examined the Scriptures daily to see whether the things that Paul and Silas preached were so. Consequently, many of them believed. So did many of the prominent Greek women, and quite a few men." (Acts 17:11-12).

- More noble. The result at Berea is quite a contrast with Thessalonica. This shows that Paul and Silas were right not to label and condemn one synagogue by the actions and attitudes of another. Those at the Berean synagogue were examples of honest seekers of truth. They listened; they examined the scriptures themselves to confirm that Paul’s use of the scripture was in harmony with the whole; and many of them believed.

- Prominent women and men. In Thessalonica, there seemed to be a group of bigots dominant in the synagogue, rather than a group of tolerant, open-minded, and influential people. In Berea, the dominant group seems to be those of high standing and position in the city, with all the noble qualities that such a position requires. Perhaps that's one of the reasons that the experience in Berea did not imitate the confusion in Thessalonica.

3 Paul Sent to Athens

Verses 13-15

¶ "The Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also. So they came there stirring up the crowds as they'd done in Thessalonica. Then the brethren at Berea immediately sent Paul out of the city and all the way to the sea. Silas and Timothy remained in Berea. Paul’s escorts brought him as far as Athens. Paul gave the escorts an order for Silas and Timothy to come to him very quickly. So the escorts departed." (Acts 17:13-15).

- Came there stirring. Unfortunately the riot makers of Thessalonica invaded Berea and tried to make the same trouble there. Although this did not lead to any arrests, the brethren thought it prudent to send Paul out of the city. When the cat disappears, the dogs have nothing to bark at. So the trouble was prevented, and Silas and Timothy could work with the new converts quietly for a short time, while Paul was discreetly taken a good distance south.

- Timothy sticks with Paul and Silas. It isn't clear whether Timothy had been with Paul and Silas most of the time, or whether he got separated from them and caught up with them in Berea. But young Timothy shows his courage and commitment by continuing to be their companion in the face of all the trouble.
Acts 17:16-34

—Verse by verse

This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 17:16-34. These verses describe Paul’s experiences in Athens, especially his speech to the philosophers in the Areopagus.

Paul’s experiences in Athens Greece.

Acts 17:16-34

¶ 16 Paul waited at Athens for Silas and Timothy. Paul’s spirit within him was provoked as he saw the city full of idols. 17 So he reasoned not only in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, but also in the marketplace every day with anyone who happened to be there. 18 Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were among those conversing with him. Some said, ‘What is this babbler trying to say?’ Others said, ‘He seems to be advocating foreign deities.’ They said this because Paul preached Jesus and the resurrection.” (Acts 17:16-18).

¶ 19 The philosophers took hold of Paul, and brought him to the Areopagus. They said, ‘May we know what this new teaching is that you proclaim? 20 You bring strange things to our ears. So we want to know what these things mean.’ 21 Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there spent their time in nothing else but to tell or hear some new thing.” (Acts 17:19-21).

¶ 22 Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, ‘You men of Athens, I perceive that you are very religious in all things. 23 For as I walked around the city and observed the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with this inscription: ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD’. What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I announce to you.’” (Acts 17:22-23).

¶ 24 The God who made the world and all things in it, he is Lord of Heaven and earth. So he doesn't dwell in temples made with hands, 25 neither is he served by men’s hands as though he needed anything; since he himself gives to everyone life and breath and everything.’” (Acts 17:24-25).

¶ 26 God made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the surface of the earth. He determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their dwelling places. 27 He appointed that they should seek the Lord, if perhaps they might reach out for him and find him. He is not far from any one of us, 28 for in him we live, and move, and have our being. As some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also his offspring.’” (Acts 17:26-28).

¶ 29 Since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone formed into some image by human art and design. 30 Therefore whilst God overlooked the times of ignorance, he now commands that all people everywhere should repent. 31 The reason is that he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he has ordained. He has given assurance of this to everyone, by raising that man from the dead.’” (Acts 17:29-31).
When the philosophers heard Paul speak of the resurrection from the dead, some mocked. Others said, 'We want to hear you again concerning this.' So then Paul went out from among them. However certain men joined with him, and believed. These included Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris, among others with them.” (Acts 17:32-34).

Paul Preaches to the Gentiles

Verses 16-18

"Paul waited at Athens for Silas and Timothy. Paul’s spirit was provoked within him as he saw the city full of idols. So he reasoned not only in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, but also in the marketplace every day with anyone who happened to be there. Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were among those conversing with him. Some said, “What is this babbler trying to say?” Others said, “He seems to be advocating foreign deities.” They said this because Paul preached Jesus and the resurrection.” (Acts 17:16-18).

- **Athens, a city full of idols.** Pagan temples and shrines to idols would be nothing new to Paul, since all cities except Jerusalem had them aplenty. Athens, however, apparently had more idols than most; and Paul, having some time to kill, might have observed and thought about them more thoroughly.

- **In the marketplace.** Paul, as he always did in every city, went into the synagogue and reasoned with the devout worshippers of God (apparently in this case without much result). However with his heart stirred up by the sight of so many idols, he went amongst the pagan populace in the market area. Here not only did people do their shopping, but they'd gather for conversation and to listen to public speakers. The marketplace, or Agora was the Greek equivalent of the Roman forum. The Greek word agora produced the Greek verbs agorazo to shop, and agoreuo to speak in public. It was a good strategy to speak in the Agora because the folk all liked to hear something new; Paul was almost certain to get an audience.

- **Epicurean and Stoic.** About 300 years before Christ the philosophies of Stoicism and Epicureanism were founded.

  **Stoics** The term Stoic came from the Greek *stoa* meaning a porch or portico. Zeno, the founder of the Stoics, held his school in a porch in the city of Athens. Stoics practised indifference to both pain and pleasure, living minimalistic and disciplined lives, and pursuing virtue and wisdom through reason controlling lust. They also believed in one god who is experienced in nature.

  **Epicureans** The Epicureans were named after their founder, Epicurus. Epicureans accepted both pleasure and pain as part of life, but they sought to reduce pain and to enhance pleasure. However, original and genuine Epicureanism did not do so by excess or hedonistic addiction. Epicureans valued the more honourable pleasures such as harmonious
friendships. They acknowledged all gods, but did not think they influenced human life in any important way, or that humans should become beholden to them.

- **This babbler.** Paul found his discussion in the market place somewhat interrupted and fragmented by hecklers who seemed to think he was talking nonsense, or that “Jesus” and “Resurrection” referred to gods that were foreign to the Athenians. So when Paul was invited, by some of the more serious philosophers, to go with them to the quieter Areopagus he was willingly led, as Luke now records...

2 Paul Speaks at the Areopagus

Verses 19-21

¶ "The philosophers took hold of Paul, and brought him to the Areopagus. They said, “May we know what this new teaching is that you proclaim? You bring strange things to our ears. So we want to know what these things mean.” (Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there spent their time in nothing else but to tell or hear some new thing.)" (Acts 17:19-21).

- **The Areopagus.** Away from the city center, high on a hill of rock, stood the Areopagus where councils and courts would convene. In Paul’s time, the Areopagus was apparently also used as a place for philosophical debates and speeches away from the noise and bustle of downtown Athens. Paul was somewhat honoured to be given an opportunity to speak at this venue.

Verses 22-23

¶ "Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “You men of Athens, I perceive that you are very religious in all things. For as I walked around the city and observed the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with this inscription: ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD’. What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I announce to you." (Acts 17:22-23).

- **The unknown god.** The time that Paul spent looking around Athens had turned up a curiosity to which he was able to pin his message. He does not speak specifically to the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers who thought little of idols. He addresses the wider and very idolatrous audience of Athenians whose curiosity had led them up the steps to this theatre, to hear Paul’s “new thing”. However Paul’s implied repudiation of countless idols, and his proclamation of one God who created all things, would ring true for the Stoics and give pause to the Epicureans (see notes above on these philosophies).

Verses 24-25

¶ "The God who made the world and all things in it, he is Lord of Heaven and earth. So he doesn't dwell in temples made with hands, neither is he served by men’s hands as though he needed anything; since he himself gives to everyone life and breath and everything." (Acts 17:24-25).
**God the Creator.** In this statement Paul beautifully distinguishes the one true God from the idols that the Athenians knew. “God doesn't dwell in temples made with hands” is God’s own teaching about himself (Acts 7:48-50, Isaiah 66:1-2). It is a fact told to the Jews who thought God needed the temple in Jerusalem to dwell in. It is a fact told to the pagans who built temples and shrines for their idols. But the phrase “not made with hands” was likely to strike the idol worshippers a sharper blow, because not only were their temples made by human hands but so were the idols housed in them!

**Verses 26-28**

¶ "God made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the surface of the earth. He determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their dwelling places. He appointed that they should seek the Lord, if perhaps they might reach out for him and find him. He is not far from any one of us, for in him we live, and move, and have our being. As some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also his offspring.'" (Acts 17:26-28).

**Seek the Lord.** In this statement Paul proclaims a God who is the maker of all men—not made by men. This is a God who can be found—not one hidden within nature as the Stoics thought; or one far removed from human realms and affairs as the Epicureans thought; or one unknown and lost among a myriad of Gods as the Athenians thought (who had erected a shrine to “the unknown god”). No, Paul proclaims a god who can be found, who is not far from any one of us, and who indeed for a little while actually lived among us!

**Verses 29-31**

¶ "Since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone formed into some image by human art and design. Therefore whilst God overlooked the times of ignorance, he now commands that all people everywhere should repent. The reason is that he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he has ordained. He has given assurance of this to everyone, by raising that man from the dead.” " (Acts 17:29-31).

**The man whom God ordained.** In this statement Paul contrasts the metal and stone representations of pagan gods, with a living human who was the image of the true God. This special human is the Judge of all mankind. Some famous people were judged in ancient times at the Areopagus, but everyone will be judged at the last day by the man God has ordained. How do we know him? He is the one whom God raised from the dead to die no more!

3 **Mixed Reception to Paul’s Message in Athens**

**Verses 32-34**

¶ "When the philosophers heard Paul speak of the resurrection from the dead, some mocked. Others said, “We want to hear you again concerning this.” So then Paul went out from
among them. However certain men joined with him, and believed. These included Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris, among others with them." (Acts 17:32-34).

- **Certain men believed.** Some scoffed at Paul’s message when he mentioned the resurrection, because they did not believe in life beyond death. But some philosophers considered it possible, and were interested to hear more from Paul. Some heard enough to make them believe. (One of these “certain men” was a woman. You might need to think about that.) Paul therefore could consider his speech at the Areopagus quite a success. A small church was started in a city where that was no easy task for one solitary man.

![Map of Greece](simplybible.com/f77k-acts-c17-v16-34.htm)
Acts 18:1-17
—Verse by verse

This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 18:1-17. These verses describe Paul’s work in the city of Corinth, tentmaking and preaching, and the fiasco when the Jews brought him to trial before Gallio.

Paul’s experiences in Corinth.

Acts 18:1-17

¶“1 Later on, Paul left Athens and came to Corinth. 2 There Paul found a certain Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus. Aquila and his wife Priscilla had recently moved from Italy to Corinth, because Claudius had deported all Jews from Rome. 3 Paul came to live and work with Aquila and Priscilla because they were tent makers by trade and so was he.” (Acts 18:1-3).

¶“4 Paul reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and tried to convince Jews and Greeks. 5 But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul was motivated all the more to bear witness to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. 6 When the Jews opposed him and blasphemed, he shook out his clothing and said to them, 'Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on, I will preach to the Gentiles!' ” (Acts 18:4-6).

¶“7 Paul quit the synagogue, and instead taught next door in the house of a certain man named Titius Justus, one who worshiped God. 8 Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household. Many of the Corinthians, when they heard, believed and were baptized. 9 The Lord said to Paul in a night vision, 'Don't be afraid, but speak and don't be silent. 10 I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you. I have many people in this city.' ” (Acts 18:7-10).

¶“11 Paul lived in Corinth for a year and six months, teaching the word of God among the people. 12 But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before Gallio’s judgment seat. 13 They said, 'This man persuades men to worship God in a manner contrary to the law.' ” (Acts 18:11-13).

¶“14 But before Paul could open his mouth to reply, Gallio said to the Jews, 'If indeed it were a matter of wrong, or of harmful crime, it would be reasonable, O Jews, that I should bear with you. 15 However if your case is about questions of words and names and your own law, then look to it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of these matters.' 16 So Gallio drove them from the judgment seat.” (Acts 18:14-16).

¶“17 Then all the Greeks laid hold on Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. Gallio did not concern himself with any of these things.” (Acts 18:17).
Paul Works as a Tentmaker in Corinth

Verses 1-3

"Later on, Paul left Athens and came to Corinth. There Paul found a certain Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus. Aquila and his wife Priscilla had recently moved from Italy to Corinth, because Claudius had deported all Jews from Rome. Paul came to live and work with Aquila and Priscilla because they were tent makers by trade and so was he." (Acts 18:1-3).

- Corinth. A city of Greece or Achaia as the southern part was known. Although Athens was the capital, Corinth was the main commercial center and a bigger city. Situated near the isthmus that connected northern and southern Greece, Corinth had access to the sea eastward at Cenchrea, and westward at Lechaemum. Many Jews lived in Corinth especially because in AD49 the Jews who lived in Rome had been expelled. Paul was alone in this big city and apparently needed to find a way to earn some money. Fortunately he had a trade, and making contact with fellow Jews he found two who were also of that trade, Aquila and Priscilla (or Prisca). So he was able to lodge and work with them. He mentions them in Romans 16:3.

Paul Speaks in Synagogue — He is Opposed

Verses 4-6

"Paul reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and tried to convince Jews and Greeks. But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul was motivated all the more to bear witness to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. When the Jews opposed him and blasphemed, he shook out his clothing and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on, I will preach to the Gentiles!” " (Acts 18:4-6).

- The Jews opposed him. Paul was doing his best to do his usual work in the synagogue, but he met with so much opposition, that the work could not succeed. Even with the encouragement of Silas and Timothy’s arrival he still could not
overcome the opposition. So he shook the dust from his clothes as a sign that he
would have no more to do with them (not even take any of their dust with him) and he left.

- **Letter to the Thessalonians.** Soon after the arrival of Timothy and Silas
(Silvanus) Paul wrote the first letter to the Thessalonians whence Timothy and
Silas had come (1Thessalonians 1:1, 3:6).

**Verses 7-10**

¶ "Paul quit the synagogue, and instead taught next door in the house of a certain man
named Titius Justus, one who worshiped God. Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue,
believed in the Lord with all his household. Many of the Corinthians, when they
heard, believed and were baptized. The Lord said to Paul in a night vision, “Don't be
afraid, but speak and don't be silent. I am with you, and no one will attack you to
harm you. I have many people in this city.”” (Acts 18:7-10).

- **The house next door.** Paul’s work in the synagogue may have been
frustrated, but it hadn't been fruitless. Titius, a Gentile who did not practise
paganism but worshiped the true God, allowed Paul to use his house as a teaching
place, right next to the synagogue. The ruler of the synagogue, Crispus, had not
opposed Paul; he continued to listen to Paul and was converted along with his
family. Many others were made disciples of Christ.

- **Don't be afraid.** However the opposition continued from the synagogue.
Paul later remembers how he felt: "I was with you in fear and in much trembling"
(1Corinthians 2:3). God blessed Paul with direct words of encouragement and a
promise that Paul would not be harmed.

**[3] Paul Speaks at Gallio’s Court —Case Dismissed**

**Verses 11-13**

¶ "Paul lived in Corinth for a year and six months, teaching the word of God among
the people. But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose
up against Paul and brought him before Gallio’s judgment seat. They said, “This man
persuades men to worship God in a manner contrary to the law.”” (Acts 18:11-13).

- **Brought Paul before Gallio.** After eighteen months of work in Corinth, Paul
becomes again the victim of persecution from the Jews. Gallio was the
administrator of Roman law, but the Jews were charging Paul with breaking Jewish
law. For some reason they must have thought Gallio would support them. Perhaps
they were influential in Corinth and had a strong hold on the economy of the city.
But, as we see next, they miscalculated badly.

**Verses 14-16**

¶ But before Paul could open his mouth to reply, Gallio said to the Jews, “If indeed it
were a matter of wrong, or of harmful crime, it would be reasonable, O Jews, that I
should bear with you. However if your case is about questions of words and names
and your own law, then look to it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of these matters.” So Gallio drove them from the judgment seat.” (Acts 18:14-16).

- **Gallio refuses to judge.** Gallio did not give Paul any chance to speak. Instead Gallio dismissed the case summarily. He could see that the charge was not of a crime against Roman law, but merely a Jewish matter. So in all fairness he told Paul’s accusers to get out of his court.

**Verse 17**

¶ "Then all the Greeks laid hold on Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. Gallio did not concern himself with any of these things." (Acts 18:17).

- **Sosthenes beaten.** Sosthenes was the ruler of the synagogue. He had replaced Crispus whom Paul had converted. Apparently Sosthenes was a little tardy in leaving the court and, no doubt much to his dismay, was given a beating that was most illegal. Gallio didn't put a stop to it. Perhaps he could see the natural justice in it. God had promised to keep Paul from harm, and Gallio served God’s purpose.

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Acts 18:18-28
—Verse by verse

This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 18:18-28. These verses describe the completion of Paul’s second missionary journey. There is also a brief account of Apollos’s gospel work.

Paul’s 2nd missionary journey ends, and the 3rd begins.

Acts 18:18-28

¶“18 After the Jews’ case against Paul was dismissed by Gallio, Paul stayed many more days in Corinth. Then he took his leave of the brethren, setting out to sea bound for Syria. He was in the company of Priscilla and Aquila. He had his hair cut in Cenchrea, for he’d been keeping a vow. 19 They came to Ephesus where Paul took leave of Priscilla and Aquila. Paul did go into the synagogue, and he reasoned with the Jews. 20 However, when they asked him to stay longer with them, he declined 21 and took his leave of them. He said, 'I must do my best to keep this coming feast in Jerusalem. I will come back again to you, God willing.' So Paul set sail from Ephesus.” (Acts 18:18-21).

¶“22 When Paul had landed at Caesarea, he went up to greet the church, and then went on down to Antioch. 23 Having spent some time in Antioch, he departed again, going from one place to the next, through Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.” (Acts 18:22-23).

¶“24 Now a certain Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, mighty in the Scriptures. 25 This man Apollos had been instructed in the way of the Lord. Fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus —with the exception that he knew only the baptism of John. 26 Apollos began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside, and explained to him the way of God more accurately.” (Acts 18:24-26).

¶“27 Apollos desired to go over into Achaia. The brethren encouraged him, and wrote to the disciples to receive him. When he got there, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; 28 for he powerfully refuted the Jews, publicly showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.” (Acts 18:27-28).

1 Paul Goes to Ephesus with Priscilla and Aquila

Verses 18-21

¶"After the Jews’ case against Paul was dismissed by Gallio, Paul stayed many more days in Corinth. Then he took his leave of the brethren, setting out to sea bound for Syria. He was in the company of Priscilla and Aquila. He had his hair cut in Cenchrea, for he’d been keeping a vow. They came to Ephesus where Paul took leave
of Priscilla and Aquila. Paul did go into the synagogue, and he reasoned with the Jews. However, when they asked him to stay longer with them, he declined and took his leave of them. He said, “I must do my best to keep this coming feast in Jerusalem. I will come back again to you, God willing.” So Paul set sail from Ephesus.” (Acts 18:18-21).

- **Setting out for Syria.** Paul was now ready to go back to Antioch in Syria, where his second missionary journey had started. He would first sail from Cenchrea, Corinth’s eastern seaport, across to Ephesus. Priscilla and Aquila accompanied him on that short leg of the journey; they apparently had business in Ephesus. Paul would then go by ship southwest to Caesarea not far from Jerusalem; then go down to Antioch.

- **Vow, synagogue, feast.** At a hasty glance, Paul may appear to have been practicing Judaism: He had been under a vow and had let his hair grow; he visited the synagogue in Ephesus; he was doing his best to get to Jerusalem for the upcoming feast. It is not necessary, however, to think that Paul was clinging the law of Moses. Jewish Christians were not expected to give up all their customs; they were only forbidden to bind them on Gentile Christians.

  - We do not know the nature of Paul’s vow. In any case, the taking of vows predated the law of Moses (eg Genesis 28:20-22).
  - Visiting the synagogue to reason with the Jews was one of Paul’s strategies for evangelism (eg Acts 18:4).
  - The statement (in some manuscripts) that Paul wanted to keep the feast in Jerusalem does not mean that he thought keeping the law of Moses was necessary to his salvation. It most likely means that he saw it as an opportunity to counteracts the lies that had damaged his reputation; to pay a courtesy visit to the church and the apostles; and to do some evangelism among Jews from various parts of the world who would also come to Jerusalem for the feast.

- **I’ll come back God willing.** Earlier in his second missionary journey, Paul had been forbidden to speak the word in Asia (Acts 16:6). This did not mean that God was against evangelism in Asia Minor, but it was not his priority for Paul at that time. Now Paul was in its chief city. He took the opportunity to visit the synagogue briefly and reason with the Jews. However, it was still not his priority:
even though he was requested to stay and teach, he declined, wishing not to delay his journey. He simply promised to return if and when God permitted. Indeed, later in his third missionary journey, Paul would spend three years in Ephesus (Acts 20:17-20,31).

2 Paul Visits Churches in Syria and Galatia

Verses 22-23

"When Paul had landed at Caesarea, he went up to greet the church, and then went on down to Antioch. Having spent some time in Antioch, he departed again, going from one place to the next, through Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples." (Acts 18:22-23).

- **At Caesarea.** It's a little uncertain why Paul went so far south, to a port near Jerusalem, when he was heading for Antioch in Syria. The shortest way would be to follow the coast, go past Cyprus, and disembark at Selucia the port of Antioch. Perhaps there was not a ship available on that route. Or, most likely, his statement (missing in some manuscripts), “I must do my best to keep this coming feast in Jerusalem”, is the explanation: he wanted to visit Jerusalem before finishing his journey at Syrian Antioch.
Went up to the church. Without the missing statement about the feast at Jerusalem, we would assume that it was the church in Caesarea that he visited. Whether it was Caesarea or Jerusalem, Luke did not record for Theophilus what took place, because it was most likely Jewish in nature, and Luke’s emphasis, in recording the second missionary journey, is on the outreach to the Gentiles.

Spent some time in Antioch. Paul’s second journey ends where it began, in Syrian Antioch. He stays there a while before he departed again to begin his third missionary journey.

Paul’s Journeys

Traditionally, Paul is said to have made three missionary journeys, plus a fourth journey to Rome. In the Acts Facts series, I have retained this traditional manner of dividing up Paul’s several journeys recorded in the book of Acts. This enables you to more easily relate our studies with other studies, references, and maps, which most likely adhere to the same scheme.

The four journeys of Paul are...

• 1st missionary journey (Acts 13:4 to 15:35).
• 2nd missionary journey (Acts 15:36 to 18:22).

The first two journeys start and end in Syrian Antioch. The third journey starts in Antioch and ends in Jerusalem. The fourth journey starts in Jerusalem and ends in Rome. You can read more about Paul’s trips to Jerusalem.

3 Meanwhile in Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila help Apollos

Verses 24-26

¶ "Now a certain Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, mighty in the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. Fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus—with the exception that he knew only the baptism of John. Apollos began to speak boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside, and explained to him the way of God more accurately." (Acts 18:24-26).

More accurately. Before describing the third missionary journey in detail, Luke takes us back to Ephesus where Paul had left Aquila and Priscilla. God has other workers besides Paul. Here we are introduced to Apollos. He is described as “teaching accurately” the things about Jesus, and as “mighty in the scriptures”. It comes as a surprise, therefore, that he did not know of baptism in the name of Christ as distinct from the baptism of John the Baptistizer. Another surprise is that Priscilla and Aquila did not contend with Apollos, or treat him as a false teacher,
or have his ministry curtailed, or disfellowship him. Rather, they did the positive and fruitful thing: they privately instructed him to make his accuracy more accurate, and his might in the scriptures more mighty! And Apollos was glad to be improved.

**Verses 27-28**

¶ "Apollos desired to go over into Achaia. The brethren encouraged him, and wrote to the disciples to receive him. When he got there, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; for he powerfully refuted the Jews, publicly showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.” (Acts 18:27-28).

- **The brethren encouraged him.** Apollos was a genuine and skilful man. The brethren recognised his value in evangelism, and encouraged him. No doubt Apollos would have carried on his work whether encouraged or not; but without that encouragement he would have been a less powerful servant of Christ. Paul has left Achaia and journeyed back to Syria. Apollos steps into Paul’s shoes in Achaia and keeps the momentum going. In our day, preachers don't need to be attacked or marginalised. They need to be made more accurate in their doctrine and encouraged in their work.

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Acts 19:1-20
—Verse by verse

This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 19:1-20. These verses describe Paul’s experiences and work in Ephesus during his third missionary journey.

Paul’s experiences and work in Ephesus.

Acts 19:1-20

¶“1While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul had gone through the upper country. So he came to Ephesus, and found a group of disciples. 2Paul asked them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' 3They replied, 'No, we haven't even heard whether the Holy Spirit has been given.' 4Paul asked, 'Into what were you baptized then?' 5They answered, 'Into John’s baptism.' 6Paul said, 'John indeed baptized with the baptism of repentance, and he told the people that they should believe in the one who would come after him —who is Jesus.' 7When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 8Paul laid his hands on them, and the Holy Spirit came upon them; they spoke with other languages and prophesied. 9There were about twelve men in all.” (Acts 19:1-7).

¶“8Paul went into the synagogue, and spoke boldly for a period of three months. He reasoned with persuasion about the Kingdom of God. 9But some became hardened and rebellious. They spoke evil of the Way before the multitude. So Paul withdrew from them, and took the disciples to the school of Tyrannus where he reasoned daily. 10This continued for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.” (Acts 19:8-10).

¶“11In Ephesus, God worked special miracles by the hands of Paul, 12so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were carried away from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them, and the evil spirits went out. 13But some Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, took it upon themselves to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had the evil spirits. They were saying, 'We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches...’ 14Among those who did this were seven sons of a man named Sceva, a Jewish chief priest. 15The evil spirit answered them, 'Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?’ 16The man who had the evil spirit in him leaped on them, and overwhelmed them. He attacked them such that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.” (Acts 19:11-16).

¶“17This became known to all who lived at Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. Fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. 18Also, many of those who had believed came, confessing, and disclosing their practices. 19Many of those who had been practitioners of magical arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. They counted their price, and found it to be fifty thousand pieces of silver.” (Acts 19:17-19).

¶“20So the word of the Lord was growing and gaining great power.” (Acts 19:20).
Paul Returns to Ephesus — Helps Untaught Disciples

Verses 1-7

¶ "While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul had gone through the upper country. So he came to Ephesus, and found a group of disciples. Paul asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” They replied, “No, we haven't even heard whether the Holy Spirit has been given.” Paul asked, “Into what were you baptized then?” They answered, “Into John’s baptism.” Paul said, “John indeed baptized with the baptism of repentance, and he told the people that they should believe in the one who would come after him — who is Jesus.” When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Paul laid his hands on them, and the Holy Spirit came upon them; they spoke with other languages and prophesied. There were about twelve men in all.” (Acts 19:1-7).

- **Came to Ephesus.** On his second missionary journey, Paul had visited Ephesus briefly as he was going from Corinth to Syrian Antioch. Members of the Jewish synagogue in Ephesus had wanted Paul to stay, but he said that he would return another time if God willed (Acts 18:18-21). Now the record of Paul’s third missionary journey, which starts at Acts 18:22-23, tells us that he came by land to Ephesus ready to stay and work there at length (Acts 19:1).

- **Found some disciples.** Before going to the synagogue that he'd previously visited, Paul found a dozen or so disciples who were believers in Jesus. How he found them, we don't know, but by some means God led him to them. Priscilla and Aquila had come to Ephesus with Paul on his voyage from Corinth to Syria, and he'd left them in Ephesus (Acts 18:18-19). But they didn't find these disciples. Apollos was preaching in Ephesus, but he hadn't found them, otherwise, before he went to Achaia, he'd have gone to these disciples in Ephesus to tell them that he'd learned the way of the Lord more perfectly (Acts 18:24-28). So the origin of these disciples is unclear — although this incident shows that knowledge of Jesus was spreading apart from the work of the apostles and preachers associated with them.

- **Paul's first question.** Paul did not seem to know these disciples, and he enquired whether they received the Holy Spirit when they believed. Paul apparently had in mind miraculous powers received through the laying on of an apostles’ hands (cf Acts 8:17-18). Since Paul recognized these people as disciples...
and believers, he would not question whether they had received the gift of the Holy Spirit which all believers receive when their sins are forgiven at baptism (Acts 2:38). Rather, he would question whether any spiritual gifts had been imparted to them.

Paul's second question. The reply to Paul’s first question was unexpected: "No, we have not heard that the Holy Spirit has been given." (Acts 19:2). This immediately made Paul question their baptism because the gospel when preached correctly will include the promise of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). So Paul asks, "Into what were you baptized then?" (Acts 19:3).

Note: Some translations render the reply to Paul’s first question as: “No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit”. This is incorrect, just as in John 7:39 it would be incorrect to translate “The Spirit was not” without supplying the implied word “given”. The reply should be rendered, “No, we have not even heard whether the Holy Spirit has been given.” (Acts 19:2).

John's baptism. The reply to Paul’s second question was, "Into John’s baptism" (Acts 19:3). This made Paul understand the problem. He explained that the baptism of John the Baptist was preliminary, and should be followed by baptism in the name of Jesus (Acts 19:4-5). On the day of Pentecost, Peter said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ..." (Acts 2:38). He made no exception of those who had been baptized with John’s baptism.

The Holy Spirit. John the Baptist was the herald of Jesus Christ. He preached and baptized, and his baptism was "a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins". (Mark 1:4). However his baptism lacked the promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit (John 7:39). The baptism of John was to give way to baptism in the name of Christ in order to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-39).

2 Paul Teaches in Ephesus —at Synagogue and School

Verses 8-10

¶ "Paul went into the synagogue, and spoke boldly for a period of three months. He reasoned with persuasion about the Kingdom of God. But some became hardened and rebellious. They spoke evil of the Way before the multitude. So Paul withdrew from them, and took the disciples to the school of Tyrannus where he reasoned daily. This continued for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." (Acts 19:8-10).

Into the synagogue. Paul also worked in the synagogue. This time he taught there for three months. This shows that he was still welcome there as he was previously when he'd been asked to stay longer (Acts 18:19-21).

Kingdom of God. One of the umbrella phrases for the Way of Christ is “the kingdom of God” or “the kingdom of heaven”. Jesus himself used that phrase when he told parables, and his own preaching is said to be "preaching the kingdom of God" (Luke 8:1, Luke 16:16). A kingdom has a king; laws; subjects or citizens; a culture; an economy; an army; and territory. Of course these aspects of a kingdom will be of a different nature in kingdom of God compared to a kingdom of this world. We remember that Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36).
• **Hardened and rebellious.** It took longer in Ephesus, but eventually the Jews who were against the Way of Jesus Christ started to agitate as they had in most of Paul’s experiences preaching Christ. And, as happened in other places, he had to leave the synagogue and find somewhere else to encourage the new disciples and persuade others to become disciples of Jesus (Acts 19:9-10).

• **School of Tyrannus.** Paul moved his work to the school of Tyrannus. If this was a school as we understand the word, then Tyrannus would possibly be the headmaster, but we hope he was not a tyrant as his name might suggest! Probably the word “school” here (Acts 19:9) means a place where people met for discussions and debates. This would suit Paul’s purpose very well and be more open for Gentiles to learn the gospel from him. He did not have the opposition here as he had in the synagogue where he lasted three months. In the school of Tyrannus, he carried on his ministry for two years with an excellent outreach into Asia Minor without having to travel around (Acts 19:10).

3 **Miracles Take Ephesus by Storm**

Verses 11-16

¶ "In Ephesus, God worked special miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were carried away from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them, and the evil spirits went out. But some Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, took it upon themselves to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had the evil spirits. They were saying, “We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches.” Among those who did this were seven sons of a man named Sceva, a Jewish chief priest. The evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?” The man who had the evil spirit in him leaped on them, and overpowered them. He attacked them such that they fled out of that house naked and wounded." (Acts 19:11-16).

• **Extraordinary miracles.** A miracle by definition is extraordinary, but those which Paul did in Ephesus were especially so. These miracles drew attention to Paul and the Jesus he preached; these miracles gave proof that he was preaching truth and the kingdom of God was real and powerful; these miracles also blessed the city greatly and showed that Paul’s God was a God of grace, mercy, and love.

• **Evil spirit.** The account of the seven sons of Sceva speaks for itself. You don't invoke the name of Jesus unless you are dedicated to him. Jesus doesn't jump just because you call his name. He didn't jump in this case. We are not told what happened to the demon possessed man, but no doubt Paul would not leave him in that condition.

Verses 17-19

¶ "This became known to all who lived at Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. Fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. Also, many of those who had believed came, confessing, and disclosing their practices. Many of those who practiced magical arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. They counted their price, and found it to be fifty thousand pieces of silver." (Acts 19:17-19).
The city of Ephesus was very religious, being devoted to magic and occult arts. As far as we know, these arts included divining the palm of the hand or reading signs in a great many other ways. They included talking to spirits of various kinds. They included drawing magical power from numbers, mixtures, amulets, and other objects.

Religions commonly employ similar arts today, and this is encouraged in our society. Isn't this religious genre as good as any other? Paul did not think so. When he showed Ephesus the superior power and the truth of his religion, numbers of people burned their religious books (Acts 19:11-20).

The value of the burned books was 50,000 pieces of silver. It is thought that the silver pieces were drachmas — each worth about a day's wages. When they burned these rare and hand-written books, a huge fortune went up in flames.

The people who burned those books made a very strong statement. They demonstrated how well Paul had convinced them that it matters what religion you practice, and only one religion will do.

Verse 20

¶ "So the word of the Lord was growing and gaining great power." (Acts 19:20).

END OF THE FIFTH SECTION OF ACTS

With this progress report (Acts 19:20). Luke concludes his description of the spread of Christianity into Asia, Macedonia, and Greece. Paul has completed his second missionary journey and has set out on his third. He has spent more than two years in Ephesus. In the sixth section of Acts, Paul revisits Macedonia and Greece and then goes to Jerusalem. He is imprisoned in Samaria, and then taken to Rome.
Acts 19:21-41
—Verse by verse

This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 19:21-41. These verses describe Paul’s troubles in Ephesus with the followers of the goddess Diana, also known as Artemis.

The goddess, Diana of the Ephesians

Acts 19:21-41

¶“21Now when these events were over, Paul determined in spirit to go to Jerusalem once he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia. He said, 'After I have been to Jerusalem, I must also see Rome.' 22He sent into Macedonia two of those who served him, Timothy and Erastus, yet he himself still remained awhile in Asia.” (Acts 19:21-22).

¶“23Around that time there arose an uproar concerning the Way, and it wasn't small. 24There was a man named Demetrius who was a silversmith. He made silver shrines of the goddess Artemis, bringing a lot of business to the craftsmen. 25This Demetrius got these artisans together, with the workmen of like occupation, and said, 'Gentlemen, you know that our prosperity relies on this business. 26However, you see and hear, that not at Ephesus alone, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that handcrafted gods are false gods. 27Not only is there danger that this trade of ours will come into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be despised; and her majesty destroyed, whom all Asia and the whole world worships.' ” (Acts 19:23-27).

¶“28Those who heard this were filled with anger, and cried out, saying, 'Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!' 29Soon the whole city was filled with confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater. The crowd had seized Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, who were among Paul’s travelling companions. 30When Paul wanted to enter in to the people, the disciples wouldn't allow him. 31Furthermore, some of the Asiarchs who were his friends, sent a message to him, begging him not to venture into the theater.” (Acts 19:28-31).

¶“32The assembly was in confusion. Some of the mob cried one thing, and some another. Most of them didn't know why they had come together. 33They brought Alexander out of the crowd, the Jews putting him forward. Alexander beckoned with his hand, and would have made a defense to the people. 34But when they realised that he was a Jew, they all cried out as one, 'Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!' They kept this up for about two hours” (Acts 19:32-34).

¶“35When the town clerk had quieted the multitude, he said, “You men of Ephesus, what man is there who doesn't know that the city of the Ephesians is guardian of the temple of the great goddess Artemis, and of the image which fell down from Zeus? 36Seeing then that these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet, and to do
nothing rash. 37 For you have brought these men here, who are neither robbers of
temples nor blasphemers of your goddess. 38 If therefore Demetrius and the craftsmen
who are with him have a matter against anyone, the courts are open, and there are
proconsuls. Let them press charges against one another. 39 But if you seek anything
beyond this, it will be settled in the regular assembly. 40 For indeed we are in danger
of being accused concerning this day’s riot, there being no just cause. We wouldn't be
able to give an account regarding this commotion.” 41 When he had said this, he

1 Paul Looks Toward Leaving Ephesus

Verses 21-22

¶ "Now when these events were over, Paul determined in spirit to go to Jerusalem
once he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia. He said, “After I have been to
Jerusalem, I must also see Rome.” He sent into Macedonia two of those who served
him, Timothy and Erastus, yet he himself still remained awhile in Asia.”
Go to Jerusalem. Paul spent around three years in Ephesus, where "a wide door for effective service" had opened for him (1 Corinthians 16:8-8). He was by this time planning to travel again, and continue his third missionary journey. This journey was to end in Jerusalem, after which he was going to be taken to Rome as described in the last two chapters of Acts. However, before going to Jerusalem, he wished to go back to Macedonia and Achaia to do more work there. He sent men ahead to start that work while he concluded his work in Asia.

Determined in spirit. Some think that the “spirit” mentioned is the Holy Spirit as distinct from Paul’s own. Later we will see that the Holy Spirit warned Paul about going to Jerusalem, and his brethren begged him not to go (Acts 21:10-14). Whilst the Holy Spirit did not forbid Paul to go to Jerusalem, neither did he determine that Paul should go. It was Paul’s own determination to go.

Timothy and Erastus. Paul had several comrades in his ministry and on his journeys. They were not always with him, but sometimes they would remain behind to complete Paul’s work, or go ahead to prepare for it.

Asian Artisans Cause Untimely Riot

Verses 23-27

"Around that time there arose an uproar concerning the Way, and it wasn't small. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought a lot of business to the craftsmen. He got these artisans together, with the workmen of like occupation, and said, “Gentlemen, you know that our prosperity relies on this business. However, you see and hear, that not at Ephesus alone, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that handcrafted gods are false gods. Not only is there danger that this trade of ours will come into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be despised; and her majesty destroyed, whom all Asia and the whole world worships.”" (Acts 19:23-27).

Artemis. This is the name of the goddess in the Greek, but in Latin (the Roman language) she is called Diana.

Demetrius stirs up trouble. This Demetrius had not openly opposed Paul in the three years Paul spent preaching in Ephesus. Suddenly, as Paul was winding up his work in Ephesus and ready to leave, Demetrius decided to stir up the people to riot. The things of which Demetrius accused Paul were largely true, but his method of taking action against Paul was illegal.

Verses 28-31

"Those who heard this were filled with anger, and cried out, saying, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” Soon the whole city was filled with confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater. The crowd had seized Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, who were among Paul’s travelling companions. When Paul wanted to enter in to the people, the disciples wouldn't allow him. Furthermore, some
of the Asiarchs who were his friends, sent a message to him, begging him not to venture into the theater." (Acts 19:28-31).

- **Asiarchs.** These were important and probably wealthy citizens of Asia who were, or had been, on a board of officials appointed to oversee the management of Roman public events such as the games. They would therefore have some expertise in handling public disturbance. Paul, a Roman citizen from an important city, would have access to such society, hence some of the Asiarchs were his friends and they urged him to keep out of the affray so as not to make it worse and not to endanger himself.

**Verses 32-34**

¶ "The assembly was in confusion. Some of the mob cried one thing, and some another. Most of them didn't know why they had come together. They brought Alexander out of the crowd, the Jews putting him forward. Alexander beckoned with his hand, and would have made a defense to the people. But when they perceived that he was a Jew, all with one voice cried out, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” They kept this up for about two hours" (Acts 19:32-34).

- **Alexander the Jew.** The Jews were getting involved in an effort to keep the people from turning on them too, since the Jews were against idols. They probably hoped also to help stir the people all the more against Paul. But Alexander failed to be heard.

- **Two hours.** It is surprising that the chanting went on so long. The authorities probably thought it wise to just monitor the situation and let it die down of its own accord to the point where order could be restored.

**3 Town Clerk of Ephesus Quashes Riot**

**Verses 35-41**

¶ "When the town clerk had quieted the multitude, he said, “You men of Ephesus, what man is there who doesn't know that the city of the Ephesians is guardian of the temple of the great goddess Artemis, and of the image which fell down from Zeus? Seeing then that these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rash. For you have brought these men here, who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess. If therefore Demetrius and the craftsmen who are with him have a matter against anyone, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls. Let them press charges against one another. But if you seek anything beyond this, it will be settled in the regular assembly. For indeed we are in danger of being accused concerning this day’s riot, there being no just cause. We wouldn't be able to give an account regarding this commotion.” When he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly." (Acts 19:35-41).

- **The town clerk.** The town clerk made a diplomatic speech in which he first said a few crowd-pleasing things about the goddess, second asserted that the Christians had done nothing illegal, third asserted that Demetrius and the craftsmen
need to follow the due process of law, and fourth warned that the Roman authorities could punish the city for the riot.

- **Christianity has consequences.** This account shows how the gospel can disrupt the normal customs, values, and beliefs of a society and even its economy. However if it's true Christianity, then it will do this only to the extent of changing things that are wrong—in this case turning people from vain idols to the living God. Such change will not damage the society but improve it, and leave the good aspects of the society not only undisturbed but more able to flourish.
Acts 20:1-16
—Verse by verse

This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 20:1-16. These verses describe Paul’s return to Macedonia and Greece during his third missionary journey.

Paul’s return to Macedonia and Greece.

Acts 20:1-16

¶“1After the uproar had ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, took leave of them, and departed to go into Macedonia. 2When he had gone through those regions, and had encouraged the disciples with many words, he came into Greece. 3He spent three months there. He was about to set sail for Syria when a plot was made against him by Jews; so he decided to go back through Macedonia.” (Acts 20:1-3).

¶“4The men who accompanied Paul as far as Asia, were Sopater of Beroea; Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians; Gaius of Derbe; Timothy; and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. 5However these had gone ahead, and were waiting for us at Troas. 6We sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we came to them at Troas, where we stayed seven days.” (Acts 20:4-6).

¶“7On the first day of the week, when the disciples were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day. He continued his speech until midnight.” (Acts 20:7).

¶“8There were many lights in the upper room where we were gathered. 9A young man named Eutychus sat in the window, sinking into a deep sleep. As Paul spoke still longer, Eutychus, was sound asleep. He fell down from the third story, and was dead when they picked him up. 10Paul went down, tightly embraced Eutychus, and said, 'Don't be troubled, for his life is in him.' 11When Paul had gone back upstairs, broken bread, and eaten, he talked with them a long while, right up til break of day. Then he departed. 12As for the boy, they took him home alive, and were greatly comforted.” (Acts 20:8-12).

¶“13Meanwhile we had gone aboard the ship and set sail for Assos, intending to take Paul aboard there. Paul had arranged it that way, intending himself to go by land. 14When Paul met us at Assos, we took him aboard, and came to Mitylene. 15Sailing from there, we came the following day opposite Chios. The next day we touched at Samos and stayed at Trogyllium, and the day after we came to Miletus. 16For Paul had determined to sail past Ephesus, not wanting to spend time in Asia. Paul was in a hurry, hoping if possible to be in Jerusalem in time for the day of Pentecost.” (Acts 20:13-16).
"After the uproar had ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, took leave of them, and departed to go into Macedonia. When he had gone through those parts, and had encouraged the disciples with many words, he came into Greece. He spent three months there. He was about to set sail for Syria when a plot was made against him by Jews; so he decided to go back through Macedonia." (Acts 20:1-3).

- **Paul's double farewell.** Paul gathered the disciples together to say goodbye. However after Paul’s time in Macedonia and Greece, he was able, at Miletus, to gather the elders from Ephesus for another farewell (Acts 20:15-38).

- **Encouraged the disciples.** Paul’s missionary work wasn't only to make disciples. Having made disciples, he tried to revisit and encourage them. Paul was not only an evangelist spreading the gospel, but an edifier building up and strengthening the converts. Paul had spent three years not travelling at all, but
working in Ephesus to build up the church. Then he set about revisiting churches in Macedonia and Greece, taking not days but months, and giving many lessons.

- **Three important ministries.** Both evangelism of the world and edification of the church are ministries of great importance, and each as important as the other. A third ministry, that of benevolence, is also high on Paul’s agenda, in this case the collection for the saints in Jerusalem (2Corinthians 9:1-15).

- **Uproars and plots.** Paul’s work is also characterised by opposition from various quarters. His last days in Ephesus saw a noisy protest against him by idol worshipers, stirred up by the craftsmen who made and traded in shrines of the goddess Artemis (Acts 19:23-41). After that, in his visitations in Greece, some of the Jews were plotting against him just as they had done in Paul’s earlier work in the region. The work of the gospel is attacked not only by pagans, as we would expect, but also by people who supposedly worship the very God who sent his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world.

2 **Paul Leaves Macedonia, Stays a Week in Troas**

**Verses 4-6**

¶ "The men who accompanied Paul as far as Asia, were Sopater of Beroea; Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians; Gaius of Derbe; Timothy; and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. However these had gone ahead, and were waiting for us at Troas. We sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we came to them at Troas, where we stayed seven days." (Acts 20:4-6).

- **Paul’s many companions.** Paul’s missionary journeys were really a team effort. At this point Luke was travelling with Paul, and several other men were waiting to rejoin them at Troas. To us, this sounds like an easy thing. We keep in touch by mobile phone and can know in an instant where everybody is and what is happening. But Paul and his companions had no such advantage, and trying to meet up with each other in the course of their journeys could be very trying and frustrating.

- **Of another occasion at Troas, Paul writes, "When I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went on to Macedonia" (2Corinthians 2:12-13).**

- **The days of unleavened bread.** Luke is here referring to a high and holy season of the Jews: the time of the Passover celebrated in Jerusalem. However this isn’t irrelevant to the disciples of Christ in Troas and elsewhere. Jesus died at Passover time. Although his disciples gathered often to remember the death of their Lord, the anniversary of his death would naturally make the Lord’s Supper even more poignant (Acts 20:7).

- **Stayed in Troas seven days.** Paul was able to be reunited with his companions waiting in Troas, and to meet with the disciples in that city at their gathering for the Lord’s Supper on the first day of the week.
Verse 7

¶ "On the first day of the week, when the disciples were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day. He continued his speech until midnight." (Acts 20:7).

- **First day of the week.** One or two translations put "on Saturday evening" here. The assumption is that Luke is thinking in Jewish time by which the Sabbath ends at sundown and the first day of the week begins. However in the same sentence Luke uses the term "midnight" which is an expression of Roman time. This strongly suggests that Luke is thinking according to the Gentile Roman clock, not according to Jewish time. Luke is a Gentile writing to a Gentile about events in a Gentile city.

Verses 8-12

¶ "There were many lights in the upper room where we were gathered. A young man named Eutychus sat in the window, sinking into a deep sleep. As Paul spoke still longer, Eutychus, was sound asleep. He fell down from the third story, and was dead when they picked him up. Paul went down, tightly embraced Eutychus, and said, "Don't be troubled, for his life is in him." When Paul had gone back upstairs, broken bread, and eaten, he talked with them a long while, right up til break of day. Then he departed. As for the boy, they took him home alive, and were greatly comforted. " (Acts 20:8-12).

- **Many lights.** Without electricity, the room was lit with oil lamps. These give off fumes and warmth. Moreover the room was crowded. Even with the window open, the air would be such as to make one drowsy. Eutychus succumbed. His body relaxed, and he fell back from the window ledge to his death below.

- **He was dead.** Luke clearly says, "he was picked up dead". Luke, as a doctor, would know the difference between seemingly dead and really dead. Therefore when Paul says, "his life is in him", Paul means that Eutychus had truly been killed by the fall, but had been brought back to life by Paul’s embrace.

- **Broken bread.** Some think this means that Paul had some food. Others think that it means he led the disciples in the Lord’s Supper. The term “breaking bread” is used for a common meal, but also for the Lord’s Supper (cf Acts 2:42,46). Which one of the two meanings you accept here, depends on how you understand the facts in verses 7 and 11. See panel below:

*Acts 20:7,11 How Interpreted*

The Events
• 1. The disciples came together to break bread.
• 2. It was the first day of the week.
• 3. Paul preached until midnight.
• 4. [Eutychus fell out of the window.]
• 5. After midnight Paul broke bread and ate.
• 6. Paul preached again until dawn.

These facts seem straightforward. However there is the question of whether this series of facts began on Saturday or Sunday, and whether the disciples had the Lord’s Supper before Paul preached till midnight or before he preached till dawn. Most people hold one of two opinions:

The Interpretations

• 1. The disciples came together on Saturday after sundown. They listened to Paul until midnight, then in the small hours of Sunday, after Eutychus had died and been raised from the dead, they partook of the Lord’s Supper with Paul. After that, Paul preached again till dawn on Sunday.

• 2. The disciples came together on Sunday and partook of the Lord’s Supper. Paul then preached till midnight when he was interrupted by the Eutychus incident. Paul then took some refreshment and preached again till dawn on Monday.

Of course there will be other interpretations, but the two above both agree that the Lord’s Supper was observed on Sunday rather than Saturday or Monday.

4 Paul Sets Out for Jerusalem

Verses 13-16

¶ "Meanwhile we had gone aboard the ship and set sail for Assos, intending to take Paul aboard there. Paul had arranged it that way, intending himself to go by land. When Paul met us at Assos, we took him aboard, and came to Mitylene. Sailing from there, we came the following day opposite Chios. The next day we touched at Samos and stayed at Trogyllium, and the day after we came to Miletus. For Paul had determined to sail past Ephesus, not wanting to spend time in Asia. Paul was in a hurry, hoping if possible to be in Jerusalem in time for the day of Pentecost."

• **Intending to go by land.** When Paul was in a hurry to get to the coast of Syria, and he had his travelling party all together, it is surprising that he would separate from them and go 30km by land to another port while they went to the ship and set sail from Troas. Paul must have had something quite important to do or, someone he needed to see, or perhaps he just needed some time to himself and a good long walk to calm his mind.

• **Jerusalem for Pentecost.** There are many ideas about why Paul wanted to be in Jerusalem by the day of Pentecost. Perhaps he thought that, with the busy celebrations, and the city crowded, he would escape the notice and harrassment of his Jewish enemies, while he met with the church and delivered the collection that had been gathered for the needy saints.
Acts 20:17-38
—Verse by verse

This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 20:17-38. These verses record Paul’s farewell speech to the Ephesian elders.

Paul’s farewell speech to the Ephesian elders.

Acts 20:17-38

¶“17From Miletus Paul sent to Ephesus, summoning the elders of the church. 18When they had come to him, he said to them, ‘You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time. 19I served the Lord with all humility, with many tears, and with trials which happened to me by the plots of the Jews. 20You know that I did not shrink from declaring to you all that was profitable. I taught you publicly and from house to house. 21I testified to both Jews and to Greeks about repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.’” (Acts 20:17-21).

¶“22’Now, behold, I go compelled in spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there; 23except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. 24But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself. I just want to finish my race with joy, and complete the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to fully testify to the gospel of the grace of God’” (Acts 20:22-24).

¶“25’Soo you see, I know that you all, among whom I went about preaching the Kingdom of God, will see my face no more. 26Therefore I testify to you this day that I am clean from the blood of all men, 27for I didn't shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God’” (Acts 20:25-27).

¶“28’Take heed, therefore, to yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which he purchased with his own blood’” (Acts 20:28).

¶“29’I say this because I know that, after my departure, vicious wolves will enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 30Men will arise even from among your own selves, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31Therefore watch, and remember that for a period of three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears’” (Acts 20:29-31).

¶“32’Soo brethren, I now entrust you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all those who are consecrated to God. 33I coveted no one’s silver, gold, or clothing. 34You yourselves know that these hands of mine served my own needs and those of my companions. 35In everything by this labor, I have shown you that you ought to help the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, who said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’’” (Acts 20:32-35).
36 When Paul had spoken these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.
37 They all wept much, and hugged Paul’s neck and kissed him affectionately. 38 They sorrowed most of all because of his saying that they should see his face no more. And they went with him to the ship” (Acts 20:36-38).

I Paul Reviews His Work in Ephesus

Verses 17-21

"From Miletus Paul sent to Ephesus, summoning the elders of the church. When they had come to him, he said to them, ‘You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time. I served the Lord with all humility, with many tears, and with trials which happened to me by the plots of the Jews. You know that I did not shrink from declaring to you all that was profitable. I taught you publicly and from house to house. I testified to both Jews and to Greeks about repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Acts 20:17-21).
Called for the elders at Ephesus. After sailing past Ephesus, because he was in a hurry to get on with his journey (Acts 20:16), Paul apparently found himself delayed a few days at Miletus. So he took the opportunity to send for the elders of the church at Ephesus (about 50km north) so that he could speak to them. He'd not seen them for nearly a year, having left Ephesus the previous Pentecost (1Corinthians 16:8).

Paul makes the following points about his work in Ephesus (Acts 20:17-21):

- He was loyal to the church in Ephesus; he stayed there for the whole time that he was in Asia.
- He served the Lord humbly, and willingly suffered many trials and cares for the sake of the gospel.
- He declared the whole gospel without fear of its opponents.
- He taught in public speeches and debates, but also in private house meetings; being more concerned with the size of the opportunity than the size of the audience.
- He taught both Jews and Gentiles without any favouritism.
- He did not teach "faith alone" but taught the necessity of other things that accompany faith, such as repentance.

2 Paul Looks Toward Jerusalem

Verses 22-24

¶ "Now, behold, I go compelled in spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there; except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself. I just want to finish my race with joy, and complete the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to fully testify to the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:22-24).
Compelled in spirit. There is disagreement as to whether Paul means his own spirit or the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, rather than compelling Paul to go to Jerusalem, has been warning Paul, through prophets "in every city", that capture and prison awaited him in Jerusalem (Acts 20:23). This message through the Spirit would be repeated in Tyre (Acts 21:3-4), and Caesarea (Acts 21:10-14). Therefore the compulsion was in Paul’s own spirit. He deeply felt an obligation to go to Jerusalem, to complete his mission. Perhaps he even thought it appropriate that he should suffer the very persecution which he had once inflicted on the disciples of Christ in that city.

Paul isn’t moved. When Paul says, “None of these things move me”, he doesn’t mean that he is deaf to the warnings and unconcerned about them. Rather, he means that he will not be moved from his determination, or stop short of fulfilling his duty to Jesus, even though completing that duty may lose him his freedom and perhaps even his life.

Verses 25-27

¶ "Now, behold, I know that you all, among whom I went about preaching the Kingdom of God, will see my face no more. Therefore I testify to you this day that I am clean from the blood of all men, for I didn't shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God." (Acts 20:25-27).

The blood of all men. Paul is using a figure of speech here. He means, “If you lose your life it won't be my fault” and of course he is talking about eternal life and eternal death.

The whole counsel of God. The term “counsel” here means not merely advice, but will. Paul had told them all the will of God. He had preached the gospel fully. Even when it brought opposition and suffering to him, he would boldly and bravely teach the whole truth about Jesus.

Paul Encourages the Work of Shepherds

Verse 28

¶ "Take heed, therefore, to yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which he purchased with his own blood." (Acts 20:28).

Elders, Overseers, Shepherds

These same men who were referred to as elders (Acts 20:17), are here called overseers and shepherds (Acts 20:28). These terms are interchangeable.

1. presbuteros
   elder (presbyter)
   Strong: 4245 cf 4243-7
   1Peter 5:1, Titus 1:5, Acts 20:17, 1Timothy 4:14
2. ἐπίσκοπος episkopos
   overseer (bishop)
   Strong: 1985 cf 1983-4
   Titus 1:7, Philippians 1:1, Acts 20:28

3. ποιμήν poimen
   shepherd (pastor)
   Strong: 4166 cf 4165-8
   Ephesians 4:11, 1Peter 2:25, 1Peter 5:1-4, Acts 20:28

**Take heed to yourselves.** There comes a time when disciples must stop relying on others to take responsibility for them, and instead take responsibility for themselves. Having done that, they can then take responsibility for others.

**Purchased the church of God.** Paul tells these elders to "shepherd the church of God which he purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). It was the local congregation at Ephesus of which they were the shepherds. Therefore the church which God purchased with his own blood is the church seen in each locality, not an invisible church.

### 4 Paul Warns About False Teachers

**Verses 29-31**

¶ "I say this because I know that, after my departure, vicious wolves will enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Men will arise from among your own selves, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember that for a period of three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears." (Acts 20:29-31).

**Wolves will enter in.** Here Paul gives the main reason for his exhortation that these elders should oversee and shepherd the church. While Paul was at or near Ephesus, he could protect the church from the destroyers. But now he is departing and others must be the watchers and protectors. Paul knew that even some of the guardians would prove to be false, and would split the church with heresy. This knowledge brought him to tears, and caused him to continually admonish the church to build its defenses.

### 5 Paul Commends the Elders to God

**Verses 32-35**

¶ "So brethren, I now entrust you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all those who are consecrated to God. I coveted no one’s silver, gold, or clothing. You yourselves know that these hands of mine served my own needs and those of my companions. In everything by this labor, I have shown you that you ought to help the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, who said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" (Acts 20:32-35).
• **No one’s silver or gold.** Paul here expresses the values that drove his work. He was interested not in earthly money, but in an eternal inheritance among the saints. He worked to make money only so that he and his companions could work to make saints. He lived by the principle that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

• **The words of the Lord Jesus.** Paul attributes to Jesus the saying, “It is more blessed to give than to receive”. We don’t find this saying in the gospels. Either Jesus said it to Paul, or Paul knew someone who had heard Jesus say it. Not everything Jesus said was written down, so we do not suppose that this quote indicates a lost record of Jesus’s sayings.

**Verses 36-38**

¶ "When Paul had spoken these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. They all wept much, and hugged Paul’s neck and kissed him affectionately. They sorrowed most of all because of his saying that they should see his face no more. And they went with him to the ship." (Acts 20:36-38).

• **They all wept much.** Christians have painful and sorrowful times such as this. We see here the expression of a great love that had grown between Paul and these men. They had always had the hope that Paul would return to them another time, but now they realize that they will never see him again in this world.
Acts 21:1-17
—Verse by verse

This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 21:1-17. These verses briefly describe Paul’s journey from Miletus to Jerusalem, as his third missionary journey draws to a close.

Journey from Miletus to Jerusalem

Acts 21:1-17

¶“1 Upon our final parting from the Ephesians, having set sail, we came by a straight course to Cos. Next day we came to Rhodes, and from there to Patura. 2 Having found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard, and set sail. 3 When we had come in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left hand, we sailed to Syria. We landed at Tyre, where the ship was to unload her cargo.” (Acts 21:1-3).

¶“4 We found disciples at Tyre, and we stayed there seven days. These disciples kept telling Paul, through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem. 5 When our time was up, we departed to continue our journey. They all, with wives and children, brought us on our way until we were out of the city. Kneeling down on the beach, we prayed. 6 After saying goodbye to each other, we boarded the ship, and they went back home.” (Acts 21:4-6).

¶“7 Our voyage from Tyre ended at Ptolemais. Arriving there, we greeted the brethren, and stayed with them one day. 8 On the next day, those of us accompanying Paul departed, and came to Caesarea. We entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. 9 This man had four maiden daughters who prophesied.” (Acts 21:7-9).

¶“10 We stayed with Philip several days. While we were there, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 When he came to visit us, he took Paul’s belt and bound his own feet and hands with it. He said, ‘The Holy Spirit says that the Jews at Jerusalem will likewise bind the man who owns this belt, and will deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’ 12 When we heard Agabus say these things, we and the people there begged Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, ‘What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.’ 14 Since he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, ‘The Lord’s will be done.’” (Acts 21:10-14).

¶“15 After these days with Philip, we packed our bags and went up to Jerusalem. 16 Some of the disciples from Caesarea also went with us. They brought along Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to lodge. 17 When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.” (Acts 21:15-17).
Journey from Miletus to Caesarea

Verses 1-3

"Upon our final parting from the Ephesians, having set sail, we came by a straight course to Cos, and the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. Having found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard, and set sail. When we had come in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left hand, we sailed to Syria, and landed at Tyre, for there the ship was to unload her cargo." (Acts 21:1-3).

Landed at Tyre. The voyage from Miletus to Tyre ran generally south-east, following the coast to Patara, then continuing without landfall until reaching Tyre.

Verses 4-6

"We found disciples at Tyre, and we stayed there seven days. These disciples kept telling Paul, through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem. When our time
was up, we departed to continue our journey. They all, with wives and children, brought us on our way until we were out of the city. Kneeling down on the beach, we prayed. After saying good-bye to each other, we boarded the ship, and they went back home.” (Acts 21:4-6).

- **Through the Spirit.** The message to Paul was a prophecy given by the gift of prophecy, one of the spiritual gifts imparted to some early Christians (1Corinthians 12:4-11).

- **That he should not go.** This was not meant as a directive by the Spirit, but as a warning. Were it a command to stay away from Jerusalem, Paul would have obeyed it. The Holy Spirit knew that Paul was determined to go to Jerusalem, and did not forbid him, but only sought to dissuade him.

- **Brought us on our way.** The whole church at Tyre went with Paul to the ship to see him off. This was not merely out of respect, but also to protect and encourage him. They were concerned that his life was in danger.

### Paul a Guest of Philip in Caesarea

**Verses 7-9**

¶ "Our voyage from Tyre ended at Ptolemais. Arriving there, we greeted the brethren, and stayed with them one day. On the next day, those of us accompanying Paul departed, and came to Caesarea. We entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. This man had four maiden daughters who prophesied." (Acts 21:7-9).

- **Voyage ended at Ptolemais.** After a day with the disciples at Ptolemais, Paul and his companions began the journey by road to Jerusalem and arrived in Caesarea.

- **Philip the evangelist.** In Caesarea, Paul and his companions visited Philip. We have have heard nothing of him since he baptized the Ethiopian Eunuch, found himself at Azotus, and preached his way to Caesarea (Acts 8:40). Some twenty years later, he was living there and gave Paul hospitality.

- **Maiden daughters who prophesied.** No doubt these daughters, being prophets, helped Philip in his ministry. The gift of prophecy was not confined to telling the future. People who prophesied were divinely guided and inspired in their teaching.

### Prophet Visits Paul — Trouble in Jerusalem Predicted

**Verses 10-14**

¶ "We stayed with Philip several days. While we were there, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. When he came to visit us, he took Paul’s belt and bound his
own feet and hands with it. He said, “The Holy Spirit says that the Jews at Jerusalem will likewise bind the man who owns this belt, and will deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.” When we heard Agabus say these things, we and the people there begged Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, “What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” Since he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, “The Lord’s will be done.”” (Acts 21:10-14).

- **Prophet named Agabus.** Agabus was the prophet who, many years earlier, had gone to Antioch in Syria and foretold the great famine (Acts 11:27-30). Now Agabus added his voice to the warnings that when Paul went to Jerusalem he would suffer.

- **People begged Paul not to go.** Paul became upset and exasperated at yet another case of many disciples trying to disuade him from going to Jerusalem. Paul did not deny the prophesies; but to Jerusalem he was determined to go, no matter what awaited him there.

- **The Lord’s will be done.** The Lord’s will was, apparently, that Paul should warned strongly of the trouble awaiting him in Jerusalem; that an effort should be made to persuade him not to go; that if he still remained determined, then he should go with the Lord’s blessing.

**4 Paul and Company Go Up to Jerusalem**

**Verses 15-17**

¶ "After these days with Philip, we packed our bags and went up to Jerusalem. Some of the disciples from Caesarea also went with us. They brought along Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to lodge. When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly." (Acts 21:15-17).

- **We packed our bags.** Included in the luggage would be some of the collected contributions for the needy saints in Jerusalem. Perhaps this was one of the reasons why some of the disciples from Cesarea went with Paul and his companions — to discourage robbers.

- **Brethren received us gladly.** If Paul was in any doubt of his welcome among the brethren in Jerusalem, his mind was put at rest. They were glad to see him. Safe lodging in Jerusalem for Paul and his companions had already been arranged in Caesarea.

- **Arrived in Jerusalem.** Paul had wanted to be in Jerusalem on Pentecost (Acts 20:16). He appears to have made it with not a day to spare, according to the days elapsed from Philippi to Miletus (Acts 20:6-16), and from Miletus to Jerusalem (Acts 21:1-8,15-17). Pentecost is the 50th day from the Passover. So starting with 50 days...
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*some day counts are guessed.*

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Acts 21:18-40
—Verse by verse

This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 21:18-40. These verses describe Paul’s troubles in Jerusalem at the end of his third missionary journey.

Trouble for Paul in Jerusalem.

Acts 21:18-40

¶“18 The day following our arrival in Jerusalem, Paul went in with us to James; and all the elders were present. 19 When he had greeted them, he reported one by one the things which God had worked among the Gentiles through his ministry. 20a When they heard it, they glorified God.” (Acts 21:18-20a).

¶“20b They said to Paul, ‘You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law. 21 They have been informed about you, that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children neither to walk after the customs. 22 What is to be done then? They will certainly hear that you have come and will assemble. 23 So you must do what we tell you. We have four men who have taken a vow. 24 Take them, and purify yourself with them, and pay their expenses for them, that they may have their hair cut. Then all will know that there is no truth in the tales they've heard about you, but that you yourself also observe the law.’ ” (Acts 21:20b-24).

¶“25 'But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have already written our decision that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from food offered to idols, from blood, from strangled things, and from fornication.’ ” (Acts 21:25).

¶“26 So Paul took the four men the next day, and purified himself and went with them into the temple to give notice of the days of purification, at the end of which a sacrifice would be made for each of them.” (Acts 21:26).

¶“27 When the seven days were almost completed, the Jews from Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the multitude. They seized him, 28 crying out, ‘Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place. Worse still, he brought Greeks into the temple, and has defiled this holy place!’ 29 They had previously noticed Trophimus, the Ephesian, with Paul in the city, and they assumed that Paul had brought him into the temple.” (Acts 21:27-29).

¶“30 All the city was stirred, and the people converged on Paul and dragged him out of the temple. The doors were quickly shut. 31 While the crowd was attempting to kill
Paul, news reached the commander of the regiment that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. 32 Immediately he took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to the rioters—who quit beating Paul when they saw the commander and the soldiers. 33 The commander moved in and arrested Paul, ordering him to be bound with two chains. Then the commander inquired who Paul was and what he had done. 34 Some among the mob shouted one thing, and some another. When the commander couldn't find out the truth because of the hubub, he ordered that Paul be brought into the barracks.” (Acts 21:30-34).

¶“35 When Paul came to the stairs, he found himself being carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the crowd 36 that followed. They were shouting, 'Kill him!' 37 As Paul was nearly inside the barracks, he asked the commander, 'May I speak to you please?' The commander said 'Oh you know Greek do you? 38 So are you that Egyptian, who lately stirred up sedition and led 4000 Assassins into the desert?' 39 But Paul replied, 'I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of that important city. I beg you, allow me to speak to the people.' 40 The commander gave him permission. Paul, standing on the stairs, raised his hand to the people. A profound quiet came over them as he began speaking to them in Hebrew.” (Acts 21:35-40).

[1] Paul Meets with James and the Elders in Jerusalem

Verses 18-20a

¶ "The day following our arrival in Jerusalem, Paul went in with us to James; and all the elders were present. When he had greeted them, he reported one by one the things which God had worked among the Gentiles through his ministry. When they heard it, they glorified God." (Acts 21:18-20a).

• **Arrival in Jerusalem.** This is the fourth recorded visit of Paul to Jerusalem. The previous three visits are recorded in Acts 9:26-30, Acts 11:28-30, Acts 15. (More Info)

• **Greeted, reported.** Paul had a good relationship with the Jerusalem church and its elders, and with the apostles. The church in Jerusalem and Judea had thousands of members and was very Jewish in its customs. Among its converts were some who were zealous for the law of Moses and believed Christians should keep it. Paul’s ministry was to Jews dispersed among the Gentiles, and to the Gentiles themselves who had no zeal for practising Judaism. This put a lot of tension in the good relationship, so Paul had to tread carefully. On this occasion he encourages the church by detailing the work of his third journey. He may also have brought and presented some of the money donated to the poor in Jerusalem by many Gentile churches at Paul’s urging (1Corinthians 16:1-5).

Verses 20b-24

¶ "They said to Paul, “You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law. They have been informed about you, that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to
forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children neither to walk after the customs. What is to be done then? They will certainly hear that you have come and will assemble. So you must do what we tell you. We have four men who have taken a vow. Take them, and purify yourself with them, and pay their expenses for them, that they may have their hair cut. Then all will know that there is no truth in the tales they’ve heard about you, but that you yourself also observe the law.” (Acts 21:20b-24).

- **You see brother.** After Paul had done with the niceties, and had succeeded in his encouragement, the church refers to a serious problem of disinformation about his ministry, and Paul is confronted (as he probably expected to be) with the need to face this problem and fix it.

- **To forsake Moses.** Paul had not, as rumoured, taught Jews dispersed among the Gentiles to abandon their customs or their observance of the law. He had rather insisted on four things:
  
  - (1) that these observances are not the way of salvation for anyone (Galatians 2:16, Galatians 3:23-29).
  
  - (2) that the law of Moses must not be bound upon Gentile Christians. Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with those who said that Gentile Christians should be circumcised and keep the law of Moses (Acts 15:1-2,5).
  
  - (3) that whether or not a person observes Jewish customs and rules must not be a subject for judging one another, but should be a matter of individual conscience which should not be injured (Colossians 2:16, Romans 14).
  
  - (4) that he himself should be "to those who are under the law as under the law, though not being myself under the law... to those who are without law, as without law, though not being myself without law but under the law of Christ” (1Corinthians 9:19-21).

- **Taken a vow.** It wasn't proposed that Paul take a vow on this occasion, but only that he pay the costs for the four men who were under a vow. (Acts 18:18).

- **You also observe the law.** It was not required of Paul that he be zealous for the law, but only that he be seen to observe it. The laws of Moses, and the associated customs and rules, were not merely religious laws but were the very threads of the social fabric of Jewish life, especially in Jerusalem. Paul had to be seen to respect these laws by his conduct.

**Verse 25**

¶ "But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have already written our decision that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from food offered to idols, from blood, from strangled things, and from fornication.”” (Acts 21:25).
The Gentiles. James repeats the terms of the resolution of the council in Jerusalem some years previously, between Paul’s first and second missionary journeys (Acts 15). It reinforced Paul’s principles that the law of Moses was not the way of salvation, and that therefore Gentiles should not be made to keep it.

2 Paul Follows Strategy Advised by James and Elders

Verse 26

¶ "So Paul took the four men the next day, and purified himself and went with them into the temple to give notice of the days of purification, at the end of which a sacrifice would be made for each of them." (Acts 21:26).

Purified himself. Although Paul was not himself under a vow, he was associating himself with the four men who were, and going with them into the temple. In this circumstance it would be proper for him to undergo purification ritual.

A sacrifice for each. The sacrifices would be offered on behalf of the four men, and Paul was paying for the purchase of the things to be sacrificed (cf Matthew 21:12). It doesn't appear that any sacrifice was made on behalf of Paul, since he had not taken the vow.

Paul’s aim. Paul’s normal strategy was to be all things to all men. For a Jew under the law, Paul would conduct himself as a Jew under the law, even though he wasn't under the law. As we see in the passage mentioned earlier, the goal of this difficult balancing act was to save souls (1Corinthians 9:19-23).

3 The Strategy Fails —Paul in Trouble

Verses 27-29

¶ "When the seven days were almost completed, the Jews from Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the multitude. They seized him, crying out, “Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place. Worse still, he brought Greeks into the temple, and has defiled this holy place!” They had previously noticed Trophimus, the Ephesian, with Paul in the city, and they assumed that Paul had brought him into the temple." (Acts 21:27-29).

Stirred the multitude. The strategy failed which James and the elders suggested, and which Paul followed since it was according to his principles. The plan failed, not because it was a bad plan, but because prejudice made Paul’s enemies misconstrue what he was doing.

Verses 30-34
"All the city was stirred, and the people converged on Paul and dragged him out of the temple. The doors were quickly shut. While the crowd was attempting to kill Paul, news reached the commander of the regiment that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. Immediately he took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to the rioters—who quit beating Paul when they saw the commander and the soldiers. The commander moved in and arrested Paul, ordering him to be bound with two chains. Then the commander inquired who Paul was and what he had done. Some among the mob shouted one thing, and some another. When the commander couldn't find out the truth because of the hubub, he ordered that Paul be brought into the barracks."

(Acts 21:30-34).

- **Soldiers save Paul.** The mob would have killed Paul had the soldiers not carried him to safety. Someone slammed shut the temple doors—perhaps that Paul’s blood should not contaminate the holy place. Whilst Jerusalem had its own culture and government, it was nevertheless under Roman occupation. One thing Rome didn’t countenance was riot. This commander was a *chiliarch*, in charge of all the local troops and their centurions. The commander’s name, by the way, was Claudias Lysias (Acts 23:26). So Paul finds himself in the hands of a very powerful man.

- **Bound with two chains.** Agabus the prophet had bound his own hands and feet with Paul’s belt, and said, *The Holy Spirit says that the Jews at Jerusalem will likewise bind the man who owns this belt, and will deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles*. The Jews caused the Roman commander to bind Paul with two chains—probably one chain for his hands at the wrists, and one for his feet at the ankles. So this may well be what Agabus referred to (Acts 21:10-11). Also, the commander later had Paul bound with thongs for a flogging which Paul averted (Acts 22:25).

### 4 Paul Speaks to Hostile Crowd

**Verses 35-40**

"When Paul came to the stairs, he found himself being carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the crowd that followed. They were shouting, “Kill him!” As Paul was nearly inside the barracks, he asked the commander, “May I speak to you please?” The commander said “Oh you know Greek do you? So are you that Egyptian, who lately stirred up sedition and led 4000 Assassins into the desert?” But Paul replied, “I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of that important city. I beg you, allow me to speak to the people.” The commander gave him permission. Paul, standing on the stairs, raised his hand to the people. A profound quiet came over them as he began speaking to them in Hebrew." (Acts 21:35-40).

- **Paul permitted to speak.** The commander had no idea who Paul was. Yet when Paul identified himself as a citizen of Tarsus, capital of the Roman province of Cilicia, the commander seemed to trust Paul, and gave him permission to address the crowd.
Acts 22:1-30
—Verse by verse

This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 22:1-30. These verses record Paul’s speech to a hostile crowd in Jerusalem.

Paul addresses a hostile crowd in Jerusalem

Acts 22:1-30

¶“1Paul said, 'Brethren and fathers, please hear my defense which I now make to you.' 2When they heard Paul speak to them in the Hebrew tongue, they became more quiet. Here is what Paul said to them: 3'I am a true Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up here in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel. I was educated according to the strict manner of the law of the fathers. I was zealous toward God, as you all are this day. 4I persecuted this way of Jesus to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. 5To this the high priest and all the council of the elders can testify. I received letters from them to the brethren, and went to Damascus to find followers there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem in order to have them punished.'” (Acts 22:1-5).

¶“6‘On my journey, as I neared Damascus about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me. 7I fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' 8And I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' And he said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you persecute.' 9Those who were with me saw the light and were afraid; but they did not hear the voice of him who spoke to me. 10And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise, and go into Damascus; there you will be told everything appointed for you to do.' 11I was made blind by the glory of that light, and my companions had to lead me by the hand. Thus I came into Damascus.'” (Acts 22:7-11).

¶“12'I was visited by a man named Ananias. He is a devout man according to the law with a good reputation among all the Jews living in Damascus. 13Ananias came and stood before me. He said, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' At that moment I looked up and could see him. 14He said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you to know his will, to see the Just One, and hear words from his mouth. 15For to all people you shall be his witness and tell what you have seen and heard. 16And now why do you wait? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'”’” (Acts 22:12-16).

¶“17‘When I returned to Jerusalem, while I was praying in the temple, I fell into in a trance. 18I saw Jesus who was saying to me, 'Make haste, and get yourself quickly out of Jerusalem; for they will not receive your testimony about me.' 19And I said, 'Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you; 20and when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I was also standing by; and consenting to his death; and I minded the clothes for those who slew him. 21And he said to me, 'Go now, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'”’” (Acts 22:17-21).
22. The Sanhedrin had been listening to Paul up to that statement. But then they began shouting, 'Away with such a fellow from the earth: for he has no right to live!' 23. While they shouted, they shed their clothes, and tossed dust into the air. 24. The Roman commander had Paul brought into the barracks, ordering that he be examined by scourging, hoping to discover why there was such an outcry against him. 25. And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, 'Is it lawful for you to flog a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?' 26. When the centurion heard that, he went and told the commander, 'Mind what you are doing, for this man is a Roman.' 27. Then the commander came, and said to Paul, 'Tell me, are you a Roman?' Paul said, 'Yes I am.' 28. The commander replied, 'With a great sum obtained I this freedom.' And Paul replied, 'But I was free born.' (Acts 22:22-28).

29. Those who had been about to interrogate Paul immediately withdrew, and the commander was afraid when he realised that he'd bound a Roman. 30. The next day, the commander wanted to know why the Jews were accusing Paul. So he released Paul and ordered the chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin to assemble. The commander brought Paul down, and set him before them.” (Acts 22:29-30).

[1] Paul Tells Crowd “I Persecuted the Way!”

Verses 1-5

"Paul said, “Brethren and fathers, please hear my defense which I now make to you.” When they heard Paul speak to them in the Hebrew tongue, they became more quiet. Here is what Paul said to them: “I am a true Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up here in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel. I was educated according to the strict manner of the law of the fathers. I was zealous toward God, as you all are this day. I persecuted this way of Jesus to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. To this the high priest and all the council of the elders can testify. I received letters from them to the brethren, and went to Damascus to find followers there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem in order to have them punished.”” (Acts 22:1-6).
the safety of the stairs, and permission was granted. Paul chose to speak in Hebrew rather than in Greek. This immediately hushed the crowd because they realized that Paul was a 'Hebrew of Hebrews' (Philippians 3:5). A Jew who could speak pure Hebrew had higher status among Jews who lived in Jerusalem. Jews from foreign places who could not speak Hebrew did not command as much respect.

**Paul’s credentials.** Paul let the crowd know his origins, and his background in the Jewish religion. On all counts he is a man of very high standing; and it did no harm to put that in the crowd’s face. Paul also describes how he himself had been every bit as anti-Christian as anyone in that crowd.

**Gamaliel.** This master of Paul’s education is possibly the same eminent Gamaliel who spoke in the Sanhedrin regarding its treatment of the apostles (Acts 5:34).

**Zealous toward God.** Paul had never lacked zeal; however his zeal had been "a zeal of God but not in accordance with knowledge" (Romans 10:2). Zeal for God, if fired by ignorance and prejudice, can be very dangerous.

### 2 Paul describes his conversion

**Verses 6-11**

"Paul continued, “On my journey, as I neared Damascus about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me. I fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' And I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' And he said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you persecute.' Those who were with me saw the light and were afraid; but they did not hear the voice of him who spoke to me. And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise, and go into Damascus; there you will be told everything appointed for you to do.' I was made blind by the glory of that light, and my companions had to lead me by the hand. Thus I came into Damascus.”” (Acts 22:7-11).

**Three accounts.** There are three accounts of Paul’s experience as he came near Damascus (Acts 9:3ff, Acts 22:6ff, Acts 26:13ff).

**About noon... a great light.** This light was brighter than the strong midday sun (Acts 26:13).

**Did not hear the voice.** Paul says that his travelling companions did not hear the voice of Jesus who spoke to him (Acts 22:19), whereas Luke says they heard the sound (Acts 9:7). Paul also says that he and his companions all fell to the ground (Acts 26:14). whereas Luke says that Saul fell to the ground and his companions stood speechless (Acts 9:7). This is one of those famous “contradictions” that some people think they have discovered in the Bible. However Luke is hardly likely to write an account that contradicts Paul’s own accounts, and then quote those accounts in the same document! It is easy to reconcile these accounts: Saul and his companions all fell to the ground when the light shone, but his companions stood up before Saul did. Saul heard what Jesus said, but his companions heard only the sound, but did not hear in the sense of catching what was said.
Verses 12-16

Paul continued, “I was visited by a man named Ananias. He is a devout man according to the law with a good reputation among all the Jews living in Damascus. Ananias came and stood before me. He said, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' At that moment I looked up and could see him. He said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you to know his will, to see the Just One, and hear words from his mouth. For to all people you shall be his witness and tell what you have seen and heard. And now why do you wait? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'” (Acts 22:12-16).

Ananias. Paul’s story could be laughed off as a touch of the sun, a moment of insanity in which his mind played tricks. However Paul points out that not only were his travelling companions witnesses to the light, but another man was, independently, quite as involved in the story as Paul. This man, Ananias, was a devout man of good reputation whose story could not be reasonably doubted. Not only did the Lord entrust Saul’s conversion to Ananias, but he also made Ananias able to corroborate Paul’s story.

Saul’s commission. Saul was given his commission to be a witness of the things he had seen. Primarily this meant that he had seen the risen Christ and he was to devote his life to preaching Christ raised from the dead and glorified. Because he was obedient to this commission, Paul found himself on many occasions a prisoner on trial.

Baptism. Saul was commanded to immediately be baptized in the name of the Lord whom Saul now believed and confessed to be Jesus. This baptism came with the promise of an amazing result, which Ananias expresses simply as "wash away your sins" (Acts 22:16). This compares with Peter’s phrase, "the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:38). Paul could have all his terrible acts of persecution, all his raging opposition to Jesus, completely forgiven, as soon as he submitted himself to baptism. Then he could set about preaching, instead of persecuting, the way of Jesus.

Wash away. We should understand that Ananias wasn't preaching “water salvation” to Saul. Whilst baptism is required for one’s cleansing from sin, baptism itself does not cleanse. Rather, in baptism, it is the blood of Jesus shed as a sacrifice for sin, that is the means of forgiveness. We know this because Jesus spoke of his blood as "poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28). Whilst baptism may be seen as "the washing of water" (Ephesians 5:26), this is understood to be a symbol of the forgiveness of sins. Water can only wash dirt from the body. Water cannot wash sin from the soul. Peter says that baptism "saves us not by washing dirt from the body but as an
appeal to God for a good conscience” (1Peter 3:21). Baptism is the symbol, not the power. The power is in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ which baptism symbolizes (see Romans 6).

- **A command to be obeyed.** We cannot reject baptism on the grounds that “it is only a symbol”. We must also see it as a commandment of the Lord. Ananias commanded Saul to be baptized. Had Saul rejected baptism, he would have added that rejection to all his other crimes against Jesus, and he would not have had any of his sins washed away. Nobody can benefit from what baptism symbolizes if they refuse to participate in the symbol itself. Why not? Because such refusal is outright disobedience to the clear commandment of God. Can you imagine Saul saying to Ananias, “Thank you, but if you don't mind I'll just have the washing away of my sins without being baptized”? Of course Saul would not have said any such thing! Yet this is effectively what a great many converts to Christ do say, and it is wrong. You can have a meat pie without tomato sauce; but you cannot have forgiveness of sins without baptism. You cannot treat baptism as a non-essential option. You must treat it as a commandment that must be obeyed without delay —following the example of Ananias and Saul.

**Verses 17-21**

¶ "Paul added, “When I returned to Jerusalem, while I was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance. I saw Jesus who was saying to me, 'Make haste, and get yourself quickly out of Jerusalem; for they will not receive your testimony about me.' And I said, 'Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you; and when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I was also standing by; and consenting to his death; and I minded the clothes for those who slew him.' And he said to me, 'Go now, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.' ”” (Acts 22:17-21).

- **Returned to Jerusalem.** Saul showed great courage in going back to Jerusalem. He was expected to bring back prisoners to be punished and killed. Instead he brought back the very gospel that he'd been zealous to eradicate. The Jews weren't about to tolerate this and Saul’s life was in grave danger. Jesus appeared to Saul and warned him of these facts.

- **Lord they know.** Saul seemed to think that knowledge of his former zeal as a persecutor should lead to acceptance of his new zeal as a preacher. Certainly reasonable people would have seen things in that light. But the Jewish enemies of Jesus were not reasonable people, but blind with prejudice. So Jesus told Paul he had to go far away from Jerusalem, so that he could preach where the threat was not so strong.

**Paul Almost Flogged by the Romans**

**Verses 22-28**

¶ "The Sanhedrin had been listening to Paul up to that statement. But then they began shouting, 'Away with such a fellow from the earth: for he has no right to live!' While they shouted, they shed their clothes, and tossed dust into the air. The Roman commander had Paul brought into the barracks, ordering that he be examined by scourging, hoping to discover why there was such an outcry against him. And as they
bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, 'Is it lawful for you to flog a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?’ When the centurion heard that, he went and told the commander, 'Mind what you are doing, for this man is a Roman.' Then the commander came, and said to Paul, 'Tell me, are you a Roman?’ Paul said, 'Yes I am.’ The commander replied, 'With a great sum obtained I this freedom.' And Paul replied, 'But I was free born.'” (Acts 22:22-28).

- **They began shouting.** The prejudice and hatred, which Saul had encountered after his conversion, was still rife all these years later. Another disgusting exhibition of it ensued.

- **Lawful to flog a Roman?** Lysias the Roman commander saw the need to quell the riot quickly before it worsened, but he needed urgently to know what the fuss was all about, and who better to inform him than Paul. Unwisely, Lysias chose torture as a crude but swift method of getting the information out of Paul. However Paul had a surprise for the Lysias, who did not know that Paul was a Roman citizen of high standing. It was illegal to flog an uncondemned Roman citizen. Even binding him with thongs in preparation for flogging was an illegal act for which the punishment was unthinkable. Paul was no longer at their mercy; they were at his. How quickly a few words can turn everything upside down!

**Verse 29-30**

¶ "Those who had been about to interrogate Paul immediately withdrew, and the commander was afraid when he realised that he'd bound a Roman. The next day, the commander wanted to know why the Jews were accusing Paul. So he released Paul and ordered the chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin to assemble. The commander brought Paul down, and set him before them.” (Acts 22:29-30).

- **Ordered the Sanhedrin to assemble.** The Roman commander had got himself into a serious predicament, and still had not discovered what the unrest was about. So he made a second attempt to find out. On this attempt, the commander acted in a considered manner and ordered a hearing. He could not use a Roman court, lest his compromised position be discovered. So he ordered the Jewish Sanhedrin to convene and examine Paul. He would attend to guard the prisoner, and thus learn what the Jews had against Paul.

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Acts 23:1-35
—Verse by verse

This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 23:1-35. These verses describe how the Sanhedrin persecuted Paul in Jerusalem, and the Roman commander Lysias rescued him.

The Sanhedrin persecutes Paul in Jerusalem

Acts 23:1-35

¶”1Paul looked in earnest at the Sanhedrin and said, 'Brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.' 2The high priest Ananias interrupted and commanded those who stood near Paul to smite him on the mouth. 3Paul said to Ananias, 'God shall smite you, you whitewashed wall. Do you sit to judge me by the law, and yet command that I be struck contrary to the law?' 4Those who stood by said, 'Do you revile God's high priest?' 5Paul replied, 'Brethren, I was not aware that he was the high priest, otherwise I would have done as the scripture says, 'You shall not speak evil of the ruler of your people.'” (Acts 23:1-5).

¶”6When Paul observed that some in the council were Sadducees, and the others were Pharisees, he cried out, 'Brethren! I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. The real point on which I am being examined is the the hope of the resurrection of the dead!' 7When Paul said this, a great argument arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The assembly was divided, 8because the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees confess belief in these. 9There was a lot of shouting. The scribes who belong to the Pharisee’s party stood up and argued aggressively. They said, 'We find no fault in this man; if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God.'” (Acts 23:6-9).

¶”10As the dissension worsened, the commander became very concerned that Paul might be torn in pieces by the mob. He commanded the soldiers to go down and to remove Paul from them by force, and to bring him into the barracks. 11When night came, the Lord stood by Paul, and said, 'Be of good courage, Paul, for just as you have solemnly testified about me in Jerusalem, so must you testify also at Rome.'” (Acts 23:10-11).

¶”12Next day, some of the Jews conspired together. They bound themselves under an oath vowing that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. 13More than forty persons were involved in this plot. 14They came to the chief priests and elders, and said, 'We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul. 15Now you and the Sanhedrin ask the commander to bring him down to you tomorrow. Make it sound as though you want to make a more complete examination of his case. We are ready to ambush him on his way, and kill him.'” (Acts 23:12-15).

¶”16The son of Paul’s sister heard of their lying in wait. He went and entered into the barracks and told Paul. 17Then Paul called over one of the centurions, and said, 'Take
So the centurion led the lad to the commander, and said, 'Paul the prisoner called me over, and requested me to bring this young man to you. He has information to tell you.' So the commander took the lad by the hand, and led him aside. The commander quietly asked the lad, 'What information have you to tell me?' The lad said, 'The Jews have conspired to request you to bring down Paul tomorrow into the Sanhedrin. They will pretend that they want examine him more thoroughly. Don't grant their request, because more than forty men lie in wait to ambush Paul. They have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him. They are ready right now, just waiting for an undertaking from you.'” (Acts 23:16-21).

¶“2: So the commander then let the young man depart, but charged him, 'You must not tell anyone that you have told me these things.' The commander then called two centurions. He said to them, 'Make ready two hundred soldiers to proceed to Caesarea, with 70 mounted on horses, also 200 men armed with spears. Go at the third hour of the night. Also provide them with mounts to set Paul on. Escort him safely to Felix the governor.' And he wrote a letter after this manner: ” (Acts 23:22-25).

¶“26'Claudius Lysias to the most excellent governor Felix: Greetings. This man was arrested by the Jews, and they would have killed him, had I not come with an army and rescued him. I had learned that he was a Roman. To ascertain their charge against him, I brought him before their Sanhedrin. I found him to be accused merely of questions concerning their law, and nothing worthy of death or of bonds. And when I was told how the Jews laid wait for the man to ambush and kill him, I sent him immediately to you, and ordered his accusers to state before you what they had against him. Farewell.'” (Acts 23:26-30).

¶“31The soldiers, following their orders, took Paul, and brought him by night to Antipatris. Next day, they left the horsemen to go ahead with him, and they returned to the barracks. When the horsemen came to Caesarea, they delivered the letter to the governor, and presented Paul before him. The governor read the letter, and then inquired what province Paul was from. When the governor understood that Paul was from Cilicia, he said, 'I will grant you a hearing as soon as your accusers arrive.' The governor commanded that Paul be kept meanwhile at Herod’s residence.” (Acts 23:31-35).

1 Paul Starts Badly in Trial Before Sanhedrin

Verses 1-5

¶ "Paul looked in earnest at the Sanhedrin and said, “Brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.” The high priest Ananias interrupted and commanded those who stood near Paul to smite him on the mouth. Paul said to Ananias, “God shall smite you, you whitewashed wall. Do you sit to judge me by the law, and yet command that I be struck contrary to the law?” Those who stood by said, “Do you revile God's high priest?” Paul replied, “Brethren, I was not aware that he was the high priest, otherwise I would have done as the scripture says, 'You shalt not speak evil of the ruler of your people.' ”” (Acts 23:1-5).
Smite him on the mouth. The commander Lysias had ordered the Sanhedrin to assemble, and had brought Paul to trial before the council as a ploy to gain intelligence about the unrest surrounding Paul. When Paul spoke in his own defense, he had uttered but one short sentence when he was intimidated and abused by being struck on the mouth by order of the court. Paul responded spiritedly, only to find himself apologising for what he said. The hearing had got off to a very bad start, and it didn't improve.

A hypocrite.

Paul Sets Sanhedrin Factions Against Each Other

Verses 6-9

¶ "When Paul observed that some in the council were Sadducees, and the others were Pharisees, he cried out, “Brethren! I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. The real point on which I am being examined is the the hope of the resurrection of the dead.” When Paul said this, a great argument arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The assembly was divided, because the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees confess belief in these. There was a lot of shouting. The scribes who belong to the Pharisee’s party stood up and argued aggressively. They said, “We find no fault in this man; if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God.”” (Acts 23:6-9).

Sadducees and Pharisees. Paul thought very quickly on his feet and employed the strategy of “divide and conquer”. By raising the issue of resurrection from the dead, Paul split the assembly. However this served only to turn the hearing into a complete fiasco.

Roman Commander Rescues Paul from Sanhedrin

Verses 10-11

¶ "As the dissension worsened, the commander became very concerned that Paul might be torn in pieces by the mob. He commanded the soldiers to go down and to remove Paul from them by force, and to bring him into the barracks. When night came, the Lord stood by Paul, and said, “Be of good courage, Paul, for just as you have solemnly testified about me in Jerusalem, so must you testify also at Rome.”” (Acts 23:10-11).

Into the barracks. Still frustrated, Lysias had Paul swept back to the safety of the barracks. We notice that Paul had kept quiet about Lysias’s former indiscretion in having Paul bound with thongs ready for flogging. Lysias no doubt had respect for Paul on this account, and was protecting Paul not merely out of a duty of care for a Roman citizen, but also out of gratitude.

Be of good courage. The Lord Jesus also showed respect and grace to Paul by personally appearing to him, encouraging him, and letting him know that the Jews will not prevent him from going to Rome.
Jewish Conspirators Fail in Plot to Kill Paul

Verses 12-15

¶ "Next day, some of the Jews conspired together. They bound themselves under an oath vowing that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. More than forty persons were involved in this plot. They came to the chief priests and elders, and said, “We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul. Now you and the Sanhedrin ask the commander to bring him down to you tomorrow. Make it sound as though you want to make a more complete examination of his case. We are ready to ambush him on his way, and kill him.”" (Acts 23:12-15).

- Under an oath. The cunning of these conspirators against Paul is redolent of the devil’s own cunning. It was at once clever yet insane. Forty men put themselves under a fatal oath simply to coerce the Sanhedrin into co-operating with their scheme. In hindsight we know their plan failed. So what did they do—die of starvation to honour their oath? Hardly: they were not honourable men.

Verses 16-21

¶ "The son of Paul’s sister heard of their lying in wait. He went and entered into the barracks and told Paul. Then Paul called over one of the centurions, and said, “Take this young man to your commander, for the lad has some information for him.” So the centurion led the lad to the commander, and said, “Paul the prisoner called me over, and requested me to bring this young man to you. He has information to tell you.” So the commander took the lad by the hand, and led him aside. The commander quietly asked the lad, “What information have you to tell me?” The lad said, “The Jews have conspired to request you to bring down Paul tomorrow into the Sanhedrin. They will pretend that they want examine him more thoroughly. Don't grant their request, because more than forty men lie in wait to ambush Paul. They have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him. They are ready right now, just waiting for an undertaking from you.”" (Acts 23:16-21).

- Heard of their lying in wait. How this lad heard about the plot is a mystery. A lad can go unnoticed where a grown man cannot. Perhaps this lad purposely risked his life to be a spy, or perhaps he just happened to overhear somebody talking. In any event it seems the providence of God was at work here. The lad, to his credit, acted responsibly. By visiting and informing Paul, the boy gave Paul the means not only to preserve his own life but to cause Lysias to be grateful yet again. It was a choice piece of intelligence that a Jewish lad took to the Roman commander. And Lysias would appreciate that Paul trusted the commander’s army to deal with the matter rather than scheming a counter-plot himself and raising a gang of Jews to attack the ambushers.

Verses 22-25

¶ "So the commander then let the young man depart, but charged him, “You must not tell anyone that you have told me these things.” The commander then called two centurions. He said to them, “Make ready two hundred soldiers to proceed to Caesarea, with 70 mounted on horses, also 200 men armed with spears. Go at the
third hour of the night. Also provide them with mounts to set Paul on. Escort him safely to Felix the governor." And he wrote a letter after this manner: "


- **Proceed to Caesarea.** Lysias thought it prudent to remove Paul from Jerusalem to the city of Caesarea where Felix governed the province that included Judea and Jerusalem. There Paul would be dealt with more safely and fairly, with the Sanhedrin having less influence and opportunity to make trouble.

- **Two hundred soldiers.** Usually a centurion was in charge of 80 soldiers rather than the nominal 100 that the term centurion suggests. However Lysias the commander was taking no chances. As Paul’s escort to Caesarea, two centurions were given charge of a full two hundred soldiers. These solders were support for seventy cavalry which the commander attached to them. Paul was to ride on horseback amid the cavalry who in turn were flanked by the foot soldiers. The commander made it clear that this detachment was to go all the way to Caesarea. However, even with this large force, a second contingent of two hundred soldiers armed with spears, or perhaps bows, was added, apparently to absolutely ensure the safe passage of Paul, and the main detachment, out of Jerusalem. These soldiers went as far as Antipatris (Acts 23:31-32).

- **He wrote a letter.** Lysias concisely informs the governor Felix in Caesarea why he is sending Paul. His letter was as follows:

**Verses 26-30**

¶ "Claudius Lysias to the most excellent governor Felix: Greetings. This man was arrested by the Jews, and they would have killed him, had I not come with an army and rescued him. I had learned that he was a Roman. To ascertain their charge against him, I brought him before their Sanhedrin. I found him to be accused merely of questions concerning their law, and nothing worthy of death or of bonds. And when I was told how the Jews laid wait for the man to ambush and kill him, I sent him immediately to you, and ordered his accusers to state before you what they had against him. Farewell. " (Acts 23:26-30).

- **Summation by Lysias.** This was the account of events according to Lysias (Acts 23:26-30 above). It was the truth, albeit with a gloss. Lysias gave the impression that he had kept himself well informed at all times. Actually Lysias had bungled his attempts to get the intelligence he needed, and remained largely uninformed until the prisoner and the prisoner’s young nephew enlightened him. But the commander Lysias can be forgiven for not mentioning that to Agrippa.

4 **Paul Escorted Safely to Caesarea**

**Verses 31-35**

¶ "The soldiers, following their orders, took Paul, and brought him by night to Antipatris. Next day, they left the horsemen to go ahead with him, and they returned to the barracks. When the horsemen came to Caesarea, they delivered the letter to the governor, and presented Paul before him. The governor read the letter, and then inquired what province Paul was from. When the governor understood that Paul was from Cilicia, he said, ‘I will grant you a hearing as soon as your accusers arrive.’ The
governor commanded that Paul be kept meanwhile at Herod’s residence" (Acts 23:31-35).

- **The horsemen... the soldiers** The horsemen were not detached from their 200 soldiers. Lysias had ordered “200 soldiers to go to Caesarea with 70 horsemen” (Acts 23:23). We recall that there was another 200 soldiers armed with spears. They were the ones who went only as far as Antipatris and then returned to barracks.

- **Paul was from Cilicia.** Cilicia was an important province, and Felix would be inclined not to inconvenience a Roman citizen from there. So he assured Paul that the only delay would be that caused by his accusers. They, of course, would give the appearance of coming to Caesarea when it pleased them. On the other hand, they would not risk offending Felix by delaying too long. Such is the way of politics.
Acts 24:1-27
—Verse by verse

This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 24:1-27. These verses describe how Paul was examined by Felix in Caesarea, with Tertullus and the Jews accusing Paul.

Paul examined by Felix in Caesarea.

Acts 24:1-27

¶“1Five days later, Ananias the high priest came down to Caesarea with the elders, and with an orator named Tertullus, who presented the evidence to the governor against Paul. 2And when Paul was summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him. Tertullus said to the governor, 'Under you we enjoy much peace, and by your providence this nation benefits greatly. 3We always, everywhere, acknowledge this with gratitude, most noble Felix. 4Not wishing to weary you further, I plead with you to grant us by your kindness a brief hearing.' ” (Acts 24:1-4).

¶“5Tertullus then said, 'Indeed we have found this man a pest and a trouble maker among all the Jews throughout the world. He is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. 6He also attempted to desecrate the temple. We then arrested him. We intended to judge him according to our law. 7However the commander Lysias fell upon us with much violence and snatched him from our hands, ordering his accusers to come before you. So when you examine him yourself, you will be able to know that all our accusations against him are true.' 8At that point the Jews joined in, asserting that these things were so.” (Acts 24:5-9).

¶“10When the governor indicated that Paul should speak, Paul made his reply: 'Knowing that you have served this nation as a judge for many years, I am pleased to make my defense. 11It will not escape your notice that it was only twelve days ago that I went up to Jerusalem to worship. 12And my accusers did not find me disputing with anybody or causing unrest either in the temple, or in the city, or in the synagogues. 13Nor can they prove any of the things of which they now accuse me.' ” (Acts 24:10-13).

¶“14'I do however confess to you that I worship the God of my fathers by following the way which they call a sect. I believe all things written in the law and in the prophets, 15and have hope toward God, which they themselves cherish, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. 16I discipline myself in order to always have a blameless conscience before God and men.' ” (Acts 24:14-16).

¶“17'After many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation. 18While I was thus engaged, certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or uproar. 19They ought to have come here before you to object if they had anything against me. 20Failing that, let those who are present tell you if they found me misbehaving when I stood before the Sanhedrin. 21The only thing they could say is that I stood up and shouted that I was on trial that day because I teach the resurrection of the dead.' ” (Acts 24:17-21).
And when Felix heard these things, having superior knowledge of that way, he adjourned the hearing with these words: 'When Lysias the commander comes down, I will be able to decide your case.' Felix then commanded a centurion to take custody of Paul, but to let him have some liberty and allow his acquaintances to help or visit him.” (Acts 24:22-23).

Some days later, Felix arrived with his wife Drusilla who was a Jewess. Felix summoned Paul, and listened to him speak about faith in Christ. As Paul reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and judgment to come, Felix trembled. He said to Paul, 'Go your way for the time being; when I find time, I will call for you.' Felix also hoped that Paul might give him a bribe for freedom, so he often sent for Paul and talked with him. But after two years went by, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. Felix, to curry favour with the Jews, left Paul imprisoned.” (Acts 24:24-27).

Tertullus Accuses Paul Before Governor Felix

Verses 1-4

"Five days later, Ananias the high priest came down to Caesarea with the elders, and with an orator named Tertullus, who presented the evidence to the governor against Paul. And when Paul was summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him. Tertullus said to the governor, “Under you we enjoy much peace, and by your providence this nation benefits greatly. We always, everywhere, acknowledge this with gratitude, most noble Felix. Not wishing to weary you further, I plead with you to grant us by your kindness a brief hearing.”” (Acts 24:1-4).

After five days. From Paul’s first appearance before Felix, it took five days for his accusers to arrive. This delay was nicely calculated to give the appearance of coming to Caesarea when it pleased them. On the other hand, they did not risk offending Felix by delaying too long. They could excuse the delay by saying they needed time to engage a lawyer and prepare their case.

An orator named Tertullus. Tertullus was the barrister prosecuting the case against Paul on behalf of the Sanhedrin. Important members of the Sanhedrin were present as witnesses. Tertullus was probably a Roman. Tertullus would have been familiar with Roman law and Roman court proceedings. His opening remarks are a formal acknowledgement of the judge and a formal plea to be heard.

Verses 5-9

"Tertullus then said, “Indeed we have found this man a pest and a trouble maker among all the Jews throughout the world. He is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. He also attempted to desecrate the temple. We then arrested him. [We intended to judge him according to our law. However the commander Lysias fell upon us with much violence and snatched him from our hands, ordering his accusers to come before you.] So by examining him yourself you will be able to know that all our accusations against him are true.” At that point the Jews joined in, asserting that these things were so.” (Acts 24:5-9).

Three accusations. There were three charges against Paul.

1. He was a trouble maker stirring up dissension among the Jews.
2. He was a ringleader of the sect that follows Jesus of Nazareth.

3. He attempted to profane the temple.

Paul is not accused of directly breaching any Roman law, however each of these charges does imply that Paul is a threat to the pax Romana —the peace and quiet which Roman rule imposed on all communities and nations under their rule. The accusations seem to be of little substance, even if they could be proven. However Tertullus offers no evidence and seems, with remarkable incompetence, to foist the responsibility of proof on to Felix the judge. (Tertullus also seems inept in accusing Lysias the commander of unreasonable violence.) Paul’s reply in his own defense shows the accusations against Paul to be nonsense.

Text missing. Some translations omit the end of verse 6, all of verse 7, and the beginning of verse 8, because the passage is missing from certain manuscripts. On the other hand, the new King James Version and others include this passage, deeming it to have sufficient manuscript support.

[2] Paul Replies in His Own Defense Before Felix

Verses 10-13

"When the governor indicated that Paul should speak, Paul made his reply: “Knowing that you have served this nation as a judge for many years, I am pleased to make my defense. It will not escape your notice that it was only twelve days ago that I went up to Jerusalem to worship. And my accusers did not find me disputing with anybody or causing unrest either in the temple, or in the city, or in the synagogues. Nor can they prove any of the things of which they now accuse me.” " (Acts 24:10-13).

Paul’s reply to the trouble making charge. After making a formal acknowledgment of respect for the judge, Paul stated that he had arrived in Jerusalem only twelve days prior to this trial. He'd been detained in Caesarea five of those days, and had been at least three days in the custody of the army. So he'd had only four days in Jerusalem to find an opportunity to make trouble. In those four days nobody had observed him disputing or causing unrest anywhere in Jerusalem. As for causing unrest “throughout the world”, there was no proof of this at all.

Verses 14-16

"Paul then said, “I do however confess to you that I worship the God of my fathers by following the way which they call a sect. I believe all things written in the law and in the prophets, and have hope toward God, which they themselves cherish, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. I discipline myself in order to always have a blameless conscience before God and men”” (Acts 24:14-16).

Paul’s reply to the sect ringleader charge. Paul did not deny this charge, but did show it to be no crime. Paul was a follower of Jesus, however he was a believer in all the law and the prophets, the Jewish scriptures. Furthermore he preached the resurrection of the dead which the majority of Jews believed in. He also practiced the righteous discipline that any good Jew followed. Clearly, if there was dissension among the Jews, Paul was not the one stirring it up.
Verses 17-21

¶ "Paul continued his defense to the governor: “After many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation. While I was thus engaged, certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or uproar. They ought to have come here before you to object if they had anything against me. Failing that, let those who are present tell you if they found me misbehaving when I stood before the Sanhedrin. The only thing they could say is that I stood up and shouted that I was on trial that day because I teach the resurrection of the dead.” “ (Acts 24:17-21).

- **Paul’s reply to the temple desecration charge.** Paul stated his purpose in coming to Jerusalem and entering the temple. It was to bring gifts of charity and religious offerings to the Jewish nation. He was purified in the temple and had brought no impure thing or person into the temple. While in the temple he was observed to be quiet and devout in his religious duties, not causing any disturbance. Those who observed his behaviour in the temple were remarkably absent from among the witnesses in the court. The witnesses who were in the court had observed Paul’s behaviour in the temple precincts when he was before them at the assembly of the Sanhedrin. They would have to admit that he did nothing profane on that occasion, unless it was that he’d shouted that he believed and taught the resurrection of the dead.

3 **Governor Felix Reserves Judgment on Paul**

Verses 22-23

¶ "And when Felix heard these things, having superior knowledge of that way, he adjourned the hearing with these words: “When Lysias the commander comes down, I will be able to decide your case.” Felix then commanded a centurion to take custody of Paul, but to let him have some liberty and allow his acquaintances to help or visit him.” (Acts 24:22-23).

- **Superior knowledge of that way.** The second charge seems to have backfired on the accusers. Felix knew a lot about the followers of Jesus and their message. He knew first hand that they were peaceful and law-abiding people. Their teachings were no threat to Roman governance. The charge that Paul was a ring leader of the Jesus sect, could have hinted that Paul was sowing seeds of sedition. However Felix knew better than to be fooled by that ploy.

- **Case adjourned.** Felix sent the Jews away without deciding the case, on the grounds that he needed to consult Lysias the commander. Tertullus may have inclined Felix to take this course. Tertullus had unwisely accused Lysias of using undue violence when he took Paul from the Sanhedrin (Acts 23:10, Acts 24:7).

- **Paul allowed some liberty.** Felix did not release Paul. Felix wanted to talk to Paul and also hoped that Paul might pay him a bribe for freedom (Acts 24:16).

4 **Felix Visits Paul to Hear Him Speak of the Way**

Verses 24-27

¶ "Some days later, Felix arrived with his wife Drusilla who was a Jewess. Felix summoned Paul, and listened to him speak about faith in Christ. As Paul reasoned
about righteousness, self-control, and judgment to come, Felix trembled. He said to Paul, "Go your way for the time being; when I find time, I will call for you." Felix also hoped that Paul might give him a bribe for freedom, so he often sent for Paul and talked with him. But after two years went by, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. Felix, to curry favour with the Jews, left Paul imprisoned." (Acts 24:24-27).

- **When I find time.** Felix did often make time to talk with Paul (Acts 24:26). So Paul had plenty of opportunity to convert Felix. Paul apparently never succeeded, even though he managed to frighten Felix. It seems Felix was seeking to improve his knowledge of the Way, but not to commit himself to it. Also, as we are informed, Felix was visiting Paul in the hope of receiving a bribe.

- **Righteous, self-control, and judgment to come.** These topics are not popular. However Paul was urging Felix to make changes in his life; to consider his standing before God. It is too easy for the rich and powerful to live this life in corruption and greed, and forget that shortly they will meet their Maker.
This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 25:1-27. These verses describe how Paul was examined by Festus and Agrippa in Caesarea.

Acts 25:1-27
—Verse by verse

Paul examined by Festus and Agrippa in Caesarea.

Acts 25:1-27
¶“1 Three days after Festus took over the province, he travelled from Caesarea up to Jerusalem. 2 In Jerusalem, the chief priests and leaders of the Jews laid charges before Festus against Paul. 3 They urged Festus to make a concession and have Paul brought to Jerusalem. They plotted, of course, to ambush Paul along the way and kill him. 4 However Festus said that Paul should be kept at Caesarea. Festus also advised that he would be leaving shortly, and that men with influence could accompany him to Caesarea and there lay charges against Paul if he has done any wrong.” (Acts 25:1-5).

¶“6 After spending no more than ten days in Jerusalem, Festus went back down to Caesarea. Next day, chairing the tribunal, Festus commanded Paul to be brought there. 7 When Paul arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around Paul, and laid many serious accusations against him, which they could not prove. 8 In his own defense, Paul said, 'Neither against the law of the Jews, or against the temple, nor against Caesar, have I offended in any way at all.' 9 Festus however, wanting to curry favour with the Jews, inquired of Paul, 'Would you be willing to go up to Jerusalem, and to stand trial before me on these matters?' ” (Acts 25:6-9).

¶“10 Paul responded to Festus, 'I am already standing at Caesar’s court, where as a Roman I ought to be judged. To the Jews have I done no wrong, as you very well know. 11 If I am a criminal, if I have committed any thing worthy of death, I don't refuse to die. But if there is no truth in the things of which these men accuse me, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal unto Caesar.' 12 Festus conferred with his council and then responded to Paul: 'Have you appealed to Caesar? Then to Caesar you shall go.' ” (Acts 25:10-12).

¶“13 Several days later, King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea and paid Festus an official visit. 14 While King Agrippa and Bernice were spending quite some time in Caesarea, Festus laid Paul’s case before the king. Festus said, 'There is a particular man left in prison by Felix. 15 When I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me about this man. They wanted a judgment against him. 16 I told them that the Roman law doesn't allow for a citizen to be handed over to his accusers until he has met them face to face before a Roman court, with the right to defend himself against the charges.'” (Acts 25:13-16).

¶“17 'After the accusers assembled here, I did not delay. The very next day I sat on the tribunal, and summoned the man. 18 When his accusers stood up to speak, however, they brought no accusation such as I had expected. 19 They only had issues against him concerning their own superstitions, and about a dead man called Jesus whom Paul affirmed to be alive. 20 Because I thought these questions dubious, I asked Paul
whether he would go to Jerusalem, and stand trial there on these matters. 21 But Paul appealed to be held in custody until he could stand trial before the Emperor. So I commanded him to be held till I could send him to Caesar.’ 22 At this point Agrippa said to Festus, ‘I would also like to hear the man myself.’ Festus replied, ‘Then tomorrow you shall hear him.’” (Acts 25:17-22).

“23 Next day, Agrippa and Bernice, amid great pomp, attended the auditorium where the hearing was to be held. Also gathered were the commanders, and prominent men of the city. Festus called for Paul to be brought in. 24 Then Festus said, ‘King Agrippa, and all gentlemen here present, you see this man, about whom all the people of the Jews have appealed to me. In Jerusalem, and also here, they shouted that he should be put to death. 25 However, I found that he had done nothing worthy of death. Furthermore, he himself has appealed to the Emperor. Consequently, I have determined to send him. 26 Yet I have nothing definite to write to my lord. So I have brought him before you —especially before you, O king Agrippa. I trust that after you have examined him, I might have something to write. 27 It seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner to Caesar without a clear indication of the crimes he is charged with.’” (Acts 25:23-27).

I New Governor Festus Hears Accusations Against Paul

Verses 1-5

¶ "Three days after Festus took over the province, he travelled from Caesarea up to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, the chief priests and leaders of the Jews laid charges before Festus against Paul, urging Festus to make a concession and have Paul brought to Jerusalem. They plotted, of course, to ambush Paul along the way and kill him. However Festus said that Paul should be kept at Caesarea. Festus also advised that he would be leaving shortly, and that men with influence could accompany him to Caesarea and there lay charges against Paul if he has done any wrong." (Acts 25:1-5).

- A new governor. Taking over from Felix, Festus became governor of the Province that included Jerusalem and Judea. So the enemies of Paul tried to manipulate Festus, using the same old tactics, hoping to achieve from Festus what they couldn't get from Felix. However Festus was in no hurry to grant their request. So Paul was kept at Caesarea for yet another hearing there.
Verses 6-9

† "After spending no more than ten days in Jerusalem, Festus went back down to Caesarea. Next day, chairing the tribunal, Festus commanded Paul to be brought there. When Paul arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around Paul, and laid many serious accusations against him, which they could not prove. In his own defense, Paul said, “Neither against the law of the Jews, or against the temple, nor against Caesar, have I offended in any way at all.” Festus however, wanting to curry favour with the Jews, inquired of Paul, “Would you be willing to go up to Jerusalem, and to stand trial before me on these matters?”" (Acts 25:6-9).

- **To go up to Jerusalem.** Festus put Paul on the spot by foisting the decision on to him as to whether he should to go to Jerusalem for trial there. Even if Paul refused, Festus would seem to have tried to help the Jews.

2 Paul Declines Trial in Jerusalem —He Appeals to Caesar

Verses 10-12

† "Paul responded to Festus, “I am already standing at Caesar’s court, where as a Roman I ought to be judged. To the Jews have I done no wrong, as you very well know. If I am a criminal, if I have committed any thing worthy of death, I don't refuse to die. But if there is no truth in the things of which these men accuse me, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal unto Caesar. Festus conferred with his council and then responded to Paul: “Have you appealed to Caesar? Then to Caesar you shall go.”" " (Acts 25:10-12).

- **The ultimate court.** Paul was very direct with Festus. Paul did not allow himself to be handed back to the Jews. Paul was already in a Roman court; he was entitled to a fair trial in that court; but his right was being compromised. Weary of the repeated hearings and the failure of the local court to expedite his case, Paul appealed to Caesar. This meant that Paul would be sent to Rome to await trial in the highest Roman court. Paul’s appeal to Caesar was no rash reaction. Paul had long since determined to go to Rome (Acts 19:21). The Lord Jesus had told Paul that he would testify in Rome (Acts 23:11).

- **Forward to Rome.** Paul decided to shift the machinations of his enemies and of local Roman politics out of reverse gear. In one short sentence, “I appeal to Caesar”, Paul forced the court to set a course for Rome, not Jerusalem. Paul would still have to bear with delays. However he had made the Romans responsible for his safe custody and eventual transport to Rome. Paul had checkmated his Jewish enemies in the Sanhedrin; they had no more moves in their wicked game.

3 Festus Consults King Agrippa About Paul

Verses 12-16

† "Several days later, King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea and paid Festus an official visit. While King Agrippa and Bernice were spending quite some time in Caesarea, Festus laid Paul’s case before the king. Festus said, “There is a particular man left in prison by Felix. When I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me about this man. They wanted a judgment against him. I told
them that the Roman law doesn't allow for a citizen to be handed over to his accusers until he has met them face to face before a Roman court, with the right to defend himself against the charges." (Acts 25:13-16).

- **To Caesar you shall go.** Festus had no option but to give this ruling, because Paul had exercised his right of appeal. However the ruling placed Festus in an embarrassing position. He had a prisoner to refer to Caesar’s court in Rome, but the prisoner was charged with no crime against Roman law. Festus had nobody but himself to blame for this predicament.

- **Agrippa and Bernice.** Fortunately Festus had a royal visit from someone who could advise him. This visitor was Marcus Julius Agrippa II (A.D. 27-100), the son of Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:1-25) and great-grandson of Herod the Great (Matthew 2:1-23). Caesar granted Agrippa the right to rule Judea and other parts of the province of which Festus was governor. Bernice was Agrippa’s sister. Agrippa was familiar with the details of Jewish customs and questions, which would include a knowledge of the way of Jesus the Nazarene (Acts 26:1-2, 26).

**Verses 17-22**

"Festus further said to Agrippa, “After the accusers assembled here, I did not delay. The very next day I sat on the tribunal, and summoned the man. When his accusers stood up to speak, however, they brought no accusation such as I had expected. They only had issues against him concerning their own superstitions, and about a dead man called Jesus whom Paul affirmed to be alive. Because I thought these questions dubious, I asked Paul whether he would go to Jerusalem, and stand trial there on these matters. But Paul appealed to be held in custody until he could stand trial before the Emperor. So I commanded him to be held till I could send him to Caesar.” At this point Agrippa said to Festus, “I would also like to hear the man myself.” Festus replied, “Then tomorrow you shall hear him.”" (Acts 25:17-22).

- **Tomorrow you shall hear him.** If Agrippa was going to advise Festus properly, Agrippa would need to examine Paul himself. This would not be a trial whereby Agrippa might dismiss all charges and order Paul’s release. Paul could now be put on trial nowhere but in Rome before Caesar. It would however be an official hearing of Paul’s defense, to try to determine the charges that might properly be laid against Paul.

**Verses 23-27**

"Next day, Agrippa and Bernice, amid great pomp, attended the auditorium where the hearing was to be held. Also gathered were the commanders, and prominent men of the city. Festus called for Paul to be brought in. Then Festus said, “King Agrippa, and all gentlemen here present, you see this man, about whom all the people of the Jews have appealed to me. In Jerusalem, and also here, they shouted that he should be put to death. However, I found that he had done nothing worthy of death. Furthermore, he himself has appealed to the Emperor. Consequently, I have determined to send him. Yet I have nothing definite to write to my lord. So I have brought him before you —especially before you, O king Agrippa. I trust that after you have examined him, I might have something to write. It seems to me unreasonably to send a prisoner to Caesar without a clear indication of the crimes he is charged with.”" (Acts 25:23-27).
Amid great pomp. The hearing before King Agrippa was no small event. It was a valuable opportunity for Paul to speak not only for himself but also on behalf of Jesus. What Paul said before the local king in Caesarea, would largely determine the ground on which he would eventually stand before the Emperor at Rome.
Acts 26:1-32
—Verse by verse

This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 26:1-32. These verses record Paul’s speech to King Agrippa at Caesarea.

Paul’s speech to King Agrippa.

Acts 26:1-32

¶“1Agrippa said to Paul, 'You are permitted to speak for yourself.' Then Paul stretched out his hand, and made his defence: 2'I think myself fortunate, king Agrippa, that I can defend myself before you this day regarding all the accusations the Jews make against me. 3I know you to be expert in all customs and questions common to the Jews. I therefore beg your patience in hearing me.' " (Acts 26:1-3).

¶“4King Agrippa, all the Jews know that my way of life, ever since my youth, was amid my own nation at Jerusalem. 5Since they have known me all this time, why don't they testify that I lived as a Pharisee, in the strictest sect of Judaism. 6Now here I am, standing trial for the hope of God's promise to our fathers. 7Our twelve tribes, earnestly serve God day and night, in hope of attaining this promise. Yet for this very hope, king Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews! 8Why should any of you think it incredible that God should raise the dead?" " (Acts 26:4-8).

¶“9Now I truly thought to myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10And this is exactly what I did in Jerusalem. I imprisoned many of the holy people, having received authority from the chief priests. I voted to have these holy ones put to death. 11I punished them frequently and in every synagogue. I tried to coerce them into blasphemy. I was enraged against them, and persecuted them even in outlying cities.' " (Acts 26:9-11).

¶“12I was on such a journey to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests. 13At midday, O King Agrippa, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who journeyed with me. 14We had all fallen to the ground when I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' 15And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And he said, 'I am Jesus whom you persecute. 16But rise, and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you with the purpose of making you a minister and witness both of these things which you have seen, and of those things in which I will later appear to you. 17I will deliver you from the Jewish people, and from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, 18to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among those who are made holy by faith in me.' " " (Acts 26:12-18).
Consequently, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. I proclaimed first to the people of Damascus, and also at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works appropriate for repentance. For this reason some Jews laid hold of me in the temple, and attempted to kill me. But I obtained help from God to continue to this day, witnessing to both small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses predicted: that Christ would suffer; and be the first to rise from the dead and thereby proclaim light to both the Jewish people and the Gentiles.' (Acts 26:19-23).

As Paul was saying this in his own defence, Festus interrupted with a loud voice: 'Paul you are beside yourself; too much learning has sent you mad!' But Paul said, 'I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak soberly and truthfully. The king knows of these matters, and I speak to him frankly, for I am sure that none of these things escape his attention. After all, this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.' Then Agrippa said to Paul, 'In a moment you will persuade me to become a Christian!' And Paul said, 'I would to God, that not only you, but all who have heard me this day, would in a moment, and forever, be such as I am—except of course for these chains.' (Acts 26:24-29).

And when Paul had said this, the king stood up, and so did the governor, and Bernice, and those who sat with them. When they had gone aside in private, they talked between themselves, saying, 'This man does nothing worthy of death or even of imprisonment.' Agrippa said to Festus, 'This man might have been set at liberty, if only he had not appealed to Caesar.' (Acts 26:30-32).

Paul Makes His Defense Before King Agrippa

Verses 1-3

"Agrippa said to Paul, "You are permitted to speak for yourself." Then Paul stretched out his hand, and made his defence: "I think myself fortunate, king Agrippa, that I can defend myself before you this day regarding all the accusations the Jews make against me. I know you to be expert in all customs and questions common to the Jews. I therefore beg your patience in hearing me." (Acts 26:1-3).

- Paul's opening formalities. Paul makes the customary, but in this case quite genuine, compliment to the king, and the formal appeal for a hearing.

Verses 4-8

"Paul continued, "King Agrippa, all the Jews know that my way of life, ever since my youth, was amid my own nation at Jerusalem. Since they have known me all this time, why don't they testify that I lived as a Pharisee, in the strictest sect of Judaism. Now here I am, standing trial for the hope of God's promise to our fathers. Our twelve tribes, earnestly serve God day and night, in hope of attaining this promise. Yet for this very hope, king Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews! Why should any of you think it incredible that God should raise the dead?"" (Acts 26:4-8).
2. Paul addresses the Jews' accusations. Agrippa would have read the transcript of Paul’s previous hearing. Agrippa was also grounded in a knowledge of Judaism. So Paul was on solid ground opening his defence with reference to the resurrection of the dead. Because Pharisees confessed a belief in the resurrection whilst Sadducees denied it, Paul had been able to divide and cripple the Sanhedrin by mentioning the resurrection (Acts 23:6-9). From a Roman point of view, Paul was at the same time able to point out that he was on trial not for a crime against Roman law, but merely on account of a religious dispute amongst the Jews—a matter in which Roman law had no interest so long as it didn't disturb the public peace.

3. Paul challenges his audience. Paul, ever the preacher, takes the opportunity to challenge the audience to question their own beliefs. Paul’s question has little to do with his own defence, but a lot to do with their accountability to God.

Verses 9-11

¶ Paul continued, "'King Agrippa, I truly thought to myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this is exactly what I did in Jerusalem. I imprisoned many of the saints, having received authority from the chief priests. I voted to have these saints put to death. I punished the saints frequently and in every synagogue. I tried to coerce them into blasphemy. I was enraged against them, and persecuted them even in outlying cities'” (Acts 26:9-11).

4. Paul describes his former status. Paul next informed (or perhaps reminded) Agrippa that Paul himself had been a zealous persecutor of the way of Jesus. This then gave Paul an opportunity to show why he had turned completely around and was now a zealous disciple of Jesus. His explanation follows:

| 2 | King Agrippa Hears How Paul was Converted |

Verses 12-18

¶ "Paul continued, “I was on such a journey to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests. At midday, O King Agrippa, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who journeyed with me. We had all fallen to the ground when I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ And I said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And he said, ‘I am Jesus whom you persecute. But rise, and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you with the purpose of making you a minister and witness both of these things which you have seen, and of those things in which I will later appear to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, and from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among those who are made holy by faith in me.” " (Acts 26:12-18).
5. **Paul describes his encounter with Jesus.** This testimony by Paul was dramatic, but true in every detail. It was certain to gain the attention of the audience and to give credence to Paul’s current devotion to Jesus.

Contradictions? Paul says that he and his companions all fell to the ground (Acts 26:14), whereas Luke says that Saul fell to the ground and his companions stood speechless (Acts 9:7). Paul also says that his travelling companions did not hear the voice of Jesus who spoke to him (Acts 22:19), whereas Luke says they heard the sound (Acts 9:7). This is one of those famous “contradictions” that some people think they have discovered in the Bible. However Luke is hardly likely to write an account that contradicts Paul’s own accounts, and then quote those accounts in the same document! It is easy to reconcile these accounts: Saul and his companions all fell to the ground when the light shone, but his companions stood up before Saul did. Saul heard what Jesus said, but his companions heard only the sound, but did not hear in the sense of catching what was said.

**Verses 19-23**

¶ Paul continued, "Consequently, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. I proclaimed first to the people of Damascus, and also at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works appropriate for repentance. For this reason some Jews laid hold of me in the temple, and attempted to kill me. But I obtained help from God to continue to this day, witnessing to both small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses predicted: that Christ would suffer; and be the first to rise from the dead and thereby proclaim light to both the Jewish people and the Gentiles" (Acts 26:19-23).

6. **Paul Summarises his mission.** Paul next summarised his mission. He was guilty of no sedition against Rome, and of no crime even against Jewish law. His mission was simply to preach the resurrection of Christ which Moses and the prophets had predicted. From Agrippa’s viewpoint, Paul would be preaching his version of Judaism, which he had as much right to do as the Pharisees had to preach theirs, or the Sadducees theirs.

7. **Paul summarises his message.** Paul defines the basic message of his ministry: Christ should suffer, and be the first to rise from the dead and thereby proclaim light to both Jew and Gentile.

**Verses 24-29**

¶ "As Paul was saying this in his own defence, Festus interrupted with a loud voice: “Paul you are beside yourself; too much learning has sent you mad.” But Paul said, “I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak soberly and truthfully. The king knows of these matters, and I speak to him frankly, for I am sure that none of these things escape his attention. After all, this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.” Then Agrippa said to Paul, “In a moment you will persuade me to become a Christian!” And Paul said, “I would to God, that not only you, but all who have heard me this day, would in a moment and forever be such as I am, except of course for these chains.” " (Acts 26:24-29).
8. Paul answers Festus. Festus was getting frustrated. Nothing new was coming out of this—certainly nothing that he could write in his letter to the emperor. He loudly interrupted Paul with a remark possibly designed to throw Paul off his well rehearsed track. Festus may have hoped Paul might say something that would lead to the outcome Festus was seeking.

9. Paul challenges Agrippa. Paul gave a polite answer to Festus. However Festus had turned Paul’s monologue into an opportunity for dialogue. So Paul threw out a challenge to Agrippa: “Do you believe the prophets?” Paul didn't wait for an answer, but said, “I know that you do”. This spared Agrippa from having to acknowledge that he was on different ground to Festus.

10. Paul again challenges the audience. Seeing that his defence was about to be curtailed, Paul finished on the high note of offering the gospel invitation to all.

These chains. Paul mentioned his chains not as an appeal to be set free, because he himself had made that impossible by appealing to Caesar. However perhaps Paul was pleading for his custody in Caesarea to be brought to an end and his transfer to Rome expedited.

Paul Judged Innocent by King Agrippa

Verses 30-32

¶ "And when Paul had said this, the king stood up, and so did the governor, and Bernice, and those who sat with them. When they had gone aside in private, they talked between themselves, saying, “This man does nothing worthy of death or even of imprisonment.” Agrippa said to Festus, “This man might have been set at liberty, if only he had not appealed to Caesar.”” (Acts 26:30-32).

If only he had not appealed. The king stood up. This effectively brought the hearing to a close, except for a private conference among the main players. It was acknowledged that Paul had committed no crime. Festus would have to write as much to Caesar, and explain that he was unable to set Paul free, and was compelled to send him to Rome, because Paul had appealed to Caesar. This was not a good look for Festus, but there it was, and Festus had to live with it.

To Caesar. In due course, Paul was dispatched to Rome. Luke does not tells us directly whether Paul ever got his trial before Caesar, but only that he spent two years in Rome (Acts 28:31). However, we may safely assume that Paul did stand trial, because an angel said to him, "You must stand before Caesar" (Acts 27:23-24). From Paul’s letters to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, Timothy, and Titus, we can glean some details of Paul’s two years’ custody in Rome, and of his release thereafter.
**Acts 27:1-44**

—Verse by verse

This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 27:1-44. These verses describe Paul’s journey from Jerusalem toward Rome, the storm at sea and shipwreck on Malta.

**Paul’s Journey to Rome Begins**

Acts 27:1-44

¶“1 When it was decided that we should sail to Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were delivered to a centurion named Julius. He belonged to the Augustan battalion. 2 We embarked on ship of Adramyttium. It was about to sail along the coast of Asia Minor. So we put out to sea accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica. 3 The next day we landed at Sidon. Julius treated Paul considerately, allowing him to go to his friends for comfort. 4 When we put out to sea again, we sailed under the shelter of Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. 5 Passing through the waters off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia. 6 At Myra, the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing to Italy. He put us aboard. 7 We sailed slowly for many days, and hardly managed to come off Cnidus. With the wind against us, we sailed under the shelter of Crete. 8 Passing Salmone with difficulty, we made it to Fair Havens near the city of Lasea.” (Acts 27:1-8).

¶“9 Much time had been lost. The Fast was already over, and the season had come when it was dangerous to sail. 10 Paul made an urgent plea: ‘Sirs, I foresee that continuing this voyage will result in much damage and loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also of our lives.’ 11 The centurion, however, was more inclined to take advice from the pilot and the ship’s owner. 12 The harbour was not suitable for wintering. So the majority favoured a decision to put out to sea and try to reach Phoenix, a harbour of Crete that lies south west and north west. There they would spend the winter. 13 When a moderate south wind arose, supposing it favoured their purpose, they weighed anchor and sailed close along the shore of Crete.” (Acts 27:9-13).

¶“14 However soon a violent wind arose, known as Euraquilo. 15 The ship was caught in the storm and could not face into the wind, so we let her be driven. 16 The ship ran under the lee of a small island called Clauda. We could hardly make the lifeboat secure, but they got it hoisted up. 17 They passed ropes under the ship to help it hold together in case they were driven aground in the shallows of Syrtis. They let down the anchor and let themselves be driven. 18 The next day we were so violently tossed by the storm that the crew began throwing the cargo overboard. 19 On the third day we lent our hands to throwing the ship’s tackling overboard. 20 For days we could see neither sun nor stars, and were battered by storm. All hope of being saved was abandoned.” (Acts 27:14-20).

¶“21 The ship’s occupants had not eaten for a long time. Paul stood up among them and said, ‘Sirs, you should have listened to my advice, and not set sail from Crete. Then you wouldn’t have suffered all this damage and loss. 22 Now I urge you to take courage, because there will be no loss of life among you. Only the ship will be lost.
23I know this because this very night the angel of the God whom I belong to and worship stood before me and said, 24'Fear not Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and behold God has granted that all who sail with you shall live.' 25Sirs, let this encourage you, for I believe that what God has told me will happen. 26We must, however, be shipwrecked on an island." (Acts 27:21-26).

¶“27On the fourteenth night, as we were driven along in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors sensed land ahead. 28They took soundings and measured twenty fathoms. A little further, they sounded again, and measured fifteen fathoms. 29Fearing that we might run aground on rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for dawn. 30The sailors were trying to escape ship. They had let down the lifeboat into the sea pretending that they would lay out anchors from its bow. 31Paul warned the centurion and the soldiers, 'If those men don't stay in the ship, you can't be saved.' 32So the soldiers cut the lifeboat's ropes and let her drift away.” (Acts 27:27-32).

¶“33While they waited for dawn, Paul urged them all to eat some food. He said, 'Fourteen days you've been on watch and have eaten nothing. I urge you to take some food for your health. Not a hair of your head is going to perish.' 34And when he had said this, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all. When he had broken it, he began to eat. 35Then they were all encouraged, and they also ate. 36There were 276 persons in the ship. 37When they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship by casting the wheat into the sea.” (Acts 27:33-38).

¶“39When daylight came, they could not recognise the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach. They thought it might be possible to drive the ship in there and beach it. 40They cut the anchors and left them in the sea. They were also releasing the ropes on the rudder and hoisting the foresail to the wind. Thus they made toward shore. 41But the ship went aground and the prow stuck fast between two channels. The ship could not move and the stern broke up in the violence of the waves. 42The soldiers were going to kill the prisoners, in case any of them should swim away and escape. 43But the centurion, wanting to bring Paul safely through, kept them from their purpose. He commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land. 44The rest should follow on boards and other flotsam from the ship. In this way it happened that they all escaped safely to land.” (Acts 27:39-44).

I Paul Sets Sail for Rome

Verses 1-8

¶ "When it was decided that we should sail to Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were delivered to a centurion named Julius. He belonged to the Augustan battalion. We embarked on ship of Adramyttium. It was about to sail along the coast of Asia Minor. So we put out to sea accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica. The next day we landed at Sidon. Julius treated Paul considerately, allowing him to go to his friends for comfort. When we put out to sea again, we sailed under the shelter of Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. Passing through the waters off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia. At Myra, the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing to Italy. He put us aboard. We sailed slowly for many days, and hardly managed to come off Cirinus. With the wind against us, we sailed under the shelter of Crete. Passing Salcombe with difficulty, we made it to Fair Havens near the city of Lasea.” (Acts 27:1-8).
Paul Warns of Shipwreck —His Advice Dismissed

Verses 9-12

¶ "Much time had been lost. The Fast was already over, and the season had come when it was dangerous to sail. Paul made an urgent plea: “Sirs, I foresee that continuing this voyage will result in much damage and loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also of our lives.” The centurion, however, was more inclined to take advice from the pilot and the ship’s owner. The harbour was not suitable for wintering. So the majority favoured a decision to put out to sea and try to reach Phoenix, a harbour of Crete that lies south west and north west. There they would spend the winter. When a moderate south wind arose, supposing it favoured their purpose, they weighed anchor and sailed close along the shore of Crete." (Acts 27:9-12).

Unclear details. There is a number of details in verses 12-20 (see above and below) that are not fully understood. We won't discuss these in detail, since they are speculative and not important to the gist of the events. The Fast: probably a reference to the Day of Atonement on the Jewish calendar around October. Southwest and northwest: some versions have northeast and southeast, which may refer to prevailing wind direction. Euraquilo: thought to be a fierce gale like a small hurricane with fickle wind direction. Let down the anchor: this might rather be let down the sail. Passed ropes under: the Greek says 'helps' and may mean
reinforcement other than ropes. *Syrtis*: most likely a large sandy shallows toward the African coast.

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### 3 Ship Battered by Violent Storm

**Verses 14-20**

¶ "However soon a violent wind arose, known as Euraquilo. The ship was caught in the storm and could not face into the wind, so we let her be driven. The ship ran under the lee of a small island called Claustra. We could hardly make the lifeboat secure, but they got it hoisted up. They passed ropes under the ship to help it hold together in case they were driven aground in the shallows of Syrtis. They let down the anchor and let themselves be driven. The next day we were so violently tossed by the storm that the crew began throwing the cargo overboard. On the third day we let our hands to throwing the ship’s tackling overboard. For days we could see neither sun nor stars, and were battered by storm. All hope of being saved was abandoned." (Acts 27:14-20).

- **All hope abandoned.** By this time the ship was in a bad way and its position could not be verified by sightings of the sun or stars. It seemed certain that the ship and its occupants were to perish. Paul, however, knew better.

**Verses 21-26**

¶ "The ship’s occupants had not eaten for a long time. Paul stood up among them and said, “Sirs, you should have listened to my advice, and not set sail from Crete. Then you wouldn't have suffered all this damage and loss. Now I urge you to take courage, because there will be no loss of life among you. Only the ship will be lost. I know this because this very night the angel of the God whom I belong to and worship stood before me and said, 'Fear not Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and behold God has granted that all who sail with you shall live.' Sirs, let this encourage you, for I believe that what God has told me will happen. We must, however, be shipwrecked on an island. '"" (Acts 27:21-26).

- **Hope returns.** Without God, when things get really bad, people lose hope. But because Paul always stayed close to God, God stayed close to Paul, and made the fact plain. In this case God was going to shepherd Paul through the crisis and get him back on track to Rome.

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### 4 Shipwreck on Melita —No Lives Lost

**Verses 27-32**

¶ "On the fourteenth night, as we were driven along in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors sensed land ahead. They took soundings and measured twenty fathoms. A little further, they sounded again, and measured fifteen fathoms. Fearing that we might run aground on rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for dawn. The sailors were trying to escape ship. They had let down the lifeboat into the sea pretending that they would lay out anchors from its bow. Paul warned the centurion and the soldiers, “If those men don't stay in the ship, you can't be saved.” So the soldiers cut the lifeboat’s ropes and let her drift away."

Paul in control. It's remarkable that Paul was one of the prisoners, yet he was telling those in charge what to do. They were trusting him, and his God, with their lives.

Verses 33-38

¶ "While they waited for dawn, Paul urged them all to eat some food. He said, “Fourteen days you've been on watch and have eaten nothing. I urge you to take some food for your health. Not a hair of your head is going to perish.” And when he had said this, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all. When he had broken it, he began to eat. Then they were all encouraged, and they also ate. There were 276 persons in the ship. When they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship by casting the wheat into the sea." (Acts 27:33-38).

Took bread and gave thanks. Paul encouraged everyone not only by word but by example. By thanking God for the food and eating, he was reinforcing the idea that God's providence was at work. All lives would be saved without injury. In the dark of night, in a frail ship, in a stormy sea, they all believed Paul and were encouraged.

Verses 39-44

¶ "When daylight came, they could not recognise the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach. They thought it might be possible to drive the ship in there and beach it. They cut the anchors and left them in the sea. They were also releasing the ropes on the rudder and hoisting the foresail to the wind. Thus they made toward shore. But the ship went aground and the prow stuck fast between two channels. The ship could not move and the stern broke up in the violence of the waves. The soldiers were going to kill the prisoners, in case any of them should swim away and escape. But the centurion, wanting to bring Paul safely through, kept them from their purpose. He commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land. The rest should follow on boards and other flotsam from the ship. In this way it happened that they all escaped safely to land." (Acts 27:39-44).

Paul's predictions accurate. Paul had said that the lives of all on board would be saved, only the ship would be lost, and they would run aground on an island (Acts 27:22,26). Paul received this knowledge from an angel, and every word came true.

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Acts 28:1-31
—Verse by verse

This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 28:1-31. These verses describe Paul’s stay on Malta, the journey from Malta to Rome, and a little of his work in Rome.

Acts 28:1-31

¶“1After everyone had got to shore, we found out that the island was called Malta. 2The natives treated us with great kindness. It was raining and cold, so they kindled a fire, and welcomed us all. 3Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire. A venomous snake came out, disturbed by the heat, and fastened on his hand. 4When the natives saw the creature hanging on his hand, they said among themselves, ‘No doubt this man is a murderer; he has escaped the sea; yet Justice won't let him live.’ 5However Paul shook off the snake into the fire, and suffered no harm. 6The natives expected Paul to swell up or drop dead, but after they had observed him for a long time, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.” (Acts 28:1-6).

¶“7The governor of the island had his property in that area. His name was Publius. He welcomed us courteously, and gave us lodging for three days. 8The father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery. Paul went into him; prayed; laid hands on him; and healed him. 9After this was done, other sick people of the island came, and were healed. 10They honoured us in many ways; and later, when we departed, they loaded us up with everything we needed.” (Acts 28:7-10).

¶“11It was three months later that we set sail in a ship of Alexandria. It had wintered in the isle. The Twin sons of Zeus, Castor and Pollux, were its figurehead. 12We landed at Syracuse, and waited there three days. 13From there we tacked to Rhegium. A day later the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli. 14There we found brethren, and were invited to stay with them. We did so for seven days and then set off toward Rome. 15The brethren from Rome heard that we were coming. They came as far as Appii Forum and The three Taverns to meet us. When Paul saw them, he thanked God, and was encouraged. 16Upon our arrival in Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard. However Paul was permitted to have his own house with a soldier guarding him.” (Acts 28:11-16).

¶“17Three days later, Paul called the leaders of the Jews together. When they had assembled, Paul said to them, ‘Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or the customs of our forefathers, yet I was taken prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. 18When the Romans examined me, they would have released me, because there was no cause of death in me. 19But when the Jews objected, I was forced to appeal Caesar —not that I have any accusation against my nation. 20So I have called for you, to meet and speak with you, because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.’ 21Paul’s visitors replied, ‘We received no letters from Judaea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren from there spoken ill of you. 22However we want to hear your views, because we know that this sect is spoken against everywhere.’ (Acts 28:17-22).
Paul’s Jewish visitors made an appointment with him for another day, when many came to him at his lodgings. Paul explained and testified about the kingdom of God, persuading them about Jesus, from the law of Moses, and from the prophets. Paul spoke from morning till evening. Some believed what Paul said; others were not persuaded.” (Acts 28:23-24).

Disagreeing among themselves, the Jewish company began leaving after Paul made this final statement: “The Holy Spirit rightly spoke to our forefathers through the prophet Isaiah, Go to this people, and say, you shall keep hearing but not understand; you will keep seeing and not perceive; for the heart of this people has become dull, their ears can hardly hear; and they have shut their eyes; lest they should see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their heart, be converted, and I should heal them.’ So let it be known to you that the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it.’ When Paul had said these words, the Jews departed, still disputing among themselves.” (Acts 28:25-29).

In Rome, Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all who came in to visit him. Paul was preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ. He was doing this quite openly and without hindrance.” (Acts 28:30-31).

**Paul’s Stay on Malta After the Shipwreck.**

**Verses 1-6**

"After everyone had got to shore, we found out that the island was called Melita. The natives treated us with great kindness. It was raining and cold, so they kindled a fire, and welcomed us all. Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire. A venomous snake came out, disturbed by the heat, and fastened on his hand. When the natives saw the creature hanging on his hand, they said among themselves, “No doubt this man is a murderer; he has escaped the sea; yet Justice won’t let him live.” However Paul shook off the snake into the fire, and suffered no harm. The natives expected Paul to swell up or drop dead, but after they had observed him for a long time, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god." (Acts 28:1-6).

**Melita.** Now called Malta, this island south of Italy was populated by “Barbarians” who were nevertheless civilised in their way. They put themselves to considerable expense and inconvenience to care for a sudden influx of 276 people who had nothing but the clothes they had swum to shore in.

**Justice.** These “Barbarians” also had a good sense of justice, supported by religious beliefs. Perhaps they conceived of justice as a god who saw to it that criminals received just punishment even if they seemed to escape it.

**Unharmed by the snake.** The islanders would certainly know a deadly serpent when they saw one. They quite properly expected Paul to die quickly. But the miracle followed Paul as Jesus had promised: "And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well." (Mark 16:17-18).
Verses 7-10

¶ "The governor of the island had his property in that area. His name was Publius. He welcomed us courteously, and gave us lodging for three days. The father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery. Paul went into him; prayed; laid hands on him; and healed him. After this was done, other sick people of the island came, and were healed. They honoured us in many ways; and later, when we departed, they loaded us up with everything we needed." (Acts 28:7-10).

**Were there converts?** Since Paul spent three months on Malta, and had performed these miracles, you would expect a church to have formed there. With his gift of tongues Paul would even have been able to preach to the islanders in their native language. Tradition has it that Paul and Publius did form a church in Malta. However it's a mystery why Luke makes no mention of preaching to these people and making disciples among them.

2 From Malta to Rome

Verses 11-16

¶ "It was three months later that we set sail in a ship of Alexandria. It had wintered in the isle. The Twin sons of Zeus, Castor and Pollux, were its figurehead. We landed at Syracuse, and waited there three days. From there we tacked to Rhegium. A day later the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli. There we found brethren, and were invited to stay with them. We did so for seven days and then set off toward Rome. The brethren from Rome heard that we were coming. They came as far as Appii Forum and The three Taverns to meet us. When Paul saw them, he thanked God, and was encouraged. Upon our arrival in Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard. However Paul was permitted to have his own house with a soldier guarding him." (Acts 28:11-16).

**Paul thanked God.** Word of Paul's arrival spread quickly among the Christians in Italy, and those in Rome came out to meet him. Paul probably feared that he would be a stranger in the city, but people cared. Paul thanked God for the encouragement this gesture lent him.
**Paul’s Ministry in Rome**

**Verses 17-22**

¶ "Three days later, Paul called the leaders of the Jews together. When they had assembled, Paul said to them, “Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or the customs of our forefathers, yet I was taken prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. When the Romans examined me, they would have released me, because there was no cause of death in me. But when the Jews objected, I was forced to appeal Caesar—not that I have any accusation against my nation. So I have called for you, to meet and speak with you, because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.” Paul’s visitors replied, “We received no letters from Judaea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren from there spoken ill of you. However we want to hear your views, because we know that this sect is spoken against everywhere.”" (Acts 28:17-22).

- **Jewish leaders visit Paul.** Paul could not go to the synagogue because he had an unincircumcised Roman chained to him. So instead he had the synagogue leaders come to him. Paul was probably anxious to know how things stood between him and his Jewish brethren, especially to gauge whether his enemies in Jerusalem had been active in Rome. However, the Jews in Rome held nothing against him, and even wished to hear his account of this “sect” that was so much spoken against.

**Verses 23-24**

¶ "Paul’s Jewish visitors made an appointment with him for another day, when many came to him at his lodgings. Paul explained and testified about the kingdom of God, persuading them about Jesus, from the law of Moses, and from the prophets. Paul spoke from morning till evening. Some believed what Paul said; others were not persuaded.” (Acts 28:23-24).

- **Morning to evening.** Paul and his visitors were used to lengthy discussions. There was nothing unusual about spending a whole day talking and debating about the scriptures. Today we, with our twenty minute sermons, and forty minute Bible classes, cannot cover much ground.

- **From Moses and the Prophets.** As always, Paul preaches and proves from the scriptures. Paul was not one of those who say, “God has spoken to me and given me a message for you.” God had spoken to Paul, but Paul in his preaching explained from the Scriptures all things concerning Christ.

**Verses 25-28**

¶ "Disagreeing among themselves, the Jewish company began leaving after Paul made this final statement: “The Holy Spirit rightly spoke to our forefathers through the prophet Isaiah, ‘Go to this people, and say, you shall keep hearing but not understand; you will keep seeing and not perceive; for the heart of this people has become dull, their ears can hardly hear, and they have shut their eyes; lest they should see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their heart, be converted, and I should heal them.’ So let it be known to you that the salvation of God is sent to
the Gentiles, and they will hear it." When Paul had said these words, the Jews departed, still disputing among themselves. " (Acts 28:25-29, Isaiah 6:9-10).

- **Disputing among themselves.** The Jewish leaders probably spent far too much energy on disputing. Some probably appreciated Christianity as another opportunity to debate. However Paul hadn't wasted his day, because some believed even if others were intractable.

**Verses 30-31**

¶ "In Rome, Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all who came in to visit him. Paul was preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ. He was doing this quite openly and without hindrance. " (Acts 28:30-31).

- **Without hindrance.** Although he was chained to a guard most of the time, Paul was treated with respect by the Roman soldiers and in no way hindered in his desire to preach. The Jews in Rome did not mistreat him or wish to kill him as their brethren in Jerusalem had done. It was by God’s grace that Paul enjoyed these comforts after he had endured so much hardship, danger, and frustration. Paul made many disciples even among Caesar’s own household (Philippians 4:22).

**END OF THE SIXTH SECTION OF ACTS**

Luke concludes his description of the spread of Christianity by leaving us with Paul working in Rome. Of course Christianity spread much further afield, “even to the remotest parts of the earth” as Jesus said (Acts 1:8). Luke, however, stops his narrative here, and we can only wish that he had told us more.